

# **THE KITE RUNNER- KHALED HOSSEINI**

## **FIRST PUBLISHED 2003 - 324 PAGES**

### The Author

Khaled Hosseini (1965) is an Afghan-born American author and physician. All of his three published novels include scenes set in Afghanistan. His debut novel, *The Kite Runner*, is almost entirely set in the war-affected country. Hosseini himself was born in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, like the protagonist of *The Kite Runner*, Amir. The story of Amir has a lot of similarities with Hosseini's own life, most notably moving to the United States and later going back to visit his hometown Kabul, while feeling like a tourist.

### Genre and Literary History

The book was written as a psychological roman. Although the story is very realistic and credible it is fiction. The literary period in which the book was written is called the postmodernism (1965–currently). In this period authors often use fragmentation in their novels to excite their readers and let them discover piece by piece all the secrets that the story holds. Hosseini does exactly that in *The Kite Runner*. Frequently he describes a situation but not directly tells the reader what precisely happened, to do exactly that in a later chapter. This leads to many moments of excitement and amazement.

### Summary

Amir, son of a rich merchant, lives in 1970s Kabul. Together with his loyal friend and servant Hassan he tries to win the annual kite-fighting tournament, with the single goal to impress his exigent father. However, instead of releasing the pressure between Amir and his father, an event that happens that day only increases the tension between them and abruptly ends the friendship between Amir and Hassan. Amir, living the rest of his life in guilt, flees to the United States with his father to avoid the war caused by the invasion of the Russians. There, after a series of events, he realises he has to go back to Afghanistan and get redemption for his actions in the past. With the help of old and new friends he finds Afghanistan drastically changed and encounters an old enemy from Kabul. Will he find the redemption he desperately searched for all those years?

## Deeper knowledge

Most of the story is located in Afghanistan, most notably in the capital Kabul, although a big part of it is set in the United States. The storyline starts around 1974 in Kabul and ends in 2002 in San Francisco. Hosseini himself was born in Kabul and fled to the United States.

The protagonist of *The Kite Runner* is Amir, son of a rich merchant. He is a shy boy who has different interests than most Afghan boys, which disappoints his father Baba. Baba is a big, respected man. He is very successful but always thinks about the less wealthy people. When Baba dies it has a big influence on Amir. Hassan is the son of Baba's servant Ali. Hassan and Amir play together a lot in their youth. After Hassan and Ali leave the house, the guilt keeps bothering Amir and he realises he has to redeem himself. He does so by defeating his life-long enemy Assef and taking Hassan's son Sohrab with him to the United States.

The book is written through the eyes of Amir. The book starts with a passage from 2001 where Amir receives a call from an old friend of Baba. From the next chapter Amir tells us the story of his life and explains the events that happened in chapter 1.

The main themes of *The Kite Runner* are guilt, friendship and redemption. Amir feels guilty for the rest of his life after he failed to rescue Hassan. Many years later he tries to find redemption by going back to Afghanistan. There he realises his friendship with Hassan had never ended.

There are many motives in *The Kite Runner*. A good example is the catapult. Hassan saved Amir once by threatening Assef to shoot his eyeball out, and many years later, Hassan's son Sohrab does exactly that to protect Amir. Another example is the kite running. Hassan used to run the kites for Amir, at the end of the book Amir runs the kites for Sohrab.

The book is written as if it was someone telling a story about the past to his children. Amir tells us the reason why Rahim Khan called him in the summer of 2001. He tells the story of his life. After he finishes that, he mentions the phone-call again. He then proceeds to tell the story of how he went back to Afghanistan and how he managed to return to the United States. Hosseini's use of language is engaging, using lots of metaphors. The sentences are medium-length and the used vocabulary is of a high level but still easily readable.

## Personal Opinion

I enjoyed reading *The Kite Runner* because of the many plot-twists and the complexity of the story. Amir's story is very credible and highly engaging, making it hard to put the book down at moments. Before reading this book I didn't have a clear vision of Afghanistan. All I knew was that there was a war with the Taliban. Hosseini describes the life of Afghani boys so well that it feels like I've been there myself. I would rate this book 5/5 since I don't think there is anything Hosseini could've done better. I would definitely recommend it to others because it really changed my vision on countries such as Afghanistan.