

# The significance of themes in the kite runner and oedipus rex

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Many stories, although their plots are different, can share a significant theme tying them together. In the novel *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and in the drama *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, both authors use the theme of blindness. With their different plots, writing styles, etc. both authors also have similarities like the use of the same theme but in different aspects. Therefore, each author's use of the theme of blindness is shown by how each author portrays this theme, the way both authors represent the theme of blindness and the significance of the treatment of blindness by each author. Overall, this theme gives each story a lot dimension and creates a pivotal point in the plot. Blindness is portrayed in both pieces but in different situations.

In *The Kite Runner*, Amir, the main character, and speaker lives his whole life as a child and into his adulthood believing his childhood best friend, Hassan was just the son of his father's longtime friend. They were from two different ethnic groups, Hassan was his servant. Until one day Amir, a 38-year-old, finds out he has been being lied to, that he was blinded from the fact that all this time Hassan had been his half-brother. He is told by his uncle Rahim Khan who is very ill. Amir asks "' Did Hassan know?' I said through lips that didn't feel like my own. Rahim Khan closed his eyes. Shook his head" (Hosseini 222). Not only did Rahim Khan lie to him but his own Baba, Amir's father, did as well. This is another reason why he feels betrayed because this also means Baba would be Hassan's dad too. This causes Amir to be frustrated and astonished all at once. Hassan was now dead, and he didn't even know that he had drifted apart, from his own brother at the time. Amir feels as if his life is not real, that it is one big made-up lie! On the other

hand, in Oedipus Rex, while there are many mentions of sight and physical blindness Oedipus himself is mentally blind. Oedipus who is the king of Thebes is determined to find the murderer of the king before him who was Laius, which is the only way the plague set to destroy their city will end. As Oedipus keeps on his journey to find this murderer he learns about he is blind to what his past is.

Tiresias who is physically blind accuses Oedipus of being the murderer. Tiresias even says " You, even though you/ see clearly, do not see the scope of your evil, / nor where you live, nor with whom you dwell" (Sophocles p. 25, 433-435). Oedipus is not only blind to the fact that he was the murderer, he is also unaware of the person he murdered was his own father. Although Amir and Oedipus are not very alike, the things they are blind to are somewhat similar. In both texts the author's use the theme of blindness similar in a sense, but overall differently. What makes them similar is the fact that both are blind to their past, but the situations are different. Amir finds out that his family was a lie and the two father figures in his life had lied to him, while Oedipus is blind to the things he has done, like killing his own father and marrying his mother. This is very wrong but Oedipus doesn't realize this, even when Tiresias brings up his parents Oedipus says " To whom? Wait! Who on earth are my parents?" (Sophocles p. 25, 460). It is evident that to the audience how mentally blind Oedipus really is.

One of the biggest differences between these is the fact that the reader does not know that Amir is blind to this up until Rahim Khan tells him. So in a sense, the reader is blind to this as well. While in Oedipus Rex the audience

knows early on that Oedipus is the murderer which creates dramatic irony in the play. Therefore, both author's mostly represent this theme in their own manners which makes them very significant. There is a sign for the way each author chose the treatment for the theme of blindness in their texts. Hosseini used this theme as a way to contribute to the importance of the story as does Sophocles. In *The Kite Runner* blindness is important because without the information that Amir had found out he never would have been pushed out of his coward ways to go back to Afghanistan and bring Hassan's son Sohrab back to America with him. This is deemed as important because when he finally locates Sohrab it is the climax of the story and is what the last chapters of the book are about. On the other hand, in *Oedipus Rex* blindness is important because it drives the plot of the story.

Since Oedipus is looking for a way to end the plague on the city and is passionate about that it is almost a plot twist when he is the way to end the plague because he is the murderer. Like mentioned earlier, this is dramatic irony because the audience knows about Oedipus before he does but, this theme gives the text part of its purpose and almost serves as a moral to the text. That being said, both authors used the significance of the theme to help drive the plot of the stories. In conclusion, in both *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles the author expertly uses the theme of blindness. Even though the author's used the theme in a different manner, the similarity that ties them together is the fact that the blindness relates to both of their characters pasts. This theme is used to reveal important information in the plot as well as making it dramatic, making blindness

significant to both texts. This not only keeps the reader or audience interested, but it comes as a shock to each of these characters as well.

Overall, the way the theme of blindness was executed by both Hosseini and Sophocles was very clever and well-thought out.