

# The kite runner and a thousand splendid suns assignment



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Khaled Hosseini's novels, *The Kite Runner* (year), and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) both explore the idea that a significant individual can inspire a course of action, which may result in a change of self. In the novel *The Kite Runner*, the protagonist, Amir, is a young boy growing up in a well off family in Kabul, Afghanistan. Amir's closest friend is Hassan, the son of his family's beloved servant. Amir's self image at the beginning of the novel is one in which he views himself as a coward, worthless and selfish. I had one last chance to make a decision. One final opportunity to decide who I was going to be. I could step into that alley, stand up for Hassan ??? the way he'd stood up for me all those times in the past ??? and accept whatever would happen to me. Or I could run. In the end, I ran. I ran because I was a coward... I was afraid of getting hurt... I aspired to cowardice... He was just a Hazara, wasn't he? This quote indicates that Amir defines himself as a coward and is ashamed of his fear and lack of courage.

The repetition of the " I " indicates that Amir is constantly thinking of himself in the desperate situation despite it is actually Hassan's life and safety that is threatened. Eventually, as war rips Afghanistan apart, Amir and his father flee, arriving in America. As an adult he is still haunted by his act of cowardice. Rahim Khan, a significant and influential character in Amir's life, encourages Amir to return to Afghanistan to redeem himself. It is at this point that Amir changes his sense of self.

He faces the demons of his past which allows him to mature and heal as a character and gain the courage that he has lacked. In Afghanistan, Amir confronts a figure from his past, Assef, and in so doing fights to redeem himself. " Baba is wrestling the black bear... He looks up at me and I see he's

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me. I am wrestling the bear". This quote shows us that he has confronted his past and has overcome his fears and changed as a character. The repetition of the " I" emphasises that he has overcome the obstacles which have haunted him his whole life, allowing him to change his sense of self.

This change is a positive and uplifting change of self for the protagonist in this novel. In the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the protagonist, Mariam also undergoes a positive change of self. This change is also similarly a positive and uplifting change. Mariam's personality shifts from being one that lacks self esteem, confidence and courage, similarly to Amir at a younger age; to one with courage, confidence, strength and heroism, similarly to Amir in his older age. This change is due to a significant individual in Mariam's life, Laila, who inspires and encourages her greatly to achieve this change.

Her original personality is exemplified in the fact that Mariam lives in fear of Rasheed, " his shifting moods, his volatile temperament, his insistence on steering even mundane exchanges down a confrontational path that, on occasion, he would resolve with punches, slaps, kicks, and sometimes try to make amends for with polluted apologies and sometimes not. " The listing of Rasheed's personality traits emphasises Mariam's fear of him and the constant abuse that she deals with. Rasheed's power is shown in the words " sometimes not" emphasising that she means nothing to him, contributing to her low self esteem.

Her change in self is evident towards the end of the novel where we see a final change of self in Mariam. She decided for the first time in her life to do something that no one has told her or forced her to do. " She turned it so the

sharp edge was vertical, and, as she did, it occurred to her that this was the first time that she was deciding the course of her own life... Mariam brought down the shove... she gave it everything she had", exemplifies that Mariam has finally achieved the confidence, strength, courage and heroism that she had lacked before through the words " everything she had", " deciding", " first" and " she".