

## ***The Kite Runner* Discussion Questions**

### **Chapter One**

1. How does the use of the first chapter to introduce the flashback establish the overall mood of the novel? How would it be different if the story were told without the flashback?
2. What does the reader know about the narrator's present life from this chapter, and how do we know?
3. What mood does the image of the two kites create? How does Hosseini create this mood?

### **Chapter Two**

1. What are the reader's first impressions of Hassan based on Hosseini's description of him?
2. Why have Amir's teachers not said very much about the Hazaras?
3. What is unusual about the relationship between Amir and Hassan?

### **Chapter Three**

1. How does Hosseini use hyperbole in his descriptions of Baba? What can the reader conclude about Baba based on these descriptions?
2. What does Baba mean when he says that Amir has "confused what you're learning in school with actual education"? What are the implications of this statement?

### **Chapter Four**

1. What does the pomegranate tree symbolize to Amir and Hassan? How does Hosseini create this symbol?
2. How and why does Hosseini create in Amir a complicated protagonist, someone with whom the reader can sympathize while despising at the same time?

### **Chapter Five**

1. How does Hosseini's description of Assef let the reader know immediately that he is the antagonist?
2. What does Assef foreshadow when he talks about his admiration for Hitler?
3. How does Hassan's harelip foster Amir's jealousy of him? Explain this irony.
4. What is suggested by the affection that Baba shows to Hassan?

### **Chapter Six**

1. What are some details of imagery that set the mood for the beginning of this chapter? How do these details create a mood for the reader?
2. What is the importance of the kite fight for Amir and Baba? How does Hosseini give it great value through his word choice in the text?

### **Chapter Seven**

1. What is the importance of Hassan's dream? Why does Hosseini include it at this point in the plot? How does the dream affect other events in this chapter?
2. Explain why this is much more than a kite fight to Amir. What details from the text make this clear, and how do they do this?

3. Amir encounters racism repeatedly as he looks for Hassan, who is running the last kite. Why does Hosseini include these exchanges?
4. What is the purpose of the memories and the dream included in this chapter as Amir peeks into the alley? How does Hosseini use this exposition to prepare the reader for Hassan's rape?
5. Why is Amir's memory of the sheep important? Explain the effect that Hosseini creates by revealing this bit of exposition at this moment in the plot.
6. Why does Amir run instead of helping Hassan? Point to the many details in the text that try to make sense of this decision. What does this action reveal about Amir?
7. How does this scene reveal the primary conflict of the novel that first appears in chapter one before the flashback?

### **Chapter Eight**

1. The image of Hassan's brown corduroy pants haunts Amir for years after the day of the kite fight. What does this image symbolize? What is its purpose?
2. Why does Hassan's friendship and loyalty bother Amir so much?
3. Why does Amir not enjoy the lavish birthday party thrown in his honor? Point to specific details from the text.

### **Chapter Nine**

1. What does Amir mean when he says that all of his gifts are "blood money"?
2. What does Amir mean when he says that he "was the monster in the lake"? Where have we seen this phrase before? What is the significance of Amir's use of this phrase in terms of understanding his character and how he feels about himself?
3. Why do Ali and Hassan leave Baba's house even though Baba forgives Hassan and begs Ali to stay? What does this scene tell the reader about Hassan?

### **Chapter Ten**

1. How does Hosseini highlight Amir's cowardice in the scene with the Russian soldier?
2. Explain the tragic irony of Kamal's death. What qualities do Amir and Kamal have in common?

### **Chapter Eleven**

1. How does the tone of the novel change at the beginning of this chapter now that Baba and Amir live in the United States? How does Hosseini create this change?
2. What does Amir mean when he says that "Kabul had become a city of ghosts" for him? How does he think living in America is going to be an improvement?
3. Compare and contrast Baba's business life in Afghanistan with his business life in America. How has Baba changed? What qualities remain?
4. Baba says that "what happens in a few days, sometimes even a single day, can change the course of a whole life." He is talking about Soraya Taheri, but the comment is more profound. Apply this wisdom to other characters in the novel. How could Baba be talking about Amir, Hassan, Rahim Khan, Kamal, Baba, or any other character in the novel?

## **Chapter Twelve**

1. What is the significance of Soraya's story about teaching Ziba to read?
2. What is the effect of Soraya telling the story of her past? How does the reader view both Soraya and Amir differently in light of her story?

## **Chapter Thirteen**

1. Explain the irony of the wedding song that Amir recognizes from the past.
2. How does Amir's past come back to him during his wedding? What is the significance of these fleeting thoughts for Amir and for the primary conflict of the novel?
3. Like Amir, Soraya has mistakes from her past, but she is not a complicated character like Amir. How and why does Hosseini create this difference?
4. What is the significance of Amir's catching Soraya reading his stories to Baba? Compare this scene to the scene in chapter four when Baba is unwilling to read the stories.
5. When Amir finds success as an author, and again when he and Soraya are unable to have children, Amir's mind wanders back to his past. What is the significance of Amir thinking back to Hassan and Rahim Khan?

## **Chapter Fourteen**

1. What is the significance of Rahim Khan's call to Amir? How is this event a turning point in the plot?
2. What is the significance of Amir's dreaming of Hassan running through the snow to catch the last kite?

## **Chapter Fifteen**

1. How does the tone of the writing change now that Amir is in Pakistan? Comment specifically on how Hosseini creates this change by looking at his sentence structure.
2. What is the significance of Rahim Khan's story about the soccer game?
3. This chapter concludes with a return to thoughts of Hassan. How does Amir feel about this conversation? What does he fear?

## **Chapter Sixteen**

1. Has Hassan changed since leaving Baba's house as a child? What is different? What is the same? What is significant about Hosseini's description of Hassan?
2. What is the significance of Hassan's running away from his long lost mother? Is he the kind of person who is in the habit of running away from difficult situations?
3. How does Hosseini create suspense at the end of this chapter?

## **Chapter Seventeen**

1. How does Hosseini make Hassan's murder all too real, making it more painful for the reader? Take note of specific narrative techniques.
2. What does the revelation of Hassan's parentage do to the conflict between Amir and his guilt?
3. Why might the reader have suspected this before Amir? (What clues were left?)
4. Why have Baba, Ali, and Rahim Khan lied to Hassan and Amir all these years? Is this consistent with their personalities? What makes this lie so important?

## **Chapter Eighteen**

1. How does Amir's new understanding of Hassan change his image of Baba? How significant is the impact of this revelation on Amir?
2. After a lifetime of feeling that he did not resemble his father, what similarities does Amir discover as he reflects on Rahim Khan's news? What is significant about these similarities?
3. Why does Amir decide to go to Kabul? Is this consistent with his actions throughout the novel? What are the implications of this decision in terms of understanding the development of the protagonist?

## **Chapter Nineteen**

1. Why is Farid so cold and rude to Amir? How does Hosseini show the reader the source of Farid's anger through his subtle word choice?
2. What new qualities does the reader see in Amir as he decides to leave for Kabul earlier than Rahim Khan recommends? How is he changing?
3. What does Farid mean when he says to Amir, "You've always been a tourist here, you just didn't know it"? In what ways is this statement true? In what ways is it false?
4. What is the significance of Amir's dream?

## **Chapter Twenty**

1. What is the importance of the lengthy description of changes that Amir finds on his way to Kabul and in the city itself?
2. Explain the significance of Amir's meeting the old beggar who happened to know his mother. How does this meeting affect Amir?
3. Why is the man at the orphanage so suspicious of Amir and Farid? What does his suspicion suggest about the life he is leading in Kabul?

## **Chapter Twenty One**

1. Why does Hosseini include the brief flashback to Amir's childhood just as he and Farid are arriving at Baba's house? What is the significance of the memory about the turtle in relation to the reality of the "fallen splendor" of Baba's house?
2. What does Amir mean when he tells Farid that he does not "want to forget anymore" as he leaves to climb the hill he and Hassan had climbed as children? What are the implications of this statement for Amir?
3. Why does Hosseini include the scene in which Farid and Amir tell the Mullah Nasruddin jokes just before they go to sleep? What is important about these jokes?
4. Why does Amir avoid answering Farid's question about why he has come back to Kabul for this particular boy?
5. Explain the irony of Amir's description of the Talib looking "like a baseball pitcher on the mound." What is the significance of this event for Amir?

## **Chapter Twenty Two**

1. How does Hosseini create fear for Amir in the first few pages of this chapter?
2. What is implied by the comparison of Sohrab to the Monkey Man of Amir's childhood?

3. How does Hosseini structure the narrative to maximize the shock when Amir and the reader finally discover the identity of the Talib?
4. How has Assef changed since the reader last encountered him? What is the significance of the story that he tells Amir?
5. Why does Amir feel at peace while being beaten by Assef? How is this a turning point for Amir?

### **Chapter Twenty Three**

1. What is the significance of Amir's dream of fighting the bear? Why is this important in terms of the primary conflict of the novel?
2. What does Amir mean when he tells Farid that both he and Assef got what they deserved?
3. What does the man wrapped in a brown blanket foreshadow? What is strange about his behavior?
4. How does Rahim Khan's letter create more guilt for Amir? Why is this important for development of the conflict between Amir and his guilt?
5. What is the importance of Amir's dream of Assef claiming to be his twin? Why would Hosseini include this dream in the story of Amir's recovery?
6. What has Rahim Khan really done by telling Amir that the Caldwells will take Sohrab when he knows no such family exists? How can Amir really be good again?

### **Chapter Twenty Four**

1. How is Hassan's life being repeated in Sohrab? What is significant about Sohrab's troubles for Amir's quest to be good again?
2. What is significant about Hosseini's narrative technique while weaving Sohrab's questions about San Francisco and the Mullahs on television together? Why not tell the two stories individually?
3. What is significant about the tragic irony displayed in placing Soraya's phone call and Amir's terrible discovery back to back at the end of this chapter?

### **Chapter Twenty Five**

1. Amir realizes that he has not prayed in more than fifteen years but does so in the hospital. What are the implications of this sudden change?
2. How does Amir's childhood relationship with Hassan color Amir's conversation with Sohrab in the hospital? Explain the significance of Amir's memories as he speaks with Sohrab.
3. How does Hosseini provide certain evidence of a transformation in Amir during dinner with the general? What are the implications of this change for Amir?
4. Why does Hosseini conclude his novel with a kite fight? What is so appropriate about this decision?
5. Look back at Chapter 1. How has the story come full circle? How has Hosseini created "a way to be good again" for Amir?