

2024-2025

Grade 11 NTI Day #1 ELA

Teacher: Mrs. Lee

Text:

**The Leather Jacket**

By Susan Muaddi Darraj

Assignment Instruction:

- Task 1 – Read and Annotate the Short Story
  - Underline key ideas and details
  - Make notes in the margin every few paragraphs – write a summary or ask a question
- Task 2 – Complete the text dependent questions (1-6). Be sure to respond to short answer prompts with complete sentences.
- Task 3 – Complete the 3 Discussion questions. Be sure to respond in three to four complete sentences

Important:

This assignment will also be available in Google Classroom. Please feel free to contact Mrs. Lee with any questions via email: [andrea.lee@pineville.kyschools.us](mailto:andrea.lee@pineville.kyschools.us)

# The Leather Jacket

By Susan Muaddi Darraj  
2023

*Susan Muaddi Darraj is an Palestinian American author of books for adults and children. She teaches at Harford Community College and the Johns Hopkins University. She has won numerous awards for her work, including an American Book Award, two Arab American Book Awards, and a Maryland State Arts Council Independent Artists Award. In this story, a woman prepares to face the life-altering consequences of her husband's choices.*

**As you read, take notes on the woman's actions and her mannerisms.**

[1]

The thing about Suleiman is that he admits nothing. You could catch this man with your purse in his hands, your gold necklace in his fist... you could be making dinner one night and get an alert that your card's being used at the department store on 10th and is this you trying to buy a man's leather jacket, size XL? but that stubborn man will roll his eyes and ask why you always assume the worst.

And it works. You actually apologized that time and bought him the jacket the following day. He'd picked one made of the best calf leather, the kind that nobody could deny looked expensive. You had the bag sitting on the kitchen table when he returned from another job interview. There was no thank you. Not a word — only that it was about time you showed him appreciation, as he slipped his arms through the sleeves.

He still pauses in front of every mirror, every glass

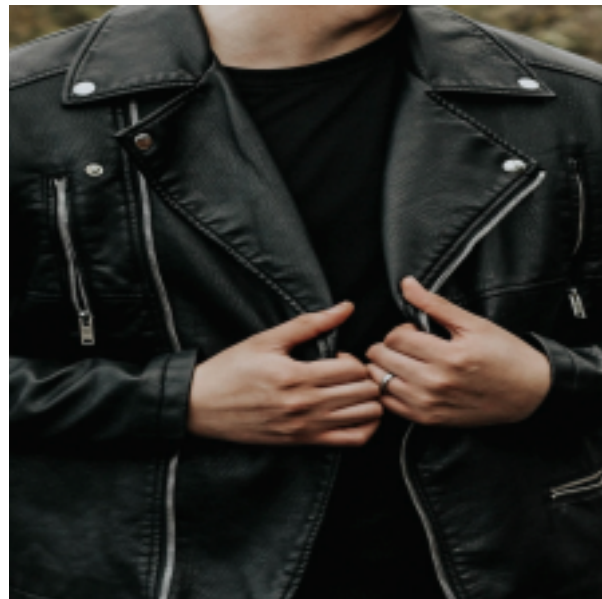
surface, when he passes by wearing that jacket. He stares at himself like he's in love. When has he ever looked at you like that, you wonder one night when you're up late making baklava<sup>1</sup> because he said he had a craving. You stand at the counter, after a long day at the office, layering sheet after sheet of the most vulnerable dough in the world, wondering why you married a man who makes everything complicated.

But it wasn't your money he took this time, promising never again.

[5]

This time, he can't fix it.

1. a dessert that is made of chopped nuts soaked in honey layered in flaky filo dough



*["Black Leather"](#) by Adrian Ordonez is licensed under CC0.*

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The tired nurse calls you on FaceTime right before and says, her voice muffled behind three masks, “Doctor says he won’t be awake much longer.” A Band Aid keeps the top of her mask taped to the bridge of her nose — you’ve seen the news where nurses and doctors are doing this so their glasses don’t fog up. You thank her excessively,<sup>2</sup> polite and agreeable because she doesn’t have to do this. It’s loud over there and you realize he’s still in the hallway, where he’s been for a week.

“You ready?” she asks. “It’s worse than yesterday.”

You nod.

She flips the camera around and there’s Baba,<sup>3</sup> pale as a page from Scripture.<sup>4</sup>

[10] The nurse’s disembodied<sup>5</sup> voice softly prods, “Your daughter’s on. Can you see her?”

You paste a hopeful look on your face, but his eyes stay closed, his mouth droops.

“Baba?” you say timidly.

“Louder, hon,” her hovering voice barks out. “It’s loud here.”

“Baba,” you practically shout into your phone. “Baba, I love you.”

[15] And for a moment, you freeze. So little time, but you are paralyzed because the little triangle of skin at the top of his chest peeks through the open neck of his gown. And it is sucking in hard with every breath he takes, like a mine about to collapse.

He is in pain. He is fighting to breathe.

How do you say, “I’m sorry Suleiman came into the house?” How do you say, “I’m sorry I married a selfish man?”

“Hon? I have other patients.”

The anger is for later.

[20] You tell Baba, loudly and in Arabic, you love him and you’re sorry but they won’t let you in. You pause to see if he will answer, but he can’t breathe. The nurse replaces his mask every few seconds, triggering his moan of relief. He’s been reduced to one thing: a need for oxygen. Opening his eyes, speaking — these are all a waste.

2. **Excessive (adjective)** going beyond the usual, necessary, or proper amount or degree

3. an affectionate term meaning “father” in Arabic

4. writings that are regarded as holy in a particular region of faith tradition

5. **Disembodied (adjective)** separated from the body or lacking a solid form

The oxygen matters more than you.

You beg: Please call back if he opens his eyes. Please write down anything he says. You know you have no right to ask, but please. She promises. Her voice sounds like it's on autopilot: like it's a promise she's made before, one she will keep having to make, because she is at the mercy of someone else.

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You'd made too much baklava that day. Baba had said on the phone, "I wish I could taste it. I wish I could leave this house and come visit and eat it with you." And because it had been months, you decided to drop off a plate to your father who had been shut in alone. You stood there and sliced the tray of baked pastries into ribbons, then turned it and sliced the other way until you had golden diamonds of baklava. You did it with your good knife, thinking, maybe you could wear gloves and a mask and drop the tray off on his porch.

But Suleiman, passing by in his jacket, said he would go. The virus doesn't show symptoms in everyone, you said, so don't go inside. Stop treating him like an idiot, he spat at you.

[25]

You check your FaceTime app. Still nothing from the nurse.

You finish packing anyway. The news will come any minute, but you do not need it to make you act. Not this time. You've been taking boxes to Baba's house for days now.

Suleiman is upstairs, avoiding you. His cough is gone — it only lasted a short time. Maybe he understands what he has done, but he still has admitted nothing.

On your way out, the jacket catches your eye, so lovely hanging from the rack by the door, and so you pick it up by its smooth collar, the way a dancer picks up a fairy-like ballerina. You head back into the kitchen, and as you slice the leather with your good knife, you think about how much you've already lost, how much more loss awaits. And you shred the garment into ribbons.

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# Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What are TWO central themes the author explores in "The Leather Jacket"?
  - A. Forgiving others is possible through careful work and commitment.
  - B. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted many large cities in the United States.
  - C. The COVID-19 pandemic brought communities together through shared hardship.
  - D. A marriage can survive difficulties through the use of clear, thoughtful communication.
  - E. Personal tragedy can lead a person to reassess their lives and make important changes.
  - F. One person's thoughtless actions can have devastating effects on the people around them.
  
2. What is the meaning of the word "vulnerable" as it is used in paragraph 3?
  - A. easily damaged
  - B. showing emotion
  - C. difficult to defend
  - D. needing protection
  
3. How does the narrator's description of the hospital in paragraph 6 function in the context of the story as a whole?
  - A. It demonstrates that Baba lives and is being treated in a nursing home.
  - B. It establishes that the story occurs during the height of the pandemic.
  - C. It shows that the woman and the nurse were friends before Baba's illness.
  - D. It illustrates the difficulties of treating respiratory illnesses in older patients.
  
4. What is the impact of the following quotation on the story?

"How do you say, 'I'm sorry I married a selfish man?'" (Paragraph 17)

  - A. It shows that the woman believes that Suleiman intended to make Baba sick.
  - B. It shows that the woman blames the hospital for not caring for Baba properly.
  - C. It shows that the woman is in denial about Suleiman's role in making Baba sick.
  - D. It shows that the woman feels her choices are partially to blame for Baba's illness.
  
5. Which phrase best supports that the leather jacket represents the way Suleiman wants to be seen by the world?
  - A. "You actually apologized that time and bought him the jacket the following day."  
(Paragraph 2)
  - B. "He'd picked one made of the best calf leather, the kind that nobody could deny looked expensive."  
(Paragraph 2)
  - C. "When has he ever looked at you like that, you wonder one night when you're up late making baklava because he said he had a craving."  
(Paragraph 3)
  - D. "Suleiman is upstairs, avoiding you. His cough is gone — it only lasted a short time."  
(Paragraph 27)
  
6. What effect is created by the author's decision to describe the woman damaging the leather jacket paragraph 28?



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Leather Jacket

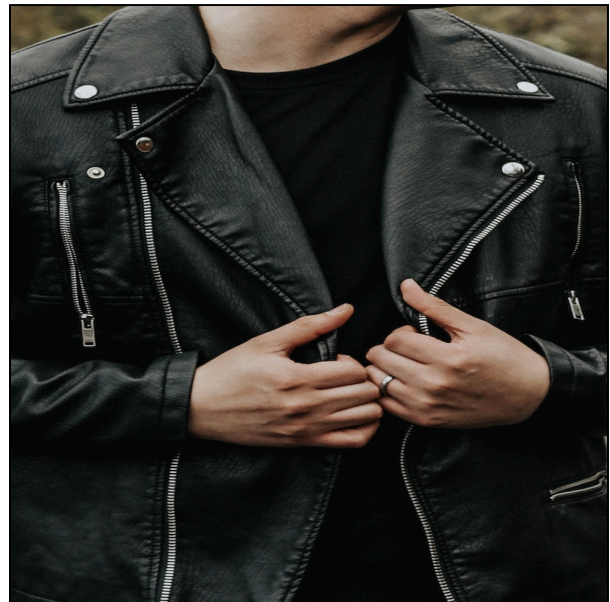
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