# Kite Runner: War. Politics And Rapes In Afghanistan

Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-American novelist who is one of the most recognized authors in the world. Hosseini is most applauded for his novels, A Thousand Splendid Suns, And the Mountains Echoed, and The Kite Runner which have collectively sold 40 million copies in about 70 countries. The novel The Kite Runner was Khaled's first novel that was published in 2003 and has been awarded many times. The Kite Runner was acknowledged for the Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Award, ALA Notable Book, Literature to Life Award, and was on the best seller list for over 240 weeks, holding the number one spot for four of those weeks. Hosseini has created a powerful story that has impacted many, if not all, of the people who read his work.

The Kite Runner tells a story of Amir, a boy who grew up living in Afghanistan during the 1970s-80s. This novel focuses on the tragic political shifts and changes in power that ultimately led to the downfall of Afghanistan. As a child living through these political revolutions, Amir was subject to a variety of life changing experiences that not only affected his childhood, but his adulthood as well. The Kite Runner is culturally significant as it shows the religious and social separation that existed as well as the corrupt government take-over by the Taliban that led to war and affected all Afghanistans.

Throughout the novel the friendship between Amir and Hassan, two boys of different religions and social statuses, who can't even acknowledge each other as friends because of their differences is often discussed. Even as a child, Amir was able to notice the separation that existed throughout the country, he said "in the end, I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazara, I was Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to change that" (Hosseini 25). Even prior to the start of the political corruption, the country was never unified as one, there was tension between all different groups whether it be socially, economically, or religiously. This foundation of separation between groups helps to establish the cultural identity of Afghanistan and led to the strain of relationships between individuals of different standings. Since Hosseini was born in Afghanistan and experienced his childhood there, he was accurately able to depict the struggle that many Afghans had to deal with on a daily basis.

This novel tells a story that can be a very sensitive topic to many and that is rape. One of the characters, Assef, represents the bad that exists within Afghanistan. Assef is very racist and discriminates against those who are of different statuses than himself. As mentioned before, Hassan was a Hazara while Amir was a Pashtun and because of their religious differences they were not allowed to claim themselves to be friends. Assef abused his social and economic status to physically and sexually harm those who were of a lower class than himself. When Assef rapes Hassan it is a clear example that those who were of a better social standing would take advantage over those who were considered to be below them. Not only were Assef's actions as a child clear proof of his racism but as an adult, Assef went on to become a Taliban leader continuing his representation of racism and ultimately abuse. This event represents betrayal from even those of the same culture as your own, rather than uniting during a tough time, Assef gave into the hardship and joined the enemy side, essentially going against all he had grown up knowing.

An important event of the past that this book reflects on that is also crucial to the Afghan culture is the war that took place. In this war the Soviet invaded and eventually the Taliban took control over much of Afghanistan. In the start the country was ruled by a monarchy until that was overthrown and the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan came to power. As time progressed the Soviets who once supported the Afghan communist party changed their views and invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979. Hosseini reflects on these events through Amir's character by describing the violence that the country faced from the invaders. As a result of the violence and the bombing, many people were forced to flee the country. In the novel, Amir and his father end up travelling on the back of a truck to live in Pakistan for two years. Once the two years had past, Amir and his father ended up living in California, working, finishing school, and being free from violence and war. While many can attempt to write about this experience of relocating because of war and devastation, Hosseini was able to give a first hand experience of what it is like to have external forces drive you out of your home.

While this novel provides insight on the past and what the home life was like during the war in Afghanistan, it can also be culturally sensitive to some individuals who are of Afghan descent. The Kite Runner clearly describes how Afghanistan and Kabul especially were destroyed by Soviet and Taliban authorities. When writing to his old acquaintance, Amir learns of the tragedy that had struck Kabul he finds out, "the Afghanistan of our youth is long dead..kindness is gone from the land and you cannot escape the killings..always the killings..in Kabul fear is everywhere" (Hosseini 216). Those who lived in Kabul prior to the war were exceptionally impacted by the devastation however those who had family living through the tragedy also faced hardship when growing up in a new and unfamiliar location. The families living in Afghanistan prior to the start of the war were stripped of all life as they knew it, their living situation was never the same, their neighbors and relatives were taken away from them, and their homes were destroyed forcing them to go to a completely unknown country. While many were able to escape, those who were unable to leave were controlled either by Afghan troops or other Soviet leaders. Ultimately, Hosseini is able to use his experience and his culture to provide a perspective that readers don't often see about this event.

This book continues to be relevant today because the war in Afghanistan is still an ongoing issue. The Taliban continued to be a pressing issue in Afghanistan so the United States intervened as an attempt to remove them from power. The Taliban was responsible for hosting camps for the terrorist group al-Qaeda who not only made their presence known in Afghanistan but also in America during the 9/11 attacks. While the United States was not faced with a war that devastated the nation forcing Americans to flee the country, there was a severe tragedy that struck the country that caused people to lose loved ones. While the majority of the war was the United States against al- Qaeda and the Taliban against Afghan opponents, the Taliban is still the prime connection that continues to make this book's story relevant to today.

The Kite Runner, written by someone with first hand experience living in Afghanistan at the start of the war, is culturally significant and helps to describe the suffering that was caused by the changing political powers in the country. Not only is this book important to Afghan culture, it also provides a perspective from an Afghan rather than hearing the story of the war from another American. The book touches on a variety of sensitive subjects including rape, racism, and relocation because of war but it is beneficial to showing the negative effects of the reigning Taliban. Khaled Hosseini is applauded for his powerful novel and all his awards are well deserved, he conveys the struggle of living during war and dealing with the aftermath while also telling a unique story about a boy who is still stuck in his past. There is a good balance between

the political aspects of the story and the backstory about rape and because of that this novel has proved to be culturally significant.