

**Teaching Unit | Lessons 1–2 | PDF File |
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The Kite Runner



The Kite Runner

Lessons 1 & 2

Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan TU 1–2

Prerequisite: Students have read chapters 20 and 21 (homework assignment)

Learning goals and achievements

- **Students get to work on three different tasks based on chapters 20–21**
- **Students compare their individual results in groups**
- **Students get to know the historical background of Afghanistan's troubled past**
- **Students get to complete a worksheet on Afghanistan's troubled past**
- **Students participate in a panel discussion known as the "blame game"**
- **Students have to decide who were the worst parties involved in Afghanistan's bloody history past and present**

8.35–8.40 Teacher welcomes students and distributes the three different task sheets based on chapters 20 & 21. Teacher supports students in case of any questions. (individual work; three different excerpts and three different tasks; handouts in three different paper colours).

8.40–8.55 Students work on tasks (individual work).

8.55–9.08 Students work in groups of three (student 1 - excerpt 1 / task 1; student 2 - excerpt 2 / task 2; student 3 - excerpt 3 / task 3) and present and discuss their results.

9.08 Teacher elicits results from groups (brief plenary discussion).

9.15–9.20 Teacher hands out article on Afghanistan's troubled past plus worksheet and asks students to start reading the article (individual work).

9.20–9.30 Break

9.30–9.45 Students continue work on article and worksheet (individual and pair work (worksheet)).

9.45–9.50 Discussion of worksheet (plenary; video projector)

9.50–10.02 The Blame Game. Teacher distributes worksheet. Students form groups of three with each group given one party to the conflict to blame. Students underline the evidence against 'their' party in the text on Afghanistan's troubled past and collect arguments on the worksheet (group work).

10.02–10.15 Panel discussion. Each group presents their arguments why 'their' party is to blame. Quick vote on who is to blame the most. Teacher: supportive role, but also devil's advocate (if necessary) (plenary).

The Kite Runner

Lessons 1 & 2

Tasks

Excerpts and Tasks for Students

Excerpt 1 - Task 1 (chapter 20)

"Kabul is not the way you remember it," he said.

"So I hear."

Farid gave me a look that said hearing is not the same as seeing. And he was right.

Tasks:


1. Can you describe why Amir associates Farid's look with the saying "hearing is not the same as seeing" and what Amir has so far heard of Kabul? (3–4 sentences)
2. Describe in your own words what Kabul looks like when Amir returns. (3–4 sentences)

Excerpts and Tasks for Students

Excerpt 2 - Task 2 (chapter 21)

The house itself was far from the sprawling white mansion I remembered from my childhood. It looked smaller. The roof sagged and the plaster was cracked. Like so much else in Kabul, my father's house was the picture of fallen splendour.

Tasks:

1. Can you think of other things in Kabul that show the same picture of fallen splendour as Amir's father's house? (3–4 sentences)
 2. Can you think of places and/or buildings that now look rather small when compared to the memories you had of them when you were a child? (3–4 sentences)
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Excerpts and Tasks for Students

Excerpt 3 - Task 3 (end of chapter 21)

When it was all over, when the bloodied corpses had been unceremoniously tossed into the backs of red pickup trucks ... a few men with shovels hurriedly filled the holes. ... A few minutes later, the teams took the field. Second half was under way.

Tasks:

1. Describe the context of this scene. What had happened before? Why is the reader so shocked by this scene? (3–4 sentences)
2. What happens normally during the break between the first and second half of a football match? (3–4 sentences)

Afghanistan's troubled past

Once upon a time ...

... there was an independent and prosperous country called Afghanistan. So how could this country turn into one of the saddest places on the planet?

Maybe the British are to blame. They came up with this cynical idea that the empires of this world needed to get a foot in the door in Afghanistan. Thus, from 1839 on, they tried to rule the country and fought three wars on Afghan soil – presumably because they wanted to protect their trade routes to India and China and to keep the Russian Czar away from the Indian Ocean.

When Afghanistan finally became independent in 1919, a time of peace and prosperity began. The king, Zahir Shah, ruled for 40 years and modernized the country. Neither in World War II nor in the Cold War did he take sides. And because both the Soviet Union and the US wanted to be present in Afghanistan, foreign money kept flowing into the country, and airports, roads and railways were built. For some Westerners, Afghanistan became a mythical place in the 1970s: they traveled on the “hippie trail” (the former Silk Road) from Istanbul and Tehran via Kabul to India, seeking spiritual truths, adventure, and cheap drugs.

A bloodless coup, a bloody revolution

Now, King Zahir Shah had an ambitious cousin, Mohammad Daoud, who led a revolt against him in 1973. He made Afghanistan a republic and became its first and only president. In *The Kite Runner*, ten-year-old Amir hears the fighting but is told that “they were shooting ducks” (p. 39). The pro-Islamic population hated Daoud, but the Afghan communist party supported him. The situation started to get more complicated when Daoud felt the Soviet Union was gaining too much influence and removed high-ranking communists from power.

Obviously, the communists weren't amused – especially when one of them was killed in 1978 and no one knew why. So three communist leaders of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan – Taraki, Amin, and Karmal – rebelled

against President Daoud in April 1978 and killed him and his family.

After this revolution, Taraki ruled Afghanistan. He did what communists around the world tried to do at the time (and what powerful people around the world hated): he made sure banks didn't exploit people who owed them money. He started a land reform (which meant he took people's land away). And he declared that women had equal rights. People who thought these three ideas were bad ideas (and there were many) were often put into prison and tortured.

An even bloodier invasion

After that, things went from bad to worse: Prime Minister Amin, an unscrupulous nationalist, eliminated Taraki in September 1979 and became president himself. Then, on 27 December 1979, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, executed Amin that same day, occupied the country, and made Karmal president. Most Afghans hated it. So maybe the Soviets are to blame, as well.

Over one million people died in the war against the Soviets, many joined the Afghan resistance fighters (the Mujahedin), and millions fled the country as refugees. In *The Kite Runner*, Baba is one of them. He and Amir left Afghanistan in early 1981, just when Ronald Reagan became president of the United States.

Now, Reagan seemed to hate the Russians as much as Baba did. That's why, in the 1980s, his government and Saudi Arabia poured about 40 billion dollars worth of military aid into Afghanistan via Pakistan. Pakistan, in turn, was happy to spend that money to sponsor, arm and train the Mujahedin, who kept firing American-made Stinger missiles at Soviet tanks and aircraft. Even Hollywood was “fighting along” and sent Sylvester Stallone to Afghanistan as John Rambo (*Rambo III*, USA, 1988). So, even though they lasted almost ten years, there was no way the Soviets were going to win that conflict.

Moving from bad to worse

After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the United Nations tried to help create a functioning

90 administration, the Islamic State of Afghanistan. However, the Mujahedin warlords were not ready to hand over their guns. And the major international players wondered who was going to call the shots in Afghanistan in the future – so they kept sending money and weapons to whoever they thought might act in their interest: Saudi Arabia supported Sunnite militias; Iran funneled money to Shiite warlords and the Hazara; and Pakistan, which was still supported by US money, built up a warlord called Hekmatyar. Predictably, a nasty civil war broke out which transformed Kabul into a ghost town. It was anarchy, “hell on earth” (*The Kite Runner*, 229). Finally, in 1994, a man called Massoud, the official Minister of Defence, was able to stop Hekmatyar from bombing Kabul.

In the name of God

Amongst all this chaos, many Afghan refugees turned to their own faith for moral guidance and spiritual support and became “students of Islam” (“Taliban”). And they started to dream their political dream of an Islamic state ruled by the *Sharia*, their strict, brutal and misogynous interpretation of Islam. They fought ruthlessly to make their dream come true. By 1994, the Taliban had become major players; and they were certainly not willing to make compromises with Massoud. So the reckless bombing of Kabul started again in 1995. In September 1996, Massoud had to leave Kabul, and the victorious Taliban called out the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates and Pakistan were the only nations to recognize the Taliban diplomatically. Under Mullah Omar they terrorized the country and effectively banned women from public life, depriving them of education, medical care and all basic human rights. Pakistan probably supported the Taliban with money and weapons and looked on as the Taliban massacred those they considered enemies, which included Shiite Moslems, such as the Hazara. In *The Kite Runner*, Amir’s trip to Afghanistan says it all (pp. 237–334). The Taliban also “exported” terrorism. Indeed,

one of Mullah Omar’s guests of honor was a man called Osama Bin Laden, who came from an absurdly wealthy Saudi family and hated the United States. His Al Qaida operatives masterminded the suicide attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001. Then George W. Bush declared his “war on terror” and – with a UN Security Council decision that encouraged the US to defend itself – NATO troops invaded Afghanistan, fought together with Massoud’s United Front, and ousted Mullah Omar. The Taliban were defeated but ready to start a vicious insurgency.

Trying to rebuild Afghanistan

At a UN summit in Bonn, Germany, in December 2001, Afghan leaders created an interim government headed by a man called Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun of royal lineage who dresses much like Baba in *The Kite Runner* and behaves much like a king. It’s difficult to say if Karzai has been part of the problem or part of the solution. Because of all the international money around, Karzai’s government has become one of the most corrupt regimes worldwide, according to Transparency International. His family members have accumulated fantastic wealth, brought Kabul Bank to the verge of collapse, and made millions selling opium. Karzai manipulated the 2004 elections, has threatened to collaborate with the Taliban and has passed laws that deprive women of many civil rights.

While the UN International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) have been trying to stabilize Afghanistan, the Taliban and other rebel groups have continued to terrorize the country, which remains one of the poorest and least developed countries on this planet. Many non-governmental organisations like the International Rescue Committee are working hard to change that. They are enabling countless villages to get back on their feet, encouraging them to elect councils and to build schools, hospitals and infrastructure. So there is hope, even though nobody really knows what will happen next (e.g. after 2014 when the ISAF troops have left).

Worksheet

Year	
1839	
1919	
1973	
1978	
1979	
1989	
1996	
2001	
2004	
2014	

Worksheet (Key)

Year	
1839	Britain fights three wars in Afghanistan
1919	Afghanistan becomes independent
1973	Mohammad Daoud becomes first president of the republic of Afghanistan.
1978	Taraki, Amin and Karmal (communist leaders take over.
1979	The Soviets invade Afghanistan and killed Amin
1989	The Soviets withdraw from Afghanistan
1996	The Taliban call out the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
2001	Interim government under Hamid Karzai
2004	Karzai is elected in manipulated elections
2014	Pullout of ISAF troupes (planned)

**Teaching Unit | Lessons 3–4 | PDF File |
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The Kite Runner



The Kite Runner

Lessons 3 & 4

Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan TU 3–4

Prerequisite: Students have read chapter 22 (homework assignment)

Learning goals and achievements

- **Students get to work on three different tasks based on chapter 22**
- **Students compare their individual results in groups**
- **Students get to know the political background of Afghanistan**
- **Students get to watch an authentic BBC documentary on the Afghan elections**
- **Students participate in discussion on the Afghanistan's political future**

8.35–8.40 Teacher welcomes students and distributes the three different task sheets based on chapter 22. Teacher supports students in case of any questions. (individual work; three different excerpts and three different tasks; handouts in three different paper colours).

8.40–8.55 Students work on tasks (individual work).

8.55–9.08 Students work in groups of three (student 1 - excerpt1 / task 1; student 2 - excerpt 2 / task 2; student 3 - excerpt 3 / task 3) and present and discuss their results.

9.08 Teacher elicits results from groups (brief plenary discussion).

9.13–9.20 Teacher hands out Pre-Task; students read Pre-Task (Vocabulary, Politicians, Places and Vocab). Teacher tells students that this is vital information to understand the video shown in the second part of the double lesson (individual work; whole class; handouts)

9.20–9.30 Break

9.30–9.40 First viewing of film on Afghan elections (whole class; global understanding; video projector)

9.40–9.45 Hand out while/after-task sheets. Brief discussion of tasks (handouts).

9.45–9.55 Second viewing of the film.

9.55–10.02 Students complete while/after-task questions first individually and then compare results with neighbour (individual work; group work)

10.02–10.15 Discussion / correction of results. Elicit students' reaction to film and the political process in Afghanistan / the future of Afghanistan (open discussion; plenary).

The Kite Runner

Lessons 3 & 4


Tasks

Excerpts and Tasks for Students

Excerpt 1 - Task 1 | Chapter 22

Assef: "Besides, I didn't fight the Shorawi for money. Didn't join the Taliban for money either. Do you want to know why I joined them?"

Tasks:

1. Can you describe why Assef fought the Shorawi and joined the Taliban? (4–5 sentences)
 2. Do you think Assef is telling the truth? Can you think of other reasons for his action? Does Assef have ulterior motives for joining the Taliban? (3–4 sentences)
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Excerpts and Tasks for Students


Excerpt 2 - Task 2 | Chapter 22

Amir: "That's what you were doing in Mazar, going door-to-door? Taking out the garbage?"

Assef: "Precisely."

Amir: "In the west, they have an expression for that. They call it ethnic cleansing."

Tasks:

1. Describe what had happened in Mazar. Who is Assef referring to as being "garbage"? (3–4 sentences)
 2. Describe Assef's reaction to the term "ethnic cleansing"? What do you think goes on in his mind? (3–4 sentences)
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Excerpts and Tasks for Students

Excerpt 3 - Task 3 | Chapter 22

My body was broken—just how badly I wouldn't find out until later—but I felt *healed*.

Healed at last.

Tasks:

1. Describe the context of this scene. What had happened before? Why does Amir feel healed at last? (3–4 sentences)
2. Did the outcome of the fight with Assef surprise you? Did you expect that the fight would end like this? (3–4 sentences)

BBC News Video on Afghan Elections 2014

<https://youtu.be/w6wWFmV468c?si=cXOKUScBztbcf7td>

Pre-Tasks (Politicians, Places and Vocabulary)

Hamid Karzai is the current President of Afghanistan. He took office on 22 December 2001 after the removal of the Taliban regime. He is an ethnic Pashtun of the Popalzai tribe. During the 1980s Soviet invasion he went to Pakistan to work as a fundraiser for the anti-communist mujahideen. The Mujahideen were backed by the United States, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran, and Karzai was a contractor for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) at the time. His siblings emigrated to the United States.

Ashraf Ghani is an Afghan politician and a candidate in the 2014 presidential election. Ghani worked at the world bank. After the Soviet invasion most of the male members of his family were imprisoned and Ghani was stranded in the United States.

Abdul Rasul Sayyaf is an Afghan Islamist politician. He took part in the war against the Soviet regime, leading the Mujahedin faction Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan.

Kandahar is one of the thirty-four provinces of Afghanistan, located in the southern part of the country next to Pakistan. Considered as birthplace of the Taliban and home of president Karzai's ancestors.

Vocabulary

For a decade ... the country has marched to the tune of Hamid Karzai and a huge contingent of foreign troops.

Presidential hopefuls

Tribal credentials

Heartland of Pashtun tribes

Descendants of the ancient Pashtun kings

Ancestral home

Military transition

Participation in an election

A mandate

voters / devotees

While and After-Tasks (Politicians, Places and Vocabulary)**Questions:**

What do the policemen who stand guard in the morning rush hour do?

What is one of the biggest challenges for the next president?

Who has the most to lose from an oppressive (Taliban) regime? And why? (2-3 sentences)

Complete the sentence: The minister of women's affairs is now running for

What would be her top priority if she came to power?

Mention at least one of the reminders that there has been progress in Afghanistan.

Complete the sentence: Abdul Rasul Sayyaf is a notorious, but in the past decade he has been useful to And in this election he is even talking about

Abdul Rasul Sayyaf's rally brings out the men they call

Why does Abdul Rasul Sayyaf think he is misunderstood?

**Teaching Unit | Lesson 5 | PDF File |
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The Kite Runner



The Kite Runner

Lesson 5

Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan TU 5

Prerequisite: Students have read chapters 23 & 24 (homework assignment)

Learning goals and achievements

- **Students get to work on two different tasks based on chapter 23 & 24**
- **Students compare their individual results in groups**
- **Students get to know some technical terminology (medicine)**
- **Students get to appreciate a group presentation (cf. also On Assessing this TU for criteria)**

8.35 Teacher welcomes students and distributes the two different task sheets based on chapter 23 & 24. Teacher supports students in case of any questions. (individual work; two different excerpts and two different tasks; handouts in two different paper colours for chapter 23 tasks and chapter 24 tasks respectively; handouts).

8.38–8.52 Students work on tasks (individual work).

8.52–8.57 Students work in groups of two (student 1 - task on chapter 23; student 2 - task on chapter 24) and present and discuss their results.

8.57–9.00 Teacher elicits results from groups (brief plenary discussion).

9.00–9.20 The group of students assigned for lesson 5 give their presentation on the background of the author Khaled Hosseini (cf. also the PDF document On Assessing this TU; teacher assess presentation according to assessment rubric).

9.20–9.30 Break

The Kite Runner

Lesson 5

Tasks

Excerpts and Tasks for Students

Excerpt 1 - Task 1 | Chapter 23

Postsurgical state

"You are in a hospital in Peshawar. You have suffered some very significant injuries ... I would say you're very lucky to be alive. Your spleen had ruptured ... a delayed rupture, because you had signs of early hemorrhage into your abdominal cavity. My colleagues from the general surgery unit unit had to perform an emergency splenectomy. If it had ruptured earlier, you would have bled to death. ... You also suffered seven broken ribs. One of them cause pneumothorax."

Tasks:

1. Who is speaking?
2. Can you describe the injuries which Amir suffered from the fight with Assef in your own words? (3–4 sentences)

Tasks for Students

Chapter 24

Tasks

1. Give chapter 24 a title

You read chapter 24 for today. Chapters in the Kite Runner are numbered, but as a publisher of the book you think it is a good idea for the reader to have an interesting sounding title for the chapter. Come up with one or two interesting title(s) for chapter 24.

2. Summary

Write a brief and compact summary for chapter 24 in no more than 8 sentences.

**Teaching Unit | Lesson 6 | PDF File |
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The Kite Runner



The Kite Runner

Lesson 6

Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan TU 6

Prerequisite: Students have watched Marc Foster's movie based on the book

Learning goals and achievements

- **Students get to compare the film to the book in general**
- **Students get to analyse various stills from the movie**
- **Students get to describe the context of scenes using visual clues**
- **Students get to voice their response to a harsh critique of the film**

8.35–9.00 Teacher welcomes students and displays stills from film, starting with still 1 and ending with still 3. Students complete task sheet for each individual frame (individual work; task sheet handouts). Teacher supports and encourages students and gives clues, followed by brief discussion for every still. (individual task; discussion in the plenary; video projector)

9.00–9.15 Students work on film critique with their partners (pair work).

9.15–9.20 Brief discussion of the students' opinion on the film critique, general discussion of film versus book.

9.20–9.30 Break

The Kite Runner

Lesson 6

Tasks

The Kite Runner: Imagery

Some Scenes from the Film

Imagery in Book & Film

Comparison of Film to Book

Still 1 / Scene 1



**If you have the right kite,
you'll win the tournament this year.**

Still 2 / Scene 2



Still 3 / Scene 3



Tasks for Students | The Kite Runner: Film & Book**The Kite Runner (Film adaptation by Marc Forster)****Tasks****1. Still 1**

1.1 Describe what you can see in this still. Where are we? Are the images in the film a good adaptation of the book material?

1.2 Describe the context of this scene.

1.3 Why is this scene important?

2. Still 2

2.1 Describe what you can see in this still. Who is speaking?

2.2 Describe the context of this scene.

2.3 Why is this scene important?

3. Still 3

3.1 Who is speaking? Who is this man and what does he tell Amir?

3.2 What is going to happen next?

3.3 How would you describe the setting of this scene? Contrast this to the setting of scene 1.

4. Critique of the Film

The reviewer Edward Boxler wrote in an online critique of the film:

"Three word review: Read. The. Book.

Longer review: Marc Forster respects Khaled Hosseini's brilliant debut novel, but something does get lost in the adaptation process. The Kite Runner is one of the best books I've ever read, but the film version, while very faithful, acts like a "Disneyfication" of the source material. Several plot points are simplified to move the story forward so that it can cover as much ground as its 2 hour running time will allow."

4.1 Do you agree with this harsh critique? Formulate your response to the critic's objections in at least four sentences.

Assessment of Teaching Unit The Kite Runner | Group Presentation

Guidelines for Group Presentation (Assessment)

1. Form groups of two (one group of three).
2. Prepare a presentation between **five and ten minutes** on a specific topic / theme of the novel as shown in the list.
3. Research your topic / theme thoroughly.
4. Prepare your presentation well.
5. Finish your presentation with an open question that we can discuss in class.
Be prepared to guide the discussion and provide input if necessary.
6. Hand in an outline a week in advance of your presentation.

Topic / Theme	Group
Kite running as a competitive sport	#1
Relationship Amir - Hasan	#2
Relationship Baba - Amir	#3
Discrimination of ethnic groups in Afghanistan	#4
Background of the author Khaled Hosseini	#5
The two themes: guilt and redemption	#6
The clash of the two civilisations: Afghanistan and the USA	#7
Symbolism: symbols used in The Kite Runner	#8

Assessment Rubric

Presentation

1. Is the language being used appropriate (style, register)?
2. Did the group reflect on their topic / theme and is this reflection apparent in the presentation?
3. Did the group present freely, did they keep eye contact with the audience?
4. Was the presentation within the time limit?
5. Did the group link the topic / theme to relevant passages in the novel?

Discussion

1. Did the open question posed by the group spark an interesting discussion?
2. Did the group actively provide an input to the discussion?
3. Did the group lead the discussion and were they able to revive the discussion should it get stuck?