

Chapman, Marina. (2013). The Girl with No Name: The True Story of a Girl Who Lived with Monkeys. Edinburgh: Greystone Books.

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Marina Chapman's bibliography, "The Girl with No Name," is a compelling and powerful story of a girl that was abducted from her rural Colombian village at the young age of four. She was left all alone in the nature of the jungle with only herself for protection. Overtime she began to adapt to life in the forest and eventually found a new family of monkeys. She soon realized that this place was where she felt most at home. Following the ways of her monkey family she began to adopt their way of life. The girl found herself climbing up trees, sleeping in burrows, and walking on all fours, all the while acclimating to a newfound energetic vigor with which she lived her life. Until one day she was compelled by a mysterious intruder and followed this person out of the forest leaving behind her monkey clan, not knowing what was to lie ahead. A downward spiral of events followed shortly after.

She was kept as a servant in a brothel, a mafia house, and a convent. She also eventually became the leader to a gang on the streets of Columbia. Every new situation she found herself in she became part of a new "family" and was given a new name and identity. However, each time she escaped from these horrible places she was stripped of her most recent identity. She was emotionally, physically and mentally abused by the many heartless individuals she met day to day. Marina was treated so horribly because she was seen as an animal instead of a human being. Marina fought the disparities of her life for her sole dream of having children and grandchildren

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of her own one day and to be able to provide them with a quality of life that she had only once dreamed of as a little girl. It was not until she met a caring neighbor named Maruja that she finally felt like she belonged somewhere and was not alone.

The book demonstrates three major themes depicting the importance of survival, relationships, and classification. At such a young age, Marina was forced to learn things a fully-grown adult would have struggled to come to terms with in order to survive in such foreign and harsh environments. The relationships she grew, good or bad, gave her the courage and determination to battle her hardships and succeed in building a better life for herself. Marina was appointed countless classifications according to how people saw and judged her, but they never really defined her until she finally was able to make a name for herself.

With the jungle being an unforgiving place, Marina was forced to adapt to a new way of life immediately to survive. She learned which foods she could eat to make sure she didn't unintentionally poison herself and how to be able to rest in an environment where tiny insects infested your bed and slept on your body. When Marina did eat a poisonous fruit, the monkeys saved her life, just as any family member would. The monkeys groomed, taught and cared for Marina and they were her only sense of security in a jungle full of fear. Throughout her time in the jungle, Marina learned an important lesson that "family is found anywhere you are loved and cared for," (p. 89) it does not mean you have to be related or even of the same genetic species, the meaning of family lies in the "precious bond, [and the] reassurance that they won't let you down" (p. 89). The monkeys were able to teach Marina how to stay alive within one of the most dangerous and harsh areas of the world, through this they build a strong relationship and Marina felt like she was one of them.

While Marina describes all the changes that are taking place in her life, the monkeys are

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the one thing that has remained a constant positive reminder for her. When facing another problem or change she would think back to her former life, “my friends were the animals – they seemed to accept my presence questioningly” (p. 144); thus, portraying the importance and impact that these animals had made on her life and how she viewed the world. Without the skills and family-like relationships she acquired in the jungle she may not have been able equipped to survive the slavery or abuse she later faced in her life. Essentially, Marina’s constant memories and determination are the things that made her long for a better life. Throughout the book, whenever Marina was alone and needed a friend, she would think of the monkeys and her street gang where she had once belonged. Trees also became very significant in Marina’s life even after leaving the jungle, “[her] only place of safety was [her] branch in the Mamoncillo tree, where [she] would crawl when [her] body had been discarded for the day, and [she] would be forgotten till the next day’s chores began.” (p. 203) Marina shows the importance of having somewhere you feel you belong and are accepted. Through all the trauma she endured she was able to build meaningful relationships that kept her hopeful of being somebody with a true identity one day.

Marina refers to humans as “cruel, cold, murderous,” (p. 115) due to the brutal situations she was continually confronted with. However, she “knew [she] would never rest until [she had] been accepted by them,” (p. 115) because they would always be a part of her world and she still longed to meet be accepted by somebody with pure intentions who would be reminiscent of her family members she left behind in the jungle. By constantly reminding herself of this, she was able to continue to fight for a better life, for just one individual to give her a chance. Marina explains that every human she had ever put trust in had abandoned her or done much worse, therefore molding her perception of humans being unforgiving and horrible creatures. While the

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few good relationships gave Marina hope the numerous bad relationships drove her motivation further. Marina's drive stemmed from the constant emotional and physical abuse as well as being a servant there was nothing more she wanted to do than escape.

In opposition, Marina explained that she always felt the most comfortable when she was with people who accepted her and were like her. The majority of human's saw themselves as superior and always held brutal authority over Marina. Marina "had no idea of what they were going to do with [her], only that they seemed disgusted by [her] presence," (p. 125) that they would never be able to accept her because she was different than the other girls in the brothel. The other girls "looked at [her] as if they could hardly bear to touch [her]," (p. 125) but they had no choice but to strip her of her previous identity. This continual change her identity caused Marina to feel "exposed again. Vulnerable," (p. 129) being unsure of what was going to happen to her.

A valuable lesson that this book teaches is to "understand choices and how the making of them could so drastically alter your life." (p. 173) Each of the choices that Marina made from escaping the convent to getting in the car with one of Ana-Karmen's men and being at the teetering edge of death, they all had consequences. The choices she made altered her life in one way or another and she learnt to think of a calculated and precise plan before she pursued any actions so that she could guarantee her success. One single choice could have ended or saved her life completely.

This book however may have some limitations, individuals may question the book's validity based on the memory of a four-year-old girl, also they may begin to question if all the facts are valid. Such as the description and actions of the monkeys, some may wonder if monkeys would actually act this way in the jungle when an intruder appears. Many may wonder

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how such a young girl could survive and adapt in an environment full of wild creatures.

This book is an inspiring story of a young girl who was faced with continual hardships, but had the strength to stay positive and continue to fight for a better life. This book is a great lesson to individuals showing that you can always succeed if you set your mind to it and fight for what you deserve. The importance of classification and belonging are reoccurring themes portrayed though out the book. The intended audience for his book would be adults in the general public that enjoy reading true stories but can handle harsh story lines. Disciplines such as sociology, physiology, anthropology, history, education, biology, and film studies would be interested and all could potentially benefit from reading this book. This book was truly inspiring and engaging read that I highly recommend to anyone interested in family or children as well perseverance through life's greatest obstacles.