

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Overbeck/Boone/Chirpas	School:	OLHS
Book Title:	A Thousand Splendid Suns	Genre:	fiction
Author:	Khaled Hosseini	Pages:	370
Publisher:	Riverhead Books	Copyright:	2007

*In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.*

**Book Summary and summary citation:** (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

Excerpts from Inside Flap Copy:

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a breathtaking story told against the volatile events of Afghanistan's last thirty years--from the Soviet invasion to the reign of the Taliban to post-Taliban rebuilding--that puts the violence, fear, hope, and faith of this country into intimate, human terms. It the tale of two generations of characters brought jarringly together by the tragic sweep of war, where personal lives--the struggle to survive, raise a family, find happiness--are inextricable from the history playing out around them.

...A Thousand Splendid Suns is at once a remarkable chronicle of three decades of Afghan history and a deeply moving account of family and friendship. It is a striking, heart-wrenching novel of an unforgiving time, an unlikely friendship, and an indestructible love--a stunning accomplishment.

**Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s):** (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

A Thousand Splendid Suns is one of two book choices for students in CP English 12 for use in a unit entitled "The War Within and Without." The unit invites students to look thematically at the idea of context and self to recognize the "wars" that rage both outside and inside human lives. Students will be asked to consider how context and identity provide various lenses through which we read, experience, and analyze text. Ultimately, students will synthesize their reading of Hosseini's novel with their reading and analysis of several additional texts of differing genres, historical contexts and disciplines. Students will give an oral presentation that argues an idea that is derived from their reading that recognizes and utilizes the concept of lenses as a component of their idea's complexity.

**Include two professional reviews of this title:** (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be "cut and pasted" (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

From Publishers Weekly

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Afghan-American novelist Hosseini follows up his bestselling *The Kite Runner* with another searing epic of Afghanistan in turmoil. The story covers three decades of anti-Soviet jihad, civil war and Taliban tyranny through the lives of two women. Mariam is the scorned illegitimate daughter of a wealthy businessman, forced at age 15 into marrying the 40-year-old Rasheed, who grows increasingly brutal as she fails to produce a child. Eighteen later, Rasheed takes another wife, 14-year-old Laila, a smart and spirited girl whose only other options, after her parents are killed by rocket fire, are prostitution or starvation. Against a backdrop of unending war, Mariam and Laila become allies in an asymmetrical battle with Rasheed, whose violent misogyny—"There was no cursing, no screaming, no pleading, no surprised yelps, only the systematic business of beating and being beaten"—is endorsed by custom and law. Hosseini gives a forceful but nuanced portrait of a patriarchal despotism where women are agonizingly dependent on fathers, husbands and especially sons, the bearing of male children being their sole path to social status. His tale is a powerful, harrowing depiction of Afghanistan, but also a lyrical evocation of the lives and enduring hopes of its resilient characters.

### Review #2

From Booklist, Kristine Huntley, Copyright © American Library Association

Hosseini's follow-up to his best-selling debut, *The Kite Runner* (2003) views the plight of Afghanistan during the last half-century through the eyes of two women. Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of a maid and a businessman, who is given away in marriage at 15 to Rasheed, a man three times her age; their union is not a loving one. Laila is born to educated, liberal parents in Kabul the night the Communists take over Afghanistan. Adored by her father but neglected in favor of her older brothers by her mother, Laila finds her true love early on in Tariq, a thoughtful, chivalrous boy who lost a leg in an explosion. But when tensions between the Communists and the mujahideen make the city unsafe, Tariq and his family flee to Pakistan. A devastating tragedy brings Laila to the house of Rasheed and Mariam, where she is forced to make a horrific choice to secure her future. At the heart of the novel is the bond between Mariam and Laila, two very different women brought together by dire circumstances. Unimaginably tragic, Hosseini's magnificent second novel is a sad and beautiful testament to both Afghani suffering and strength. Readers who lost themselves in *The Kite Runner* will not want to miss this unforgettable follow-up. Kristine Huntley

### **What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?**

Title: **The Kite Runner**

Author: **Khaled Hosseini**

Title: **A Separate Piece**

Author: **John Knowles**

Title: **Hamlet**

Author: **William Shakespeare**

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

### **Document any potentially controversial content:**

**Suicide:** Shortly after the story begins Miriam's mother, shunned and abandoned by Miriam's father, commits suicide by hanging.

**Rape:** Brief description of Rasheed raping Miriam under the guise of his marriage rights.

**Abortion:** Laila briefly considers performing an abortion on herself when she finds herself pregnant with Rasheed's child, but finds herself unable to complete the act.

**Spousal/Child Abuse:** Miriam and later also Laila and her daughter Aziza experience on-going abuse from Rasheed throughout the novel, mostly beatings (sometimes severe), but also one occasion in which Miriam is forced to chew rocks. Later Laila and her daughter Aziza are locked in a room and left to starve, though they survive.

Sex: A brief sexual encounter between Laila and Tariq is described.

Violence: Ultimately, Miriam murders Rasheed in an effort to save herself, Laila and the children from a murderous Rasheed. Miriam is later executed for her crime.

Language: the term harami (bastard) is used with frequency to refer to Miriam; damn

**Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)**

Gifted/Accelerated  Regular  At Risk

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

**Reading level of this title (if applicable):**

**Date Submitted to Department Chair:** 1/22/09

**Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:**

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults