

“The Immigrant Experience in California through Literature and Theater”

Louise Hazebrouck’s Lesson Plan for *The Kite Runner*

Audience: high school students

Goals: to teach concepts of parallel scenes and juxtaposition in literature

Time frame: five 1- hour classes

Day 1: After they have completed the reading of the novel, put students in groups of 3-4 and ask them to find as many parallel scenes, settings or characters as they can in the novel. They should jot them down in two columns in their notebooks. Their list might include some of the following:

- Two rapes (Hassan’s by Assef at the beginning and Sohrab’s implied sexual abuse by Assef at the end)
- Two fathers (Baba and Rahim Khan for Amir; Baba at the beginning as father for both Amir and Hassan, and Amir at the end as father for Sohrab)
- Two pomegranate tree scenes (at the beginning when Amir and Hassan’s friendship is denoted by their time at the tree and later after their friendship is damaged and Amir refuses to go to the tree with Hassan)
- Two scenes involving a character reading to another character who is trying to become literate (at the beginning Amir reads to Hassan and later Amir attempts to read to Sohrab)
- Two scenes where courage and integrity are at stake via a slingshot defense of a victim (Hassan threatens to shoot Assef with a stone when Assef is bullying Amir, and later on, Sohrab shoots Assef in the eye when Assef attacks Amir)
- Two homes for Baba and Amir (the lavish home in Kabul and the modest home in Fremont)
- Two moments when Amir is challenged to do the right thing (to intercede during Hassan’s rape and to accept Rahim Khan’s challenge to return to Kabul to find Sohrab)
- Two important kite flying scenes (Hassan runs for Amir’s kite when Amir wins the competition, and Amir runs for Sohrab’s kite at the end when he detects a spark of life in Sohrab’s expression)

(This list is by no means exhaustive.) Students should then choose their favorite pair and discuss the similarities and the differences between the two moments. (They could also discuss how adapting the fictional scenes into play form helps to elucidate those similarities and differences for students.)

DAY 2: The same students should work on computers to adapt these two moments from the novel into play form. The result will be two short scripts.

DAY 3: The students should then rehearse their scenes and decide how to perform them in order to best present the idea of “juxtaposition” to their audience of fellow students.

DAY 4: This is performance day. After each performance of the two related, juxtaposed scenes, students should lead their classmates in a discussion of what their classmates saw as similar and different in the two scenes.

DAY 5: The teacher can now lead the entire class in a discussion of why Khaled Hosseini included these parallel scenes. Students should identify the big idea in the novel: the two cultural groups, the Hazaras (Hassan) and the Pashtuns (Amir), and the fact that the two boys from such clashing groups are

eventually found out to be half -brothers. They should understand that Hosseini is saying to his readers that these types of harsh cultural inequities between groups of people are unjust and should be challenged by all of us, wherever we find unfair, discriminatory practices in our worlds.

This is precisely where a discussion of the book's title can come up. To be an effective kite runner, one must be humble, creative and clear headed. These are also the very qualities that one needs to fight injustice in the world. Hassan always embodied these qualities and finally, at the very end of the book, Amir is able to find these qualities within himself too when he risks his life to save Sohrab and then runs Sohrabi's kite for him (He is a Pashtun **servicing** a Hazara out of respect, loyalty and love, a reversal of the societal norm). Additionally, have students note the article "the" in the book's title. Who is THE kite runner? For most of the book it is Hassan, but as was just mentioned, ANYONE, even Amir, even a reader of the novel, can become THE kite runner in life.

Wrap up this 5-day unit by asking students to become more aware of parallel scenes, characters or settings in novels, as well as other such constructs in fiction writing. Urge them to constantly ask themselves what the connection is between these forms/ structures and the deeper meanings of the works.