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**The Child's Experience: The Nature of Trauma and the Role of Literature in Promoting Youth's Understanding of Global Progress through Debra Ellis' *The Breadwinner*.**

*The Breadwinner* by Debra Ellis is a groundbreaking children's novel that presents modern day Afghanistan to young readers in a way that is completely non-withholding, honest, and empowering— through the eyes of a child character, constantly confronted with violence, pain and impossible odds, but is never completely defeated by them. By exploring this brutally realistic setting, developing the female characters in the novel, and presenting hope and hard work, Ellis presents a unique and empowered version of the modern child, to the modern child. Adults frequently conceive children as incapable of understanding or coping with harsher realities present in society, and so children are often shielded from aspects of the world considered impure, or frightening. This process of hiding and withholding creates an atmosphere driven by shame and suspect, effectively presenting an unrealistic version of reality and, more harmfully, isolates those children that are in dangerous and disturbing situations— communicating to them that their reality is both abnormal and hopeless. The reality is that children, despite their age or innocence are exposed to varying degrees of violence. It is unfair to those children for literature to marginalize their experience, and does nothing to promote personal growth, or global progress. It is widely agreed among psychoanalysts— specifically Bruno Bettelheim (who worked extensively with traumatized children) and Robert Stolorow (whose body of work is greatly dedicated to the intersubjective-systems theory, dealing largely with trauma's intersubjective context)— that the way to present, understand and cope with traumatic experience, is through open and non-withholding dialogue, that works to illuminate the child's own strength and capability, build them upward and expel the notions of shame that so readily lurk in the shadow of trauma.