



# Key Vocabulary: The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

Vocabulary Word	Definition	Context
Betrayal	The act of being disloyal or treacherous	"There is only one sin, only one. And that is theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft. When you kill a man, you steal a life...you steal his wife's right to a husband, rob his children of a father. When you tell a lie, you steal someone's right to the truth. When you cheat, you steal the right to fairness. There is no act more wretched than stealing."
Communist	A person who supports or advocates for a society in which property is owned collectively	"What are you reading?" he asked. "Marx," I said, selecting a book at random from the shelf. "You're becoming a communist," he muttered, shaking his head. "No, I'm becoming informed," I said."
Exile	Being forced to leave one's home country or community	"Hassan and I fed from the same breasts. We took our first steps on the same lawn in the same yard. And, under the same roof, we spoke our first words. Mine was Baba. His was Amir. My name. Looking back on it now, I think the foundation for what happened in the winter of 1975 was already laid in those first words. I uttered them and my life as I knew it ended. And, in their place, grew a MONSTER."
Guilt	A feeling of responsibility or remorse for doing something wrong	"I always felt like Baba hated me a little. And why not? After all, I had killed his beloved wife, his beautiful princess, hadn't I? The least I could have done was to have had the decency to have turned out a little more like him. But I hadn't turned out like him. Not at all. And in so far as we were both sociable with one another, I think that was the reason. Baba admired my car, but not the choices I'd made in life. There was a part of me, the part that I had always taken great pride in, that wanted to be just like him. But that was the part of me that betrayed Hassan, wasn't it?"
Hazara	An ethnic group native to Afghanistan, who mainly practice Shia Islam	"The boy with the clipped ear was Hassan, my best and only friend. We used to climb the poplar trees in the driveway of my father's house and annoy our neighbors by reflecting sunlight into their homes with a shard of mirror. We would sit across from each other on a pair of high branches, our naked feet dangling, our trouser pockets filled with dried mulberries and walnuts. We took turns with the mirror as we ate mulberries, pelted each other with them, giggling, laughing."
Islamist	A person who supports or advocates for a society governed by Islamic law	"We can never go back to Afghanistan," Baba said one day when I was reading to him. "But Hassan can." He looked at me. "Inshallah, one day you will go to Kabul, Amir. And when you do, you will find a way to make up for what you did."
Jihad	A struggle or fight against enemies of Islam	"The clerics said that blood must be repaid with blood. The Koran said that believers had an obligation to seek revenge. I had heard that word muttered about in conversations, on the streets, by the mujahedin who came to our school to recruit. Jihad. Holy war. But jihad was not a concept to be trifled with."



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Kinship	A connection or bond between people based on shared characteristics or values	"But blood couldn't be denied. And Hassan was a kite runner, always chasing the free-flying kites he saw all around him. He was better at it than I was. Flying kites. It wasn't just skill. He had an instinct for it. Maybe it was because there was a kinship between him and the kites. They were alike. Illuminated from within, glowing in the dusk, dying at dawn."
Mujahideen	Muslim guerrilla fighters in Afghanistan, who fought against Soviet and Afghan government forces	"In the winter of 1975, Kabul was as cold as a witch's tit, as my Baba would say. But the cold didn't bother us. Hassan and I were used to the cold. We'd lived in the same house since we were born, him in the mud shack out back, me in the big house up front. We ate together, played together, and I never, ever, referred to him as 'my servant'. My best friend, Hassan."
Pashto	An Indo-European language spoken by the Pashtun people	"I wanted to tell them all that I was the snake in the grass, the monster in the lake. I wasn't worthy of this place, of this fine house and all its luxuries. Nothing was free in this world. Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba."
Pashtun	A member of a mainly Muslim people living in Afghanistan and Pakistan	"I had never really thought about it, but Afghanistan was made up of all sorts of ethnicities, Pashtuns being the largest, followed by the Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, and others. And all sorts of languages were spoken in Afghanistan, too."
Refugee	A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster	"Suddenly I was glad I hadn't gone with Baba to the Taheri house. Suddenly, I was very happy with my life. It was something about the purity of his face, I think, and his hopeful eyes. Not the artificial hope manufactured for refugees, but the real hope that something good might happen to you in this life."
Soviet	Relating to the former Soviet Union or its citizens	"In April 1978, the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power in a bloody coup d'etat. Almost overnight, Afghanistan went from a reasonably peaceful monarchy to a violent, Soviet-sponsored communist regime."
Sunni	The largest denomination of Islam, who believe in the leadership of the caliphs after the death of the Prophet Muhammad	"Rahim Khan had summoned me to his house. He was sitting at his desk, deep in thought, when I arrived. There was a small stack of books next to him, and he was leafing through one. I had a sense that I was walking into an important conversation. He motioned me to a chair and asked if I'd like some tea. I said no thank you. He took a sip from his cup and cleared his throat. 'I'm afraid there is some bad news, Amir jan. Terrible news, in fact.'"
Taliban	A Sunni Islamist political group and military organization in Afghanistan	"In the late summer of that year, Taliban fighters started showing up in Kabul. We'd hear the rattle of their machine guns in the distance, sometimes even the explosion of a rocket-propelled grenade. We'd all stop and listen, trying to determine how close the fighting was."

## Historical and political context of the book

"The Kite Runner" is set in Afghanistan during a period of significant political and social upheaval, spanning from the 1970s to the early 2000s. Here's an overview of the historical and political context:



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In 1973, a coup led by Mohammed Daoud Khan overthrew Afghanistan's monarchy, which had been in power for over 200 years. Daoud Khan established a republic and began to implement some social and political reforms.

However, in 1978, a Marxist group called the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) staged a coup, leading to a period of Communist rule in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union supported the PDPA and sent troops to Afghanistan to help establish a Communist government.

This led to a period of conflict and violence in Afghanistan, as various groups fought against the Communist government and the Soviet troops. The Mujahideen, a coalition of rebel groups, received support from the United States and other Western countries, who saw the Soviet intervention as a threat to global security.

In 1989, the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from Afghanistan, but the country remained mired in conflict as different factions vied for power. The Taliban, an Islamist group, emerged as a major force in the mid-1990s and eventually took control of most of the country.

The Taliban imposed a strict version of Islamic law and committed human rights abuses, particularly against women and minorities. In 2001, following the September 11 attacks, the United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban government.

The historical and political context of Afghanistan during this period is a major theme in "The Kite Runner." The novel portrays the impact of war and political upheaval on individual lives and relationships, and highlights the devastating effects of violence and extremism on Afghan society.