

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: <i>The Kite Runner</i>	Synopsis Afghanistan, 1975: Twelve-year-old Amir is desperate to win the local kite-fighting tournament and his loyal friend Hassan promises to help him. But neither of the boys can foresee what will happen to Hassan that afternoon, an event that is to shatter their lives. After the Russians invade and the family is forced to flee to America, Amir realizes that one day he must return to Afghanistan under Taliban rule to find the one thing that his new world cannot grant him: redemption. <small>Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus</small>
Book Author Hosseini, Khaled	
Copyright Year: 2003	

Professional Reviews of *The Kite Runner*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (July 2003 (Vol. 99, No. 21))

Hosseini's debut novel opens in Kabul in the mid-1970s. Amir is the son of a wealthy man, but his best friend is Hassan, the son of one of his father's servants. His father encourages the friendship and dotes on Hassan, who worships the ground Amir walks on. But Amir is envious of Hassan and his own father's apparent affection for the boy. Amir is not nearly as loyal to Hassan, and one day, when he comes across a group of local bullies raping Hassan, he does nothing. Shamed by his own inaction, Amir pushes Hassan away, even going so far as to accuse him of stealing. Eventually, Hassan and his father are forced to leave. Years later, Amir, now living in America, receives a visit from an old family friend who gives him an opportunity to make amends for his treatment of Hassan. Current events will garner interest for this novel; the quality of Hosseini's writing and the emotional impact of the story will guarantee its longevity.

Kirkus Reviews starred (May 1, 2003)

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.

Publishers Weekly (May 12, 2003)

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. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

School Library Journal (November 1, 2003)

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.-Penny Stevens, Andover College, Portland, ME Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

Library Journal (April 15, 2003)

This novel relates the demise of friendship and the precipitous decline of Afghanistan at the end of the 20th century. Amir, a Pashtun, and his Hazara servant, Hassan, have grown up not only as master and servant but also as inseparable friends. Yet Amir is jealous of his father's affection for Hassan, who, though poor and illiterate, has many talents. Amir abandons Hassan at a time of extreme need and then, motivated by guilt, brutally betrays him. After he and his father escape to the United States following the Russian invasion, Amir continues to suffer from regret and guilt. In the latter half of the novel, Amir returns to Afghanistan and begins

to atone for his childhood mistakes. Although the narrative suffers from an overreliance on coincidence, it provides a vivid glimpse of life in Afghanistan over the past quarter century. The characters of Amir and his father, their relationship, and the relationship of Hassan and Amir are all carefully and convincingly described and developed. Hosseini, now a doctor in California, is possibly the only Afghan author writing in English, and his first novel is recommended for all public and academic libraries. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 2/1/03.]-Rebecca Stuhr, Grinnell Coll. Libs., IA Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *The Kite Runner*

Source: Follett Titlewave, NovelistPlus

ALA Notable Books - Fiction: 2004

Alex Award: 2004

School Library Journal's Adult Books for High School Students: 2003