

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	OLHS English	School:	OLHS
Book Title:	The Kite Runner	Genre:	fiction
Author:	Khaled Hosseini	Pages:	371
Publisher:	Riverhead Books	Copyright:	2003

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.)

Inside Flap Copy:

Taking us from Afghanistan in the final days of the monarchy to the present, *The Kite Runner* is the unforgettable, beautifully told story of the friendship between two boys growing up in Kabul.

Raised in the same household and sharing the same wet nurse, Amir and Hassan nonetheless 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, member of a shunned ethnic minority. 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.

The Kite Runner is a novel about friendship, betrayal, and the price of loyalty. It is about the bonds between fathers and sons, and the power of their lies. Written against a history that has not been told in fiction before, *The Kite Runner* describes the rich culture and beauty of a land in the process of being destroyed. But with the devastation, Khaled Hosseini also gives us hope: through the novel's faith in the power of reading and storytelling, and in the possibilities he shows for redemption.

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)

The Kite Runner is part of the culminating unit of study that senior AP English Language and Composition students will work with after taking the AP exam. Students will be participating in a comparative study of the classic Shakespearean work *Hamlet* and this contemporary work to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize ideas related to the characterization and themes in the two works. Students will engage in critical readings of both works and will work to connect the ideas within each despite a centuries-long gap between each work's publishing. Among the themes and ideas to consider in the works are those of indecisiveness and inaction, evaluation of others' actions, guilt, ethics, trust, the inner journey, relationships, betrayal, personal catharsis and the effects of the above on individuals, families and a nation. Characterization plays a significant role in both works and students will work to discover how characterization and point of view affect the plot and various themes. Students will engage in whole class discussions, journaling of ideas/concepts, and in-class writing assignments. The study will culminate in a Socratic Seminar in which students

analyze and discuss the themes and ideas as well as formulate and evaluate arguments using textual support from both of the texts.

Connections to the OLSD curriculum map for AP Composition are as follows:

Reading process (3, 4)

Reading Applications, Literary (8, 9,10)

Writing process (11, 12, 13)

Writing Application (17, 18)

Communication Standard (27, 28)

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 School Library Journal, Penny Stevens, Andover College, Portland, ME

Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.: Adult/High School-

This beautifully written first novel presents a glimpse of life in Afghanistan before the Russian invasion and introduces richly drawn, memorable characters. Quiet, intellectual Amir craves the attention of his father, a wealthy Kabul businessman. Kind and self-confident Hassan is the son of Amir's father's servant. The motherless boys play together daily, and when Amir wins the annual kite contest, Hassan offers to track down the opponent's runaway kite as a prize. When he finds it, the neighborhood bullies trap and rape him, as Amir stands by too terrified to help. Their lives and their friendship are forever changed, and the memory of his cowardice haunts Amir as he grows into manhood. Hassan and his father return to the village of their ancestors, and later Amir and his father flee to Los Angeles to avoid political persecution. Amir attends college, marries, and fulfills his dream of becoming a writer. When Amir receives word of his former friend's death under the Taliban, he returns to Kabul to learn the fate of Hassan's son. This gripping story of personal redemption will capture readers' interest.

Review #2

From Publishers Weekly, Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Hosseini's stunning debut novel starts as an eloquent Afghan version of the American immigrant experience in the late 20th century, but betrayal and redemption come to the forefront when the narrator, a writer, returns to his ravaged homeland to rescue the son of his childhood friend after the boy's parents are shot during the Taliban takeover in the mid '90s. Amir, the son of a well-to-do Kabul merchant, is the first-person narrator, who marries, moves to California and becomes a successful novelist. But he remains haunted by a childhood incident in which he betrayed the trust of his best friend, a Hazara boy named Hassan, who receives a brutal beating from some local bullies. After establishing himself in America, Amir learns that the Taliban have murdered Hassan and his wife, raising questions about the fate of his son, Sohrab. Spurred on by childhood guilt, Amir makes the difficult journey to Kabul, only to learn the boy has been enslaved by a former childhood bully who has become a prominent Taliban official. The price Amir must pay to recover the boy is just one of several brilliant, startling plot twists that make this book memorable both as a political chronicle and a deeply personal tale about how childhood choices affect our adult lives. The character studies alone would make this a noteworthy debut, from the portrait of the sensitive, insecure Amir to the multilayered development of his father, Baba, whose sacrifices and scandalous behavior are fully revealed only when Amir returns to Afghanistan and learns the true nature of his relationship to Hassan. Add an incisive, perceptive examination of recent Afghan history and its ramifications in both America and the Middle East, and the result is a complete work of literature

that succeeds in exploring the culture of a previously obscure nation that has become a pivot point in the global politics of the new millennium.

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

Title: **A Separate Peace**

Author: **John Knowles**

Title: **The Glass Menagerie**

Author: **Tennessee Williams**

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Rape scene: A brief but compelling scene, neighborhood bullies brutally beat and then one of them rapes Hassan, the son of the servant to Amir's family. Hassan is a Hazara, an ethnic minority in Kabul, and he is viewed as less than human by the bullies, especially the ringleader, Assef. This scene becomes the catalyst for the rest of the book as Amir begins his lifelong inner struggle and guilt from his intentional betrayal of Hassan by not coming to his aid. Amir is motivated by the promise of gaining the ever-elusive approval of his father, for having won the kite race, for the first time in his life.

Violence: A couple of disturbing scenes of violence occur. One is the description of the fight between Assef and Amir as adults, after a Hitler-like Assef has become a leader of a Talib group that terrorizes Kabul, Afghanistan. Amir is fighting to get Sohrab, a child from an orphanage, away from Assef. Another is a public stoning of a woman and man in an area for allegedly having committed adultery.

Child abuse: An orphanage official reveals that children are sold as slaves to a Talib official, who is revealed to be Assef, every couple of months. Child abuse is implied, but there is nothing graphic; the official explains that he has no choice because if he doesn't do it the official will just take the children, but this way he has money to buy food for the other children.

Profanity: Twenty-one references total to the following words used in anger, frustration and/or degradation of others: fuck, shit, ass, whore, goddamn, and bastard.

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: 4/13/07

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