

## Introducing “The Kite Runner”

### 1. GEOGRAPHY:

- a. Locating Afghanistan is very important to the story and for understanding its strategic location.
  1. Using a world map or a map of Asia, find Afghanistan and find out how many countries border it and explain why this is geopolitically important. Special emphasis should be placed on borders with Pakistan to east and Iran to west.
- b. Understanding Afghanistan’s internal complexity
  1. At [www.lib.utexas.edu](http://www.lib.utexas.edu), the Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, has an outstanding collection of maps of Afghanistan.
  2. Under “Thematic maps” look at the “ethnolinguistic maps” of the country. Pay special attention to the Pashtun and Hazara groups. The two main characters, Amir and Hassan, are from these two groups respectively.

### 2. THEMES

- a. Before reading the novel, have students write short papers (or alternatively discuss in small groups) the meaning of these concepts. You can have them write personal narratives in which they enunciate their own experiences with the concepts or write more abstract definitions of what each concept means.
  1. redemption      2. goodness      3. happiness
- b. After writing essays, have students work in small groups to reach a consensus definition of what each concept means.
- c. Instruct students as they read the novel to annotate passages in which these concepts are introduced and illustrated.

### 3. HISTORY

- a. The history of Afghanistan just over the last thirty years is quite complicated, but

an understanding of it is very helpful for reading the novel. Quite a bit of history is explicated during the early chapters of the novel, but some outside reading and knowledge can help.

b. Key areas of concern are the 1979 Russian invasion and occupation and resultant resistance by various factions, the civil war that followed the Russian abandonment, the rise of the Taliban and their takeover, and, finally, the 9/11 attacks and subsequent attacks by the United States and allies in late 2001.