

Write about the way  
in which hosseini  
uses setting in



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Write about the way the significance of the way in which Hosseini uses setting in 'The Kite Runner'. Focus on two or three. Hosseini uses setting in the kite runner in various ways. It is a tool in showcasing the social division between Hazara and Pashtuns in Kabul and is also used to dramatise and add tension to the story. An example of Hosseini adding tension through setting is Amir and Baba's car journey from Kabul to Jalalabad.

It is narrated by Amir in the present tense, as if he is there telling us what's happening at that moment as opposed to the past tense narrative style that the remainder of the book is told in. The scene begins with 'We pulled up to the check point' we are only limited to Amir's view at the time, whilst Amir usually adds his thoughts for example just before Hassan gets raped, after his harelip has been fixed he says '...which was ironic. Because that was the winter Hassan stopped smiling' there is no reflection of the past in this scene.

There is no sense of omniscience and the reader feels for the first time that Amir is vulnerable and that he is real. The scene continues with 'Feet crushed gravel' by using the word 'feet' instead of some ones feet or the Russian soldiers feet, Hosseini makes it impersonal and threatening, as if the feet do not belong to a human being with emotions. It also allows the reader to understand how Amir was feeling at the time, he knows that the feet belonged to the Russian soldier but he doesn't tell us and by only including information he knew at the time we turn into Amir and we feel his fear.

The people in the car are clearly on edge, Hosseini shows us this through 'a flicker of a lighter', in order to hear it in the truck Amir and the other

passengers must have been very quiet and listening out for anything threatening. The word 'flicker' is gentle and emphasises how still and alert they must have been. The deathly silence is broken by a 'shrill cackling' that scares Amir. There is an eerie quality to this, the word 'cackling' is usually associated with witches in children's books, and although this should be very clichéd- the evil character having an evil laugh- Hosseini sets up the scene in such a way that you feel frightened for Amir. The laughing man then starts singing an 'old Afghan wedding song' and this is when his identity is revealed '...with a thick Russian accent'. This adds to the eeriness as there is a conflict of expectations- it's more unsettling that the Russian soldier is singing and laughing rather than if he had been beating someone. When the door of the truck is opened and the three men peer in, Amir describes 'a bone coloured moon' hanging in the sky.

The word 'bone' intensifies the feeling of danger and death, Hosseini could have used 'white' or any other adjective to describe the moon but by associating the moon with bone he warns the reader that something bad is about to take place. The moon is also used later on, to show Baba's bravery and nobility when he stands up to the Russian soldier 'he eclipsed the moonlight'. Baba is shown to be fearless, he is larger than the moon and he shields them from it and everything else. Amir uses his direct thoughts when he describes how he had believed the Russian soldier has shot Baba 'It's done, then.

'I'm eighteen and alone...' in doing this not only does it allow the reader to sympathise with Amir and connect with him but it highlights how dangerous the situation is, Amir can't even protest against what's happening, the calm

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way in which he thinks it through ' where do I bury him? Where do I go after? I find is quite disturbing. I feel that it lacks emotion and for me I wonder if this is a fabrication by Amir -the writer. He knows that Baba didn't die, but he presents it in this way to sensationalise the story.

Another use of setting in the story is to show the great divisions of society in Kabul, Hosseini uses Baba's house and Ali's hut to show the social structure in Kabul. Baba and Amir who were Pashtuns and Sunni Muslims were the affluent upper class and were respected whilst the Hassan and Ali as Hazaras and Shia Muslims were servants. The two houses are also used to show the different father-son relationship between Hassan and Ali and Baba and Amir. Baba's house is described as being very grand; the entire paragraph dedicated to it oozes wealth and prosperity.

Hosseini uses superlative adjectives to describe the house ' prettiest house in all of Kabul...' Everything about the house is luxurious and beautiful, there are great descriptions of tapestries and ' marble floors and wide windows'. Even the smells in the house are rich ' perpetually smelled of tobacco and cinnamon', the word ' perpetually' hints that Baba's wealth was continuous, it would never end, as if Amir believed that he would always live in this luxury. The house is very formal ' poplar trees lined the driveway' and ' rosebushes' flanked the entryway.

However throughout this beautiful description there are some cracks and some uneasiness. In particular the ' wrought- iron gates' that give the house a prison like feel, and also the mention of Rahim Khan ' I'm in his arms, but it's Rahim Khan's pinky my fingers are curled around' this suggests that

within the opulence there are some badly hidden issues. In contrast Ali's hut is introduced to the reader by the heading 'the Wall of Ailing Corn' the corn that 'never really took' as if there is also something wrong with the hut.

Whilst Baba's house is given a detailed description Amir's description of Ali's hut is brief, perhaps because he doesn't think it's significant or maybe because he doesn't remember it much, he admits himself 'in the eighteen years that I lived in that house, I stepped into Hassan and Ali's quarters only a handful of times...' He remembers it as 'sparse, clean, dimly lit...' it is simple and modest and reflects the character of its inhabitants. There is nothing extraneous and nothing excessive unlike Baba's house with the mahogany table that could easily seat 'thirty guests' or the 'two acres of backyard'.

He also describes a 'loquat tree' that gave shade to the house; this differs to the 'poplar trees' and 'rosebushes' of Baba's house. Loquat trees are local trees in Kabul whilst rosebushes are foreign, they also have purpose they produce fruit unlike Baba's trees that are purely decoration. It is ironic that the smallest thing that Baba owns he shares and is associated with Ali 'Baba and Ali had planted a small vegetable garden'. It is also significant that Amir describes his house as 'Baba's estate' or Baba's house. He doesn't claim it, but when he describes Hassan and Ali's house, not only does he call it a 'home' rather than a 'house' but he says that it's their home. The hut signifies the close relationship between Ali and Hassan; they don't have fancy tapestries or tables that get in the way of each other. There is always something between Baba and Amir, even the house divides them 'upstairs was my bedroom, Baba's room and his study...' Baba constantly shuts Amir

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out of his study ““ Go on now,” he would say, “ This is grown-ups time”. ’ Hassan and Ali slept in the same room with ‘ two mattresses on opposite sides of the room’- they were always together.

Ali’s hut also shows Amir’s attitude towards Hazaras and shows that the social division between Hazaras and Pashtuns is one that affects the younger generation too. He calls Hassan’s home a ‘ mud hut’ and although he says it’s modest, it’s evident that he doesn’t think much of it. However the ironic thing is that Hassan and Ali’s hut fits with Kabul whilst Baba’s estate stands out not only because it’s pretty but because the vast majority of Kabul do not live like that a fact Amir is only aware of when he is much older.