Senior Cycle English

Exploring Senior Cycle Texts
The Kite Runner- Khaled Hosseini

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini is a novel included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination 2028. It may be used as part of the Comparative at Ordinary Level or Higher Level.

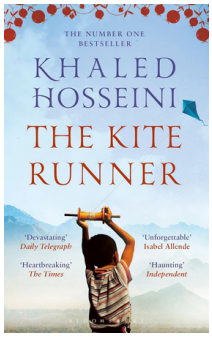

Image courtesy of Riverhead

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *The Kite Runner* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.

Scan the QR code or click here to access a Getting Started with Guide for this Text

Before you read (Teacher Guidance)

1. **Historical Snapshot Activity**

Mini-research on:

- Afghanistan before and after the Soviet invasion (1979)
- The rise of the Taliban

Students create:

- A timeline OR
- A headline newspaper front page

2. **Themes Anticipation Guide**

Give students statements to agree/disagree with:

- "You can never truly make up for past mistakes."
- "Loyalty is more important than honesty."
- "Social class determines your future."

Students move around the room (Agree/Disagree zones) and justify their opinions.

Extract

Background: The Kite Runner is a novel by Khaled Hosseini, set in Afghanistan before and after major political upheaval. It follows Amir, a young boy from a wealthy family, and his friendship with Hassan, his servant's son. The story explores themes of loyalty, betrayal, guilt, and redemption. In the opening, an older Amir reflects on a key childhood event that shaped his life.

I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975.1 remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbling mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years.

One day last summer, my friend Rahim Khan called from Pakistan. He asked me to come see him. Standing in the kitchen with the receiver to my ear, I knew it wasn't just Rahim Khan on the line. It was my past of unatoned sins. After I hung up, I went for a walk along Spreckels Lake on the northern edge of Golden Gate Park. The early-afternoon sun sparkled on the water where dozens of miniature boats sailed, propelled by a crisp breeze. Then I glanced up and saw a pair of kites, red with long blue tails, soaring in the sky. They danced high above the trees on the west end of the park, over the windmills, floating side by side like a pair of eyes looking down on San Francisco, the city I now call home. And suddenly Hassan's voice whispered in my head: _For you, a thousand times over._ Hassan the harelipped kite runner.

I sat on a park bench near a willow tree. I thought about something Rahim Khan said just before he hung up, almost as an after thought. -There is a way to be good again.-1 looked up at those twin kites. I thought about Hassan. Thought about Baba. Ali. Kabul. I thought of the life I had lived until the winter of 1975 came and changed everything. And made me what I am today.

(Hosseini, Khaled. The Kite Runner. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003.)

Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

The following may be completed in written or oral format, as individuals or as part of a group activity.

1. How does the opening line “I became what I am today at the age of twelve” create curiosity about Amir’s past?
2. What does the phrase “the past claws its way out” suggest about Amir’s feelings and the theme of memory in the extract?
3. How does the image of the two kites contribute to the mood of the extract and hint at important relationships in the novel?
4. Compare the opening of this novel to another text you have studied. You may like to focus on characterisation, setting and mood.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following question may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel.

1. **Personal Essay**

Write a personal essay about a time when your past influenced your present, inspired by the idea that “the past claws its way out.” You may reflect on memory, regret, or how people change over time.

2. **Podcast Script**

Write a script for a short podcast episode exploring the theme of guilt and redemption in young people’s lives. You may refer to the extract as a starting point but should include your own insights, examples, or stories.

3. **Magazine Feature Article**

Write a feature article for a magazine titled “Can We Ever Escape Our Past?” In your article, discuss how past experiences shape identity, using examples from real life, society, or literature.

4. **Speech**

Write a speech for your classmates on the importance of facing your mistakes and learning from them. You may draw on ideas suggested in the extract.

5. **Short Story**

Write a short story that begins with the line: “I knew at that moment everything had changed.” Your story should explore a turning point in a character’s life.

6. **Reflective Blog Post**

Write a blog post aimed at teenagers about friendship and loyalty, inspired by the relationship hinted at between Amir and Hassan in the extract.

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