

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Cathie Boone

School: Olentangy Liberty High School

Book Title: *The Kite Runner*

NOTE: This book is already approved; this is a revision to accurately reflect how this book is currently used via the standards.

Genre: Novel - Fiction

Author: Khaled Hosseini

Publisher: Riverhead Books

Copyright: 2003

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

From Goodreads.com:

The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, *The Kite Runner* is a beautifully crafted novel set in a country that is in the process of being destroyed. It is about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies. A sweeping story of family, love, and friendship told against the devastating backdrop of the history of Afghanistan over the last thirty years, *The Kite Runner* is an unusual and powerful novel that has become a beloved, one-of-a-kind classic.

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum blueprints and/or State standards.

This novel will be used to engage in literary analysis and literary argumentation in addition to exploring thematic ideas including good/evil, love, loyalty, betrayal, guilt, and redemption. Students will continue to build close reading skills to include nuance and complexity as well as a more refined understanding of narrative structure and complex character.

This novel will also be used to further explore the idea of how the ninth grade thematic approach of identity is intertwined within cultural and societal expectations. Additionally, the novel is unique in that it addresses these issues within the context of a post 9/11 world from the vantage point of a naturalized Afghan-American author allowing for not only literary analysis but also an understanding of literary argumentation and how an author develops that through the genre of a novel. Discussion, writing and reflection are anchored in the text which serves as a springboard to explore the complex intersection of writing and broader cultural issues.

Specific District and Common Core Standards include:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6**
 - Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.R.9-10.1**
 - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2**
 - Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3**

- Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10**
 - By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

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). Reviews should suggest an appropriate grade-level or grade-band.

Review #1

KIRKUS REVIEWS <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/khaled-hosseini/the-kite-runner/>

Here’s a real find: a striking debut from an Afghan now living in the US. His passionate story of betrayal and redemption is framed by Afghanistan’s tragic recent past.

Moving back and forth between Afghanistan and California, and spanning almost 40 years, the story begins in Afghanistan in the tranquil 1960s. Our protagonist Amir is a child in Kabul. The most important people in his life are Baba and Hassan. Father Baba is a wealthy Pashtun merchant, a larger-than-life figure, fretting over his bookish weakling of a son (the mother died giving birth); Hassan is his sweet-natured playmate, son of their servant Ali and a Hazara. Pashtuns have always dominated and ridiculed Hazaras, so Amir can’t help teasing Hassan, even though the Hazara staunchly defends him against neighborhood bullies like the “sociopath” Assef. The day, in 1975, when 12-year-old Amir wins the annual kite-fighting tournament is the best and worst of his young life. He bonds with Baba at last but deserts Hassan when the latter is raped by Assef. And it gets worse. With the still-loyal Hassan a constant reminder of his guilt, Amir makes life impossible for him and Ali, ultimately forcing them to leave town. Fast forward to the Russian occupation, flight to America, life in the Afghan exile community in the Bay Area. Amir becomes a writer and marries a beautiful Afghan; Baba dies of cancer. Then, in 2001, the past comes roaring back. Rahim, Baba’s old business partner who knows all about Amir’s transgressions, calls from Pakistan. Hassan has been executed by the Taliban; his son, Sohrab, must be rescued. Will Amir wipe the slate clean? So he returns to the hell of Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and reclaims Sohrab from a Taliban leader (none other than Assef) after a terrifying showdown. Amir brings the traumatized child back to California and a bittersweet ending.

Rather than settle for a coming-of-age or travails-of-immigrants story, Hosseini has folded them both into this searing spectacle of hard-won personal salvation. All this, and a rich slice of Afghan culture too: irresistible.

Review #2

Publisher’s Weekly <https://www.publishersweekly.com/9781573222457>

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. *(June 2)*

Forecast: It is rare that a book is at once so timely and of such high literary quality. Though Afghanistan is now on the media back burner, its fate is still of major interest and may become even more so as the U.S.'s nation-building efforts are scrutinized. 10-city author tour; foreign rights sold in Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Israel, Spain, Sweden and the U.K.

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

- *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles
- *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- *Othello* by William Shakespeare

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 an 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)

X Gifted/Accelerated

X Regular

X At Risk

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

Reading Level of this Title (if applicable):

Suggested Professional Literacy 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

Signatures:

Teacher:  **Date:** 12-1-2021

Department Head:  **Date:** 12-1-2021

Building Administrator:  **Date:** 12/1/21

Curriculum Supervisor:  **Date:** 12/2/21