

Guilt having failed to
fight the group of



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Guilt has the incredible power to change an individual's perspective and affect them for the rest of their life.

The Kite Runner, written by Khaled Hosseini, is a world-renowned novel published in 2003 that tells the story of a young boy named Amir who grows up with the guilt of having failed to fight the group of boys who raped his closest friend. One of the main themes Hosseini emphasizes in the novel, is the powerful affect of guilt on one's self. Different characters such as Amir, Sanubar and Baba use the guilt that exists in every one of them as a motive to their actions to further develop the plot. Amir, the narrator of the novel, witnesses his closest friend, Hassan, get bullied by an older boy named Aseef and decides not to intervene in the situation. This one decision plagued Amir with guilt for the next thirty years of his life. This forces Amir to travel across two countries in an attempt to hopefully seek redemption for the apparent mistake he thought he made. This is an example of the impact guilt can have on one's actions. The Kite Runner demonstrates that the power and influence of guilt is often under looked; it has the ability to completely change one's actions and thoughts.

The Kite Runner demonstrates the theme of guilt through the main character, Amir. The guilt that exists within Amir, affects many of his decisions and actions in the future. In the beginning of the story, Amir observes his close friend, Hassan, get bullied by an older boy named Aseef. It was at this moment that Amir had to decide whether to intervene the situation or run away. " In the end, (he) chose to run" and not stand up for Hassan. Amir's guilt developed from the moment he decided to run away from the alley.

Hassan had defended and protected Amir for his entire life and the moment Hassan needed Amir the most, Amir left him in the dust. However, the hidden message Hosseini implies throughout the novel, is misplaced guilt as even if Amir was to intervene and stand up for Hassan, he would stand no chance to the older boy, Asef. As a result, Amir unnecessarily feels guilty about what he did, without realizing that he wouldn't have made a difference in the first place, even if he was to stand up for Hassan. This one decision left a stain on Amir for the next thirty years. A quote on pg. 88 states " I wish someone would wake me up, so I wouldn't have to live with this lie anymore" This quote explains how guilty Amir felt after seeing Hassan get raped as he desperately sought for anyone to find out but didn't choose to tell anyone the actual truth. Another example from the text is when Amir tries throwing pomegranates at Hassan, as an attempt to get Hassan to fight back and punish Amir for choosing to leave Hassan.

However, Hassan refused to throw any pomegranates at Amir, but instead smashed one into his face. A quote on pg. 94 states " I wanted Hassan to fight me back for the way I failed him" This quote indicates that Amir wanted Hassan to fight him back, so he could have the " punishment he craved" (93) This demonstrates that Amir wanted to feel the act of being punished for his wrongdoing, similar to how Hassan was brutally raped due to Amir's apparent mistake. Amir's guilt forces him to travel across two countries to seek redemption for the mistake he made. 15 years later, Amir's guilt led him to make the hefty decision of returning to Afghanistan " to be good again" (189) by rescuing Hassan's orphaned son, Sohrab, from the terrible conditions he was left to face in Kabul. Amir sees this as an opportunity to redeem and free

himself from his guilt for the one decision he made 15 years ago. Many decisions that Amir makes throughout the *Kite Runner*, revolve around his guilt from the one choice of not intervening in the situation when Hassan was getting bullied. Another character in Hosseini's *Kite Runner* that demonstrates the power of guilt is Baba. Similar to Amir, Baba is not immune to the guilt afflicted on others as his own sense of guilt affects many of the decisions he made throughout the novel.

Baba's believed that when someone lied they "stole away someone's right to the truth" (223). Contrary to his beliefs, Baba's guilt prompts many of his actions and forces him to lie to others. Near the conclusion of the novel, it is disclosed that Amir was Hassan's half-brother and Baba was Hassan's real biological father.

Baba, as he stated, "stole the truth" from his loved ones such as Amir and Hassan by living with the guilt of hiding the truth from his legitimate son, lying to his illegitimate son and committing, in Baba's words, his only sin of lying. Throughout the novel, Baba's guilt caused him to act ashamed of Amir for absolutely nothing as Baba stated, "there's always something missing with my son" (19). Baba always took out his guilt on Amir by constantly criticizing him of his actions, as Baba tried to act as if the guilt was nonexistent, when in reality he was ashamed of himself for lying. Baba's guilt for not playing the father role to Hassan, led him to do everything he could for Hassan while still having the appearance as a man with one son. Baba always criticized Amir because he wanted Amir to be the perfect son. Baba didn't want to feel remorse for giving Amir the luxurious life over his legitimate son, Hassan. There are many instances in the book where Baba

forgives Hassan for his wrongdoing eventhough Hassan commits the one sin that mattered to Baba which was lying.

This is demonstrated when Hassan was accused of stealing Amir's