

## **PinkMonkey® Literature Notes on . . .**

<http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>

### **Sample MonkeyNotes**

**Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.**

# ***The Kite Runner***

by

**Khaled Hosseini**

**2003**



MonkeyNotes by Diane Clapsaddle

For the complete study guide: <http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>

Reprinted with permission from TheBestNotes.com Copyright © 2005, All Rights Reserved  
Distribution without the written consent of PinkMonkey.com or TheBestNotes.com is strictly prohibited.

## KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

### SETTING

The story takes place in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States from 1975 until the present day.

### CHARACTER LIST

**Amir** - He is the narrator of the story who tells how he grew up in Afghanistan and the sins he had committed against his friend and half-brother, Hassan. It is his journey to redemption that.....

**Hassan** - He is the best and kindest character in the story. He is Amir's best friend and as Amir later learns, he is also his half-brother. He faces discrimination every day, because he is a.....

**Baba** - He is Amir and Hassan's father, but because it would be shameful to admit Hassan, a Hazara, was his son, the secret remains hidden long after his death. In Amir's mind, he is larger than life, the man who....

**Ali** - His character is that of the loyal servant to Baba and a father figure to both Hassan and Amir. He....

**Sohrab** - He is Hassan's son and the boy for whom Amir faces the Taliban to free. Like his father, he is raped by Assef and later betrayed by Amir. He even tries to commit suicide after Amir breaks.....

**Soraya** - Amir's wife, she, too, suffers from mistakes she made as a young woman, but accepts her humiliation for running away with a man and becomes a good, decent human being. She is denied.....

**Rahim Khan** - He was Baba's best friend and business partner and was a major part of Amir and Hassan's life. He seems to understand Amir's desperate need for his father's approval and tries to fill the gap Baba.....

**Assef** - He is the villain of the story, a Pashtun boy who bullies Amir and Hassan and tries to humiliate Ali. He has a sociopathic nature even as a boy and admires Hitler for what he had done in eliminating the.....

### CONFLICT

**Protagonist** - Amir is the protagonist, because it is his story – a story that details his childhood in Afghanistan and the terrible sin he commits against Hassan, a Hazara boy who also happens to be.....

**Antagonist** - The antagonist is, on the surface, the man named Assef, who is a bigoted childhood acquaintance of Amir and Hassan. He torments them both, but actually attacks and.....

**Climax** - Amir meets Assef, now a Talib, in hand-to-hand combat and Sohrab, like his.....

**Outcome** - Amir recovers from his terrible beating and they get out of Afghanistan and flee to Pakistan. There, he tries to find a way to take Sohrab to the United States. However, he runs into many bureaucratic walls.....

### SHORT PLOT/CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

Amir tells us about the unique relationship he has with Hassan, a Hazara boy who is the victim of discrimination, but ironically is the half-brother of Amir, a Pashtun. Amir is overwhelmed with guilt when he allows Hassan to be beaten and raped on the day Amir wins the kite flying tournament. He lies to have Hassan accused of theft so he will leave their home and Amir can try to forget his guilt. Eventually, Amir and his father flee Afghanistan after the Russians invade and Amir takes his tragic memories to America to start a new life. Unfortunately, his debt to Hassan must be paid and he returns to his country to find Hassan's.....

## THEMES

The theme of **strength of character** is the most prevalent theme. Amir commits terrible sins against his friend and half-brother, Hassan. The story of what he does and how he seeks and finds atonement is a lesson for everyone who wants to do find a way to be good again.

The theme of **the resilience of the human spirit** is also an important idea. Even though Amir has committed these sins, the inner strength that he had all along, but thought was somehow missing from his character, breaks through to allow him to find Sohrab and free him from the clutches of Assef. In this ....

Many additional themes are identified and discussed in the complete summary.

## MOOD

At times, the mood is tragic, filled with despair, and very sad; at other times, it is .....

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Khaled Hosseini was born on March 4, 1965. He is the oldest of five children. His father worked for the Afghan Foreign Consul and his mother taught Farsi and history at a girls' high school in Kabul.

Kabul, Afghanistan is the boyhood home of Khaled Hosseini, as it is for his protagonist, Amir. He also incorporates in his story the same time period in which he, the author, grew up – the 1960s through the present day.

In the early 1970s, Khaled's family moved to Tehran, Iran when his father was assigned to a diplomatic post at the Afghan Embassy in Iran. They returned home to Kabul in 1973. In 1976 his family moved to Paris, France, where his father was a diplomat at the Afghan Embassy. They were to return home to Afghanistan in 1980, when the Russians invaded his country. His father was recalled home after the invasion, but decided to, ask for political asylum in the United States and received it.

As a result, Hosseini ended up in San Jose, California. They struggled to make ends meet for a while, as they had lost all of their property in Afghanistan and had to start over. His father worked .....

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

### CHAPTER 1

#### Summary

The narrator begins the story by proclaiming, “I became what I am today at the age of twelve.” He describes a mysterious crumbling mud wall and an alley beside a frozen creek in the year 1975. He affirms that he has been “peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years.”

The narrator then tells us that he had received a telephone call from his friend, Rahim Khan, in Pakistan. To him, it isn't just Rahim Khan on the line; it is his past which is filled with sins for which he never atoned. After he hangs up on the call, he goes for a walk along Spreckels Lake on the northern edge of Golden Gate Park where he sees a pair of kites soaring in the sky. They remind him of Hassan, the harelipped (*cleft palate, a congenital abnormality*) kite runner who had once told the narrator, “For you a thousand times over.” He replays the last words of the telephone conversation from Rahim Khan, “There is a way to be good again.” All the names of that time in 1975 flood back into his mind, the time when everything changed and he became who he is today.

## Notes

We do not yet know our narrator's name, but we do know some significant things about him: he lives in San Francisco and is of Middle Eastern descent; the year 1975, when he was twelve years old, was a pivotal time in his life; and there was a young man who was an important part of his life, a young man named Hassan who had a harelip and who seems to have been inordinately devoted to our narrator. This chapter then prepares us for an extraordinary story about to unfold.

## CHAPTER 2

### Summary

This chapter opens with the narrator's childhood memory of him and Hassan climbing the poplar tree in the driveway of his father's home and using a mirror to reflect sunlight into the windows of the neighbors' houses. He describes their boyish misbehavior in a fond way and also describes Hassan as having a face of a Chinese doll chiseled from hardwood. The face is marred by the harelip as through "the Chinese doll maker's instrument may have slipped." It's also obvious that the narrator takes advantage of Hassan who he says would never deny him anything. Some of things he asks him to do are wrong, but Hassan never blames the narrator, always accepting responsibility himself.

The narrator tells us he lives with his father, his *baba*, in the most beautiful house in his district in the northern part of Kabul, Afghanistan. His father is wealthy and influential, but it is apparent that he doesn't provide the narrator with the time the boy would like with him. He describes many of the pictures in their home, including one of his father with King Nadir Shah in 1931 and one with his best friend and business partner, Rahim Khan. His father holds the narrator close as a baby in the picture, but his little hand is curled around the finger of Rahim Khan.

On the south end of the garden behind his father's house sits a modest mud hut, where Hassan lives with his father, Ali. Hassan had been born there just one year after the narrator's mother had died giving birth to him. In the eighteen years that the narrator lived in the house, he had only been inside that hut a handful of times. Hassan's mother, Sanaubar, left him and his father when she decided to run off with a clan of traveling singers and dancers. The narrator wonders if Hassan ever dreams of his mother or aches for her like the narrator aches for his mother.

Some of the narrator's earliest memories of Hassan are of the discrimination he faces because he is *Hazara*. Hazaras were in the minority, because they were *Shi'a* (*Shiite*) Muslims and not *Sunni* Muslims. They were identified by their "Chinese-like" faces, because they were of Mongol descent.

The narrator also tells us about Ali, Hassan's father, who has two congenital deformities: his lower facial muscles are paralyzed, leaving him unable to smile, and forced to show his feelings with his eyes; and he had suffered through polio and his right leg was atrophied, forcing him to swing the weak leg in an arc as he walked. The narrator used to follow Ali through the streets and mimic his walk, but Ali never said anything ever. The neighborhood children were afraid of him and called him *Babalu*, or Boogeyman.

The narrator never knew much about the Hazara, because his history books seldom said anything about these people. Then, he discovered in one of his mother's old books an entire chapter about how his people, the *Pashtun*, had persecuted and oppressed the Hazara. When he shows the chapter to his history teacher, the man just wrinkles his nose and comments that the Shi'a way is to pass themselves off as martyrs. When he said the word Shi'a, he pronounced it like it was a disease.

**For the complete study guide: <http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>**

The narrator remembers that he heard that Hassan's mother had taunted Ali just like the neighborhood kids had done. What's more, at Hassan's birth, seeing the harelip, she had sneered that Ali now had his own idiot child to smile for him. She had refused to even hold her baby and five days later, she was gone. As a result, the narrator's father had hired the same woman who was nursing him to nurse Hassan, a blue-eyed Hazara woman from Bamiyan. Ali would always sing the song she had sung to the two babies and would then remind them both that there was a brotherhood between people who had fed from the same breast, a kinship that not even time could break.

The narrator and Hassan had done everything together from the beginning. His first word was Baba, but Hassan's was Amir, the narrator's name. The narrator believes that the foundation for what happened in 1975 and all that followed was already laid in their first words.

### Notes

This chapter introduces us to what obviously impacted greatly on Amir's life: his father, Ali, and Hassan; the fact that his mother died at his birth and Hassan's mother ran away; the fact that they are from two different social classes, Pashtun and Hazara; and the fact that he and Hassan fed at the same breast and that they believe in his country that that makes them brothers forever.

By telling us these things, he is preparing us for significant events that will involve these people and the things that happened to them from the time they were born. He is also, in a subtle way, telling us that all these events had molded him into the man that he somehow is ashamed of having become and that he still has time, as Rahim Khan had said, to "find a way to be good again." .....

## OVERALL ANALYSES

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Amir** - He is the narrator of the story who tells his how he grew up in Afghanistan and the sins he had committed against his friend and half-brother, Hassan. It is his journey to redemption that is the premise of this tale. We see that he is basically a good boy and man, but that he made.....

**Hassan** - He is the best and kindest character in the story. He is Amir's best friend and as Amir later learns, he is also his half-brother. He faces discrimination every day, because he is a Hazara, a minority whom the Pashtuns treat like slaves. The sins committed against him – being raped by Assef while Amir does nothing to help him – are immediately forgiven, because he loves Amir so much. Even when .....

**Baba** - He is Amir and Hassan's father, but because it would be shameful to admit Hassan, a Hazara, is his son, the secret remains hidden long after his death. In Amir's mind, he is larger than life, the man who was supposed to have wrestled a bear. But, in reality, he was a man tormented by his secrets. He dies in America, never again going home to his beloved Afghanistan. While he lives there, he.....

Additional characters are analyzed in the complete study guide.

### PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The story is a narrative from the viewpoint of Amir who tells about the sins he committed in his childhood and how he atoned for them as a man.

## THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

The theme of **strength of character** is the most prevalent theme. Amir commits terrible sins against his friend and half-brother, Hassan. The story of what he does and how he seeks and finds atonement is a lesson for everyone who wants to do find a way to be good again.

The theme of **the resilience of the human spirit** is also an important idea. Even though Amir has committed these sins, the inner strength that he had all along, but thought was somehow missing from his character, breaks through to allow him to find Sohrab and free him from the clutches of Assef. In this same way, when Sohrab falls into a great inner depression and tries to commit suicide, the spirit within him emerges and he finds his way to happiness again.....

Additional themes are identified and discussed in the complete summary.

## RISING ACTION

The rising action begins with the telephone call from Rahim Khan asking Amir to.....

## FALLING ACTION

After Assef is defeated, Amir must find a way to get him into the United States. He betrays Sohrab by asking him to go into an orphanage temporarily and Sohrab then tries to commit suicide. Amir.....

## POINT OF VIEW

It is written in first person point of view and narrated by Amir.

## OTHER ELEMENTS

There are several other literary devices that pop up at various times in the story. One of the most prevalent ones is **foreshadowing** which frequently presents clues of something that will happen later in the novel.

## FORSHADOWING

Some **examples of foreshadowing** include:

- 1.) The entire first chapter prepares us for Amir's return to Afghanistan to save Sohrab and atone for his sins against Hassan.
- 2.) His father presents Amir with wisdom that is also foreshadowing: he tells Amir that the mullahs would ruin Afghanistan and that the only sin is theft of any kind. When the Taliban take over Afghanistan, this foreshadowing is fulfilled: they steal the very soul from the people and their country.....

11 additional examples of foreshadowing are provided in the complete study guide.

## IRONY

Another element that is important to note is **irony** – when something happens, or is seen, or is heard that we may know, but the characters do not, or that appears opposite of what is expected. Some **examples of irony** include:

- 1.) It is ironic when Amir tells us that Baba paid to have plastic surgery done on Hassan's harelip and now he can smile. Yet, something will happen the next winter that makes Hassan stop smiling.....

13 additional examples of irony are discussed in the complete study guide.

## QUOTES - IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS

The following quotations are important at various points in the story:

(Riverhead Books, The Berkley Publishing Group, New York, New York, 2003)

1.) **“I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years.”** (pg. 1)

Amir tells us this as he opens his story and prepares us for the time he betrayed his best friend Hassan in an alley in Kabul.

2.) **“There is a way to be good again.”** (pg. 2)

Rahim Khan said this to Amir to encourage him to help Hassan’s son escape Afghanistan.....

14 additional quotations are analyzed in the complete summary.

## SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS / IMAGERY / SYMBOLS

Other elements that are present in this novel are **symbols and metaphors**. Symbols are the use of some unrelated idea to represent something else. Metaphors are direct comparisons made between characters and ideas. There are many symbols and metaphors used by the author such as:

1.) The fact that two boys feed at the same breast is symbolic for brotherhood.

2.) The stories about Rostan and Sohrab in the *Shahnamah* symbolize the goodness and heroic qualities of Hassan and the characteristics to which Amir aspires.....

13 additional items are discussed in the complete summary.

## IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

**Title:** *The Kite Runner*

**Author:** Khaled Hosseini

**Date Published:** 2003

**Meaning of the Title:** It refers first to Hassan who runs down the kite cut by Amir in the tournament. It also refers to Amir who must make up for betraying his friend by.....

**Setting:** Kabul, Afghanistan and Fremont, California from 1975 to the.....

**Protagonist:** Amir, the narrator of the story, who details his sins against his.....

Additional key elements are outlined in the complete summary

## STUDY QUESTIONS / MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

1.) Rahim Khan told Amir that he

- had time to be the man his father wanted him to be.
- had the chance to do good again.
- had to come to Pakistan to reclaim his father’s house.

2.) Hassan was a member of the minority class called

- Pashtuns
- Naans
- Hazaras.....

13 additional questions and answers are provided in the complete study guide.

**For the complete study guide: <http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>**

**ANSWER KEY**

1.) b 2.) c .....

**ESSAY TOPICS / BOOK REPORT IDEAS**

1. Analyze Amir's character as he grows up in Afghanistan. What kind of boy was he? Would he have been someone you would have wanted to know? Why?
  2. Discuss the class system that exists between the Hazara and the Pashtun. How is it similar to the racism that has existed in our country?.....
- 9 additional items are provided in the complete study guide.

Copyright ©2005 TheBestNotes.com.

Reprinted with permission of TheBestNotes.com. All Rights Reserved.

Any distribution without the written consent of TheBestNotes.com is strictly prohibited.

***END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS***

**For the complete study guide: <http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>**