

2. Characters: Do you like the main characters or not? Why? Do you have any advice for them? Comment about the narration. Who's telling the story?
3. Social questions: Looks for race, gender, or class inequalities and injustices. Who has the power in the story and how is it used? What do you think?
4. Setting: Is it realistic? Does it fit the story?
5. Dialogue: Is it realistic? Can you "hear" the characters talking? Could you change the dialogue?
6. Emotions: How were you emotionally involved in the story?
7. Literary devices: Does the author use flashbacks and foreshadowing effectively?
8. Themes: To what extent is this a morality tale?
9. Ending: Would you have liked the book to end differently? How?

I. CHAPTERS 1-5 (PP. 1-47)

READING QUESTIONS

1. The novel begins with a flashback. What do you think is its purpose? What do you learn about the narrator?
 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?
 3. What does it mean to be *Hazara*, Shi'a Muslim, Afghanistan's minority group? Who, in the story thus far, is *Hazara*?
 4. What does it mean to be *Pashtun*, Sunni Muslim, Afghanistan's majority group? Who, in the story thus far, is *Pashtun*?
 5. 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?
 6. Who is Sanaubar? How is she contrasted to Amir's mother?
 7. Who is Ali? What do the neighborhood children call him? What does it mean? Why do they call him this?
 8. How does Amir feel about his father in these chapters?
 9. Who is the king's cousin? What did he do and why?
 10. Who is Baba? Describe him. What are his values? How does he relate to extremely religious leaders?
 11. 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?
 12. Who is Assef? What is his ancestry? What is he famous for? What is his political vision?
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13. Who are Wali and Kamal?
14. What happens between Assef/Wali/Kamal and Amir/Hassan? What does Assef threaten (foreshadow)?
15. Hassan has plastic surgery to be able to smile "normally" by the following winter. Why does Amir think that is ironic?
16. What does Amir want to tell Assef about Hassan when Assef bullies them about being friends?

VOCABULARY CHAPTERS 1-5

Affluent, intricate, p. 4
 Notoriously, unscrupulous, congenital, rendered, oscillating, reveries, p. 8
 Garrulous p. 10
 Veracity, p. 23
 Obstinate, p. 13
 Havoc p. 14
 Virtuous p. 15
 Chortle, p. 17
 Aloofness, p. 19
 Melee, p. 20
 Valiant, p. 21
 Contrite, impeccable, vehemently, p. 24
 Imbecile, p. 28
 Nemesis, p. 29
 Oblivious, p. 30
 Feigned, p. 31
 Irony, p. 32
 Subtle, nuances, p. 42
 Trepidation, p. 43

REFERENCES:

Henry Kissinger, p. 21
 Steve McQueen, *Bullitt*, p. 27
 Zahir Shah, fall of Afghan monarchy July 1973, p. 36

QUOTATIONS

"There is only one sin, only one. And that is theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft." (p. 17)
 "A boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything." (p. 22)
 "...a person who wastes his God-given talents is a donkey." (p. 32)

II. CHAPTERS 6-9 (PP. 48-109)

READING QUESTIONS

1. Why do boys in Afghanistan during the winter of 1975 have gashes on their fingers? What is *tar*?
2. In chapter 6, how does Amir feel about Hassan? (Think about his conflicted feelings.) Why does he mean "my life as a ghost"? p. 56
3. What is the proudest moment of twelve-year-old Amir's life as described in Chapter 7?
4. What happens to Hassan when he runs the blue kite for Amir? (Assef foreshadowed this earlier in Chapter 5.)
5. 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? What do you think of Amir's behavior?
6. What is the significance of the two memories and dream presented on pages 73-74?
7. Where does the family take a trip to in Chapter 8?
8. What does Amir ask of Baba that makes Baba angry? What does Baba say in response?
9. 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? (Think *symbolism*.) What ends up happening? Why is that symbolic?
10. What does Assef give Amir for his birthday? Why is this significant?
11. What does Amir put under Hassan's mattress? Why does he do it? What is your reaction to Amir's betrayal?
12. When Baba confronts Hassan about this, what does Hassan say?
13. What does Baba then do that shocks Amir?
14. What happens to Hassan and Ali?
15. How is the end of chapter nine a turning point in the novel?

VOCABULARY CHAPTERS 6-9

Abhor, p. 52
Indignation, p. 54
Integrity, p. 54
Curtly p. 60
Shirked, austere, morose, p. 61
Havoc, p. 75
Imminent, p. 77
Guileless, p. 78

Insomniac, p. 86
Harried, p. 91
Anonymity, p. 93
Interlude, p. 93
Embodiment, p. 96
Façade, p. 97
Alter ego, p. 98
Blood money, p. 102
Grimace, p. 107

QUOTATIONS

"Afghans abhor customs but cherish rules." (p. 52)

"But better to get hurt by the truth than comforted with a lie." (p. 58)

"In the end, the world always wins. That's just the way of things." (p. 99)

III. CHAPTERS 10-14 (PP. 110-194)

READING QUESTIONS

1. What "weakness" of Amir's does Baba have to apologize for in Chapter 10?
 2. Who is Karim?
 3. Why are Amir and his father fleeing Afghanistan?
 4. Why does Baba challenge the Russian officer who is obviously high on drugs?
 5. In Chapter 10, several things happen that are ironic or foreshadowing. Label each one of these and explain:
 - The only way Amir can survive the long ride in the fume-filled tank is by remembering flying kites with Hassan.
 - Baba gathers up the dirt of his homeland and places it next to his heart.
 - Kamal's father commits suicide after Kamal dies from breathing the fumes of the tank.
 - Kamal, one of Hassan's rapists, has been raped himself and hasn't spoken since.
 6. Chapter 11 has a new setting. What is it?
 7. "America was different. America was a river roaring along, unmindful of the past. I could wade into this river, let my sins drown to the bottom, let the waters carry me someplace far." This quote from Chapter 11 is said by whom? What does it reveal? What does this metaphor mean?
 8. What does Baba give Amir as a graduation present? What is Amir feeling at this moment? What is Baba feeling?
 9. In Chapter 11, who is Soraya?
 10. What are Baba and Amir doing in San Jose on the weekends?
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11. Who is General Taheri?
12. What does Amir tell his father he wants to study in college? What is Baba's reaction?
13. Baba observes that "It may be unfair, but what happens in a single day can change the course of a whole lifetime." Whom is he speaking about? Why? What else might be significant about that quote?
14. What does Amir observe about a double standard in Chapter 12?
15. Why did the visit with the pulmonologist become unsuccessful when Baba asked where he was from?
16. What is Baba diagnosed with? How does he decide to treat it?
17. Why does Amir ask Baba to meet with General Taheri?
18. In Chapter 13, Amir thinks about the "bears" his father has wrestled during his lifetime. What "bears" has Baba wrestled?
19. What good news does Amir learn in Chapter 13?
20. What disappointment do Soraya and Amir face? Do you think Amir should have told Soraya about his betrayal of Hassan before they were married? Why or why not? What does this do to a relationship?
21. In 1989, what is going on in Afghanistan? Who are the Mujahedin? Who is in charge?
22. Chapter 14 brings us back to the opening of the book: the telephone call from Rahim Khan. What is Rahim asking Amir to do?

VOCABULARY CHAPTERS 10-14

Lucrative, p. 111
Inevitable, p. 113
Acrid, p. 132
Pungent, p. 133
Sauntered, p. 138
Legacy, p. 140
Arrogant, p. 140
Perpetually, p. 144
Fickle, p. 148
Sallow, p. 153
Ominous, p. 155
Palliative, p. 156
Reticence, demeanor, furtive, p. 157
Daunting, p. 184
Meticulous, ambivalent, p. 186
Oblivious, p. 188

REFERENCES:

Jimmy Carter, p. 126, Russian history, p. 126, world events, p. 183-4, - in 1989

QUOTATIONS

"Not a word passes between us, not because we have nothing to say, but because we don't have to say anything—that's how it is between people who are each other's first memories..." (p. 122)

"Baba loved the *idea* of America. It was living in America that gave him an ulcer." (p. 125) Comment on this paradox.

"For me America was a place to bury memories. For Baba, a place to mourn his." (p. 129) How can a place or moving bury memories?

"People need stories to divert them at difficult times." (p. 139)

"Life is a train. Get on Board." (p. 185)

IV. CHAPTERS 15-20 (PP. 195-258)

READING QUESTIONS

1. In Chapter 15, Amir meets with the dying Rahim Khan. Where are they?
 2. What does Amir say about clichés? Why does Amir use the cliché about "an elephant in the room" to describe his meeting with Rahim Khan?
 3. Afghanistan has been seized by what political group in Chapter 15?
 4. In Chapter 16, Rahim tells us what happened to Hassan. What has happened? Where is he living?
 5. Who is Farzana? Sohrab?
 6. What happened in 1996 by the Taliban in *Mazar-i-Sharif*?
 7. In Chapter 17, Rahim gives Amir a letter from Hassan, who wrote it six months before. What is the tone of this letter? How does Amir react?
 8. In Chapter 18, Amir finds out that both Hassan and his wife were shot by the Taliban trying to protect Baba's house, orphaning their son. Rahim tells Amir it is his job to find Sohrab in Karteh-Seh, Afghanistan, and take him to an orphanage in Peshawar, Pakistan. What is Amir's reaction? Do you think Rahim's dying wish is unfair? Why or why not?
 9. How does the cliché, "like father, like son" mentioned on page 226, relate to Baba and Amir?
 10. What clues hint at the secret that is revealed in Chapters 17-18?
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11. In Chapter 19, Farid is engaged to drive Amir from Peshawar to Afghanistan. Describe his first impression of Amir. When Farid said, "You've always been a tourist here, you just didn't know it," (p. 232), what did he mean? What is Farid's impression of emigrant Afghans who return to visit Afghanistan?
12. What realizations does Amir come to in Chapter 19?
13. In Chapter 20, Amir sees Kabul for the first time since leaving. Describe what he sees.
14. In Chapter 20, the director of the orphanage, Zaman, tells Amir that Sohrab was taken by a Taliban official, who takes children, usually girls, about once a month, for his "sexual pleasure." The official gives Zaman a great deal of cash. How does Zaman defend his actions?

VOCABULARY CHAPTERS 15-20

Nonchalantly, p. 195
Incessant, p. 195
Garrulous, p. 196
Collateral, p. 200
Melancholic, wallow, pragmatic p. 201
Presumptuous, p. 207
Proverbial, p. 212
Oblivion, p. 226
Empathy, p. 228
Animosity, p. 228
Surly, p. 229
Rueful, p. 229
Deliberate, ruminate, p. 231
Contemptuous, p. 236
Furtive, p. 238
Morosely, p. 244
Benevolence, p. 248
Profoundly, p. 250

QUOTATIONS

"A boy who won't stand up for himself becomes a man who can't stand up to anything." (p. 221)

V. CHAPTERS 21- 25 (PP. 259-371)

READING QUESTIONS

1. In Chapters 21-22, the cruelty of the Taliban is clearly in evidence. Give two or three examples.
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2. In Chapter 21, Amir finally sees Sohrab and realizes something about the Taliban official. What is it? What is your reaction to Assef's reappearance as a Talib? How does he justify his transformation? Is it a transformation?
3. In Chapter 22, we encounter many "full-circle" endings as we reach the climax, or turning point, of the plot. List three.
4. What is your reaction to Rahim Khan's letter to Amir? Should the letter have been presented to him earlier? Do you feel that Baba was a good man?
5. Consider your parents and how your opinions about them have changed as you have gotten older. Are there any parallels between your concept of your parents and Amir's concept of Baba?
6. Chapter 24 continues the falling action of the plot. Why do Sohrab and Amir travel to Islamabad? Amir says "There are a lot of children in Afghanistan, but little childhood." What does he mean? How can you relate this to Hassan and Sohrab?
7. What is a mullah?
8. Who is Raymond Andrews and how does he function in the novel?
9. What does Soraya agree to do?
10. What does Soraya's Uncle Sharif do to help Sohrab?
11. What promise does Amir break to Sohrab?
12. What then does Sohrab do? Why is this significant?
13. Chapter 25 resolves the action with Sohrab and Amir returning to San Francisco. Describe Sohrab for the first seven months he is in San Francisco.
14. General Taheri is worried about something when he comes to visit. What is it? What is Amir's reaction to this?
15. Why do Afghans gather at Lake Elizabeth Park?
16. What happens as Amir runs the kite for Sohrab?
17. How is this another full circle?

VOCABULARY CHAPTERS 21-25

Gingerly, p. 261
Succulent, p. 265
Morbidly, p. 275
Surreal, p. 281
Epiphany, p. 282
Impunity, p. 301
Remorse, p. 302
Shrewd, p. 304
Pondered, p. 306
Paunchy, p. 308
Reproachful, obligatory, p. 316
Irrevocably, p. 320