

The Kite Runner
Khaled Hosseini
Riverhead Books, 2003

Reviews

- [The Guardian](#) (“The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini-review,” July 30, 2014.): “The story is fast-paced and hardly ever dull, and introduced me to a world – the world of Afghan life – which is strange, fascinating and yet oddly familiar all at the same time. Hosseini’s writing finds a great balance between being clear and yet powerful, and not only is the story itself brilliantly constructed, but the book also explores the very art of storytelling. Amir himself becomes a writer, and he reflects on his experiences in the story as though his life itself were a piece of fiction (which of course it is!).” – Charlie B.
- [Kirkus Reviews](#) (May 20, 2010.): “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.”
- [The New York Times](#) (“The Servant,” August 3, 2003): “This powerful first novel, by an Afghan physician now living in California, tells a story of fierce cruelty and fierce yet redeeming love. Both transform the life of Amir, Khaled Hosseini’s privileged young narrator, who comes of age during the last peaceful days of the monarchy, just before his country’s revolution and its invasion by Russian forces. ...In “The Kite Runner,” Khaled Hosseini gives us a vivid and engaging story that reminds us how long his people have been struggling to triumph over the forces of violence -- forces that continue to threaten them even today.” – Edward Hower
- [Publisher’s 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."

- [Slate](#) ("The Kite Runner," July 25, 2005.): "If The Kite Runner's early adopters picked up the book to learn something about Afghanistan, what kept them reading (and recommending it) is the appealingly familiar story at the heart of the novel: a struggle of personal recovery and unconditional love, couched in redemptive language immediately legible to Americans. The Kite Runner tells the story Amir and Hassan, two childhood best friends in Kabul, divided by class and ethnicity. Amir is a wealthy Pashtun, and Hassan, his servant, is a Hazara. Hassan is a child of preternatural goodness and self-confidence, though he is illiterate and often picked on by roving Pashtun boys, in particular a "sociopath" named Assef. Amir, whose mother died in childbirth, is an outsider ill-at-ease with himself. He is debilitatingly hungry for the love of his father, Baba, a wealthy businessman who is puzzled that his son prefers reading to watching soccer. The studiously symmetrical plot revolves around an act of childhood cowardice and cruelty that Amir—the narrator—must make amends for years later, after he and Baba have emigrated to America. "There is a way to be good again," a friend counsels him. It's clearly such messages of redemption that prompted one Amazon reviewer to observe that The Kite Runner "remind[s] us that we are all human alike, fighting similar daily and lifelong battles, just in different circumstances." – Meghan O'Rourke

Awards

- Book Sense Bestseller List Sensation
- Boeke Prize
- Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Award
- ALA Notable Book
- [Alex Award](#), American Library Association, 2004
- Borders

References

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