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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



The Kite Runner
Khaled Hosseini



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To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

The Kite Runner

Note To Teacher: The Kite Runner deals with mature subject matter. This novel contains some very strong profanity, derogatory language, references to drug use, and graphic descriptions of violence, including rape. Younger or more immature students may have difficulty with such subject matter.

Pre-Reading

1. What do you think the title *The Kite Runner* signifies? Before beginning the book, using information from the front and back covers, write a paragraph predicting what this novel will be about.
2. *The Kite Runner* is a bestselling novel. The first few pages contain quotes from respected literary sources that provide positive reviews about the book. The quotes provide small glimpses into the content and tone of the book. They are meant to draw interest and entice people to buy it.

Imagine that someone has written a biography of your life. What elements about the book would you include to intrigue people and make them want to read about your life? Write a hypothetical quote praising the book and the author's skill in recounting your story. In other words, compose a back cover for a book on the story of your life.

3. Many people consider it an honor for an author to dedicate a book to them. Authors often dedicate their books to loved ones, people who've been supportive, or the people they most admire. If you wrote a novel, to whom would you dedicate it? Write an email to the person you would dedicate the novel to, explaining the dedication and explaining why you specifically chose him or her.

The Kite Runner

7. The narrator's father, whom he calls Baba, and his friends gather regularly to discuss "politics, business (and) soccer." Some people would argue, though, that politics is a subject to avoid discussing with others, even your friends, because people have so many strong opinions about the subject, and expressing strong opinions frequently leads to arguments.

Write a posting for an online newsletter, giving people a list of three "safe" subjects to discuss instead of controversial topics like politics or money. Make sure you include reasons why those subjects are preferable to politics.

8. The narrator describes a prized photo of his grandfather with King Nadir Shah, the former supreme ruler of Afghanistan. This photo is proudly displayed in the narrator's home as a sign of the political importance of his family. It was probably an important moment in his grandfather's life to have met the king of his country. If you could meet someone famous, which person would you choose to meet? Write a letter to this person, explaining why you'd like to meet. Then make a list of ten questions you would want the person to answer.
9. The narrator and his friend Hassan take a shortcut to the movie theater one day, even though the narrator's father has forbidden them to go that way. It's all right to do this, though, the narrator reasons, because his father is out of town, so he'll never find out about it.

Write a speech of no more than one page, to be presented at a school assembly, advising students that it is not a good idea to disobey an authority figure, even if that person will never find out that you disobeyed. Make sure your speech includes an introduction, supporting information, and a conclusion.

The Kite Runner

27. Other than the fact that he's simply a bully, Assef harasses Amir and Hassan because of their friendship. Why does he do this? What is it about Amir and Hassan that Assef dislikes so much?

Explain why you think Assef has such a problem with Amir and Hassan to a classmate who does not understand the reasons behind Assef's bullying.

28. When Assef threatens him and Amir, Hassan stands up for himself. Amir is frightened and doesn't know what to say, yet Hassan pulls out his slingshot and holds his ground, daring Assef to attack him. It is clear that Hassan is very brave. He, in reality, is very frightened, though. There are three boys threatening he and Amir, yet Hassan does not back down.

If many of us were in the same situation, however, we would probably rather run away. Write a certificate of commendation for Hassan, thanking him, on behalf of Amir, for his remarkable bravery. OR Write a short paragraph explaining Hassan's bravery to the classmate in question 27.

29. Throughout the years, Baba has given Hassan a series of expensive and fancy birthday gifts. This year, however, Baba has outdone himself: he pays for plastic surgery to correct Hassan's harelip.

What is the most extravagant or thoughtful gift that you have ever received? Is there a gift that you have gotten that you treasured above all others? Write a journal entry in which you describe the best gift you ever received and why that one was the best.

The Kite Runner

54. Baba is almost arrested when, in a fit of rage, he starts breaking things in a grocery store. Baba becomes angry because he wants to write a check for his purchases, and the storeowner asks to see I.D. for the check. Baba takes this as an insult, thinking that the store owner is questioning his ability to pay for the items.

This incident may be understood in terms of cultural differences between Afghanis and Americans. Even though the couple who own the grocery store is Vietnamese, they still follow the American custom of checking I.D. to process check purchases. Baba, however, is used to Afghanistan, where what a household owes to a store may be tallied by the storeowner's cutting a mark on a stick.

Baba's experience in this situation is not uncommon. Many immigrants come to America and are shocked, confused, or insulted by American customs. Write a flyer to be given to new immigrants to America from a country like Afghanistan, telling them how they overcome a cultural phenomenon that is particular to America. For example, you might explain how we can purchase food at a grocery store by cash, by check, or by credit card.