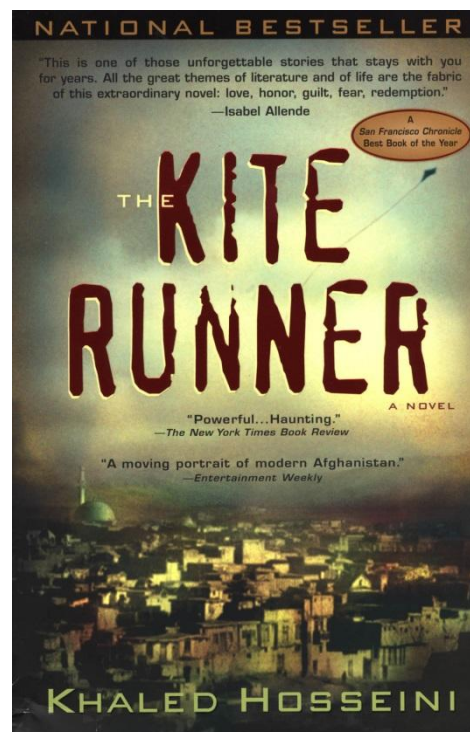


The American Place Theatre

Literature to Life

Teacher's Resource Guide

A companion guide to the *Literature to Life* production of:



The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

Getting to Know Afghanistan

50,000-20,000 BCE: Archaeological evidence indicates human civilization is beginning to thrive in the area that will become known as Afghanistan.

500 BCE: Persian leader Darius the Great extends his empire into modern-day Afghanistan.

329 BCE: Alexander the Great conquers Persia and Afghanistan. Greek rule continues in much of the area during the next two centuries, although unrest and revolts are common.

50 AD: The Kushan empire and its Buddhist doctrines, begin to establish themselves in the region.

550: After years of relative independence, Persian forces reassert control over the area but continue to face intermittent revolts from native Afghan tribes.

652: Arabs introduce the region to Islam, a religion that becomes dominant.

962: The Islamic era begins with the Ghaznavid founded by Turks and giving rise to Afghanistan's emerging role politically and culturally in Islamic civilization.

1030: The Ghaznavid empire begins to fall apart after the death of Mahmud of Ghazni.

1370: A series of ventures to seize competing kingdoms and intermittent revolts mark the 14th and 15th centuries.

1504: Babur, a founder of India's Moghul dynasty, takes control of Kabul and, in time, much of modern-day Afghanistan. Moghul rule introduces another religion, Hinduism, to the country and sets off more attempted nationalist revolts.

1600s: On the heels of the nationalist movement of the previous century led by Bayazid Roshan, another nationalist-minded revolt—this one headed by Afghan warrior-poet Khushhal Khan Khattak - begins against the Moghul government in the late 1600s.

1708: Mir Wais, considered by some the father of Afghan independence, successfully takes over Andahar in southern Afghanistan. His son, Mir Mahmud, invades Persia and liberates Herat. But by 1736, the Persians start to re-establish their grip on the region.

1750s: Ahmad Shah Durrani begins his rule, consolidating and enlarging Afghanistan while also governing much of India. But peace will be the exception over the next 100 years, as local leaders fend off Persian and Sikh invasions and fight amongst themselves.

1836: The British, in corroboration with ex-king Shah Shuja, invade Afghanistan in response to growing Russian and Persian influence in the region. Afghan forces fight fervently against British forces, and the nation reasserts its independence.

1878: The British launch their second war against Afghanistan, but withdraw in the face of strong resistance two years later.

1885: Russian forces seize territory in northern Afghanistan. The Russians will keep most of the area, but thereafter pledge to respect Afghanistan's territorial integrity. Eight years later, another boundary agreement—this one between Afghanistan and British India—leaves several Afghan tribal areas in what is now Pakistan.

1921: A third Anglo-Afghan war breaks out after anti-British forces assassinate the king. But by 1919, the war-weary British relinquish control over Afghanistan's foreign affairs. The new king, Amānullāh Khan, establishes diplomatic relations with several major nations and introduces reforms aimed at modernizing the country. But the moves alienate many tribal and religious leaders and generate political turmoil

1949: Afghanistan's Parliament refuses to recognize new boundaries drawn by Great Britain establishing an independent Pakistan.

1973: Daoud Khan and the Afghan Communist Party overthrow the ruling Afghan government and long-time king Mohammad Zahir Shah. Daoud abolishes the monarchy, presents a new constitution, ousts suspected opponents from the government and institutes economic and social reforms.

1978: Daoud is killed and his government falls in a communist-backed coup. Mass killings, arrests and tortures ensue, and the Afghan guerrilla (Mujahidin) movement is born.

1979: Anti-communist forces take control, prompting a Soviet invasion.

1984: The Mujahideen, known by supporters as "Freedom Fighters," begin receiving military and logistical assistance from the United States and other countries.

1988: The Soviet Union and United States sign the Geneva Accords, calling for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the return of refugees without fear of persecution. But the Mujahideen do not take part in the negotiations, and do not accept it.

1992: The Mujahideen take over Kabul and declare Afghanistan liberated. They form an Islamic state, headed by the Islamic Jihad Council and Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani.

1994: The Taliban militia is born and begins to rise up against Rabbani's government and its supporters. Over the next several years, the group will become a dominant political force, although by 2001 only three other countries recognize its legitimacy.

2001: Afghanistan interim government is formed.

2002: Hamid Karzai becomes President and peacekeeping forces enter the country.

2004: A new constitution is introduced.

Pre-Show Activity: An Introduction to the Author

Objective:

The students will be introduced to author Khaled Hosseini and his novel, *The Kite Runner*. Students will use spatial relationships to the physical book to communicate their initial reactions to text.

Common Core Anchor Standards Addressed:

SL.CCR.3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

L.CCR.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

1. Have volunteers read the following aloud:

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1965. He is the oldest of five children, and his mother was a teacher of Farsi and History at a large girls high school in Kabul. In 1976, Khaled's family was relocated to Paris, France, where his father was assigned a diplomatic post in the Afghan embassy. The assignment would return the Hosseini family in 1980, but by then Afghanistan had already witnessed a bloody communist coup and the Soviet invasion. Khaled's family, instead, asked for and was granted political asylum in the U.S. He moved to San Jose, CA, with his family in 1980. He attended Santa Clara University and graduated from the UC San Diego School of Medicine. He has been in practice as an internist since 1996. He is married and has two children (a boy and a girl, Haris and Farah). *The Kite Runner* is his first novel.

Excerpt from www.khaledhosseini.com

Dear Friends,

Many readers see my novel, The Kite Runner, as a book about Afghanistan, a story of its violent recent past, its tragedies and upheavals, culture and resilient people. They tell me that this book opened for them an intimate window into my troubled homeland, and that news stories about Afghanistan suddenly registered with them on a deep and personal level. They ask me if this was my intent in writing this book. And I tell them it was. But not that first day, in March of 2001, when I sat to write the opening words of this book. For me, writing has always been, first and foremost, about storytelling. The Kite Runner came about simply because I was bewitched by a story. A story of guilt and redemption, brutality and kindness, sin and forgiveness, a story of the doomed friendship between two boys, one rich, one poor, one flawed, the other pure, with Afghanistan and her own tale of brutality and kindness as the backdrop. It was always, first and last, about story. And stage has always been a unique and powerful medium for storytelling, direct and intimate, organic and spontaneous. And so I thank American Place Theatre for selecting the story of Amir and Hassan, two boys who lived in my mind and are dear to my heart. I am grateful and thrilled. Thank you for honoring me with this performance tonight.

Khaled Hosseini

Letter written to The American Place Theatre - April 12, 2005

2. Spatial Activity:

The group forms a circle, and a copy of *The Kite Runner* is placed at the center. Each person has the opportunity to place his/her body in relation to the book, thus expressing something about how they feel based on the information they have so far. For example, a person who still feels

s/he knows nothing about the book, but is interested in finding more out, may stand at a distance from the book and stare at it. A person who thinks s/he is going to love it may cradle it in his/her arms. A person who thinks it's going to be boring may turn his/her back to the book.

Pre-Show Activity: Yes, No, Maybe Spectrogram

Objective: The students will make personal connections to the characters and themes in *The Kite Runner* by relating their experiences to the novel through a spectrogram activity.

Common Core Anchor Standards Addressed:

SL.CCR.1: *Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.*

SL.CCR.2: *Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.*

1. Students are told that the room is split up into three categories - Yes, No, and Maybe. A question will be asked, and they will respond by moving to one side of the room if the answer is "Yes," the other side if the answer is "No" and the middle part of the room if the answer is "Maybe, or I'm not Sure." The students can also stand anywhere on the spectrogram between "Yes" and "No."
2. Read questions aloud. Questions start off general and then advance to those thematically relevant to the novel *The Kite Runner*:
 - Have you heard of the novel *The Kite Runner*?
 - Do you know much about Afghanistan?
 - Do you think that you have much in common with a student of your age living in Afghanistan?
Do you have a close childhood friend from whom you've grown apart?
 - Do you have a close childhood friend with whom you still keep in touch?
 - Have you ever had a good friend who was in a different social class?
 - Have you ever had a secret that you didn't share with anyone?
 - Have you ever regretted a choice that you made?
 - Have you ever felt like a "bad person"?
 - Do you have a relative whom you admire?
 - Do you think all people have flaws?
 - Do you think it is ever okay to lie?

Reflection:

In small groups debate the last question, "Do you think it is ever okay to lie?" Have groups present their best arguments to the class. Have students defend a position opposite of their own views.

Pre-Show Activity: Tableaux

Objective: Students will collaborate to interpret text passages from *The Kite Runner* through physical images.

Common Core Standards Addressed:

R.CCR.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

R.CCR.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

NYS Arts Standard 1.2: Imitate experiences through pantomime, play making, dramatic play, story dramatization, storytelling, role-playing, improvisation, & guided playwriting.

Activity:

1. Participants are broken up into small groups. Each group receives an excerpt from *The Kite Runner* and is asked to either literally or abstractly create a tableau (frozen image) which captures the essence of the excerpt. The teacher defines “tableau” for the students as a silent frozen picture using the physical body.
2. Groups are given 10-minutes time to discuss their excerpt and collectively decide how to best capture its imagery. They decide which characters are present in the tableau and are encouraged to be as creative as they wish, since they have not yet seen the performance.
3. Groups will share their tableau with the class (possibly in chronological order). When the class yells out in unison, “1-2-3 Freeze,” the group freezes into their tableau.
4. As each group presents, the other participants try to figure out what is going on in the image. Encourage the actors to hold their image and not react to how the group responds.
5. Next, have participants think of a word or phrase that best describes what their character is feeling. Give them 30 seconds to think of something and then have them go back into their image. When tapped they will speak out a phrase or sentence which gives a clue as to who they are in the tableau or what their character may be feeling.

Examples of excerpts that can be used:

I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975. I 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.

Hassan and I used to climb the poplar trees in the driveway of my father's house and annoy our neighbors. I talked Hassan into firing walnuts with his slingshot at the neighbor's one-eyed German shepherd. Hassan never wanted to, but if I asked, really asked, he wouldn't deny me. Hassan never denied me anything. And he was deadly with his slingshot.

During the school year, we have a daily routine. By the time I drag myself out of bed and lumber to the bathroom, Hassan has already washed the morning namaz with Ali, and prepared my breakfast. I eat and complain about my homework, Hassan makes my bed, polishes my shoes,

irons for the day, packs my books and pencils. I hear him singing to himself in the foyer as he irons, singing old Hazara songs in his nasal voice. Baba and I drive off in his black Ford Mustang.

At home I open the door to the smoky study Baba and Rahim Khan are drinking tea and listening to the news on the radio. Their heads turn. Then a smile plays on my father's lips. He opens his arms. I put the kite down and walk into his thick hairy arms. I bury my face in the warmth of his chest and weep. Baba holds me close to him, rocking me back and forth. In his arms, I forget what I've done. And that is good.

Post-Show Activity: Role on the Wall

Objective: Students will explore the characters' inner feelings and external influences in *The Kite Runner*.

Common Core Anchor Standards Addressed:

R.CCR.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

R.CCR.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Exercise:

Students pick one character that they were introduced to in performance of *The Kite Runner*. Each student creates an outline of a body by drawing it onto a small poster board and decides which of the characters in the novel it represents.

Students are told that on the inside of the body they should write words or phrases that capture the internal world of the character including:

- Thoughts
- Beliefs
- Emotions
- Characteristics
- Secrets
- History

On the outside of the body, they are asked to write words or phrases that capture the external world of the character including:

- What people think of this character
- What this character shows to the world
- Physical appearance of the character
- External influences or environment
- People and situations that the character interacts with

Discussion:

1. What do these things tell us about this character?
2. What does this person struggle with? Are there internal conflicts or relationship tensions that influence their choices?
3. What questions do you still have about this person?

Post-Show Activity: Scene Writing

Objective: Students will practice creating original thematic written material. The participants will write and act out a theme-related, two-character scene.

Common Core Anchor Standards Addressed:

R.CCR.6: *Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.*

W.CCR.3: *Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.*

Exercise:

1. Ask the class to brainstorm three categories—themes, characters, and settings—which are present in the novel and performance of *The Kite Runner*. Then, help students define these terms and lists the students' responses on the board under the three different categories.
2. In groups of two, participants agree upon one theme, one setting, and two characters from the brainstormed lists that they would like to further explore.
3. After the pairs have agreed on a setting, theme, and characters for themselves, they silently write scene dialogue in the following way: using one piece of paper and one pen, each participant writes one line of dialogue and then passes the pen onto his/her partner who does the same.
4. Each participant is responsible for his/her writing of dialogue and should not consult his/her partner. The entire activity should be silent. Groups rehearse and present their scenes.
5. After the writing is complete, each pair will share their scene with the class.
6. Discuss each scene: what was the theme? Was there conflict between the characters? What did each character want and why?

Post-Show Activity: The Hot-Seat

Objective: Students will demonstrate their knowledge of characters in *The Kite Runner* through a character interview.

Common Core Anchor Standards Addressed:

SL.CCR.3: *Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.*

SL.CCR.4: *Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.*

NYS Arts Standard 1.1: Use improvisation and guided play writing to communicate ideas and feelings.

Exercise:

1. After each pair has presented their scene, the class will have the opportunity to interview them in-role as the characters.
2. The class may ask the characters any questions that further their understanding of the character, scene, and themes presented.
3. The participants being interviewed must use their imaginations to answer the questions in character basing their responses on the information they have gathered from reading the text and seeing the stage presentation.

Final Reflection:

During the interviews, did you make any new discoveries about these characters or their relationship to each other? What?

What was most challenging about being interviewed as this character?

What questions do you still have about this character?