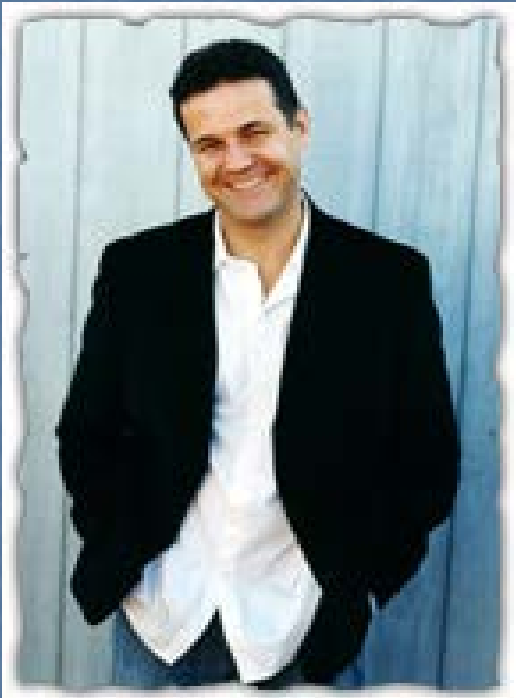


The Kite Runner
by Khaled Hosseini

Introduction

About the Author



Source: Khaled Hosseini Website
<http://www.khaledhosseini.com/>,
accessed 17 February 2008.

- Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1965.
- His mother was a teacher and his father a diplomat.
- His family left Afghanistan for a posting in Paris in 1976, well before the Communist coup and the Soviet invasion. They intended to return, but sought political asylum in the US in 1980.
- He now lives in California, where he works as a doctor.

(Sherman 2006, p.5)

About *The Kite Runner*

- Hosseini states: 'The story line of my novel is largely fictional. The characters were invented and the plot imagined. However, there certainly are, as is always the case with fiction, autobiographical elements woven through the narrative. Probably the passages most resembling my own life are the ones in the US, with Amir and Baba trying to build a new life. I, too, came to the US as an immigrant and I recall vividly those first few years in California, the brief time we spent on welfare, and the difficult task of assimilating into a new culture. My father and I did work for a while at the flea market and there really are rows of Afghans working there, some of whom I am related to.' (Razeshta Sethna: E-mail: newsline@cyber.net.pk in Sherman 2006, p. 5)

About *The Kite Runner*

- Hosseini 'wanted to write about Afghanistan before the Soviet war because that is largely a forgotten period in modern Afghan history. For many people in the west, Afghanistan is synonymous with the Soviet war and the Taliban.' He explains: 'I wanted to remind people that Afghans had managed to live in peaceful anonymity for decades, that the history of the Afghans in the twentieth century has been largely peaceful and harmonious.' (Newsline Publications 2001 in Sherman 2006, p. 5)

About *The Kite Runner*

- Hosseini experienced Kabul with his brother 'the way Amir and Hassan do: long school days in the summer, kite fighting in the winter time, westerns with John Wayne at Cinema Park, big parties at our house in Wazir Akbar Khan, picnics in Paghman.' He has 'very fond memories of childhood in Afghanistan, largely because [his] memories, unlike those of the current generation of Afghans, are untainted by the spectre of wars, landmines, and famine.'

(Newsline Publications 2001 in Sherman 2006, p. 5)

Afghanistan



Introduction to Afghanistan

- An ethnically diverse country.
- As of July 2007, there are approx. 32 million people estimated to live in Afghanistan.
- Pashtu and Dari are considered the official languages of Afghanistan and are spoken by 85% of the people.
- 30 other minor languages are also spoken in Afghanistan.

Introduction to Afghanistan

- About 99% of the population is Muslim, and of these Muslims, 84% belong to the Sunni sect.
- There has been a long history of an ethnic hierarchy within Afghanistan. It has created imbalances in wealth, influence and education within its society.
- Traditionally Pashtuns have dominated the country because they are the presumed majority of the population.
- As a result, many of the other ethnic groups have not had a strong voice within the society.

(Amnesty International USA *The Kite Runner Companion Curriculum*.

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/education/pdf/kiterunnerhigh.pdf> Accessed on 17 February 2008)

Ethnic Groups

- Pashtuns:
 - Majority ethnic group at 42%
 - Highest ethnicity on the social ladder and dominate governmental bodies
 - Pashtu is their native language
 - Consist mainly of Sunni Muslims

Ethnic Groups

- Tajiks
 - 27% of population
 - Second largest ethnic group
 - Identified with agriculture and town life
 - Mainly inhabit the fertile eastern valleys
 - A group that is considered to have low income and like many Hazaras, they are not the highest on the social ladder. However there are Tajiks that are successful and important members of the government.

Ethnic Groups

■ Hazaras

- 9% of Afghanistan's population
- Reside mainly in the central Afghanistan mountain region called 'Hazarajat'
- Historically, the Hazara seem to have Mongolian origins.
- Most Hazara are Shi'ite Muslims. The 1% which are not Muslim are either Hindu, Sikh or Jewish.
- Hazaras are considered to be on the lower end of the socio-economic scale.

Ethnic Groups

- 12% of the population is comprised of the Turkmen (3%) and Uzbeks (9%).
- The remaining 10% of the population is comprised of the Nuristans, an ancient people of Mediterranean descent, the Fariswan, the ethnic Shi'a Persians, the relatively few in number Baluchis of the south and the scattered members of the Kuchi and Aimaq nomads.

Source: Amnesty International USA *The Kite Runner Companion Curriculum*.

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/education/pdf/kiterunnerhigh.pdf> Accessed on 17 February 2008, p. 14-15.

Historical Events

*See your timeline for more detailed information

1919 – Afghanistan regains independence after third war against British forces trying to bring the country under their sphere of influence.

1953 – General Mohammed Daud becomes prime minister. Turns to Soviet Union for economic and military assistance.

1978 – General Daud is overthrown and killed in a coup by leftist People's Democratic Party.

1979 – Power struggle between leftist leaders Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammed Taraki won by Amin. Soviet Union send in troops to help remove Amin, who is executed.

Historical Events

- 1980 – Babrak Karmal, leader of the People's Democratic Party Parcham faction is installed as ruler backed by Soviet troops. Various majahedin troops fight Soviet forces. US, Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia supply money and arms.
- 1986 – US begins supplying mujahadin with Stinger missiles, enabling them to shoot down Soviet helicopter gunships. Babrak Karmal replaced by Najibullah.
- 1988 – Afghanistan, USSR, US and Pakistan sign peace accords and Soviet Union begins pulling out troops.

Historical Events

- 1989 – Last Soviet troops leave, but civil war continues as mujahadin push to overthrow Najibullah.
- 1991 – US and USSR agree to end military aid to both sides. Mujahadin triumph.
- 1992 – Rival militias vie for influence.
- 1993 – Mujahideen factions agree on formation of government with ethnic Tajik, Burhanuddin Rabbani, proclaimed president.

Historical Events

- 1994 – Factional contests continue. Pashtun-dominated Taliban emerge as a major challenge to the Rabbani government.
- 1996 – Taliban seize control of Kabul and introduce hardline version of Islam. Rabbani flees to join anti-Taliban northern alliance.
- 1997 – Taliban recognized as legitimate rulers by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Most other countries continue to regard Rabbani as head of state.

Historical Events

1999 – United Nations imposes an air embargo and financial sanctions to force Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden for trial (he had bombed US embassies in Africa in 1998).

2001 – September 11 – attacks on US

2001 - October – US and Britain launch air strikes against Afghanistan after Taliban refuse to hand over Osama bin Laden.

2001 – November – Taliban falls.

*See your timeline for further events until 2007.

Source: Amnesty International USA *The Kite Runner Companion Curriculum*.

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/education/pdf/kiterunnerhigh.pdf> Accessed on 17 February 2008, p. 24-26

Taliban Rules for Women

- May not work outside the home.
- May not participate in any activity outside the home unless accompanied by her husband or male relative.
- May not be treated by male doctor.
- May not study at any institutions, including schools and universities.
- Must wear the long veil (burqa) which covers them from head to toe.
- If found guilty of adultery, will be publically stoned to death.
- May not laugh loudly – no stranger should hear a woman's voice.
- May not wear high heels – no man should hear a woman's footsteps.

Taliban Rules for Everyone

- No one can listen to music.
- No one can watch television, movies or videos.
- No citizen can have a non-Islamic name.
- Men may not shave or trim their beards.
- No one may fly kites.
- In any sporting event, no one may clap.
- Anyone who converts from Islam to any other religion will be executed.
- No burying of anyone who was killed by the Taliban. Bodies must remain in the streets as examples to other 'wrongdoers'.

Source: Amnesty International USA *The Kite Runner Companion Curriculum*.

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/education/pdf/kiterunnerhigh.pdf> Accessed on 17 February 2008, p. 40-41

Sources

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