

# A thousand splendid suns assignment



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

It made me forget about the real world and dragged my mind into the world of Miriam and Leila. Miriam is a girl who was “born a Hiram, a source of shame to her father and his family” (60). Her father Jail is of the upper-class men of Kabul, and her mother a lowly woman cast out of her home by her master Jail. Every Thursday, Jail would visit Miriam and tell her of the wondrous stories of her past, and Miriam, a naive little girl, would eat up all the Lies he feeds her. Her mother would warn her against it all, but Miriam chose to believe the happy version of events Jail told her.

He was a rich man telling rich lies. Why would Miriam's own father be so cold-hearted to pretend to love her and make up stories that aren't even true? I think he does this because “[he is] ashamed of [her]” (50); but he doesn't want her to know his true personality or else she wouldn't respect him since he is her father after all. Social appearances told society whether you were worth their time or not, so Jail wanted to save his face and keep his good reputation. Nowadays, we are still judged by our social status and appearance though it isn't as severe and open as back then in the late 1900s.

Miriam's mother once warned her that there was “only one skill” she had to perfect, “[a]ND it's this: tamale. Endure” (17). We can observe how obedient Miriam is, because she did endure. She “quietly endure[d] all that [fell] upon [her]” (82) through the good times and the bad – especially through the bad. If I had to live Miriam's life, I doubt that I would have endured through everything that came my way as well as she did. Miriam is like a coconut: she has a hard shell, and nothing can break her. But on the inside, her heart is so big and generous, yet she sometimes feels like she can't keep up the brave face any longer.

The first few days of Maria's forced marriage were tough on her. She wasn't used to the new surroundings and she was feeling "adrift and forlorn" (56). But little by little, chore by chore, with each smile and connection she made with her new husband, she thought to herself "that they would make good companions after all" (77). After losing her first child, Miriam returns to her state of misery and loses the connection she had with her husband. Rehashed. His temper goes out of control, and everything she does has this sense of dreariness and to her "life ... [seems] so exhausting" (83).

I can feel Maria's despair and grief as if it were almost my own even though I have no idea what it feels like to have lost a child. This is an example of Chalked Hussein's power in writing: he draws me in with his vivid words painting a clear picture in my mind. Chapter 16-25 (Part TWO) Journal #2 In Part Two of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the narrator takes us down the path of life of Leila. When she was only nine years old, the Soviet Union had already invaded Afghanistan. Some people, like Laic's teacher, said that "the Soviet Union was the best nation in the world... Mind to its workers, and its people were all equal" (101). But others disagreed strongly with this statement. Laic's father believes firmly in education, especially for women. He thinks that education should come before marriage "because a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated" (103), which is quite the opposite of what most other parents with daughters think. Leila has been "the top-ranked student" (103) for the past two years, but she feels that she cannot tell her friends Hessian and Gist as they do not have the same perspective on education as Leila and her father.

Ever since Laic's two older brothers have went off to war, her mamma has been depressed and feels like there is no point in life. She is an "unmoving blanketed mound" lying in bed everyday. From this, I inferred that mamma prefers her sons to Leila. This is a great example of how in some cultures parents favor sons over daughters. Why is this so? I think this is because of the stereotype that boys are better than girls. I see no reason why a girl cannot be as strong or smart or talented as a boy in any way. Nowadays, we try to ban this way of thinking but some people still have this belief.

One afternoon, "a stranger with news" (122) came knocking at her door. He came to tell her parents that Laic's brothers, Nor and Mad, have died triumphantly, fighting for their beloved country's sovereignty. Many people the next morning arrived at their funeral, but all Mamma did was "sway back and forth and stare at the rug with a remote, spiritless look" (125). Contrarily, it was hard for Leila "to summon sorrow, to grieve the deaths of people [she] had never really thought of as alive in the first place" (125, 126) because her brothers had left for war when she was a very young girl.

Even though the last of the Soviet convoys left the city in 1989, Mamma swore she would not celebrate nor rejoice until the Unexamined win the war against Incunabula and "hold a victory parade right here in Kabul" (138). Three years later, unexpected happened. Incunabula surrendered ! From that day on, "Mamma rose from bed a new woman" (145) and resumed her motherly chores. Unfortunately, around a week later everything unraveled and instead of having a common enemy, the Unexamined found the enemy in each other. They fired rockets at the mountains, and "the mountains fired on Kabul" (157).

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One day after school when Gist was walking home with her friends, a stray rocket struck them. It was only during the funeral the next day the information finally started to sink in and “[a]t last, Leila began to weep for her friend” (161). For Leila, the bad news just kept coming like an ocean’s waves. This time it was her best friend and lover, Atari, who was moving to Pakistan. She felt betrayed and heartbroken, but at the same time she knew he had to go. Almost everyone in her neighborhood had packed their belongings and left, but Mamma refused.

She said it was an “affront, a Dearly, These two women were similar; they were both compassionate and kind-hearted. One night, when Rehashed their husband was in a foul mood, Leila talked back to him. He immediately assumed it was Miriam who taught her to do this, even though they weren’t exactly friends at that time. He took out his leather belt, and that meant a beating for Miriam. Just as he brought the belt down, Leila lunged at him, pleading him to not beat Miriam. Even though Miriam was jealous and reluctant to befriend Leila at first; she soon learned to accept and appreciate the other woman’s companionship.

The beginning of their friendship sparked when Leila first asked Miriam to have tea, after a long weary day doing chores around the house. “I know it’s chilly outside, but what do you say we sinners have us a cup of chaw in the yard?” Leila asked. Miriam protested weakly at first, but gave in to the thought of a break from all the work. From then on, they had daily chaw and were no longer enemies, but an understanding came across the two of them and they started to do their chores together. I don’t relate at all to the lives

of Leila and Miriam, so why did I feel their pain and their happiness like I was experiencing it?

It was because Chalked Hussein wrote this book with such emotion and depth; he wound my mind carefully into the life of these two women.

CONNECTIONS Chalked Hussein wrote this book with hope in his heart and a mind-blowing story to tell. He used many literary devices to spice up his book and to add more pizzazz. When Nana told Miriam “ To Jail and his wives, I was a poker. A muggers. You too. ” This is a powerful metaphor describing how others looked down on them because they were from a lower caste. Another device would be “ early evening” and “ badly out of breath”.

They are examples of alliteration for emphasis on the time of day and the condition of the character. He also used similes. Some examples of that would be “ She could make out the minarets in the distance, like the dusty fingers of giants... ” Which compares the distant towers to the fingers of a giant and “ She had a mouth that ran like a sewing machine” which compares tells us that Hessian not only talked a lot but also very fast. Lastly, one example of personification is “ They are not friendly countries. ” A country cannot be friendly, it is the people living in the country that are friendly or not.

This book was written in two perspectives: Maria’s and Laic’s. It was a bit confusing Jumping back and forth from these points of view, but it showed the opinion of these two women and laid out the two sides of this story.

ANALYSIS One part of the book that was very touching was when Miriam accepted her punishment for killing Rehashed to save Leila, so that Leila can

live the rest of her life peacefully and without fault. It shows how big Maria's heart is, how willing she was to give up her life for someone she loves. Leila wanted Miriam to run away with her, but Miriam refused.

She said, " Eve killed our husband. Eve deprived your son of his father. It isn't right that I run. I can't. Even if they never catch us, I'll never escape your son's grief. " It broke my heart to see Leila leave Miriam behind, but it was decided. Miriam said Leila and her children have given her the happiness she was looking for – there was nothing else she wanted.

RESPONSE The other part that moved me so much was the letter Jail wrote to Miriam to apologize. Tort now is treated near, Ana now is wasn't a good Tanner to near.

He wrote, " I dare, I dare allow myself the hope that, after you read this, you will be more charitable to me than I ever was to you. That you might find it in your heart to come and see your father. That you will knock on my door one more time and give me the chance to open it this time, to welcome you, to take you in my arms, my daughter, as I should have all those years ago. It is a hope as weak as my heart. " This paragraph in his letter stood out to me the most, and it shows how sorry Jail was for not being there for his daughter all those years. For giving her away to marriage, for treating her like she wasn't good enough for him.

RESPONSE After reading the letter, I think that Jail has changed, that death's open arms have given him a change of heart. It brought tears to my eyes, because Miriam didn't have the chance to forgive her father and make everything right again. Why didn't Miriam visit Jail after receiving his first

letter? I think it was because she was scared of seeing him after so long, of what he would think of her, and mostly importantly she was scared of him not opening the door for her again like the day of her birthday years before.

RESPONSE The message the author tried to convey was as clear as a summer sky to me.

It is that friendship is something we should all treasure. It shows us that sometimes teamwork is essential to win even though sometimes we have to sacrifice. Leila and Miriam won the war against Rehashed, but in this case Miriam had to give up her life for it. It was a beautiful but heart-breaking deed: Miriam sacrificing herself for her sister and only friend Leila; she was so humble to put others before herself. In conclusion, Chalked Hussein gave the readers a very powerful image of his home country Afghanistan and showed us how strong a true friendship can be.