

# The Kite Runner Discussion Guide

*Dear Friend,*

*Thank you for your interest in *The Kite Runner* and for your support of refugees around the world and resettled refugees in our communities. Please feel free to draw from the questions as you discuss the book or film with family and friends, or want to dive more deeply into the story and themes on our own. We hope your experience with *The Kite Runner* provides learning and inspiration to you.*

*This guide was developed by USA for UNHCR staff and in part based on questions issued by the publisher.*

## Discussion Questions

### 1. Amir and Hassan's friendship

The strong underlying force of this story is the relationship between Amir and Hassan. How would you characterize their friendship? Why does Amir constantly test Hassan's loyalty? After the kite running tournament, why does Amir no longer want to be Hassan's friend?

### 2. Symbolism of the pomegranate tree

When Amir and Hassan are young 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.'" In a letter to Amir later in the story, Hassan mentions that "the tree hasn't borne fruit in years." Discuss the significance or symbolism of this tree.

### 3. Amir's relationship with Baba

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. What are examples of Amir seeking attention and approval from his father? Discuss Amir's relationship with Baba when he was

young and in adulthood. Does their relationship change over time? If so, how?

#### 4. Rituals and sacrifice

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. "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. 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? Discuss the image in the context of the story.

#### 5. The kite running tournament

After Amir wins the kite running tournament, Amir and Baba form a bond of friendship; however, 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." What is the significance of this passage?



#### 6. Baba's character

Did learning that Hassan is Baba's son change your understanding of Baba? 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 are they more alike? How is this realization both negative and positive?

#### 7. Betrayal

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 similar or different? Do you think that such betrayals are due to flaws in Baba's and Amir's character, or are they the outcome of circumstances and characters?

## 8. Soraya and Amir's upbringings

Compare and contrast the relationships of Soraya and Amir and their fathers. How have their upbringings contributed to these relationships? How have their relationships with their fathers influenced their relationship to one another?

## 9. Making amends

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." What is Amir referring to from twenty-six years ago? Why is this moment so important in Amir's journey?

## 10. Amir and Assef's confrontation

Amir's confrontation with Assef in Wazir Akar Khan marks an important turning point in the story. Why does the author have Amir, Assef, and Sohrab all come together in this way?

Why is this confrontation important in Amir's journey toward forgiveness and acceptance?

11. The meaning of kite running. Why do you think kite running figures so prominently in the story? Do you think the kite running was meant to symbolize anything? If so, what?