



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts

The Breadwinner

directed by Nora Twomey

The Breadwinner directed by Nora Twomey is a film included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2026, 2027 and 2028, 2029 and 2030).



Image courtesy of
IMDB

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *The Breadwinner* covers themes which could be considered sensitive and controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or [click here to access a Getting Started with Guide for this Text](#)

Before you watch... (Teacher Guidance)

1. Story Telling Traditions

Guide students in a discussions about why oral history and stories might be important. If needed, remind them of colonised countries and their way of preserving history.

2. Activate Prior Knowledge

Have pupils discuss or mind map in pairs the following questions:

- What do you already know about Afghanistan?
- What do you know about its culture, history, or geography?
- What questions do you have about life in Afghanistan?

3. Quick Writing

Ask pupils to write 2–3 sentences about a time someone taught them something important about their family, community, or country. Have them think about what they learned and how it made them feel.

4. Vocabulary Preview

Introduce key terms pupils will hear in the clip. Instruct pupils to match the words with short definitions or draw a small symbols for each. Possible terms may include:

Invasion - Heritage - Silk Road - Taliban - Storytelling



Film Clip



Image courtesy of *The Independent*

Background: In this scene from *The Breadwinner*, Parvana's father, Nurullah, tells her about the history of Afghanistan. He explains how the country has faced invasions and challenges over many centuries, yet has a rich culture and proud heritage. The story helps Parvana understand her homeland and why it is important to stay brave. This moment also shows how storytelling can teach lessons and inspire courage.

Watch the clip [here](#). 

Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidelines)

These prompts are designed to support close reading and personal response. They may be used orally or in writing, individually or in groups.

1. Character Reflection

Encourage pupils to think about how Parvana feels in this clip as she listens to her father's story. Ask pupils to consider how it might change the way she feels about her country. Guide pupils to write a short diary entry as Parvana after hearing the story, describing her thoughts and emotions.

2. Debate

Give students the prompt: "Storytelling can teach us more about our world than textbooks." Split class in two and allow time to plan and research for a debate on the topic.

3. Creative Response

Have pupils write a short story or legend about their own family, town, or country, inspired by how Nurullah uses storytelling to teach Parvana.

4. Connections

In pairs, have pupils brainstorm how the ideas shown in this clip link to any other texts they have studied. Have pupils write a short comparison of the two. If they cannot think of one, encourage them to describe how it might connect to another country's history.



Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

These activities extend engagement with the extract and invite creative and personal responses. Use individually, in pairs, or in groups.

1. Character Analysis

Allow a re-watch if necessary and have pupils answer the question: *Describe Nurullah as a character, based on this clip. What kind of father is he?* Encourage students to use evidence from the clip in their answers.

2. Persuasive Response

Give pupils the prompt below and have them write a persuasive response explaining their opinion, using the clip as an example.

Prompt: *Nurullah believes it is important to remember Afghanistan's history. Do you agree that learning about the past is important?*

3. Short Story

Have pupils plan and create their own short story that teaches an important lesson about courage, family, or hope. They could base it on:

- Their family or community.
- A historical or imagined place.
- A character who must be brave in difficult circumstances.

4. Alternate Ending

Instruct pupils to imagine that the story Nurullah tells takes a magical twist. They should write an alternate ending where Parvana is transported into the historical story where she meets one of the figures from the past and learns something important about courage or her family.