

The Kite Runner

Chapters 1-8 Comprehension Questions

1. The novel begins with a flashback. What do you think is its purpose? What do you learn about the narrator?(p1)
2. Who is Hassan? Describe him physically. What is a cleft lip? Describe him by his relationships. What was his first word? Why is that important? How did he come into Amir's life? What contrast is made between Amir and Hassan?(p3)
3. Amir and Hassan are good friends but Amir is always making fun of him or teasing him. For example, when Hassan did not know the meaning of the word imbecile Amir told him "It means smart, intelligent."(Houseini p.29) and then Amir would feel guilty. Why would Amir do this to Hassan and do people still do this to other people today for the same reason/s?
4. "There were two brothers, young men from a wealthy family in Kabul. They got into their father's Ford Roadster. They were high on hashish and french wine. They ended up killing a Hazara husband and wife which left an orphan boy," (Husseini, 21). Amir's grandfather ordered the two young men to enlist in the Army for one year. Why did everyone think this punishment was too harsh when these two men took two human lives? Would people's opinions be differently today?
5. While reading this story Amir makes the statement "After all, didn't all fathers in their secret hearts harbor a desire to kill their sons?" Why would Amir think this way and are there any passages that would prove or disprove this question?
What does it mean to be *Hazara*, Shi'a Muslim, Afghanistan's minority group? Who, in the story thus far, is *Hazara*?
6. What does it mean to be *Pashtun*, Sunni Muslim, Afghanistan's majority group? Who, in the story thus far, is *Pashtun*?
7. How does Amir describe his home? Why do you think he elaborates this description so much? What do the details of the family pictures in Amir's house reveal?
8. Who is Sanaubar? How is she contrasted to Amir's mother?
9. Who is Ali? What do the neighborhood children call him? What does it mean? Why do they call him this?
10. How does Amir feel about his father in the beginning of the novel?
11. Who is the king's cousin? What did he do and why?
12. Who is Baba? Describe him. What are his values? How does he relate to extremely religious leaders?
13. What does Baba give Hassan for his birthday? What does his present suggest about his character? How does Amir react to this present? Why did the present turn out to be ironic?
14. Who is Assef? What is his ancestry? What is he famous for? What is his political vision?
15. Who are Wali and Kamal? Why are they significant to the story?
16. What happens between Assef/Wali/Kamal and Amir/Hassan? What does Assef threaten (foreshadow)?
17. Hassan has plastic surgery to be able to smile "normally" by the following winter. Why does Amir think that is ironic?
18. What does Amir want to tell Assef about Hassan when Assef bullies them about being friends?
19. Why do boys in Afghanistan during the winter of 1975 have gashes on their fingers? What is *tar*?
20. In chapter 6, how does Amir feel about Hassan? (Think about his conflicted feelings.) Why does he mean "my life as a ghost"?
21. What is the proudest moment of twelve-year-old Amir's life as described in Chapter 7?
22. After Amir and Hassan won the kite tournament they were both rejoicing. Amir stated, "Then I saw Baba on our roof. He was standing on the edge, pumping both of his fists. Hollering and clapping. And that right there was the single greatest moment of my twelve years of life, seeing Baba on that roof, proud of me at last," What was the significance of this moment? Do you think this was truly the first time that Baba had felt proud of Amir? How would this connection that Amir and his father affect their future relationship or was this moment simply just a moment?
What happens to Hassan when he runs the blue kite for Amir? (Assef foreshadowed this earlier in Chapter 5.)
23. Who says, "I opened my mouth and almost said something...The rest of my life might have turned out differently if I had." Why are those words important?
24. What do you think of Amir's behavior?
25. What is the significance of the two memories and dream presented on pages 73-74?
26. Where does the family take a trip to in Chapter 8?
27. What does Amir ask of Baba that makes Baba angry? What does Baba say in response?
28. What is inscribed on the pomegranate tree in the back yard? So, why then is it significant that Amir tries to pick a fight with Hassan in front of that tree?
29. (Think *symbolism*.) What ends up happening? Why is that symbolic?
30. What does Assef give Amir for his birthday? Why is this significant?

QUOTES

In the following sections explain what each quotation means in the context of the piece of literature. What meaning does the author intend the reader to take away from the following quotes?

1. "Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years". p. 1
2. "Now, no matter what the mullah teaches, there is only one sin, only one. And that is theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft. Do you understand that?" p. 17
3. "A boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything." P. 22
4. "...a person who wastes his God-given talents is a donkey." P. 32