**The Breadwinner - Chapter 1 Questions**

1. **Where is Parvana at the opening of the book? What is she doing?**

   She is at the Kabul market helping her dad sell items for their family.

2. **How old is Parvana?**

   She is 11 years old.

3. **Why is Parvana “one of the lucky ones” (9)? What does she mean by that?**

   She can read. Both of her parents are educated. They think it’s important for all to get an education.

4. **What was Parvana’s initial reaction to the Taliban coming to Afghanistan? Why? How has her mind changed since then?**

   At first she was almost happy that the Taliban had taken over the government. “When [the Taliban] first took over the capital city of Kabul and forbade girls to go to school, Parvana wasn’t terribly unhappy. She had a test coming up in arithmetic that she hadn’t prepared for, and she was in trouble for talking in class again” (11). Parvana later wished she could go to school.

5. **Briefly describe Parvana’s homes before and after the Taliban. What happened?**

   Before the Taliban, Parvana’s family had a large home. When the bombs started falling, Parvana’s family homes were bombed and they had to find new homes. Each home got smaller as they became poorer and poorer.

6. **What did Parvana’s father end up selling because the offer was too good?**

   Parvana’s father sold his false leg because somebody offered him a great deal of money for it.

7. **How does Parvana’s sister remember Kabul? How does Parvana know Kabul? Describe each and provide examples from the book.**

   Parvana’s sister remembers Kabul as a place with whole sidewalks, traffic lights that worked, “evening trips to restaurants and cinemas, browsing in fine shops for clothes and books” (16).
The Breadwinner - Chapter 2 Questions

1. What does Parvana have to do as soon as she gets home?
Parvana has to fetch water. It will take her five trips to fill the tank a sixth to have a full bucket.

2. Why does Parvana have to be the one to always do the task mentioned in question 1? 
   Provide examples from the book with page number(s). (page 20-21)
Maryam was only five and can’t carry an empty bucket much less one full of water. Mother and Nooria had to wear burqas whenever they went outside, and they couldn’t carry a pail of water up the uneven steps while wearing burqas.

3. Describe in detail Parvana’s family’s one room apartment. (page 22-23)
Parvana could cross the room in ten steps one way and twelve steps the other way. At the end of the room was a lavatory. They kept their propane cook stove in there because of the tiny vent. The water tank was also in the lavatory.

4. What does Parvana’s mother put in the pile of items to sell that makes Parvana upset? 
   Describe what this item is (look it up in a dictionary or on Wikipedia). (p. 24)
Parvana’s mother is going to sell her red, shalwar kameez. A Shalwar kameez is a traditional dress worn by both women and men in South Asia.

5. Who was Hossain? What happened to him? What was he like? (p. 25)
Hossain was the oldest son of Parvana’s family. He was killed by a land mine when he was fourteen years old. Hossain used to laugh a lot and played with Parvana.

6. What happened to father at the end of the chapter? Why do you think this happened? 
   (p30-33)
The Taliban broke into their apartment and took Father. They are angry at his foreign education. They also wanted to steal items from the house.
The Breadwinner - Chapter 3 Questions

1. Describe where the family sleeps. How is it different from where you sleep? (p. 34)

Parvana’s family sleeps on rugs laid out on the floor. Americans typically sleep in beds.

2. What does Parvana miss about her father? (p. 35)

Parvana misses the sounds of her father snoring. It had always been a way for her to know she was safe from harm.

3. What Taliban rule did Parvana’s family choose to not obey? What was Father’s reason? Do you think he was right? Why or why not?

Parvana’s family chooses not to paint their windows black. Father said the window was too small and too high up, so nobody would see it. Yes I think he was right because… / No, I do not think he was right because…

4. Why does Parvana tell Nooria to write a note for her mother? How does Mother feel about this? How does Nooria feel?

Parvana tells Nooria to write her mother a note as though she were father giving his wife permission to be outside. Mother hates the idea and says she will not be treated like a kindergartener. Nooria agrees with Parvana and writes the note.

5. Where do Parvana and her mother go (be specific)? Why? Are they successful?

Parvana and her mother go to Pul-i-Charkhi Prison to locate Father. They are not successful.

6. Parvana remembers her father saying to her “Hold steady, my little Malali.” Who is Malali? Why does her father call her his little Malali?

Father had told the children a story about a brave girl, name Malali, who had encouraged the Afghan troops to fight against the British. He calls her that to remind her to be brave.
The Breadwinner - Chapter 4 and 5 Questions

1. How long had it been since mother had walked outside of their home? Why? (p. 44-45)

It had been a year and a half since mother had left the home because the Taliban forbade it.

2. What did Parvana dream about the night they visited the prison? (p. 47-48)

Parvana dreamed about soldiers hitting her as she shouted, “I am Malali!” The worst part was watching her mother beaten and not being able to help.

3. What is Parvana afraid to do while everyone is being quiet for mother? Why? (p50-51)

Parvana wants to read books, but is afraid to read Father’s secret stash because the Taliban might burst into the room and take the books away. They could also be punished for having the books.

4. What happens on the fourth day? What does Parvana have to do? Why? (p.52-53)

On the fourth day, the family runs out of food. Parvana has to go out and buy food for the family or they will all starve.

5. Summarize what Parvana does on pages 54-55.

Parvana debates if she should act like a woman and stay outside the stores, or go in the stores. Either way, she risks getting in trouble. Parvana buys bread first, since it faces the street. While she is making her purchases, she gets caught by a Talib. She surprises him by yelling “Stop hitting me” (and then she runs away).

6. Describe Mrs. Weera. What is she like? (p. 57-58)

Mrs. Weera is tall with white hair and a strong body. She was a physical education teacher before the Taliban showed up. She is a woman who can take charge.

7. What does Mrs. Weera ask Parvana to do to help her family? Does Parvana do it? (p. 59-60)

Mrs. Weera asks Parvana to fetch buckets of water to refill the water tank. Parvana is hesitant at first but agrees to the task, knowing her family needs her and it is what her father would want.
The Breadwinner - Chapter 6 and 7 Questions

1. What does Parvana’s family decide will be the solution to their inability to go into the market, especially now that Father is gone? Why do they decide it’s the “perfect solution?”

Parvana’s mother and sister, Nooria, decide that Parvana should act and dress as a boy. Her mother calls it the “perfect solution” because as a boy, Parvana would be able to move freely in the market.

2. Describe Parvana’s “transformation” using quotes from the book. What does Parvana think about her new appearance?

Mother cuts off Parvana’s hair in the bathroom. “Her new hair felt both bristly and soft” (68). Parvana decides that she likes her new hair. Parvana wears her brother’s shalwar kameez. “It was nice to have pockets. Her girl clothes didn’t have any” (68). Her mother gives her a “white cap with beautiful embroidery all over it” (69).

3. What did Parvana buy when she went to the market?
Parvana bought tea, rice, and onions.

4. In the beginning of Chapter 7, what task does Parvana’s mother ask her to do? Why?

Parvana’s mother asks Parvana to go to the market to sell items like father used to. The family needs more money to buy food and other items. Parvana is the only one who can safely make money (74).

5. Why does Parvana’s family tell people father is ill?

“It was safer to say Father was ill than to tell people he’d been arrested. No one wanted to look like an enemy of the government” (76).

6. Who is Parvana’s first customer? Describe how Parvana feels when he first approaches.

Parvana’s first customer is a Taliban soldier. She is extremely nervous. “Parvana was about to squish her eyes shut and wait to be shot...” (77).

7. After the Talib leaves, Parvana is confused. Why is she confused?

“Up until then, she had seen Talibs only as men who beat women and arrested her father. Could they have feelings of sorrow, like other human beings?” (80).
The Breadwinner - Chapter 8 and 9 Questions

1. What does Parvana help Mrs. Weera do?

Parvana helps Mrs. Weera move from her old house to Parvana’s house.

2. What does Maryam get to do that makes mother nervous? Why is mother nervous?

Maryam gets to go with Parvana to fetch water. Mother is worried that Maryam will forget to call Parvana “Kaseem” and/or that Maryam will not listen to Parvana while they are out.

3. Describe a typical day for Parvana (referring to Chapter 8).

Parvana “went out to the market early every morning, returned home for lunch, then went back to the market in the afternoon” (89). “Every day after lunch, Parvana, Nooria, Ali and Maryam went outside for an hour” (90). “They would walk around the neighborhood until their legs got tired, then they would sit in the sunshine” (90).

4. What two items does Parvana find on her rug while she is out working?

Parvana finds a “small square of embroidered cloth” (93) and “a beaded bracelet” (94). Later, she finds a “lovely white handkerchief with red embroidery around the edges” (102).

5. Who is Shauzia? What gift does she give Parvana?

Shauzia is one of Parvana’s old classmates. Shauzia is also dressed like a boy to blend in. She gave Parvana “a small twist of paper holding several dried apricots” (96).

6. When Parvana brings Shauzia to her house, Mrs. Weera announces a secret plan. What is Mrs. Weera’s secret plan? How could it be dangerous?

Mrs. Weera announces that she is going to start a secret school for girls. This is dangerous because if they get caught, the Taliban will have the arrested and/or killed for violating their law.

7. How are Mother and Mrs. Weera going to publish their articles?

Mother and Mrs. Weera have enlisted the help of other families. Their husbands will smuggle the paper to Pakistan, where it will be printed, and then smuggle it back into Afghanistan to be handed out (101).
1. What does Shauzia decide that she and Parvana should do for a job? How does Parvana feel about this idea?

Shauzia hears about getting paid for digging up bones. If they find bones and give them to the “bone collector” they will get paid. Parvana doesn’t really want to do it, but goes along with Shauzia anyway (p104-106).

2. What does Kabul have more of than flowers?

Parvana’s Father used to say that Kabul has more land mines than flowers (109).

3. How much money did the girls make while bone digging? Was it a profitable venture?

Parvana mentions that she made as much in the morning as she had in three days last week (111). Yes, it was a profitable venture.

4. What was Mother’s reaction when Parvana came home from bone-digging? Does Parvana tell her mother where she really was?

Mother was worried. She says, “Are you all right? Where were you? Why didn’t you come home for lunch? We’ve been sitting here terrified that you had been arrested” (114). After Parvana’s mother cried with worry, Parvana told her she had been digging up bones.

5. How long did it take Shauzia and Parvana to save up enough money to buy the trays? What did they decide to sell on their trays?

It took them two weeks of digging bones to save up enough money to buy trays with straps (117). They decided to sell cigarettes by the pack, as well as gum and matches (117).

6. Why do Shauzia and Parvana go to the stadium? What do they think is going to happen there? What do they actually witness at the stadium?

Shauzia and Parvana go to the stadium to sell their wares. They think there is going to be a soccer game and they will be able to sell a lot of their items to such a large crowd. However, they end up witnessing the punishment of thieves at the hands of the Taliban, who declare that thieves get their hands chopped off (120-121).
The Breadwinner - Chapter 12 and 13 Questions

1. What is Shauzia’s home life like? Describe what her family is like.

Her Father’s parents never liked her mother, so they are grumpy that they have to rely on her. “If they’re not actually arguing, they sit and glare at each other” (124).

2. When is Shauzia planning to leave Afghanistan? Where is she going? How will she get there? Who is going with her?

Shauzia is planning to leave Afghanistan in the spring to go to France. She will travel with nomads into Pakistan. Then she will head “to the Arabian Sea, get on a boat, and go to France!” (126). She is planning to go alone.

3. What does Parvana want her life to be like? Explain with quotes from the book.

“She wanted to sit in a classroom and be bored by a geography lesson” (130). “I just want to be an ordinary kid again. I want to sit in a classroom and go home and eat food that someone else has worked for. I want my father to be around. I just want a normal, boring life” (128).

4. What surprise does Parvana get when she returns home from the market?

Parvana finds out that Nooria is engaged to be married to a family they were neighbors with for several years (135).

5. Who is going to Mazar? Who is staying behind? Why?

Nooria, Mother, Ali, and Maryam are going to Mazar for Nooria’s wedding. Parvana is staying home because her presence will be difficult to explain (137-138).

6. What does Parvana buy Nooria as a gift?

Parvana buys Nooria a pen in a beaded case as a wedding / going away present (139).

7. What happens to Parvana toward the end of August?

Parvana got caught in a rain storm. She ducked into a “bombed-out building” and waited there until the storm was over. As she was getting ready to leave, she heard a woman crying (143).
The Breadwinner - Chapter 14 and 15 Questions

1. Describe Kabul at night using quotes from the book.

“Kabul was a dark city at night.” “Many of the street lights had been knocked out by bombs, and many of those still standing did not work.” “The narrow, winding streets of the marketplace were very different in the dark” (147-148).

2. Describe what happened to Homa’s family.

The Taliban came to their house, took Homa’s father and brother outside and shot them in the street. When her mother hit them, they shot her too (151).

3. How did Homa escape from Mazar?

Homa hid in a closet until it was dark. Then she ran out of the house and hid in the back of a truck that brought her to Kabul (152).

4. What does Parvana do when she hears about the killing in Mazar? What explanation does she give for doing it?

Parvana lies on the toshak and covers up with a quilt for two days. She says that is what women in her family do when they’re sad (153).

5. Why does Parvana decide to work harder and run after the customers with her tray?

She feels like she has something she’s working for now. For example, she has to buy her father’s medicine. She tells Shauzia she is working to get her family back (157-158).

6. What gift does Parvana leave for the mysterious Window Woman?

Parvana plants some wildflowers under the window where she usually puts her blanket for work so the woman will have something pretty to look at (162).

7. What do Parvana and Shauzia plan to do as they are saying goodbye?

Parvana and Shauzia plan to meet at the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris on the first day of spring twenty years from now (165).