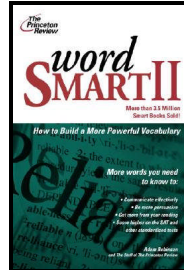


The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

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Approximately \$12.00



The Princeton Review's Word Smart
by Adam Robinson

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The Kite Runner

This stunning 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, 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.

Guiding Questions

What are guiding questions? They are questions that probe for deeper meaning and set the stage for further questioning by fostering the development of critical thinking skills and higher order capabilities such as problem-solving and understanding complex systems. Think about the guiding questions below as you read this novel over the summer.

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 two 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 nomads." How is this significant to the framing of the novel?

2. 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.
3. America acts as a place for Amir to bury his memories and a place for Baba to mourn his. In America, there were “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?
4. Compare and contrast the relationships of Soraya and Amir and their fathers. How have their upbringings contributed to these relationships?
5. When Amir and Baba move to the States their relationship changes, and Amir begins to view his father as a complex man. Discuss the changes in their relationship. Do you see the changes in Baba as tragic or positive? Why?

Princeton Review’s Word Smart II

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