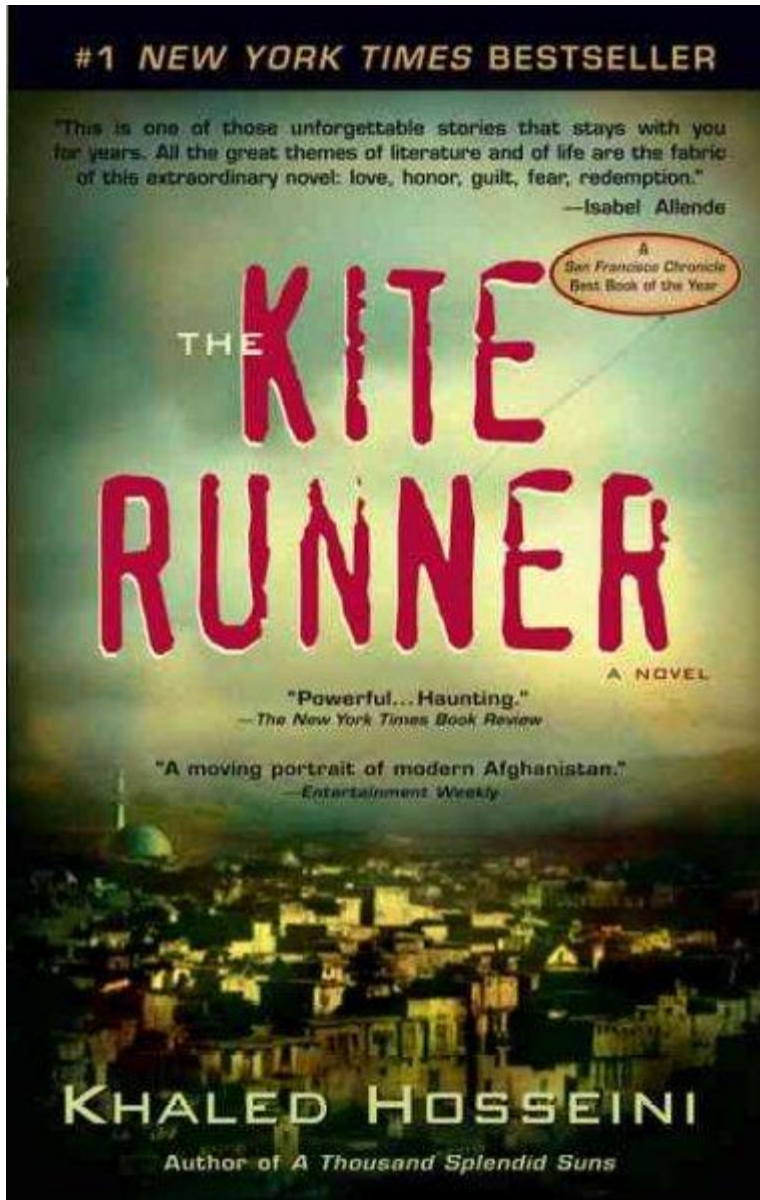


Ann Arbor District Library: Book Club to Go Discussion Guide

About the Book



Traces the unlikely friendship of a wealthy Afghan youth and a servant's son, in a tale that spans the final days of Afghanistan's monarchy through the atrocities of the present day.

About the Author Source: <http://www.khaledhosseini.com/hosseini-bio.html>

Khaled Hosseini was born in 1965 into an affluent Afghan family in the northern part of Kabul, son of a diplomat and oldest of five children. In 1976, his family moved to Paris, where his father had been posted to the Afghan embassy and where the family would still be living in 1978 when the Soviet Union invaded

Afghanistan. The Hosseini family was granted political asylum in the United States and emigrated to San Jose, California in 1980.

Life in America was difficult for Hosseini's parents, who had been successful professionals in Afghanistan. Khaled Hosseini remembers the poverty and frequently wounded pride that characterized those early years in America, memories that made their way into his first novel as well:

It was very hard for them. My father had been a diplomat, and he took a job as a driving instructor. There were a few incidents, soon after we'd arrived. Once the doorbell rang and Boy Scouts came in from the Salvation Army, with hand-me-down clothes, shoes, a Christmas tree -- they just kind of barged in. It was mortifying. We were grateful of course. But mortified. It was a sobering experience. "This is who we are here." (San Francisco Chronicle, August 10, 2003)

Eager to repay his parents for all their sacrifices, Hosseini was an able and ambitious student, graduating from Santa Clara University and the UC San Diego School of Medicine. In the wake of a successful novel, Hosseini finds himself frequently asked about his decision to practice medicine, a decision he explains this way: "I was the first-born in a family of five children, and my parents were immigrants who sacrificed for me and I wanted to honor that sacrifice. I was adept in science and wanted to work with people, so it's an honorable profession which has been satisfying and good for me" (Mercury News, June 21, 2003).

Hosseini didn't have time to think about writing, or much of anything else, during the busy years of medical school and residency, but once settled into his medical practice, Hosseini describes the idea for a short story popping into his head in 1999 while driving. He wrote the story when he got home, and that one was followed by several more, some of which were published in small press magazines. His father-in-law was particularly struck by one of his unpublished stories, but felt it should be longer. "So I started developing it into a novel. That was in March of 2001. I wrote it pretty steadily until 9/11. Then I put it away." Despite his initial fear that Afghans would be persecuted and his horror at Afghanistan's involvement in the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Hosseini was heartened by the outpouring of support he received: "People were incredibly gracious. Patients would leave me voice mails saying, Hope you are OK, hope nobody's bothering you, hope you're [sic] family's all right. After a couple of months I went back to the book, and finished it last June. I sold it in September" (San Francisco Chronicle, August 10, 2003)

The book he sold was, of course, *The Kite Runner*, which was published to critical acclaim in 2003. Commercial and critical success came as a surprise, and were not among the dreams that Hosseini had for his book. He told NPR's Liane Hansen what he hoped the novel might be able to accomplish:

Well, my primary concern as a writer is I hope this story resonates with people and that it emotionally is a story that people will think about long after it's done. But I also, from more than just a literary interest, hope that it gets people to keep talking about Afghanistan and to remember that Afghanistan is still there, and that [. . .] Afghanistan still needs the long-term international commitment and so on. So if it achieves anything toward that end in even a small way, I think it will have been worthwhile. (NPR's Weekend Edition, July 27, 2003)

Reviews

Booklist

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.

School Library Journal

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.

Publishers Weekly * Starred Review *

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.

Library Journal Review * Starred Review *

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.

Kirkus * Starred Review *

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.

Literary Criticism

The Nation We Don't Know

Seated cross-legged at a low table in the Chopan Kebab House, one of Toronto's few Afghan restaurants, picking chunks of lamb from an improbably large plate of rice, Khaled Hosseini explains the importance of dining in Afghan culture.

"Eating meals is a very unifying experience," he says, "You're almost touching each other as you sit around a common platter eating with your hands. It's not the way we eat in the West. It's a much more lonely eating experience here."

The characters in Hosseini's first novel, *The Kite Runner*, feast often. At each momentous occasion, the Afghan characters that populate the book sit down for meals of "kofta and chicken qurma" or "chopan kabob, sholeh-goshti, and wild-orange rice." As they move from Afghanistan to America, and from wealth to poverty to middle-class, their food remains the one factor that does not change.

The Kite Runner is the story of Amir, the son of a wealthy businessman, who is growing up in Kabul during his country's zenith in the '70s. The young boy befriends Hassan, the son of his father's Hazara servant and a child of pre-natural grace. Threatened by his companion's perfection, Amir betrays him, and that act haunts him as he flees to America after the Soviets invade in 1979, becomes a successful novelist, marries, and finally returns to Afghanistan to make reparations.

Amir narrates the book, but the idea for the story began with Hassan. "I started with the one character," Hosseini explains. "I'd been thinking about this angelic Hazara boy who is very deeply loyal to his master for a long time, but the story came to me when I thought of giving Hassan an alter-ego, and making the alter-ego as imperfect as Hassan is perfect. Whereas Hassan knows exactly what he wants in life, the alter-ego is troubled and wrenched with insecurities."

The alter-ego became Amir and Amir, in turn, became the lead character. Hosseini says he realized Amir's deep flaws made him a more interesting narrator than the idealized Hassan. "I thought he would be the more dynamic because he has a lot of room to grow," he says.

Amir's story mirrors Hosseini's own biography. The son of an Afghan diplomat, Hosseini was living with his family in Paris when the Soviets invaded. Faced with execution if they returned home, the family sought political asylum in the United States, eventually settling in Northern California. While Amir and his father also settle in the Bay Area, the author cautions against drawing direct parallels between himself and his lead character.

"It is written in the first person, so it's natural to assume it's autobiographical," explains the novelist, "And his Afghanistan and mine was the one that was peaceful and harmonious. And we both came to America after the Soviet war started. So in broad strokes, it is autobiographical, but it is much more fictional than most people realize."

Among the differences between Hosseini and Amir is that while Amir quickly becomes a successful novelist, his creator is a physician by trade. Indeed, Hosseini only started writing seriously as a reprieve from his medical duties.

"Medicine can be rewarding, but it can also be frustrating, because sometimes the rewards are very small," he explains, "if you drop someone's blood pressure by 20 points, that's a victory. And medicine is also a very regimented, linear thing. So I was aching to do something different on the side and tap into the parts of my brain that were laying dormant," he says.

To satisfy his craving, Hosseini started getting up at 5 a.m., long before his wife and two young children, to write. He started with suspense thrillers and Victorian tales of gothic horror, but soon moved on to short pieces of literary fiction. "Then, after a year and a half of writing, I started to believe I could maybe even write a book," he says.

Hosseini's book offers compelling insight into Afghani culture. The author says his depictions of Buzkashi games (a sort of polo match played with a goat carcass instead of a ball) and kite flying tournaments were written to serve his plot, but finds it tremendously satisfying to explain Afghan life to a Western audience.

"For most folks in the West, Afghanistan is often a sound bite on CNN about the Taliban, or the Soviet War or maybe land mines," he says, "But I don't think a lot of people have a sense of the culture. Some people don't know it snows in Kabul. They think it's all deserts and hot."

He adds that the book also serves as a reminder that Afghanistan was not always the ravaged nation now featured on the evening news.

"A lot of people forget that Afghanistan lived in harmony and peace for decades. All these different tribes found a way of getting along and lived relatively peacefully for a long, long time," he says.

Given that his characters constantly discuss (and sometimes rant about) Soviet rule, the Taliban regime and politics in the Middle East, I ask if the book is a political novel. He says the politics of the book belong not to him, but to his characters.

"I think characters after a while become real people to you," Hosseini responds, "and just like real people have religious allegiances and a favourite colour and a favourite food, they also have politics. For example, Amir's father has his own view of America and his own view of Israel and his own view of Afghans. But it wasn't meant as a political book."

Hosseini returned to his homeland last March for his first visit in several decades. He says he was shocked by Kabul's shattered infrastructure and its streets filled with orphans, widows and guns.

"I got into a car from the airport, and the driver had an AK-47 just lying on the floor," he recalls.

The author says he was also surprised to find an old relative in exactly the same place he left her.

"There was an aunt of my father's, who I last saw maybe 30 years ago," he recalls, "she lived in the house in Kabul, and when we said 'good-bye' she was in her bedroom, lying on her mattress and smoking a cigarette. So when I went back to Kabul, I looked for the house and finally found it. I went in and she was sitting in the same room, seemingly on the same mattress, smoking a cigarette. So I introduced myself and she seemed underwhelmed to see me. But then I told her I was a doctor, and she really perked up. She wanted to talk about her health."

As we finish our kebobs and rice, I ask Hosseini if he plans to return to his medical practice now that he is a promising novelist.

"My mother asked me that same thing," he chuckles, "and she had an answer she wanted to hear. I'm not giving up medicine at this point. It's a honourable job. And, uh, you know, writing is not that most dependable of incomes."

Source: Hosseini, Khaled, and James Cowan. "The Nation We Don't Know." National Post 5.211 (5 July 2003): PT6. Rpt. in Contemporary Literary Criticism. Vol. 254. Detroit: Gale, 2008. Literature Resource Center.
<http://www.aadl.org/research/browse/books>

Discussion Questions *Source: Reading Group Guide*

1. The novel begins with Amir's memory of peering down an alley, looking for Hassan who is kite running for him. As Amir peers into the alley, he witnesses a tragedy. The novel ends with Amir kite running for Hassan's son, Sohrab, as he begins a new life with Amir in America. Why do you think the author chooses to frame the novel with these scenes? Refer to the following passage: "Afghans like to say: Life goes on, unmindful of beginning, end...crisis or catharsis, moving forward like a slow, dusty caravan of kochis [nomads]." How is this significant to the framing of the novel?

2. The strong underlying force of this novel is the relationship between Amir and Hassan. Discuss their friendship. Why is Amir afraid to be Hassan's true friend?

Why does Amir constantly test Hassan's loyalty? Why does he resent Hassan? After the kite running tournament, why does Amir no longer want to be Hassan's friend?

3. Early in Amir and Hassan's friendship, they often visit a pomegranate tree where they spend hours reading and playing. "One summer day, I used one of Ali's kitchen knives to carve our names on it: 'Amir and Hassan, the sultans of Kabul.' Those words made it formal: the tree was ours." In a letter to Amir later in the story, Hassan mentions that "the tree hasn't borne fruit in years." Discuss the significance of this tree.

4. We begin to understand early in the novel that Amir is constantly vying for Baba's attention and often feels like an outsider in his father's life, as seen in the following passage: "He'd close the door, leave me to wonder why it was always grown-ups time with him. I'd sit by the door, knees drawn to my chest. Sometimes I sat there for an hour, sometimes two, listening to their laughter, their chatter." Discuss Amir's relationship with Baba.

5. After Amir wins the kite running tournament, his relationship with Baba undergoes significant change. However, while they form a bond of friendship, Amir is still unhappy. What causes this unhappiness and how has Baba contributed to Amir's state of mind? Eventually, the relationship between the two returns to the way it was before the tournament, and Amir laments "we actually deceived ourselves into thinking that a toy made of tissue paper, glue, and bamboo could somehow close the chasm between us." Discuss the significance of this passage.

6. As Amir remembers an Afghan celebration in which a sheep must be sacrificed, he talks about seeing the sheep's eyes moments before its death. "I don't know why I watch this yearly ritual in our backyard; my nightmares persist long after the bloodstains on the grass have faded. But I always watch, I watch because of that look of acceptance in the animal's eyes. Absurdly, I imagine the animal understands. I imagine the animal sees that its imminent demise is for a higher purpose." Why do you think Amir recalls this memory when he witnesses Hassan's tragedy in the alleyway? Amir recollects the memory again toward the end of the novel when he sees Sohrab in the home of the Taliban. Discuss the image in the context of the novel.

7. America acts as a place for Amir to bury his memories and a place for Baba to mourn his. In America, there are "homes that made Baba's house in Wazir Akbar Khan look like a servant's hut." What is ironic about this statement? What is the function of irony in this novel?

8. What is the significance of the irony in the first story that Amir writes? After hearing Amir's story, Hassan asks, "Why did the man kill his wife? In fact, why did he ever have to feel sad to shed tears? Couldn't he have just smelled an onion?" How is his reaction to the story a metaphor for Amir's life? How does this story epitomize the difference in character between Hassan and Amir?

9. Why is Baba disappointed by Amir's decision to become a writer? During their argument about his career path, Amir thinks to himself: "I would stand my ground, I decided. I didn't want to sacrifice for Baba anymore. The last time I had done that, I had damned myself." What has Amir sacrificed for Baba? How has Amir "damned himself"?

10. Compare and contrast the relationships of Soraya and Amir and their fathers. How have their upbringings contributed to these relationships?

11. Discuss how the ever-changing politics of Afghanistan affect each of the characters in the novel.

12. On Amir's trip back to Afghanistan, he stays at the home of his driver, Farid. Upon leaving he remarks: "Earlier that morning, when I was certain no one was looking, I did something I had done twenty-six years earlier: I planted a fistful of crumpled money under the mattress." Why is this moment so important in Amir's journey?

13. Throughout the story, Baba worries because Amir never stands up for himself. When does this change?

14. Amir's confrontation with Assef in Wazir Akar Khan marks an important turning point in the novel. Why does the author have Amir, Assef, and Sohrab all come together in this way? What is the significance of the scar that Amir develops as a result of the confrontation? Why is it important in Amir's journey toward forgiveness and acceptance?

15. While in the hospital in Peshawar, Amir has a dream in which he sees his father wrestling a bear: "They role over a patch of grass, man and beast...they fall to the ground with a loud thud and Baba is sitting on the bear's chest, his fingers digging in its snout. He looks up at me, and I see. He's me. I am wrestling the bear." Why is this dream so important at this point in the story? What does this dream finally help Amir realize?

16. Amir and Hassan have a favorite story. Does the story have the same meaning for both men? Why does Hassan name his son after one of the

characters in the story?

17. Baba and Amir know that they are very different people. Often it disappoints both of them that Amir is not the son that Baba has hoped for. When Amir finds out that Baba has lied to him about Hassan, he realizes that "as it turned out, Baba and I were more alike than I'd never known." How does this make Amir feel about his father? How is this both a negative and positive realization?

18. When Amir and Baba move to the States their relationship changes, and Amir begins to view his father as a more complex man. Discuss the changes in their relationship. Do you see the changes in Baba as tragic or positive?

19. Discuss the difference between Baba and Ali and between Amir and Hassan. Are Baba's and Amir's betrayals and similarities in their relationships of their servants (if you consider Baba's act a betrayal) similar or different? Do you think that such betrayals are inevitable in the master/servant relationship, or do you feel that they are due to flaws in Baba's and Amir's characters, or are they the outcome of circumstances and characters?

Multimedia

An Afghan Story: Khaled Hosseini and 'Kite Runner' (Radio Broadcast)

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4795618>

A discussion on NPR's *Fresh Air*.

The Kite Runner (Movie)

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1309124>

(Call number: DVD Drama Kite)

In a divided country on the verge of war, two childhood friends, Amir and Hassan, are about to be torn apart forever. It's a glorious afternoon in Kabul and the skies are bursting with the exhilarating joy of a kite-fighting tournament. But in the aftermath of the day's victory, one boy's fearful act of betrayal will mark their lives forever and set in motion an epic quest for redemption. Now, after twenty years of living in America, Amir returns to a perilous Afghanistan under the Taliban's iron-fisted rule to face the secrets that still haunt him and take one last daring chance to set things right.

Further Reading

***Book Club To Go!* *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1283731>

(Call number: Fiction Hosseini)

Since its publication in 2007, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has shipped more than three million copies. The bestselling adult novel of 2007, it spent fifteen weeks at #1 on the New York Times bestseller list and remained on the list for an

impressive forty-nine weeks. Propelled by the same superb instinct for storytelling that made *The Kite Runner* a beloved classic, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is at once an incredible chronicle of thirty years of Afghan history and a deeply moving story of family, friendship, faith, and the salvation to be found in love. Now, in this lavishly designed edition of the novel, the narrative is enhanced by expressive photos that capture the people and culture of the region in vivid detail and reflect the book's powerful themes, so apt for our times: the passionate search for family, home, acceptance, a healthy society, and a promising future-regardless of the obstacles.

Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books, not Bombs, in Afghanistan and Pakistan by Greg Mortenson

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1348838>

(Call number: 371.822 Mo)

In this dramatic first-person narrative, Greg Mortenson picks up where "*Three Cups of Tea*" left off in 2003, recounting his relentless, ongoing efforts to establish schools for girls in Afghanistan; his extensive work in Azad Kashmir and Pakistan after a massive earthquake hit the region in 2005; and the unique ways he has built relationships with Islamic clerics, militia commanders, and tribal leaders even as he was dodging shootouts with feuding Afghan warlords and surviving an eight-day armed abduction by the Taliban.

Read-Alikes

Crescent by Diana Abu-Jaber

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1201295>

(Call number: Fiction Abu-Jaber)

Praised by critics for her first novel, "*Arabian Jazz*," Diana Abu-Jaber now weaves with spellbinding magic a multidimensional love story set in the Arab-American community of Los Angeles.

The Swallows of Kabul by Yasmina Khadra

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1218322>

(Call number: Fiction Khadra)

Set in Kabul under the rule of the Taliban, this extraordinary novel takes readers into the lives of two couples: Mohsen, who comes from a family of wealthy shopkeepers whom the Taliban has destroyed; Zunaira, his wife, exceedingly beautiful, who was once a brilliant teacher and is now no longer allowed to leave her home without an escort or covering her face. Intersecting their world is Atiq, a prison keeper, a man who has sincerely adopted the Taliban ideology and struggles to keep his faith, and his wife, Musarrat, who once rescued Atiq and is now dying of sickness and despair.

Anil's Ghost by Michael Ondaatje

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1166914>

(Call number: Fiction Ondaatje)

With his first novel since the internationally acclaimed *The English Patient*, Booker Prize--winning author Michael Ondaatje gives us a work displaying all the richness of imagery and language and the piercing emotional truth that we have come to know as the hallmarks of his writing. *Anil's Ghost* transports us to Sri Lanka, a country steeped in centuries of tradition, now forced into the late twentieth century by the ravages of civil war. Into this maelstrom steps Anil Tissera, a young woman born in Sri Lanka, educated in England and America, who returns to her homeland as a forensic anthropologist sent by an international human rights group to discover the source of the organized campaigns of murder engulfing the island.

The Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1058351>

(Call number: Fiction Rushdie)

Just before dawn one winter's morning, a hijacked jumbo jet blows apart high above the English Channel. Two figures fall to the sea, later washing up, alive, on a beach. It was an ambiguous miracle, for both seem to have acquired curious changes. Both have been chosen as opponents in the eternal wrestling match between Good and Evil.

The Bookseller of Kabul by Asne Seierstad

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1212753>

(Call number: Fiction Seierstad)

This mesmerizing portrait of a proud man who, through three decades and successive repressive regimes, heroically braved persecution to bring books to the people of Kabul has elicited extraordinary praise throughout the world and become a phenomenal international bestseller. *The Bookseller of Kabul* is startling in its intimacy and its details - a revelation of the plight of Afghan women and a window into the surprising realities of daily life in today's Afghanistan.

Summaries from AADL.org Catalog

Extra!

Part of what solidified the boys' childhood friendship was flying kites. Have any group members ever had a significant experience while flying a kite?