

## SUMMER READING STUDY GUIDE

### ***THE KITE RUNNER* by Khaled Hosseini**

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965, Khaled Hosseini moved to Tehran in 1970, where his father worked for the Afghan embassy. In July of 1973, the night Hosseini's youngest brother was born, the Afghan king, Zahir Shah, was overthrown in a bloodless coup by the king's cousin, Daoud Khan. In 1976, the Afghan Foreign Ministry relocated the Hosseini family to Paris. Plans to return to Kabul in 1980 were thwarted by the bloody communist coup and subsequent invasion of the Soviet army. Granted political asylum by the United States, they moved to San Jose, California, in September 1980. Having lost all their property in Afghanistan, they lived on welfare and food stamps while Hosseini's father worked multiple jobs to become financially stable. Hosseini graduated from high school in 1984 and enrolled at Santa Clara University where he earned a bachelor's degree in biology in 1988. The following year, he entered the University of California-San Diego's School of Medicine, where he earned a medical degree in 1993. He completed his residency at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. Though Hosseini has practiced internal medicine since 1996, he yearned to write. His memories of the peaceful pre-Soviet era Afghanistan led him to write *The Kite Runner*, as well as his personal experiences with Afghan Hazaras, a shunned ethnic minority. While living in Iran, Hosseini taught a 31-year-old Hazara man to read and write. His other novels include *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed*.

#### **ABOUT THE BOOK**

*The Kite Runner*, spanning Afghan history from the final days of the monarchy to the present, tells the story of a friendship between two boys growing up in Kabul. Though raised in the same household and sharing the same wet nurse, Amir and Hassan grow up in different worlds: Amir is the son of a prominent and wealthy man, while Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant, is a Hazara. Their intertwined lives, and their fates, reflect the eventual tragedy of the world around them. When the Soviets invade and Amir and his father flee the country for a new life in California, Amir thinks that he has escaped his past. And yet he cannot leave the memory of Hassan behind him.

#### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

##### Chapters 1-5

1. The novel begins with a flashback. What do you think is its purpose? What do you learn about the narrator?
2. Who is Hassan? Describe him physically. What is a cleft lip? What was his first word? Why is that important? What contrast is made between Amir and Hassan?
3. What does it mean to be Hazara, Shi'a Muslim, Afghanistan's minority group? Who, in the story thus far, is Hazara?
4. What does it mean to be Pashtun, Sunni Muslim, Afghanistan's majority group? Who, in the story thus far, is Pashtun?

5. Who is Sanaubar? How is she contrasted to Amir's mother?
6. Who is Ali? What do the neighborhood children call him? What does it mean?
7. Who is Baba? What are his values? How does he relate to extremely religious leaders?
8. What does Baba give Hassan for his birthday? What does his present suggest about his character? How does Amir react to this present? Why did the present turn out to be ironic?
9. What happens between Assef/Wali/Kamal and Amir/Hassan? What does Assef threaten?
10. What does Amir want to tell Assef about Hassan when Assef bullies them about being friends?

### Chapters 6-9

1. Why do boys in Afghanistan have gashes on their fingers?
2. In chapter 6, how does Amir feel about Hassan? Why does he mean "my life as a ghost"?
3. What is the proudest moment of twelve-year-old Amir's life as described in Chapter 7?
4. What happens to Hassan when he runs the blue kite for Amir?
5. Who says, "I opened my mouth and almost said something...The rest of my life might have turned out differently if I had." Why are those words important? What do you think of Amir's behavior?
6. What is inscribed on the pomegranate tree in the back yard? So, why then is it significant that Amir tries to pick a fight with Hassan in front of that tree?
7. What does Assef give Amir for his birthday? Why is this significant?
8. What does Amir put under Hassan's mattress? Why does he do it?
9. When Baba confronts Hassan about this, what does Hassan say?
10. What does Baba then do that shocks Amir? What happens to Hassan and Ali?

### Chapter 10-14

1. What "weakness" of Amir's does Baba have to apologize for in Chapter 10?
2. What does Amir observe about a double standard in Chapter 12?
3. Why did the visit with the pulmonologist become unsuccessful when Baba asked where he was from?
4. Why does Amir ask Baba to meet with General Taheri?
5. In Chapter 13, Amir thinks about the "bears" his father has wrestled during his lifetime. What "bears" has Baba wrestled?
6. What good news does Amir learn in Chapter 13?
7. What disappointment do Soraya and Amir face? Do you think Amir should have told Soraya about his betrayal of Hassan before they were married? Why or why not? What does this do to a relationship?
8. In 1989, what is going on in Afghanistan? Who are the Mujahedin? Who is in charge?
9. Chapter 14 brings us back to the opening of the book: the telephone call from Rahim Khan. What is Rahim asking Amir to do?

### Chapters 15-20

1. What does Amir say about clichés? Why does Amir use the cliché about "an elephant in the room" to describe his meeting with Rahim Khan?

2. Afghanistan has been seized by what political group in Chapter 15?
3. In Chapter 16, Rahim tells us what happened to Hassan. What has happened? Where is he?
4. Who is Farzana? Sohrab?
5. What happened in 1996 by the Taliban in Mazar-i-Sharif?
6. How does the cliché, "like father, like son" mentioned on page 226, relate to Baba and Amir?
7. What clues hint at the secret that is revealed in Chapters 17-18?
8. What realizations does Amir come to in Chapter 19?
9. In Chapter 20, Amir sees Kabul for the first time since leaving. Describe what he sees.
10. In Chapter 20, how does Zaman defend his actions?

### Chapters 21-25

1. In Chapters 21-22, the cruelty of the Taliban is clearly in evidence. Give 2-3 examples.
2. In Chapter 21, Amir finally sees Sohrab and realizes what about the Taliban official?
3. In Chapter 22, we encounter many "full-circle" endings as we reach the climax, or turning point, of the plot. List three.
4. What is your reaction to Rahim Khan's letter to Amir? Should the letter have been presented to him earlier? Do you feel that Baba was a good man?
5. Chapter 24 continues the falling action of the plot. Why do Sohrab and Amir travel to Islamabad? Amir says "There are a lot of children in Afghanistan, but little childhood." What does he mean? How can you relate this to Hassan and Sohrab?
6. What is a mullah?
7. Who is Raymond Andrews and how does he function in the novel?
8. What does Soraya agree to do?
9. What does Soraya's Uncle Sharif do to help Sohrab?
10. What promise does Amir break to Sohrab?

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