



The Kite Runner

School Show Study Guide

Wells Fargo Center for the Arts
Friday, April 16, 2010

LITERATURE TO LIFE® is a performance-based literacy program that presents professionally staged verbatim adaptations of significant American literary works. The program gives students a new form of access to literature by bringing to life the world of the book with performances that create an atmosphere of discovery and spark the imagination. *Literature to Life* encourages reading, writing, and critical thinking and provides a catalyst for learning and self-expression.

This *Literature To Life* Teacher's Resource Guide was written by professional teaching artists with vast experience implementing effective, hands-on strategies in the classroom. It is designed for educators to introduce drama-in-education to their students, as both a pre- and post-*Literature to Life* performance guide. The activities presented meet the Learning Standards for English and the Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts. The exercises can be adapted (simplified or extended) according to the students' special needs, maturity, interests, and abilities.

Forging the connection between theatre, literature and education is no longer a privilege—it is our responsibility as educators to not only open these doors, but to charge through them with purpose and certitude.



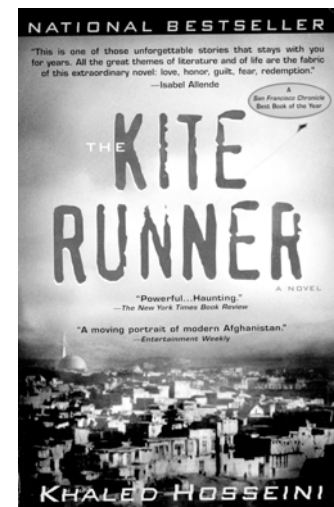
David Kener, Executive Director
The American Place Theatre

All excerpts from *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini are reprinted here with permission. The text for the *Literature to Life* performance of *The Kite Runner* is taken directly from the book. All rights reserved.
Photography by Paul Coughlin and Joe Hoyt.

Theatre Etiquette

To make the theatre-going experience more enjoyable for everyone, a code of behavior has been established. When attending theatrical performances, remember these simple rules of conduct.

- Be on time for the performance.
- Do not eat, drink, or chew gum in the theatre.
- Turn off all cellular phones and pagers.
- Be sure to use the restroom BEFORE the pre-show discussion begins.
- Talk before and after the performance only. Remember that the people near you and on stage can hear you.
- Be an active participant in the pre- and post- show discussions in order to further deepen your experience with *Literature to Life*.
- Appropriate responses to the performances, such as laughing and applauding, are appreciated.
- Act with maturity during romantic, violent, and other challenging scenes.
- Do not leave after the performance, a post-show discussion will follow including a Q&A with the actor.
- Open your eyes, ears, and mind to the entire theatrical experience!



The following exercises are designed to be used BEFORE seeing the play!

Section 1: Introduction

About the Author

Objective: The students will be introduced to Khaled Hosseini and *The Kite Runner*.

Have volunteers read the following biography and letter:

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1965. He is the oldest of five children, and his mother was a teacher of Farsi and History at a large girls high school in Kabul. In 1976, Khaled's family was relocated to Paris, France, where his father was assigned a diplomatic post in the Afghan embassy. The assignment would return the Hosseini family in 1980, but by then Afghanistan had already witnessed a bloody communist coup and the Soviet invasion. Khaled's family, instead, asked for and was granted political asylum in the U.S. He moved to San Jose, CA, with his family in 1980. He attended Santa Clara University and graduated from the UC San Diego School of Medicine. He has been in practice as an internist since 1996. He is married and has two children (a boy and a girl, Haris and Farah). *The Kite Runner* is his first novel.

Excerpt from www.khaledhosseini.com

Dear Friends,

Many readers see my novel, The Kite Runner, as a book about Afghanistan, a story of its violent recent past, its tragedies and upheavals, its rich culture and resilient people. They tell me that this book opened for them an intimate window into my troubled homeland, and that news stories about Afghanistan suddenly registered with them on a deep and personal level. They ask me if this was my intent in writing this book. And I tell them it was. But not that first day, in March of 2001, when I sat to write the opening words of this book. For me, writing has always been, first and foremost, about storytelling. The Kite Runner came about simply because I was bewitched by a story. A story of guilt and redemption, brutality and kindness, sin and forgiveness, a story of the doomed friendship between two boys, one rich, one poor, one flawed, the other pure, with Afghanistan and her own tale of brutality and kindness as the backdrop. It was always, first and last, about story. And stage has always been a unique and powerful medium for storytelling, direct and intimate, organic and spontaneous. And so I thank The American Place Theatre for selecting the story of Amir and Hassan, two boys who lived in my mind and are dear to my heart. I am grateful and thrilled. Thank you for honoring me with this performance tonight.

Khaled Hosseini

Letter written to The American Place Theatre - April 12, 2005

Exercise:

Objective: Based on the biography and letter from the author above, as well as their first impressions drawn from the title of the novel and the setting in which it takes place, the students will demonstrate their immediate reactions to the book.

The group forms a circle, and a copy of *The Kite Runner* is placed at the center. Each person has the opportunity to place their body in relation to the book, thus expressing something about how they feel based on the factors listed in the objective (e.g. A person who still feels they know nothing about the book, but is interested in finding out, may stand at a distance from the book and stare at it. A person who thinks he/she going to love it may cradle it in his arms. A person who thinks it's going to be boring may turn his/her back to the book.)

Students are encouraged to be honest about their expectations of the novel. This activity should be repeated after the students have seen the *Literature to Life* performance of *The Kite Runner* and/or read the novel.

Making Personal Connections

A) Yes, No, Maybe Spectrogram

Objective: The students will make personal connections to the characters and themes in *The Kite Runner* by relating their experiences to the novel in a safe and fun environment.

Exercise:

Students are told that the room is split up into three categories - Yes, No, and Maybe. A question will be asked, and they will respond by moving to one side of the room if the answer is "Yes," the other side if the answer is "No" and the middle part of the room if the answer is "Maybe, or I'm not Sure." The students can also stand anywhere on the spectrogram between "Yes" and "No."

Questions start off general and then advance to those thematically relevant to the novel *The Kite Runner*:

- Have you heard of the novel *The Kite Runner*?
- Do you know much about Afghanistan?
- Do you think that you have much in common with a student of your age living in Afghanistan? (**They may say "no" before seeing the play, but may change their minds after getting to know the main characters.*)
- Do you have a close childhood friend from whom you've grown apart?
- Do you have a close childhood friend with whom you still keep in touch?
- Have you ever had a friend who was in a different economic class than you?
- Have you ever had a good friend who was in a different social group than you?
- Have you ever had a secret that you didn't share with anyone?
- Have you ever regretted a choice that you made?
- Have you ever felt like a "bad person"?
- Do you have a relative whom you admire?
- Do you think all people have flaws?
- Do you think it is ever okay to lie? *For this last question, groups may be split up and asked to debate their answer. They may even be asked to defend a position different from their own.*

Making More Connections:

*Other questions that can be used for Yes, No, Maybe that will help students make personal connections to the text can be drawn from the following paragraphs about what Afghans love to do. (e.g. Have you ever had a picnic in the park? Have you ever flown a kite? Do you like to tell stories?)

What Afghans Love To Do:

Picnics: Before the wars, Afghans spent their weekends with family and friends going to public parks or to the countryside to enjoy their beautiful surroundings and have picnics. People would travel for hours to enjoy lush and green places such as the Jalalabad gardens or closer to Kabul, the Paghman parks.

Kites: One favorite pastime is kite making and flying. Kite flying is an art and sport at the same time. Kite makers take pride in creating kites that can reach up to 5 feet in size. The line attached to the kite is covered with glue and a fine powder of ground glass. As the challengers engage their kites up high in the sky, the goal becomes to cross lines and cut off the opponent's kite with a sawing motion. Children love this game as they often chase the falling kite, which they get to keep. Taliban forbids kite making or flying during their rule—some children have been executed as a result.

Music: Afghans adore music and playing at weddings, outdoors, or whenever they can. The harsh ban on music by the Taliban could lead to death if not respected. Afghan musicians were jailed and music tapes were destroyed. Now that the Taliban no longer rule, music, folk dances and celebrations take place as before.

Food: Afghan food is healthy and delicious. Vegetable dishes, rice, meat stews or kabobs and fresh bread, "nan," are all part of the menu. Cardamom tea is always served along with a refreshing yogurt drink called "doogh" on hot days. Desserts such as fresh or dried fruits, nuts, sugar covered almonds, "nokhol," or chick peas are nibbled on before a meal or with tea.

Pastimes: Afghans like storytelling, dancing and children's games such as marbles. They also enjoy the national game of Buzkashi, a harsh and fast wrestling sport played on horseback and dating back to the thirteenth century. Other sports big in Afghanistan are soccer, boxing, volleyball and basketball. Outdoor activities, family time and picnics are very important as well.

B) Concentric Circles

Objective: The students have a chance to further discuss some of the questions that they had answered silently in “Yes, No, Maybe,” by sharing stories and making personal connections to the characters in a one-on-one discussion with their peers.

Batcha, by Joe Hoyt (Afghani boy)

Exercise:

Participants are broken up into two groups—Group A and Group B. Group A is asked to stand in the middle of the room, forming a circle. Group B is then asked to form a circle around them. Group A turns around and finds a partner in Group B. Each pair introduces themselves to one another and a question is asked by the teacher. After both members have responded, one of the groups is asked to move a specific amount of spaces or people to the right or left. A new question is asked by the teacher. After each question is answered, one of the groups is again asked to move a number of spaces to their right or left so as to have a new partner each turn. Once again, questions are related to the themes of *The Kite Runner*.

Examples include:

- Tell your partner whether you think you will enjoy the reading/viewing *The Kite Runner* based on its title and what you know about it so far, and why? (Ask Group A to move two spaces or people to their right and find a new partner.)
- Tell your partner what images or words come to mind when you think of “Afghanistan”? Would you consider these images or words as stereotypical, or true to reality? (Ask Group B to move four spaces or people to their left, finding a new partner.)
- Tell your partner about a childhood friend that you no longer speak to. How and why did you grow apart? (Ask Group A to move...)
- Tell your partner about a choice that you made that you now regret. (Ask Group B to move...)
- Tell your partner about a relative that you admire and why? (Ask Group A...)
- Tell your partner about a time that you lied. Do you regret the lie or do you believe it had to be done? (Ask Group B...)

*When the students view the performance of *The Kite Runner*, they will be reminded of their own personal connections to the themes and the stories that they shared.



Getting to Know the Text

A) Broken Sentences

Objective: Students will become familiar with the language in *The Kite Runner*.

Exercise:

Students are split into groups of 4. Each group is given small pieces of paper with individual words and is asked to piece the words together to form a sentence. The first group to successfully piece the sentence together wins. Note that there may be multiple versions of the same sentence that are grammatically correct. This is repeated for a few rounds. The text is taken directly from the novel *The Kite Runner*. Some of these same sentences will be used in the frozen images, so as to reinforce the text in the novel/performance.

Type out and photocopy the following sentences and cut them into individual words for each group. Place the words into separate envelopes (*DO NOT INCLUDE PUNCTUATION*). If you have four groups you should have 20 envelopes altogether, labelled as follows: Sentence 1 Group 1, Sentence 1 Group 2, Sentence 1 Group 3, Sentence 1 Group 4, etc....

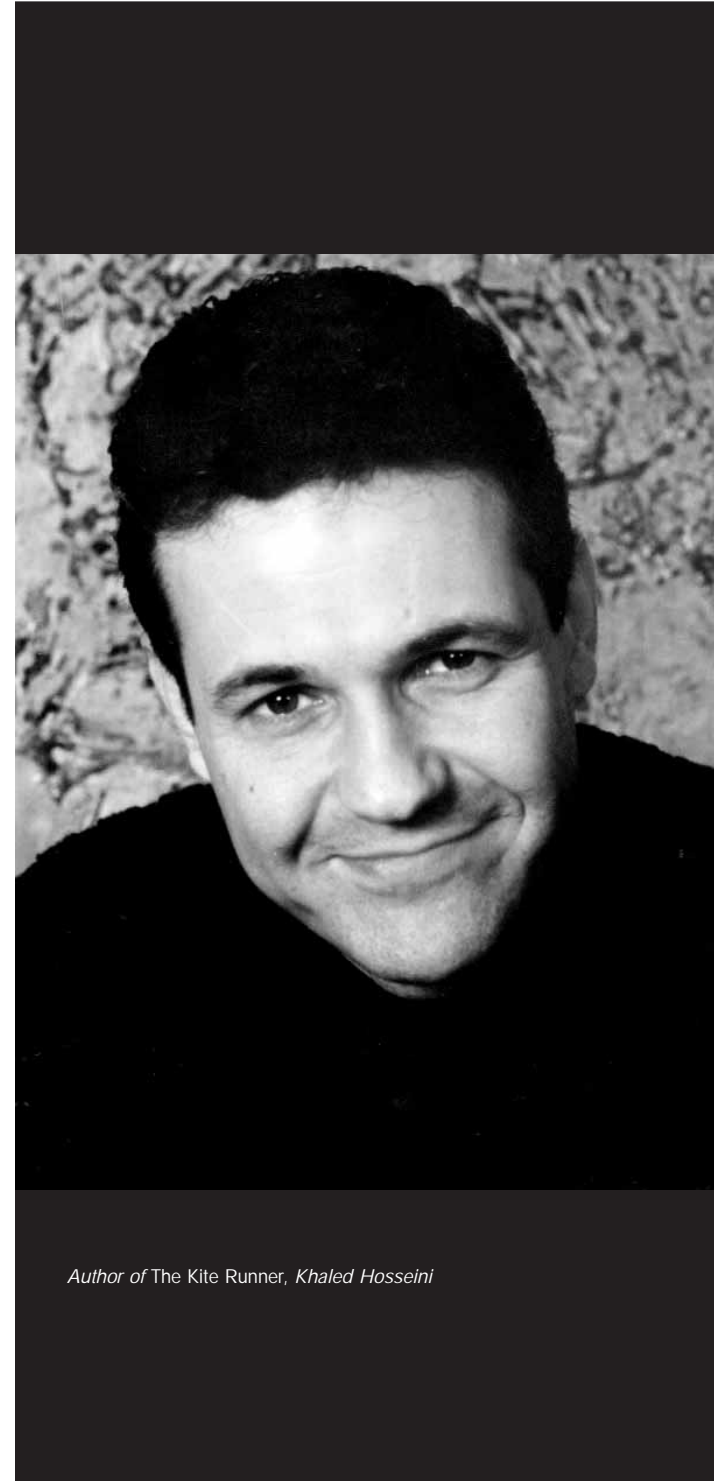
"I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years."

"Hassan and I used to climb the poplar trees in the driveway of my father's house and annoy our neighbors."

"Assef's eyes flick to something behind me and widen with surprise."

"I keep stealing glances at Baba sitting with Rahim on the roof, wondering what he is thinking."

"I bury my face in the warmth of his chest and weep."



Author of The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini

B) Tableaux/Frozen Images

Objective: To further familiarize the students with the text, as well as to deepen their understanding of the novel/performance using powerful physical imagery.

Exercise:

Participants are broken up into small groups. Each group receives an excerpt from *The Kite Runner* and is asked to either literally or abstractly create a tableau or frozen image which captures the essence of the excerpt. The teacher defines "tableau" for the students as a silent frozen picture using the physical body.

Groups are given time to discuss their excerpt and collectively decide how to best capture its imagery. They decide which characters are present in the tableau and are encouraged to be as creative as they wish, since they have not yet seen the performance.

Groups are also told that when they present their frozen image, each individual (whether they represent a person, object, or symbol) will be tapped. At this time they will speak out a phrase or sentence which gives a clue as to who they are in the tableau or what their character may be feeling. Much of this is based on the students' speculation about the character using clues provided in the excerpts.

Each group shares their tableau with the class (possibly in chronological order). When the class yells out in unison, "1-2-3 Freeze," the group freezes into their tableau.

As each group presents, the other participants try to figure out what is going on in the image. After participants offer their thoughts, they tap each group member, listen to the phrase which they verbalize and once again try to figure out what is being portrayed in the tableau. Finally, the tableau is viewed as the excerpt is read by a volunteer.

Examples of excerpts that can be used:

I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975. I remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbling mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years.

Hassan and I used to climb the poplar trees in the driveway of my father's house and annoy our neighbors. I talked Hassan into firing walnuts with his slingshot at the neighbor's one-eyed German shepherd. Hassan never wanted to, but if I asked, really asked, he wouldn't deny me. Hassan never denied me anything. And he was deadly with his slingshot.

During the school year, we have a daily routine. By the time I drag myself out of bed and lumber to the bathroom, Hassan has already washed up, prayed the morning namaz with Ali, and prepared my breakfast. While I eat and complain about my homework, Hassan makes my bed, polishes my shoes, irons my outfit for the day, packs my books and pencils. I hear him singing to himself in the foyer as he irons, singing old Hazara songs in his nasal voice. Then Baba and I drive off in his black Ford Mustang.

At home I open the door to the smoky study and step in. Baba and Rahim Khan are drinking tea and listening to the news crackling on the radio. Their heads turn. Then a smile plays on my father's lips. He opens his arms. I put the kite down and walk into his thick hairy arms. I bury my face in the warmth of his chest and weep. Baba holds me close to him, rocking me back and forth. In his arms, I forget what I've done. And that is good.



Bustop, by Joe Hoyt



Section 3: Getting to Know Afghanistan

50,000-20,000 BCE: Archaeological evidence indicates human civilization is beginning to thrive in the area that will become known as Afghanistan.

500 BCE: Persian leader Darius the Great extends his empire into modern-day Afghanistan.

329 BCE: Alexander the Great conquers Persia and Afghanistan. Greek rule continues in much of the area during the next two centuries, although unrest and revolts are common.

50 AD: The Kushan empire and its Buddhist doctrines, begin to establish themselves in the region.

550: After years of relative independence, Persian forces reassert control over the area but continue to face intermittent revolts from native Afghan tribes.

652: Arabs introduce the region to Islam, a religion that will eventually become dominant.

962: The Islamic era begins with the Ghaznavid Dynasty, founded by Turks and giving rise to Afghanistan's emerging role politically and culturally in Islamic civilization.

1030: The Ghaznavid empire begins to fall apart after the death of Mahmud Ghazni.

1370: A series of ventures to seize power, competing kingdoms and intermittent revolts mark the 14th and 15th centuries.

1504: Babur, a founder of India's Moghul dynasty, takes control of Kabul—and, in time, much of modern-day Afghanistan. Moghul rule introduces another religion, Hinduism, to the country and sets off more attempted nationalist revolts.

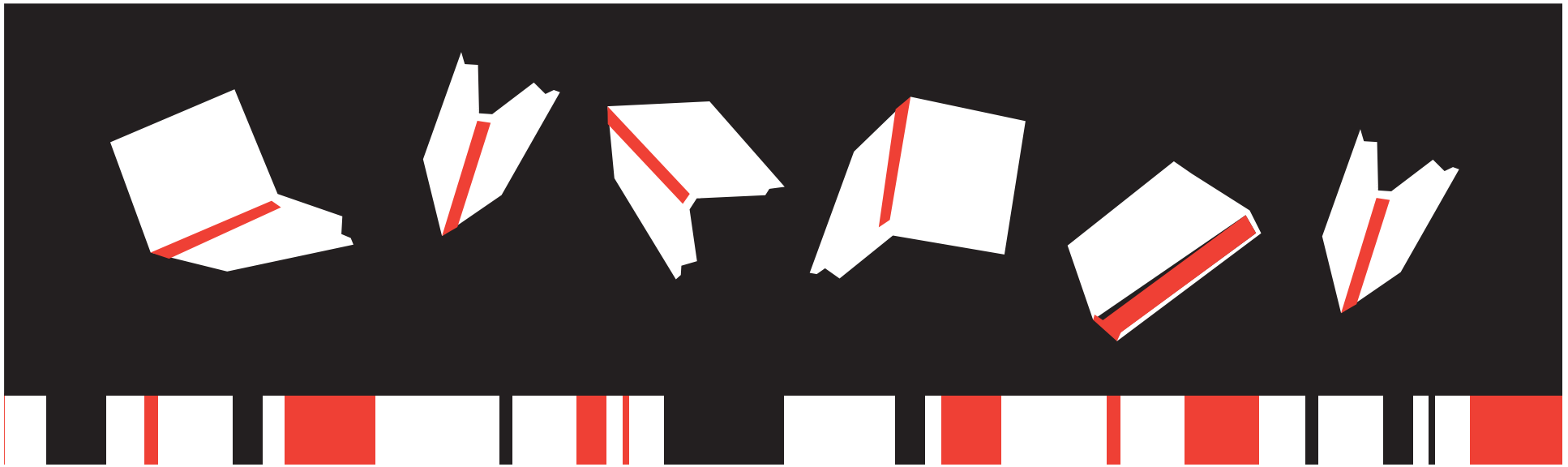
1600s: On the heels of the nationalist movement of the previous century led by Bayazid Roshan, another nationalist-minded revolt—this one headed by Afghan warrior-poet Khushhal Khan Khattak—begins against the Moghul government in the late 1600s.

1708: Mir Wais, considered by some the father of Afghan independence, successfully takes over Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. His son, Mir Mahmud, invades Persia and liberates Herat. But by 1736, the Persians start to re-establish their grip on the region.

1750s: Ahmad Shah Durrani begins his rule, consolidating and enlarging Afghanistan while also governing much of India. But peace will be the exception over the next 100 years, as local leaders fend off Persian and Sikh invasions and fight amongst themselves.

1836: The British, in corroboration with ex-king Shah Shuja, invade Afghanistan in response to growing Russian and Persian influence in the region. Afghan forces fight fervently against British forces, and by 1843 the nation reasserts its independence.

1878: The British launch their second war against Afghanistan, but withdraw in the face of strong resistance two years later.



1885: Russian forces seize territory in northern Afghanistan. The Russians will keep most of the area, but thereafter pledge to respect Afghanistan's territorial integrity. Eight years later, another boundary agreement—this one between Afghanistan and British India—leaves several Afghan tribal areas in what is now Pakistan.

1921: A third Anglo-Afghan war breaks out after anti-British forces assassinate the king. But by 1919, the war-weary British relinquish control over Afghanistan's foreign affairs. The new king, Amanullah, establishes diplomatic relations with several major nations and introduces reforms aimed at modernizing the country. But the moves alienate many tribal and religious leaders and generate political turmoil.

1949: Afghanistan's parliament refuses to recognize new boundaries drawn by Great Britain establishing an independent Pakistan.

1973: Daoud Khan and the Afghan Communist Party overthrow the ruling Afghan government and long-time king Mohammad Zahir Shah. Daoud abolishes the monarchy, presents a new constitution, ousts suspected opponents from the government and institutes economic and social reforms.

1978: Daoud is killed and his government falls in a communist-backed coup. Mass killings, arrests and tortures ensue, and the Afghan guerrilla (Mujahidin) movement is born.

1979: Anticommunist forces take control, prompting a Soviet invasion.

1984: The Mujahidin, known by supporters as "freedom fighters," begin receiving military and logistical assistance from the United States and other countries.

1988: The Soviet Union and United States sign the Geneva Accords, calling for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the return of refugees without fear of persecution. But the Mujahidin do not take part in the negotiations, and do not accept it.

1992: The Mujahidin take over Kabul and declare Afghanistan liberated. They form an Islamic state, headed by the Islamic Jihad Council and Professor Burhannudin Rabbani.

1994: The Taliban militia is born and begins to rise up against Rabbani's government and its supporters. Over the next several years, the group will become the nation's dominant political force, although by 2001 only three other countries recognized its legitimacy.

2001: Afghanistan interim government formed.

2002: Hamid Karzai becomes President and peacekeeping forces enter the country.

2004: A new constitution is introduced.



The following exercises are designed to be used AFTER seeing the play!

Section 3: Post-Show Activities

Exploring the Characters

A) Role on the Wall

Objective: Students will have the opportunity to explore the characters' inner feelings, as well as external influences.

Exercise:

Students pick one character that they were introduced to in the *Literature to Life* performance of *The Kite Runner*. Each student creates an outline of a body by drawing it onto a small poster board and decides which of the characters in the novel it represents. Students are told that on the inside of the body they should write words or phrases that capture the internal world of the character—including thoughts, feelings, emotions, history, or anything that takes place internally. On the outside of the body, they are asked to write words or phrases that capture the external world of the character—including what people think of this character, what this character shows to the world, the physical appearance of the character, external influences or environment, other people and situations that the character interacts with, and anything else external.

After all the students have completed their outline, they may tape it on the wall for the rest of the class to see.

B) Scene Writing

Objective: Students will practice creating original thematic written material. The participants will write and act out a theme-related, two-character scene.

Exercise:

The teacher asks the class to brainstorm three categories—themes, characters, and settings—which are present in the novel and performance of *The Kite Runner*. The teacher helps the students define these terms and lists the students' responses on the board under the three different categories. In groups of two, participants agree upon one theme, one setting, and two characters from the brainstormed lists that they would like to further explore.

After the pairs have agreed on a setting, theme, and characters for themselves, they write a silent dialogue in the following way: one participant writes one line of dialogue and then passes it onto his/her partner who does the same. Each participant is responsible for his/her writing of dialogue and should not consult his/her partner. The entire activity should be silent.

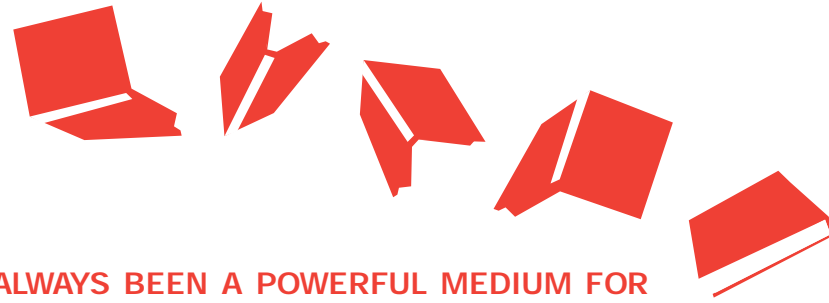
Groups rehearse and present their scenes.

C) Hot-seating

Objective: Students will gain insight into the characters of *The Kite Runner*.

Exercise:

After each group presents, the rest of the class places the characters on the hot-seat. The class may ask the characters any questions that further their understanding of the character, scene, and themes presented. The participants being hot-seated must answer the questions in character based on the information they know about the character as well as their imaginations.



“ STAGE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A POWERFUL MEDIUM FOR STORY TELLING...I THANK THE AMERICAN PLACE THEATRE FOR SELECTING THE STORY OF AMIR AND HASSAN, TWO BOYS WHO LIVED IN MY MIND AND ARE DEAR TO MY HEART. I AM GRATEFUL AND THRILLED!”
~ KHALED HOSSEINI, AUTHOR OF *THE KITE RUNNER*



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Afganistan Resources

Embassy of Afghanistan, Washington D.C.
<http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/>

Association for the Protection of Afghan Archaeology
www.apaa.info

AIA, Archaeology Institute of America
<http://www.archaeological.org/webinfo.php?page=10242>
US STATE Department US Department of State - Focus on Afghanistan: Fact Sheets

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We Want to Hear from YOU and your STUDENTS!

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What to Do After You See the Performance

Please encourage your students to reflect on the play in some of the following ways. We would love to have copies of some of the writings or artwork your students create!

Write

- Write a letter to the actor, writer or teaching artist in response to the play.
- Amir liked to create alternate endings to stories and novels he read. If you were to create an alternate ending for the performed adaptation of *The Kite Runner*, what would it be? (e.g. Re-write the scene between Amir and Hassan, but this time let Hassan hit Amir with the pomegranate.)
- Khaled Hosseini used kite flying as a metaphor for Amir's longing to gain the approval of his father and be free: "All I see is the blue kite. All I smell is victory. Salvation. Redemption. This is my one chance to become someone. If there is a God, He'll guide the winds, let them blow for me so that, with a tug of my string, I'll cut loose my pain, my longing. I've endured too much." Write about an activity you like to do, and how it may be a metaphor for something deeper.
- Hassan was made fun of because he was a "Hazara." Do you see discrimination of a group of people in your community, and if so, how does it make you feel? What steps could Hassan and Amir have taken to promote change in their community, and what can you do?
- Write a review of our production as if you were a journalist for a newspaper.

Draw

- Draw images from the production.
- Draw a poster for our production of *The Kite Runner*.
- Create a collage of images from magazines in response to the play.

Wynn Handman, Artistic Director/Co-Founder

David Kener, Executive Director

Jennifer Barnette, Managing Director

Jillian Mojica, Office Manager

Adi Ortner, Arts Education Associate