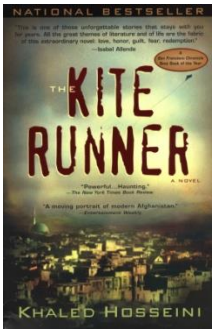
The Kite Runner

Academic Level

A Background Resource for Readers

Adopted from the UT Arlington OneBook website: http://www.uta.edu/onebook



The Kite Runner poses a number of complex, thought-provoking questions about a wide range of issues. What responsibility does the individual hold to others? One of major issues explored in Khaled Hosseini's first novel is that of power and power relations - between fathers and sons, men and women, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, Pashtun and Hazara, weak countries and powerful countries, immigrants and Americans.

Many of these issues we have also explored in our earlier readings. Our summer reading memoirs, SSR novels, and *Night* have all dealt with similar issues. So as we read, we will be looking to refine our understanding of these themes in hopes of better understanding how power affects our humanity.

Meet the Author

Khaled Hosseini was born in 1965 in Kabul, Afghanistan. He is the oldest of five children.

Hosseini's father's diplomatic career took the family to Tehran and Paris. After the Communist takeover of Afghanistan and the subsequent Soviet invasion in 1979, the U.S. granted the Hosseini family political asylum. The family settled in San Jose, CA, in 1980.

Hosseini attended Santa Clara University and graduated from UC San Diego School of Medicine. He has been in practice as an internist since 1996.

He is married and has two children. *The Kite Runner* is his first novel.

Translations

agha: Great lord, nobleman; signifies respect.

jan: A word of endearment.

Khan: Used like "mister" when placed after a person's first name.

namoos: Reputation, fame, renown, esteem, honor; dignity.

nang: Honor, reputation, estimation.

sahib: A friend; courtesy title like "sir."

Characters

Ali (AH-lee)
Hassan's father; servant to Baba and Amir.

Amir (AH-meer)
Main character and narrator of the story.

Assef (AH-sef)
Childhood tormentor of Amir and Hassan.

Baba (baw-baw)
Amir's father.

General Taheri (TAH-hair-REE)
Soraya's father.

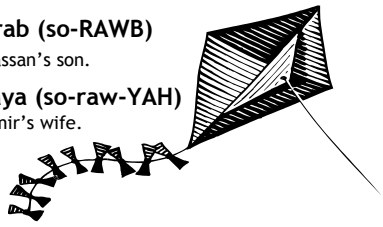
Hassan (HA-sahn)
Servant and friend to Amir.

Khala Jamila (ha-lah jah-MEE-la)
Soraya's mother.

Rahim Khan (RAW-heem HON)
Baba's friend and business partner; mentor to Amir.

Sohrab (so-RAWB)
Hassan's son.

Soraya (so-raw-YAH)
Amir's wife.



Comparison

Afghanistan		Pennsylvania
Size:	647,500 sq km	119,283 sq km
Population:	30,419,928	12,763,536
Life expectancy:	Total: 48 years	Total: 78.2 years
Infant mortality rate:	122 deaths/1,000 live births	7.5 deaths/1,000 live births
Ethnic groups:	Pashtun 42%; Tajik 27%; Hazara 9%; Uzbek 9%; Aimak 4%; Turkmen 3%; Baloch 2%	white 79.2%; Hispanic 5.9%; black 11.3%; Asian 2.9%
Literacy *(age 15+ who can read and write):*	Total population: 28.1%	Total U.S. population: 99%
Male:	43.1%	99%
Female:	12.6%	99%
Airports:	52 (paved and unpaved)	63 (paved public airports only)
Median household income:	$426 per year	$51,651 per year

Timeline of Afghan History

1919-1929 King Amanullah introduces reforms meant to modernize Afghanistan. Conservative religious groups revolt against the government.

Jan. 14, 1929 Amanullah abdicates.

Oct. 17, 1929 Nadir Shah, former general and minister of war, becomes king.

Nov. 8, 1933 Nadir Shah assassinated. His son, Zahir Shah, succeeds to the throne.

Sept. 6, 1953 King Zahir Shah asks his cousin, Muhammad Daoud Kahn, to become Prime Minister.

Mar. 10, 1963 Prime Minister Daoud resigns.

July 1973 Former Prime Minister Daoud deposes King Zahir Shah and proclaims Afghanistan a republic. Daoud is proclaimed president.

1978 Daoud executed by members of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a party founded on Marxism.

Dec. 21, 1979 The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan, partly to support the Marxists.

1980 The United States and other countries begin sending arms to Afghan resistance groups fighting the Soviets.

1981 Five Afghan resistance groups form an alliance known as mujahedin.

1981-1989 The mujahedin battle the Soviet troops stationed in Afghanistan.

May 1988 Soviet troops begin to withdraw from Afghanistan, finishing in Feb. 1989.

1989-1992 The mujahedin fight the Afghan government led by PDPA member Najibullah.

1992 Najibullah resigns. The mujahedin elect Rabbani president.

1992-1996 With the Communists gone, suppressed ethnic rivalries resurface, leading to civil war.

1994 The Taliban, made up largely of Pashtuns, begin to gather followers in southern Afghanistan.

Sept. 27, 1996 The Taliban take Kabul.

1997 Led by Ahmad Massoud, non-Pashtun ethnic groups of Afghanistan unite as the Northern Alliance to fight the Taliban.

July 1998 The Taliban attack Mazar-i-Sharif, killing about 6,000 Hazaras.

1998-2001 The Taliban fight the Northern Alliance.

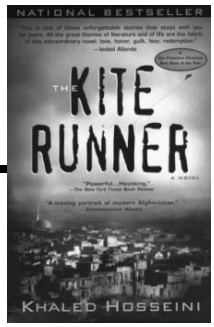
Sept. 11, 2001 Supported by the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda attack the United States.

Oct. 7, 2001 The United States begins bombing Afghanistan after the Taliban refuse to hand over Osama bin Laden.

2002-2006 International coalition forces fight remnants of the Taliban. Afghans work to create a constitution and hold free democratic elections.

Dec. 7, 2004 Hamid Karzai becomes the first democratically elected president in Afghanistan's history.

The Kite Runner



The Kite Runner poses a number of complex, thought-provoking questions about a wide range of issues. What responsibility does the individual hold to others? One of major issues explored in Khaled Hosseini's first novel is that of power and power relations - between fathers and sons, men and women, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, Pashtun and Hazara, weak countries powerful countries, immigrants and Americans.

Many of these issues we have also explored in our earlier readings. *Of Beetles and Angels*, *Buddha in the Attic*, *Night* and our SSR novels have all dealt with similar issues. So as we read, we will be looking to refine our understanding of these themes in hopes of better understanding how power affects our humanity.

READING SCHEDULE	***As You Read, Pay Attention To...***
Chapters 1-4 (pages 1-34) **DUE: Monday, December 2**	As you read, pay attention to Amir's relationship with his father. Baba says, "…there is only one sin, only one. And that is theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft" (17). Why does he say this? Do you think it is significant?
Chapters 5-7 (pages 35-79) **DUE: Thursday, December 5**	Early in the story, Baba says to Rahim, "A boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything" (22). How do the events for these chapters connect to this quote? Is Amir a coward or a product of his environment?
Chapters 8-11 (pages 80-142) **DUE: Tuesday, December 10**	Rahim tells Amir, "In the end, the world always wins. That's just the way of things" (99). What does Rahim mean? How does this quotation connect to the events of these chapters?
Chapters 12-14 (pages 143-194) **DUE: Friday, December 13**	A return to the beginning: "Come. There is a way to be good again" (2, 192). How does this quote frame the action of these chapters?
Chapters 15-20 (pages 195-258) **DUE: Wednesday, December 18**	"Yes, hope is a strange thing. Peace at last. But at what price?" (201). What price have each of the main characters "paid" by the close of chapter 20? Has that "price" been fair?
Chapters 21-23 (pages 259-310) **DUE: Friday, January 3**	The director of the orphanage, Zaman, declares, "There's nothing I can do to stop it," speaking of how the Talib "buys" children (256). This connects to a larger idea present in these chapters - can one person really make a difference, especially against such overwhelming odds?
Chapters 24-25 (pages 311-371) **DUE: Wednesday, January 8**	The story ends with Amir saying "For you, a thousand times over," a line that has been repeatedly mentioned throughout the story (371). Why is it significant that the story ends with Amir saying this words?

TEST: Friday, January 10

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE

Published: February 2008
Hazaras: Afghanistan's Outsiders
http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/02/afghanistan-hazara/phil-zabriskie-text

The Outsiders

Set apart by geography and beliefs, oppressed by the Taliban, the Hazara people could be Afghanistan's best hope.

By Phil Zabriskie

At the heart of Afghanistan is an empty space, a striking absence, where the larger of the colossal Bamian Buddhas once stood. In March 2001 the Taliban fired rockets at the statues for days on end, then planted and detonated explosives inside them. The Buddhas had looked out over Bamian for some 1,500 years. Silk Road traders and missionaries of several faiths came and went. Emissaries of empires passed through—Mongols, Safavids, Moguls, British, Soviets—often leaving bloody footprints. A country called Afghanistan took shape. Regimes rose and collapsed or were overthrown. The statues stood through it all. But the Taliban saw the Buddhas simply as non-Islamic idols, heresies carved in stone. They did not mind being thought brutish. They did not fear further isolation. Destroying the statues was a pious assertion of their brand of faith over history and culture.

It was also a projection of power over the people living under the Buddhas' gaze: the Hazaras, residents of an isolated region in Afghanistan's central highlands known as Hazarajat—their heartland, if not entirely by choice. Accounting for up to one-fifth of Afghanistan's population, Hazaras have long been branded outsiders. They are largely Shiite Muslims in an overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim country. They have a reputation for industriousness yet work the least desirable jobs. Their Asian features—narrow eyes, flat noses, broad cheeks—have set them apart in a de facto lower caste, reminded so often of their inferiority that some accept it as truth.

The ruling Taliban—mostly fundamentalist Sunni, ethnic Pashtuns—saw Hazaras as infidels, animals, other. They didn't look the way Afghans should look and didn't worship the way Muslims should worship. A Taliban saying about Afghanistan's non-Pashtun ethnic groups went: "Tajiks to Tajikistan, Uzbeks to Uzbekistan, and Hazaras to goristan," the graveyard. And in fact, when the Buddhas fell, Taliban forces were besieging Hazarajat, burning down villages to render the region uninhabitable. As autumn began, the people of Hazarajat wondered if they'd survive winter. Then came September 11, a tragedy elsewhere that appeared to deliver salvation to the Hazara people.

Six years after the Taliban fell, scars remain in the highlands of the Hazara homeland, but there is a sense of possibility unthinkable a decade ago. Today the region is one of the safest in Afghanistan, mostly free of the poppy fields that dominate other regions. A new political order reigns in Kabul, seat of President Hamid Karzai's central government. Hazaras have new access to universities, civil service jobs, and other avenues of advancement long denied them. One of the country's vice presidents is Hazara, as is parliament's leading vote getter, and a Hazara woman is the first and only female governor in the

country. The best-selling American novel The *Kite Runner*—now a feature film—depicted a fictional Hazara character, and a real Hazara won the first *Afghan Star*, an *American Idol*-like program.

As the country struggles to rebuild itself after decades of civil war, many believe that Hazarajat could be a model of what's possible not just for Hazaras but for all Afghans. But that optimism is tempered by past memories and present frustrations—over roads not built, a resurgent Taliban, and rising tides of Sunni extremism.

A project is now under way to gather thousands of stone fragments and rebuild the Buddhas. Something similar is occurring among Hazaras as they try to repair their fractured past, with one notable difference: There are pictures of the destroyed Buddhas. The Hazaras have no such blueprint, no sense of what a future free from persecution is supposed to look like.

Musa Shafaq wants to live in that future. He is 28, with shoulder-length black hair and typical Hazara features, not unlike those of the Buddhas. He stands at the gate of Kabul University in a red sweater, black jeans, and tinted prescription glasses. Classes are out for the day. In two months, he will graduate, a notable achievement for any Afghan given the country's instability. Because he is Hazara, his success signals a new era. Shafaq is poised to finish at the top of his class, which should guarantee him the job he most wants, a teaching post at Kabul University.

"The Hazaras are producing the most enthusiastic, educated, forward-looking youth, who are seizing the opportunities provided by the new situation," says Michael Semple, a red-bearded Irishman who serves as the deputy to the special representative of the European Union in Afghanistan. Shafaq helped found the Center for Dialogue, a Hazara student organization with 150 members. The group publishes its own magazine, holds events promoting "humanism and pluralism," and works with human rights organizations to monitor elections. Semple deems the group part of an emerging political consciousness among Hazara youth.

"We have a window of opportunity," Shafaq says, "but we are not sure how long it will remain open." This son of Hazarajat is the proverbial country boy who came to the big city and made good. Shafaq's father farmed in their village, Haft Gody, in Waras, a district in southern Bamian, and ran a restaurant in the district center. Children in Waras customarily marry young, stay close to home, and tend the potato fields. But Shafaq wanted something more. When he wasn't helping his father, he read voraciously—novels, history, philosophy, translations of Abraham Lincoln, John Locke, and Albert Camus.

Growing up, Shafaq heard the stories of where his people came from, why they looked different from Pashtuns and Tajiks. He and his fellow Hazaras, the story goes, are the descendants of Genghis Khan's Mongolian soldiers, who marched into central Afghanistan in the 13th century, built a garrison, and conquered the inhabitants—a varied mix of peoples not uncommon along the Silk Road. When the locals rose up and killed Genghis's son, the conqueror retaliated by leveling Bamian and wiping out most of its residents. Those who survived intermarried with the Mongolian invaders and became the Hazaras—a genetic collaboration evident in the diversity of facial features among the region's people today.

In recent times a minority of Hazaras have embraced the Genghis connection as a point of pride, but more often the outsider lineage has been used against them. For many the modern-day narrative starts in the 1890s, when King Abdur Rahman, a Pashtun, launched bloody anti-Hazara pogroms in and around Hazarajat. Fueled by chauvinism, armed with fatwas from Sunni mullahs who declared the Hazaras infidels, Rahman's forces killed many thousands and took slaves from among the survivors. Throngs of Hazaras were driven from lowland farms up into the central highlands. Later rulers

used force, law, and manipulation to keep the Hazaras confined, physically and psychologically, to those highlands.

Accounts of the Hazaras' dark history have been passed down through generations, a cultural inheritance of sorts. "It was an embarrassment for Hazara people to show their ethnicity," recalls Habiba Sarobi, Bamian's governor. Mohammed Mohaqeq, the former Hazara commander who received the most votes in the 2005 parliamentary elections, says, "We were like donkeys, good for carrying things from one place to another."

Shafaq was in tenth grade when the Taliban rose to power in 1996, promising security to a populace tired of the bitter conflict among ethnic warlords, including Hazara factions. A year earlier, the Taliban had brutally murdered Abdul Ali Mazari—a charismatic leader sometimes called the father of the Hazara people—who had helped found "the party of unity," or Hezb i Wahdat, in an effort to stop the infighting among Hazaras. After his death, the party splintered, and Taliban forces soon spread across Hazarajat.

"I was working with my father in the field when my sister ran to us and said, 'The Taliban are everywhere,'" Shafaq says. Villagers fashioned white flags from bags of fertilizer. Local leaders struck deals to appease the Taliban. Shafaq hid his books.

It was an ugly war. In Bamian Province, Wahdat fighters hoped to prevent the Taliban from taking the few parts of the country they'd yet to conquer. Schools closed. Crops lay unattended. Families fled for Iran or for the hills. The Taliban imposed a blockade on Hazarajat, prompting food shortages in a region already suffering from drought. In Bamian, the bazaar was torched and scores of families sought sanctuary in the caves near the Buddhas.

In early 2001, in the coldest days of a brutal Hazarajat winter, the horror came to the district of Yakawlang. On January 8, the Taliban rounded up young Hazara men in Nayak, the district center. "People were thinking they would be taken to court," recalls Sayed Jawhar Amal, a teacher in the nearby village of Kata Khona. "But at 8 a.m. they were killed. All of them." The men were lined up and shot in public view. When elders from Kata Khona inquired about young men from their community, they were also killed. In all, Human Rights Watch concluded, more than 170 were executed in four days. "Because we were Shia. That was the only reason," says Mohsin Moisafid, 55, of Kata Khona, who lost two brothers that day.

Local leaders got permission to bury the bodies. The frozen corpses had to be separated with boiling water. Two weeks later, the fighting started anew. According to Human Rights Watch, Taliban forces burned down more than 4,000 homes, shops, and public buildings. They destroyed entire towns in western Bamian Province. Villagers fled into the mountains, then looked down and watched their homes burn.

Many took sanctuary in Waras, where Shafaq's family—mother, father, and seven siblings—were struggling to find food. Shafaq stopped studying and started teaching—Hazarajat schools today are full of teachers who didn't finish grade school. But his dreams were fading. "I was not very hopeful because I was thinking the Taliban will stay for another 10 or 20 years," he says.

The Taliban's onslaught was at its peak when planes crashed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It was a deus ex machina, says Michael Semple, who documented, at great personal risk, the 2001 Yakawlang massacre. After U.S. forces drove the Taliban from power, expectations rose. The Hazaras, in particular, thought deliverance was at hand. "I've operated in the days when Hazaras felt they were virtually faced with an apartheid system," Semple says. "Now it's a totally different kettle of fish."

But it is hard for Hazaras like Shafaq to trust this moment. "I would like to see a place where the dreams of young people are attainable," he says, "where there is a church and a Hindu temple, where other religions can exist. That is the aim of pluralism." He dreams of the teaching job at Kabul University and of marrying a woman back home. She is the daughter of family friends, a Sayed Shiite who traces her lineage to the prophet Muhammad. Sayed families do not customarily let their daughters marry Hazara men. But in this new era, maybe it is possible.

...

Musa Shafaq is back in the Hazara heartland. He did not get the job at Kabul University he wanted. "If I am going to live in Afghanistan, it should be in Kabul," he says. His stellar academic record should have made that possible. "He was one of the brightest students. He should have been recruited," says Issa Rezai, an adviser at the Ministry of Higher Education. But prejudice against Hazaras remains high at the university. Fundamentalist Pashtun professors still predominate, including some hard-core fundamentalists who led factions accused of atrocities against Hazara civilians. Sayed Askar Mousavi, author of *The Hazaras of Afghanistan*, says such discrimination underscores how little has fundamentally changed. In Bamian, he says, "there are two changes. There were two Buddhas, and now there are none."

Shafaq has had other bad news as well: He will not be able to marry his girlfriend back in Waras. "I love her and she loved me," Shafaq says, but "when I sent my mother to ask for her hand from her father, he refused. Because I am a Hazara."

And so, Shafaq is alone, back in Hazarajat, teaching at Bamian University, where all the other teachers are also Hazaras. Like their students, they are earnest, motivated, intelligent—and a bit fearful. Since reopening in 2004, the university has grown. Beyond the entrance is a dusty courtyard where groups of smartly dressed male and female students, books in hand, make their way to class. The sign on the front of the school is written in three languages—in English and in Dari, the most common language in Afghanistan, and then in Pashtu, the language of the Pashtuns, in the largest script.

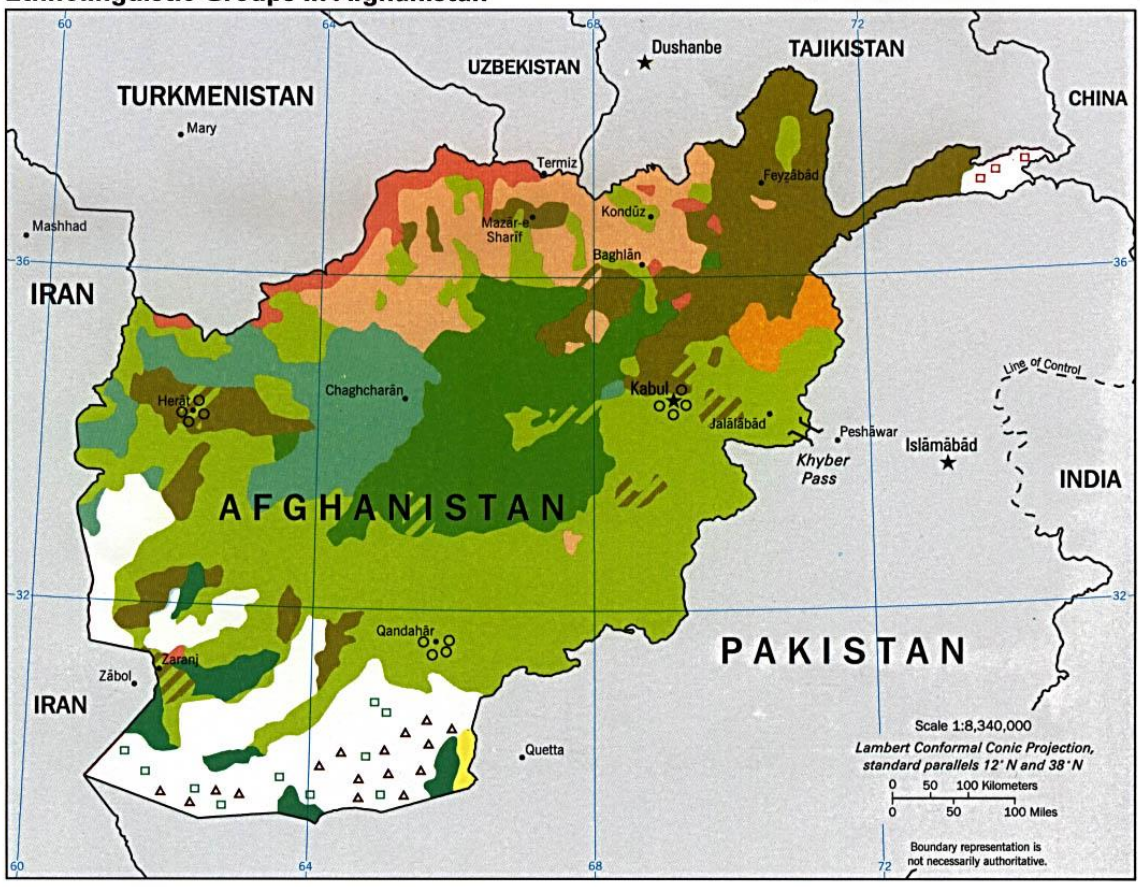
Shafaq teaches the history of Afghanistan during the enlightenment and the industrial revolution, expounding on John Locke and Abraham Lincoln, on liberty and democracy. His salary is 2,000 afghanis a month, about $40.

After so much hope, so many promises, the Hazaras are feeling ignored by the new government—led as it is by a Pashtun president. Across Hazarajat, the question echoes: Why has there not been more development and more interest in an area that is safe, where the population supports the government, where corruption is not widespread, where women play a role in public life, where poppies are not proliferating? It's not uncommon to hear farmers muse about growing poppies to sell on the heroin market, maybe even causing a little violence, because they think that might draw the government's attention.

Construction is not easy in this terrain, granted, but Hazarajat could be a model of what's possible when a region buys into the nation-building process. Yet so much time has passed. Already, the resurgence of the Tali-ban, who recently have targeted Hazara leaders in several districts abutting their southern strongholds, is stirring difficult memories. "Anytime we hear news of the Taliban on the radio, our bones turn to water," says Mohsin Moisafid in Kata Khona.

Perhaps a new generation of Afghan leaders will emerge to finally lead people beyond the mindset of war and warlords and jihad. Much depends on whether the Taliban will continue to grow, whether the international community will lose interest, whether the tensions between the U.S. and Iran, fellow Shiites, will adversely affect the Hazaras. Whatever happens, much more than the fate of the Hazara people is at stake. As Dan Terry, an American aid worker who has lived in Afghanistan for 30 years, puts it: What happens to the Hazaras is "not just the story of this people. It's the story of the whole country. It's everybody's story."

Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan



Iranian
- Baloch
- Aimak
- Hazara
- Pashtun *Durrani, Ghilzai*
- Qizilbash
- Tajik

Turkic
- Kirghiz
- Turkmen
- Uzbek

Other
- Brahui
- Nuristani

Sparsely populated or uninhabited

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The Kite Runner

READING QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 1-4: Respond in complete sentences using specific details from the reading

Father/Son Relationship

Chapter 3 really focuses on how Amir views his father. Amir says, "The problem, of course, was that Baba saw the world in black and white. And he got to decide what was black and what was white. You can't love a person who lives that way without fearing him too. Maybe even hating him a little" (15). **What does this reveal about Baba? What does this reveal about Amir? How would you describe Amir's relationship with his father?**

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Sin

Baba says, "...there is only one sin, only one. And that is theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft" (17). **Why does he say this? Explain why is this quote is significant?**

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Quotes

One of my favorite quotes comes from chapter three, "Children aren't coloring books. You don't get to fill them with your favorite colors" (21). Sometimes it is difficult for parents to remember that their children are not simply extensions of them. Each child is his own person. We must respect the power of the individual. **What is quote that stuck out for you? Why?**

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Standing Up

Baba declares, "A boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything" (22). **Do you agree? Do the events of our early life dictate who we will become as adults?**

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READING QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 5-7: Respond in complete sentences using specific details from the reading

The Nature of Power

So much of these chapters deal with power differences - who has power and who doesn't. We talked about the scene when Amir asks Hassan if he would eat dirt for him (54). We talked about Hassan taking power from Assef ("Someone had challenged their god. Humiliated him" (42).) We talked of the Pashtuns power over Hazaras. **So, what is it that we learn about power? What does power do to people? Why is power so seductive?**

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Hassan Stands Up

Think about how Hassan protects Amir from Assef. Note the details and description of the confrontation.

- To what is the rock compared in size?
- At which eye does Hassan aim?
- What nickname does he suggest?

Hassan symbolically strips Assaf of his power when he stands up for Amir and "beats" Assef in front of Assef's friends. **In a what ways does Hassan make Assef look like less of a man?**

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Happy Birthday, Amir

What birthday present does Baba give to Hassan? What does this present suggest about his character? How does Amir react to this present? **How does this present turn out to be ironic?**

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Assef's Power

In our class discussion we talked about power, especially as it related to Assef and Amir. We thought that perhaps Assef might have raped Hassan as a way to establish his dominance, to regain power. Afterall, Hassan had symbolically stripped Assaf of his power. So Assaf did what he did to regain power, to take away Hassan's manhood. **What might this tell us about the nature of power? What themes do we learn from this idea? Do we see it repeated elsewhere?**

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READING QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 8-11: Respond in complete sentences using specific details from the reading.

Favorite Quote

One of my favorite quotes from this section is from Baba. He says, "War doesn't negate decency. It *demands* it, even more than in times of peace." What are your favorite quotes from this section?

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Guilt

“I understood the nature of my new curse: I was going to get away with it. ... I was that monster" (86). Amir is racked with guilt and yet he does not speak up. He does not apologize to Hassan. Why?

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The World Wins

In chapter 8, Rahim states, "In the end, the world always wins. That's just the way of things" (99). What does he mean? Do you agree?

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Punishment

In chapter 8, Amir throws pomegranates at Hassan (remember the allusion to pomegranates?). He states, "I wish he'd give me the punishment I craved" (92). What is it that Amir wants from Hassan? Why does Hassan not hit Amir?

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READING QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 12-14: Respond in complete sentences using specific details from the reading.

Gossips

Why were people gossiping about Soraya?

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Somebody's getting married!

Why did Amir and Soraya decide to shorten their engagement period? Describe their wedding.

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First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes…

How does Amir feel about having children? What problems are Amir and Soraya having in trying to have a child?

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A way to be good

Reader see a return to the beginning in this set of chapters: "Come. There is a way to be good again" (192). How does this quote frame the action of these chapters?

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READING QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 15-20: Respond in complete sentences using specific details from the reading.

Peace?

When Rahim Kahn talks about the Taliban kicking the Soviets out of Afghanistan, he states, "Yes, hope is a strange thing. Peace at last. But at what price?" (201). What does Rahim Kahn mean by this?

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Hassan

Summarize the letter that Hassan has written to Amir. What happened to Hassan after he wrote that letter? Why?

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Where is Sohrab?

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More secrets

Why does Rahim Kahn tell us about Ali's first wife of three years? Why is this significant? What does this tell us about Hassan? About Baba?

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What had Baba stolen according to Amir?

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How can Amir be good again?

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Finding Sohrab

In chapter 20, Amir and Farid learn that Sohrab may be in an orphanage, but they learn it may be too late for Sohrab. Where is Sohrab? Why is Farid so angry at the director of the orphanage?

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Summarize Chapters 21 – 23:

Summarize Chapters 24-25:

THEMES OF YOUR READING:

Kite Runner Motifs:

MOTIF	EXAMPLES	EXPLANATIONS
wounds/scars	• "Sometimes up in those trees, I talked Hassan into firing walnuts with his slingshot at the neighbor's one-eyed German shepherd" (4). Amir goads Hassan into tormenting a disfigured animal, something that is less than him, something that cannot fight back. In a sense, this tormenting of something that has a lesser status is just like Amir's taunts of Hassan. • "But polio had left Ali with a twisted, atrophied right leg that was a sallow skin over bone with little in between except a paper-thin layer of muscle" (8). Ali's status as less than (Hazara) is also represented through his physical disfigurement. He is portrayed as less than physically; however, his character is of strong morals, perhaps representing a character that is physically weak but morally strong – a contrast for Amir. • Hassan's mom, Sanaubar, abandons Hassan because of the cleft lip (10). Like Ali, this physical wound seems to show a contrast between what can be seen versus the character's moral and ethical traits • Baba has scars on his back because of fighting the bear (12). The scars show that he is willing to go out of his way to do right, to defend good. What follows this scene is a description of Baba building an orphanage. So again we see the wound as a physical blemish on a character with strong morals and convictions. Mention of the bear again on 174. • "…the face of Afghanistan is that of a boy with a thin-boned frame, a shaved head, and low-set ears, a boy with a Chinese doll face perpetually lit by a harelipped smile" (25). This quote is not only part of the larger motif, it is also **symbolic**. Afghanistan is a child, young, naïve, but a disfigured child. This disfigured child, represented by Hassan, is physically scarred (like the landscape of Afghanistan has been by war) but morally and strong. The Afghan people are strong-willed, strong in their beliefs. • Hassan's lip is surgically corrected, but nearly the same time when he is made "perfect" on the outside, he experience such trauma that his internal self is changed during "the winter that Hassan stopped smiling" (47).	• Wounds/scars are used to highlight the differences between a character's physical appearance and his or her internal world. Those characters that are disfigured physically (Hassan, Ali, Baba) seem to be internally (morally) strong. Those characters that are physically strong (Amir, Assef) are flawed internally.
mirrors	• "When we were children, Hassan and I used to clim the poplar trees in the driveway of my father's house and annoy our neighbors by reflecting sunlight into their homes with a shard of mirror" (3). Using the mirror as a prank, a weapon. The glass reflects on others but not on himself. • "[Ali] would take the mirror and tell us what his mother had told him, that the devil shone mirrors too, shone them to distract Muslims during prayer. 'And he laughs while he does it,' he always added, scowling at his son" (4). The boys are being devilish here. They are distracting other Muslims who might be trying to pray in their homes and they are being noisy and giggly. A few sentences later, Amir tells us, "[Hassan] never told on me. Never told that the mirror , like shooting walnuts at the neighbor's dog, was always my idea" (4). Amir is the devil, not Hassan. This is perhaps foreshadowing what is to come. • Mirror in the wedding ceremony (page 71).	• Mirrors as a weapon to reflect the faults of others, but not turned on oneself. This is ironic as we usually use mirrors to see reflections of ourselves.

MOTIF	EXAMPLES	EXPLANATIONS
pomegranate tree	• "There was a pomegranate tree near the entrance to the cemetery. One summer day, I used one of Ali's kitchen knives to carve our names on it: 'Amir and Hassan, the sultan of Kabul'" (27). • "'Hit me back!' I spat. 'Hit me back, goddamn you!'" (92). Amir asks Hassan to throw the pomegranates at him.	Pomegranate as symbol of resurrection and redemption: • In Christianity, the pomegranate can be seen as a symbol of resurrection and life everlasting in Christian art, the pomegranate is often found in devotional statues and paintings of the Virgin and Child. • The pomegranate also figures into Islamic stories. "According to the Quran, the gardens of paradise include pomegranates. It is important, tradition says, to eat every seed of a pomegranate because one can't be sure which aril came from paradise." And pomegranates protect the eater from envy and hatred.
one-eyed		
ghosts		

MOTIF	EXAMPLES	EXPLANATIONS
lamb		
dreams		
brass		

MOTIF	EXAMPLES	EXPLANATIONS

Coping With Guilt

By Chuck Gallozzi

For more articles and contact information, visit http://www.personal-development.com/chuck

GUILT UPON THE CONSCIENCE IS LIKE RUST UPON IRON

Seventeenth-century British Bishop, Robert South, wrote: "Guilt upon the conscience, like rust upon iron, both defiles and consumes it, gnawing and creeping into it, as that does which at last eats out the very heart and substance of the metal." More recently, American Psychotherapist Dr. Albert Ellis wrote, "The more sinful and guilty a person tends to feel, the less chance there is that he will be a happy, healthy, or law-abiding citizen." The message, then, is guilt can harm us. What is the proper way to handle guilt and how does it harm us? For the answers to these and other questions, read on.

Let's begin by defining "guilt" as it is used in this article. It's not neurotic or unjustified guilt that I'm writing about, but the discomfort we experience when we go against our own conscience. Here are some examples: a student goes partying with friends when he should be studying for an important exam, a husband is not spending enough time with his wife because he's watching too much sports on TV, an employee spends an hour a day doing personal business during office hours. In all of these cases, the subjects were doing something they knew they should not have been doing or not doing something they should have been doing, so they felt guilty.

It is not feeling guilty that is bad, but unresolved guilt that is harmful. That is, guilt is good. It is a red warning light, alerting us that we are straying from the path and need to correct our course. We are not responsible for what we are, but for what we can become. So, whenever we choose short-term pleasure over long-term gain, we feel guilty. We are bound to slip now and then. But if we listen to the voice of our conscience and change our behavior, our feeling of guilt will evaporate. The trouble occurs when we refuse to change, even though we know better.

What happens when our guilt is unresolved, when we refuse to listen to the voice of reason?

1. Well, if we continue to behave destructively, guilt will gnaw away at our peace of mind. After all, we realize that we'll have to pay the price for our irresponsible behavior in the future. Guilt also saps our energy, which is badly needed for our personal development.

2. When we are plagued by guilt, we mistrust or fear others, for as Shakespeare wrote, "Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind; the thief doth fear each bush an officer."

3. The guilty suffer three times: once when they act irresponsibly, again when they see others behave responsibly, and third when they have to pay the consequences.

4. When unresolved, guilt can lead to a poverty complex. That is, we may subconsciously thwart our own success because we feel undeserving. Let's say a ruthless corporate executive climbs to the top by destroying those beneath him. Even though he becomes successful, his subconscious mind may direct him toward gambling, for example, to make him lose his "undeserved wealth."

5. When we succeed despite our unresolved guilt, it may also lead to depression or fear of being exposed. Others may try to drown out the voice of their conscience with drugs, sex, or alcohol.

Thus, unresolved guilt can crush our enjoyment of life, cause fear and pain, and prevent us from reaching our potential.

The cure

What is the cure for the malady of irresponsibility? It is "Response-Ability." That is, the ability to respond suitably. It is the ability to make the right choices. We can heal ourselves of irresponsibility by following the AAA steps (Admit, Analyze, Atonement). First we need to ADMIT or acknowledge that we made a poor choice. We have to confess to ourselves that what we did was wrong.

Next, we must ANALYZE our behavior. What is the reason for our poor choice? What action should we have taken in its place? What are the consequences of inappropriate behavior? How can we avoid making the same mistake? What action will we now take to stay on track?

When we choose to act properly, our action coincides with what is best for us. Another word for this is integrity. Integrity is what we have when we behave in accordance to our beliefs. The word is related to integration, and it refers to the integration of our heart, spirit, goals, and actions. When everything comes into alignment, when everything is at one, we reach the third step, at-one-ment (ATONEMENT).

When we follow these three steps, our past feeling of guilt will be replaced by responsibility, our past pain will be replaced by a wish to improve, and our past regrets will be replaced by a plan to do better. Let's scrape off the rust and let our natural goodness shine through!

The Kite Runner

AMIR'S UNRESOLVED GUILT

Below are quotations from Gallozzi's article "Coping with Guilt." Below each quotation, find an example from *Kite Runner* that shows how Amir is suffering from this symptom of unresolved guilt after the rape of Hassan. Give a brief description of Amir's behavior and a brief explanation of it. List the page numbers.

What happens when our guilt is unresolved?

1. "If we continue to behave destructively, guilt will gnaw away at our peace of mind. After all, we realize that we'll have to pay the price for our irresponsible behavior in the future. Guilt also saps our energy, which is badly needed for our personal development."

2. "When we are plagued by guilt, we mistrust or fear others, for as Shakespeare wrote, 'Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind; the thief doth fear each bush an officer.'"

3. "The guilty suffer three times: once when they act irresponsibly, again when they see others behave responsibly, and third when they have to pay the consequences."

4. “When unresolved, guilt can lead to a poverty complex. That is, we may subconsciously thwart our own success because we feel undeserving.”

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5. “When we succeed despite our unresolved guilt, it may also lead to depression or fear of being exposed. Guilt can crush our enjoyment of life, cause fear and pain, and prevent us from reaching our potential.”

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Blog Assignment

THE POWER OF GUILT

Having read Chuck Gallozzi's article "Coping with Guilt" and explained how Amir fits with some of the Gallozzi's forms of guilty behavior, it is time to start thinking about how this idea of guilt fits into a theme of *The Kite Runner*.

What is it that guilt does to human beings?

Use some of the examples and passages that you explained on your "Amir's Unresolved Guilt" sheet as support for a theme statement that you construct about guilt. You will write a **one paragraph** response that includes a theme statement and three supporting examples.Post your response as a blog post on the Ning. **Your response is DUE before class begins on _____.**

GRADING:

- The student develops a specific, well written theme statement (the thesis of the blog) that connects *The Kite Runner* to how human beings deal with guilt. (5 points)
- The student develops his or her theme by effectively synthesizing at least three pieces of textual evidence found in our reading of *The Kite Runner*. (10 points)
- The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and convincing. To be convincing, the evidence is specific, referencing specific page numbers and/or quotations. (10 points)
- The prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing. (5 points)
- The paragraph is formatted according to MLA standards, uses correct parenthetical citations. Use page 9 of your MLA Made Simple Guide. (5 points)

The Kite Runner

Extra Credit

There is so much history and depth to the cultures and the peoples who call Central Asia and the Middle East home that it is difficult to cover each area in depth during our few short weeks of study. So it is time to do some independent exploring! Below you will find a movie and book recommendation list. Select **one** book or movie set in either Central Asia or the Middle East, either from this list or one you discover on your own, have both Ms. Ward and a parent/ guardian sign the attached permission form, and start reading (or watching). Once you've finished, write a 2-3 page report on your selected piece. Your written report should **NOT** be a book report. Instead it is a ***narrative reflection*** that incorporates a **THEME** from the movie or text and connects it to what we have been studying in your English and World Cultures course. Finish this assignment by _____, and you can earn up to 10 extra credit points!

MOVIES:

- ***Afghan Star*** (2009, Documentary, NR)
  Havana Marking's eye-opening documentary follows four finalists on "Afghan Star," an "American Idol"-style show that's become wildly popular – yet still extremely controversial – since the Taliban's ban on music was lifted. (Description from Netflix)
- ***The Beauty Academy of Kabul*** (2006, Documentary, NR)
  Proving that vanity and the pursuit of beauty are universal, this 2004 documentary tracks a group of American women (including some Afghan émigrés from the 1980s) who open a beauty school in Afghanistan. Though there are culture clashes aplenty, moments of true kinship also transpire over curling rods and comb-outs as these women from divergent world's labor in the name physical beauty in director Liz Mermin's refreshing film. (Description from Netflix)
- ***Charlie Wilson's War*** (2007, Film, Rated R)
  Texas congressman Charlie Wilson sets a series of earth-shaking events in motion when he conspires with a CIA operative (Philip Seymour Hoffman, in an Oscar-nominated role) to aid Afghan mujahideen rebels in their fight against the Soviet Red Army. (Description from Netflix)
- ***Frontline: Behind Taliban Lines*** (2010, Documentary, NR)
  In this eye-opening "Frontline" special report, an Afghan video journalist trains his lens on a little-seen region of Afghanistan, where a Taliban "shadow" government is slowly gaining control while U.S. forces focus their efforts elsewhere. The penetrating program offers sobering insights on the ever-changing war on terrorism, including who's undermining U.S. efforts in the country and, more importantly, why. (Description from Netflix)
- ***Motherland Afghanistan*** (2007, Documentary, NR)
  Afghani-American filmmaker Sedika Mojadidi shadows her father, a women's health specialist working to rebuild hospitals in war-torn Afghanistan, in this thought-provoking documentary filmed in the wake of the United States' invasion of the region. In a country where one in seven women dies during childbirth, many women are willing to travel for days to receive adequate care from a trained professional. (Description from Netflix)
- ***Shadow of Afghanistan*** (2006, Documentary, NR)
  Seen through the eyes of an Afghan warrior, this documentary chronicles Afghanistan's violent history, including the rise of the Taliban and subsequent U.S. invasion in 2001, with a focus on the struggles of ordinary citizens to survive.
- ***Zero Dark Thirty*** (2011, Film, Rated R)
  For a decade, an elite team of intelligence and military operatives, working in secret across the globe, devoted themselves to a single goal: to find and eliminate Osama bin Laden. ZERO DARK THIRTY reunites the Oscar-winning team of director-producer Kathryn Bigelow and writer-producer Mark Boal (2009, Best Picture, THE HURT LOCKER) for the story of history's greatest manhunt for the world's most dangerous man. (Description from Netflix)

BOOKS:

Palestine and Israel

- *Dawn* by Elie Wiesel
  Elisha is a young Jewish man, a Holocaust survivor, and an Israeli freedom fighter in British-controlled Palestine; John Dawson is the captured English officer he will murder at dawn in retribution for the British execution of a fellow freedom fighter. The night-long wait for morning and death provides *Dawn*, Elie Wiesel's ever more timely novel, with its harrowingly taut, hour-by-hour narrative. Elisha wrestles with guilt, ghosts, and ultimately God as he waits for the appointed hour and his act of assassination. (Review from Amazon.com)
- *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East* by Sandy Tolan
  Tolan offers listeners an easy-to-follow journey through a maddeningly stubborn conflict that has infused global politics since the 1940s. Tolan personalizes the Arab-Israeli conflict by tracing the intertwined lives of a Palestinian refugee named Bashir Al-Khairi and a Jewish settler named Dalia Eshkenazi Landau. The pair is connected through a stone home in Ramla, now part of Israel. Built in the 1930s by Bashir's father, the Al-Khairi family was forced to flee during the violent formation of Israel in 1948. The Eshkenazis, Holocaust survivors from Bulgaria, became the new owners. After 1967's Six Day War, Bashir showed up and Dalia invited him in and began an intense dialogue that's lasted four decades. (Review from Amazon.com)

- *19 Varieties of Gazelles: Poems of the Middle East* by Naomi Shihab Nye
  As she grieved over the "huge shadow [that] had been cast across the lives of so many innocent people and an ancient culture's pride" after September 11, 2001, poet and author Naomi Shihab Nye's natural response was to write, to grasp "onto details to stay afloat." Accordingly, Nye has gathered over four dozen of her own poems about the Middle East and about being an Arab American living in the United States. She writes of Palestinians, living and dead, of war, and of peace. Readers of all ages will be profoundly moved by the vitality and hope in these beautiful lines from Nye's heart. (Review from Amazon.com)

Iran and Iraq

- ***Women of De Koh: Lives in an Iranian Village*** by Erika Friedl
  This fascinating collection lifts their concealing veils to bring us face to face with the women of a contemporary Iranian mountain village. Their situations are primitive and oppressive by Western standards, but the author, an anthropologist who has lived a number of years in Iran, lets the women speak through her deft pen, capturing their voices in tales of domestic power politics, childbearing, barrenness, marriage, old age. Like the relationships in this village of gossipy, intermarried and extended families, the 12 stories are interconnected, revealing a pungent, incisive view of women's society as a whole, and multifaceted portraits of some memorable individuals. (Review from Amazon.com)
- ***Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir of Books*** by Azar Nafisi
  In 1995, after resigning from her job as a professor at a university in Tehran due to repressive policies, Azar Nafisi invited seven of her best female students to attend a weekly study of great Western literature in her home. Since the books they read were officially banned by the government, the women were forced to meet in secret, often sharing photocopied pages of the illegal novels. For two years they met to talk, share, and "shed their mandatory veils and robes and burst into color."
- **Sunrise Over Fallujah** by Walter Dean Myers
  Operation Iraqi Freedom, that's the code name. But Robin Perry, an ambivalent recruit from Harlem, and all his fellow soldiers in the Civil Affairs Battalion have a simpler name for it: WAR. Perry and the rest of his unit soon find their definition of "winning" the war in Iraq ever more elusive and their good intentions being replaced by terms like "survival" and "despair." (Review from Scholastic)
- ***Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog From Iraq*** by Riverbend
  Iraqi women's voices have been virtually silent since the fall of Baghdad. Yet four months after Saddam's statue toppled in April 2003, the pseudonymous Riverbend, a Baghdad native then 24 years old, began blogging about life in the city in dryly idiomatic English and garnered an instant following. This year's worth of Riverbend's commentary--passionate, frustrated, sarcastic and sometimes hopeful--runs to September 2004. Before the war, Riverbend was a computer programmer, living with her parents and brother in relative affluence; as she chronicles the privations her family experiences under occupation, there is a good deal of "complaining and ranting" about erratic electricity, intermittent water supplies, near daily explosions, gas shortages and travel restrictions. (Review from Amazon.com)

Afghanistan

- *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini
  It's difficult to imagine a harder first act to follow than *The Kite Runner*: a debut novel by an unknown writer about a country many readers knew little about that has gone on to have over four million copies in print worldwide. But when preview copies of Khaled Hosseini's second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, started circulating at Amazon.com, readers reacted with a unanimous enthusiasm that few of us could remember seeing before. As special as *The Kite Runner* was, those readers said, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is more so, bringing Hosseini's compassionate storytelling and his sense of personal and national tragedy to a tale of two women that is weighted equally with despair and grave hope.
- *Under the Persimmon Tree* by Suzanne Fisher Staples
  Under the Persimmon Tree alternates between two narrators: Najmah, a young Afghan girl whose father and brother are unwillingly taken away by the Taliban to fight, and whose mother and newborn brother are blown up in an air raid. She makes her way to Pakistan, where she meets Nusrat, an American woman married to an Afghan doctor who is missing. While the book is fiction, Staples says most if not all of the incidents are based on stories Afghans told her, including the story of a young girl who witnessed the death of her mother and brother.
- *Other Side of the Sky* by Farah Ahmedi
  "Very compelling. . . . Here you have a girl, a child, who suffered her own disability, [and] the loss of her family and her homeland. She's taking care of her aging mother and adapting to this new culture, and she's a bright, shining light in the world. . . . Very moving."-- Mary Karr, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Liar's Club*
- *West of Kabul, East of New York* by Tamim Ansary
  Ansary, who was raised in pre-Russian-client Afghanistan, the son of an exemplar of that nation's civil elite and of an American his father met while studying abroad, moved to the United States in time to live out college and urban cool in the Sixties and Seventies. But this Afghan American, writing in response to one awful day and in fact extending to book-length some of the notions he posited in a widely read e-mail on September 12, 2001, tells truths about dislocation, heritage, home, family, and religion that both affirm life and profoundly sadden. Ansary's account of how his brother chose to stay "east of New York," of his travels through Muslim communities at the time of the Iranian hostage crisis, and of his personal collision with conspiracy theory are particularly unsettling and worth any reader's time. (Review from Amazon.com)
- ***The Photographer: Into War-torn Afghanistan with Doctors Without Borders*** by Emmanuel Guibert
  In 1986, Afghanistan was torn apart by a war with the Soviet Union. This graphic novel/photo-journal is a record of one reporter's arduous and dangerous journey through Afghanistan accompanying the Doctors Without Borders. Didier Lefèvre's photography, paired with the art of Emmanuel Guibert, tells the powerful story of a mission undertaken by men and women dedicated to mending the wounds of war. (Review from Amazon.com)

INDEPENDENT PROJECT APPROVAL FORM

Name:_____

Block:_____ Date:_____

Title of Book/Movie:_____

Author of Book/Movie:_____

How will you obtain a copy of this book/movie?_____

Short description of book/movie (if not on Ms. Ward's recommended list):_____

_____

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_____

Two reasons for selecting this book/movie:

1)_____

_____

2)_____

_____

By signing this form, both the student and parent/guardian understand that the student is committing to obtain the above book or movie on his or her own. It is important that parents and guardians review the independent book or movie selected by the student, especially if it was not selected from Ms. Ward's recommended list, to ensure it is appropriate for class. This extra credit project is due _____.

_____ _____

Student's Signature Date

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature Date