

The Kite Runner Circle Session Discussion Questions
AP English Literature and Composition

The following questions will be used to lead our discussion of *The Kite Runner*. You must be prepared for the first week of class. You should annotate as you read and highlight parts that will help you support your answers.

1. Is *The Kite Runner* told from an American perspective or from an Afghan perspective?
2. The title of the novel – *The Kite Runner* – suggests Hassan is the main subject of the story. Does the title lead us astray? Is this book really about Hassan?
3. What role does Amir's mother play in the novel? Is she just as important to Amir as Baba? How do the dead continue to affect the living in this novel?
4. There are quite a few instances of deformity or scarring in the novel. To name a few: Ali's limp, Hassan's harelip, Amir's scar, Assef's crushed eye, and Soraya's birthmark. Why do you think Hosseini included so many deformities and scars in the novel? Can you think of any metaphorical deformities? Metaphorical scars?
5. Through the character of Baba, masculinity looms large in Amir's home life. How does masculinity – of what it means to be an Afghan man – figure into the novel's ideas of nationhood and international conflict?
6. A few characters ask Amir if he writes about Afghanistan. Do you think Hosseini, in the end, endorses wildly imaginative literature in *The Kite Runner*? Or does *The Kite Runner* demand literature tethered to our lives and the political events that shape them?
7. Amir treasures the leather-bound notebook Rahim Khan gives him but throws away the biography of Hitler Assef gives him. Comment on these two uses of writing and Amir's choice of the notebook.
8. Hassan seems to have a particularly pure love for literature. Does Hassan, in a way, teach Amir how to love literature? Is Hassan Amir's first literary mentor (Rahim Khan being the second)?
9. There's a fictional piece of fiction in *The Kite Runner* called *A Season for Ashes*. Amir's novel tells the story of a professor who runs away with a clan of gypsies after he finds his wife cheating on him with one of his students. Do you think Amir is proud of his book *A Season for Ashes*? Would you be proud of it? How is its plot relevant to *The Kite Runner* and to Amir's life?
10. The novel begins "I became what I am today at the age of twelve." To what is Amir referring? Is his assertion entirely true? What other factors have helped form his character? How would you describe Amir?
11. Amir had never thought of Hassan as his friend, despite the evident bond between them, just as Baba did not think of Ali as his friend (page 22). What parallels can be drawn between Amir and Hassan's relationship, and Baba and Ali's? How would you describe the relationship between the two boys? What makes them so different in the way they behave with each other? What is it that makes Amir inflict

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small cruelties on Hassan? Had you already guessed at the true relationship between them? If so, at what point and why?

12. It is Amir's dearest wish to please his father. What fuels this wish? To what extent does he succeed in doing so and at what cost? What kind of man is Baba? How would you describe his relationship with Amir and with Hassan? How does that relationship change, and what prompts those changes?

13. Khaled Hosseini vividly describes Afghanistan, both the privileged world of Amir's childhood and the stricken country under the Taliban. How did his descriptions differ from ideas that you may already have had about Afghanistan? What cultural differences become evident in the American passages of the novel? How easy do the Afghans find it to settle in the U.S.? Compare the social structures of Amir's life in Afghanistan vs. those he encounters in America.

14. After Soraya tells Amir about her past, she says, "I'm so lucky to have found you. You're so different from every Afghan guy I've met." (page 157) How do Afghan women fare in America? Are they any better off than they were in Afghanistan before the Taliban seized power? There is a noticeable absence of women in the novel. How is this significant?

15. On the drive to Kabul Farid says to Amir "You've always been a tourist here, you just didn't know it." (page 204) What is Farid implying? What do you think of his implication? What gives a person worth in a society? Does this vary between societies?

16. The strong underlying force of this novel is the relationship between Amir and Hassan. Discuss their friendship. Why is Amir afraid to be Hassan's true friend? Why does Amir constantly test Hassan's loyalty? Why does he resent Hassan? After the kite fighting tournament, why does Amir no longer want to be Hassan's friend?

17. What is the significance of the novel's title? What might the kite fighting tournament symbolize? Does the competition's combination of physical brutality and aesthetic beauty parallel any other aspects of the book?

18. What is Amir's relationship with Baba in the beginning of the book? How does it change after he wins the kite fighting tournament?

19. America acts as a place for Amir to rehash his memories and as a place for Baba to mourn his. In America, there are "homes that made Baba's house in Wazir Akbar Khan look like a servant's hut." (page 135) What is ironic about this statement? What is the function of irony in this novel?

20. During their argument about his career path, Amir thinks to himself: "I would stand my ground, I decided. I didn't want to sacrifice for Baba anymore. The last time I had done that, I had damned myself." Why is Baba disappointed by Amir's decision to become a writer? What has Amir sacrificed for Baba? How has Amir "damned himself"?

21. Amir's confrontation with Assef in Wazir Akbar Khan marks an important turning point in the novel. Why does the author have Amir, Assef, and Sohrab all come together in this way? What is the

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significance of the scar that Amir develops as a result of the confrontation? Why is it important in Amir's journey toward forgiveness and acceptance?

22. Baba and Amir know that they are very different people. Often it disappoints both of them that Amir is not the son that Baba has hoped for. When Amir finds out that Baba has lied to him about Hassan, he realizes that "as it turned out, Baba and I were more alike than I'd ever known." (page 226) How does this make Amir feel about his father? How is this both a negative and positive realization?

23. When Amir and Baba move to the States their relationship changes, and Amir begins to view his father as a more complex man. Discuss the changes in their relationship. Do you see the changes in Baba as tragic or positive?