

## ***The Kite Runner***

### Study Guide Questions

Note: Setting, both historical and geographical, is an important aspect of this novel. It would be a good idea to look at a map to locate the countries and cities that are mentioned in the story.

#### CHAPTER ONE

This chapter is very brief, but it establishes several important points:

- The story is told in *first person point of view*.
  - The present time in which the *narrator* is speaking when the book begins is December 2001.
  - This part of the novel is *retrospective*, that is, the narrator is looking back to an earlier time in his life.
  - Three important *settings* are introduced.
  - Three important *characters* (in addition to the narrator) are introduced.
  - The *theme* of guilt (“my past of unatoned sins”) is introduced.
  - Kites (with their possible *symbolic* meaning) are mentioned.
1. What specific date is mentioned in the first sentence?
  2. What specific details of setting are mentioned in the first paragraph (place, weather)?
  3. Who calls from Pakistan (name and relation to narrator)?
  4. Where is the narrator living at the present time (city)?
  5. Whose voice whispers in the narrator’s head? What does it say?

#### CHAPTER TWO

1. Hassan is the narrator’s childhood friend. What birth defect does Hassan have?
2. What weapon is Hassan “deadly with”?
3. What is the name of Hassan’s father?
4. Who is Rahim Khan?
5. What name does the narrator call his father?
6. What kind of house do the narrator and his father live in? In what city is it located?
7. Where do Ali and Hassan live? Why?
8. What happened to the narrator’s mother?
9. What happened to Hassan’s mother? What was her name?
10. Ali has two physical defects. What are they?
11. Two ethnic groups are important in this story. They are the Hazara, who are Shi’a Muslims, and the Pashtuns, who are Sunni Muslims. What is the relation between them?
12. What had the narrator and Hassan done that created a brotherhood between them, “a kinship that not even time could break”?
13. What is the name of the narrator?
14. What was the narrator’s first word?
15. What was Hassan’s first word?

#### CHAPTER THREE

1. What is the “lore” or legend about Baba?
2. How is Baba described? How tall is he?
3. What did Baba decide to build in the late 1960’s?
4. What does Amir lie about when Baba takes him to Ghargha Lake? Why?
5. How did Baba become rich?
6. What kind of woman was Amir’s mother? Describe her.
7. What did Baba do that was considered a “terrible sin” to some Muslims?
8. Who does Baba think are “bearded idiots”?

9. What does Baba say is the only sin? Why?
10. Why does Amir think that his father hates him a little?
11. What is Amir good at in school? What did he spend his allowance on?
12. What sport did Baba love that Amir “was never going to either play or watch”?
13. One important element in many plots is the overheard conversation. Amir overhears a conversation at the end of this chapter. In this conversation, what does Rahim Khan say is “missing” in Amir?  
What does Baba say about a “boy who won’t stand up for himself”?  
What does Baba say that he wouldn’t believe if he hadn’t seen it with his own eyes?
14. What does Amir say that Rahim Khan was wrong about?

#### CHAPTER FOUR

1. Why did Amir never think of Hassan as his friend even though he spent most of the first twelve years of his life playing with him?
2. What kind of movies did Amir and Hassan like? What was their favorite?
3. Why didn’t Hassan go to school? What did he do instead?
4. What kind of car did Baba have?
5. What kind of tree was in “an old abandoned cemetery atop the hill” near Amir’s father’s property?
6. What did Amir carve on the tree?
7. What did Amir tease Hassan about? What does this show about Amir?
8. What was Hassan’s favorite book? What was it about?
9. What was Hassan’s favorite story? What was it about?
10. In 1973, Amir wrote his first short story. What was it about?
11. How did Baba react to Amir’s story?  
How did Rahim Khan react?  
How did Hassan react?

#### CHAPTER FIVE

1. What happened in December 1979 that brought “the death of the Afghanistan” that Amir knew?
2. Who is Assef? What is his ethnicity? What does he look like?
3. What weapon does Assef have that he is famous for?
4. What English word describes what Assef was?
5. What historical figure does Assef admire? Why?
6. What is Assef’s attitude toward Hazaras?
7. How does Hassan prevent Assef from hurting Amir? How does Assef react to this?
8. In the winter of 1974, what does Baba give Hassan for his birthday?
9. How does Amir feel about this gift?
10. At the end of this chapter, what does the narrator say is ironic?

#### CHAPTER SIX

1. Why is winter “every kid’s favorite season in Kabul”?
2. What happened in Kabul every winter?
3. Why did kite makers coat their kite strings with ground glass?
4. What did the kite fighter’s assistant do?
5. What did a kite runner do?
6. What was the “most coveted prize” for the kite runner?
7. Who was “by far the greatest kite runner” the narrator had ever seen?
8. What did Hassan have that Amir “always envied”?
9. Hassan is a person who means everything he says. What does Amir say is “the thing about people who mean everything they say”?
10. When did Hassan run a kite for the last time?
11. What does Amir think will end his “life as a ghost” in his own house? Why?

## CHAPTER SEVEN

1. What does Hassan dream about the night before the tournament? How does Amir respond to this dream?
2. “At least two dozen kites already hung in the sky, like paper sharks roaming for prey.” What kind of figure of speech is used in this sentence? What two things are being compared?
3. What color is the kite that Amir cuts to win the tournament?
4. When Hassan is setting off to run the blue kite for Amir, what does he shout back to him?
5. When Amir goes looking for Hassan, how do people react when he asks if they have seen Hassan?
6. Where does Amir see Hassan? Who is with him?
7. Assef wants the blue kite. Why won't Hassan give it to him?
8. What happens to Hassan in the alley?
9. Why did Amir run away instead of trying to help Hassan?
10. What happens when Amir gets home with the blue kite?

## CHAPTER EIGHT

1. What happens to Amir on the drive to Jalalabad?
2. What does Amir tell Hassan that he wants him to “stop doing”? What does he want Hassan to do?
3. What does Amir ask his father that makes Baba angry? What is Baba's response? Why does Amir ask this question?
4. Why is Amir happy for the school year to start?
5. Why does Amir pelt Hassan with pomegranates? How does Hassan respond?
6. What does Assef give Amir for his birthday? What does Amir do with it?
7. Rahim Khan tells Amir a story about how he almost got married. What is the significance of this story?
8. What does Rahim Khan give Amir for his birthday?

## CHAPTER NINE

1. What two gifts does Baba give Amir for his birthday?
2. What do Ali and Hassan give Amir for his birthday?
3. What does Amir put under Hassan's mattress? Why?
4. What are the circumstances that lead to Ali and Hassan leaving Baba's household? What is Baba's reaction to their decision?
5. What is symbolic about the weather on the day that Ali and Hassan leave?
6. In what year do the events of this chapter take place?

## CHAPTER TEN

1. In what year does this chapter take place?
2. Why are Amir and his father in the back of a truck? Where are they going?
3. Why does a man in the truck kiss Baba's hand?
4. How do Baba and Amir complete the trip when the truck they are supposed to take is broken? What does this reveal about the situation that they are in?
5. This chapter ends with an event that conveys the despair of these displaced people. What is it? Where have we seen Kamal previously in this story?

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. What is the setting of this chapter?
2. What is Baba's opinion of Israel? Why?
3. Which American president does Baba dislike? Which does he like? Why? Does Amir agree with him? Explain.
4. What job does Baba have at this point in the story?
5. Why does Baba have a violent fit in the Nguyens' store?

6. What does Baba do that shocks Mrs. Dobbins? What does this action reveal about Baba?
7. What year does Amir graduate from high school? How old is he then?
8. What does Baba give Amir for his graduation?
9. What does Amir want to study in college?
10. Why does Amir like America more than his father does?
11. What do Baba and Amir do on the weekends to supplement their income?

## CHAPTER TWELVE

1. Who is Soraya Taheri? What does Amir refer to her as?
2. In what year do the events in this chapter take place?
3. What aspects of Afghani culture are evident as the relationship between Amir and Soraya develops?
4. What is Soraya studying to be? Why is she attracted to this career?
5. What is the nature of Baba's illness?
6. Why won't Baba allow Dr. Schneider to treat him? Explain.
7. After Baba is released from the hospital, what does Amir ask him to do?
8. Speaking of Soraya, Amir says, "I suspected there were many ways in which [she] was a better person than me. Courage was just one of them." Explain why Amir thinks this. Provide specific examples.
9. Throughout the story, Baba has been portrayed as a strong and proud man. Give examples of how these qualities are evident in this part of the novel.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. Amir and Soraya have an elaborate Afghan wedding. How much did Baba spend on it?
2. How long after the wedding does Baba die?
3. At his father's funeral, Amir thinks of the "bears" that Baba had wrestled his whole life. What were these "bears"?
4. Why doesn't Amir care about Soraya's past?
5. What gift does General Taheri give to Amir?
6. What does Amir do in the summer of 1988?
7. When Amir and Soraya are unable to have a child, they consider adoption. Why is General Taheri opposed to adoption?
8. What is Amir's attitude about adoption?
9. Amir thinks that "perhaps something, someone, somewhere, had decided to deny me fatherhood for the things I had done. Maybe this was my punishment, and perhaps justly so." What things is Amir referring to?

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. This chapter begins in June 2001 with a telephone call that was first mentioned in Chapter One. As a result of this call, what does Amir tell Soraya that he has to do? Why?
2. How long have Amir and Soraya been married by this point in the story?
3. What comment does Rahim Khan make that indicates to Amir that Rahim knows about Amir's secret regarding Hassan?

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. In what city (and country) is Rahim Khan living?
2. Rahim Khan gives Amir a brief history of recent events in Afghanistan and describes the current situation. At this point, who is controlling most of Afghanistan?
3. What is Rahim's attitude toward this group? What example does he give to support his opinion (it occurred at a soccer game)?
4. Rahim Khan lived in Baba's house for years after Baba and Amir left. Who lived there with him?

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. There is a shift in narrator in this chapter. Who is the speaker? Why is this shift necessary?
2. Explain the significance of the following dates: 1986, 1990, 1995, 1996, 1998.
3. What did Hassan name his son? Why?
4. What things did Hassan teach his son?

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1. What is the effect of the letter to Amir from Hassan? Explain.
2. What does Hassan say about the pomegranate tree? Why is this symbolic?
3. What does Rahim Khan ask Amir to do? What is Amir's response?
4. Near the end of the chapter Amir says, "You bastards. ... You goddamn bastards! ... All of you, a bunch of lying goddamn bastards." To whom is he referring? Why?

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. In this chapter, Amir mentions clichés for a second time. What is a cliché? Why are they bad? What two clichés does Amir use, and why does he think they are appropriate?
2. Why does Amir decide to go to Kabul? Read the passage that explains this decision carefully.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

1. Who is Farid? What has happened to his hand and his family?
2. What is "perhaps the most important item" that Amir takes with him when he goes to Kabul? Why?
3. On page 231 (first paragraph) there is an extended metaphor. What is it? Explain the comparison. When did Amir first use this metaphor?
4. Explain what Farid means when he says, "You've *always* been a tourist here, you just didn't know it." Is he correct?
5. Why does Farid think that Amir has returned to Afghanistan? How does he learn the truth?
6. Why does Amir give Farid's sons his watch? What do they really want?
7. What is the significance of Amir being "the man in the herringbone vest"?
8. What is the similarity between what Amir does at the end of this chapter and what he "had done twenty-six years earlier"? What is the difference?

## CHAPTER TWENTY

1. What were "grim reminders" of the first war that were evident on the trek between Jalalabad and Kabul? What effects of the second war were also evident?
2. Identify at least three ways in which Kabul has changed since Amir was last there.
3. Describe the Taliban men that appear in this chapter. What are they doing? What does Farid tell Amir not to do?
4. What was the "improbable coincidence" that involved "a beggar on the street"?
5. Who is Zaman? What does he say has happened to Hassan's son?
6. Why does Farid attack Zaman?
7. Why does Zaman say he allows the Taliban official to take children?
8. Where does Zaman say that Amir will find this official?

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

1. At the beginning of this chapter, Amir visits two places that were important to him when he was a boy. What are they? How have these places changed?
2. Why does Farid find it hard to believe that Amir came all the way from America to find this boy?
3. What happened to the man and woman at half-time of the soccer game? What crime did they commit?

4. Describe the man with whom Amir arranges a meeting. What role did this man have in the executions?

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

1. When Amir describes eating grapes on page 275, he is using foreshadowing. What specifically is being foreshadowed?
2. The “tall Talib in white” is repeatedly compared to a celebrity. Who is it?
3. What is Sohrab’s appearance when he is brought into the room?
4. What does Sohrab do to “entertain” the men?
5. How is it made clear that the Talib in white is a pedophile?
6. Who does the Talib in white turn out to be?
7. According to Assef, what is the “mission” he is on?
8. What name does Amir give to this “mission”?
9. When the guards leave the room, what does Assef take out of his pocket that doesn’t surprise Amir one bit?
10. Why does Amir start laughing while he is being beaten by Assef?
11. How does Sohrab save Amir from being beaten to death by Assef?

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

1. Where is Amir during most of this chapter?
2. What are the “significant injuries” that Amir has as a result of the beating?
3. What has happened to Amir’s upper lip? Why is this ironic?
4. What has happened to Rahim Khan?
5. Why does Amir think that he is in danger in the hospital? Why does Farid say that he needs to go to Peshawar?
6. According to the U.S. Consulate, who “never existed”? What does this force Amir to do?
7. Where does Amir go when he leaves Peshawar?

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

1. How is Islamabad different from Peshawar?
2. How much money does Amir give to Farid for helping him?
3. Where does Amir find Sorhab after the boy runs away?
4. What does Amir give to Sohrab to help the boy remember his parents?
5. Why does Sohrab say that sometimes he is glad that his parents are “not here anymore”?
6. What does Amir ask Sohrab if he would like to do?
7. What two promises does Amir make to Sohrab?
8. Who is Raymond Andrews?
9. According to Andrews, why will it be difficult for Amir to take Sohrab to the U.S.?
10. Who is Omar Faisal? Why does he say that Sohrab will have to go to an orphanage?
11. Who is Kaka Sharif? (He has been mentioned several times earlier in the story.) What good news is he able to provide to Amir and Soraya?

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

1. What did Sohrab do when he believed that he would have to go back to an orphanage?
2. What does Amir do that he hasn’t done “for over fifteen years”?
3. How is Sohrab different after he recovers from his attempted suicide? What does he say he wants?
4. When did Amir and Sohrab arrive back in the U.S.?
5. What does Amir tell General Taheri at dinner one night? What does he tell the General “never again” to do?
6. What does Sohrab do during his first seven months of living with Amir and Soraya?
7. What is the “small, wondrous thing” that happens in March 2002?

8. What are the last words that Amir actually speaks in the novel? To whom is he speaking? Why is this a role reversal for Amir?