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Literature Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



A Thousand Splendid Suns

by Khaled Hosseini

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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A Thousand Splendid Suns

All references come from the Riverhead Books edition of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, copyright 2007.

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. understand the political upheaval in Afghanistan and the struggle its people face.
2. discuss the double standard of behavior of males and females in the novel, and identify ways the double standard is perpetuated.
3. decide on and discuss an overall theme for the book.
4. demonstrate an understanding of symbolism in the novel.
5. predict events in the novel.
6. identify flat and round characters and explain the difference.
7. define irony and identify examples in the novel.
8. make inferences based on events in the novel.
9. identify examples of figurative language in the novel.
10. identify foreshadowing in the novel.
11. describe major characters.
12. explain how the major characters have changed over the course of the novel.
13. explain how setting relates to the characters in the book.
14. identify the point of view of the novel, and demonstrate how a different point of view would affect the story.
15. identify the climax of the novel.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Explain whether you feel the ending of the novel is appropriate or realistic.
2. Write a character analysis of Laila, Mariam, Rasheed or Tariq. Be sure to include their personality traits, their motivation in the story, their strength and weaknesses, and your own opinion of each character.
3. What do you think is the central conflict in the story? Is the conflict internal or external? Support your answer with details from the novel.
4. How might the story have been different if Tariq really had died, as Abdul Sharif told Laila?
5. How might the novel be different if Hosseini used another point of view? Explain how the story might change if it were told in the first person or a non-alternating third person limited point of view.
6. Is there a hero in the novel? If so, who do you think it is? Explain, and be sure to include your definition of “hero.”
7. Consider Rasheed, Mariam, Laila, and Tariq. Of these characters, which are static (flat) and which are dynamic (round)? What major changes do the dynamic characters experience? Explain using details from the novel.
8. At which point in the novel does the climax take place? What effect does this climax have on the conflict and the characters?
9. What traits does Mariam have that would make her a good mother? Refer directly to the novel to provide examples of times when Mariam acts motherly.
10. Trace Laila’s and Mariam’s evolution over the course of the novel. How has each woman changed? What has each woman learned?
11. How might the novel be different if Mariam had lived?
12. Using details from the novel, explain the major political changes in Afghanistan from 1973 to 2003.
13. How might the ending of the novel been different if Laila had not received Mariam’s inheritance?

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Chapter 1

Vocabulary

bazaars – open-air markets
culpable – guilty, responsible
demurely – in a reserved manner
endearments – affectionate words or actions
facade – the front
harami – an illegitimate child; one born of two unmarried parents
illegitimate – the child of two unmarried parents
jinn – a demon or other possessing spirit
kolba – a hut or rudimentary house
loathsome – hated
minarets – steeples; towers on top of mosques
relic – a souvenir; memento
Sufis – Muslim mystics
surmise – to figure out; understand
trellised – covered with a screen or lattice work so vines can grow on it
ward off – keeps away

1. How old is Mariam at the beginning of Chapter 1?

2. Describe Nana's reaction to Mariam's breaking the bowl.

3. Why does the speaker assert that the *harami* is innocent?

Chapter 5

Vocabulary

aggrieved – offended
ample – more than enough
articulate – explain clearly with words
conifer – an evergreen tree or shrub
consoling – soothing
disillusionment – the state of having lost faith or trust
dousing – extinguishing; killing
foreboding – indicating or suggesting misfortune
forlorn – miserable or hopeless
grievances – complaints
hookahs – water pipes used for smoking tobacco
muted – hushed
opaque – cloudy
reproach – disapproval
sprightly – in a lively manner
stricken – heartbroken
treacherous – likely to betray
wretched – mean; cruel

1. At the beginning of Chapter 5, how old is Mariam?

2. What tactics does Nana use to keep Mariam from going to visit Jalil? List as many as you can.

5. Rasheed has friends over and tells Mariam to stay in her room. Why is Mariam flattered by this demand?

6. Mariam finds herself in Rasheed's room. What does she find when she opens the drawers of the dresser?

7. Why does Mariam feel Rasheed is a hypocrite for having the magazines?

8. Later, why does Mariam regret snooping in Rasheed's belongings?

9. Why does Mariam now feel "a kinship" with Rasheed?
