

## Including *The Kite Runner* in Fall 2007 Classes

Adapted from San Jose State University

For more teaching materials, resources, and assignments, visit:

<http://www.uncw.edu/commonreading>

**Why?** The purpose of the UNCW Common Reading Experience is to: (1) provide an introduction to / reinforcement of academic expectations and intellectual engagement, (2) provide an opportunity for self-reflection and critical thinking, and (3) build community on campus. It is also a wonderful way to get students into the habit of reading. We urge faculty to help support this program by incorporating the selected book into their courses. Some ideas are listed below.

**Will students have read the book?** The program and the book have been publicized to freshmen through mailings and at summer orientation. All incoming freshmen receive a complimentary copy of the book at Orientation, and they are strongly encouraged to read it over the summer as their “first assignment.” If you have freshmen students, you can assume they have read the book. For other students, you might include it as required reading in your syllabus or give them a few weeks to read it at the start of the fall before discussing it or including any assignment on it.

**How?** Here are a variety of suggestions for incorporating *The Kite Runner* in your courses. Hopefully one or more will make sense for your particular course or lead you to think of other ideas. If you have other ideas, please send them to [adamsjb@uncw.edu](mailto:adamsjb@uncw.edu).

**1. Events** – Review the list of events posted on the Common Reading website – [www.uncw.edu/commonreading](http://www.uncw.edu/commonreading) - and require students to attend any event or a specific one relevant to your course and write a reflective paper about it. There is a wide range of activities including discussion groups, films, a lecture series, and a festival celebrating the book.

**2. Diversity** – Use information about Afghanistan to incorporate the experiences of diverse peoples and cultures. Have students compare and contrast Afghanistan’s history, cultures, social structures, political systems, and environments to those of America or other countries you may already cover in your course. For example, if you’re discussing class or gender roles in the U.S., consider asking students how they compare with the story of *The Kite Runner* and living in Afghanistan. This would be a good way to address diversity in Freshman Seminar courses through discussion and analysis of diverse peoples.

- The website has numerous links to information on Afghanistan society, geography, social structure, family, gender roles, religion, education, health, warfare, politics, and more.

**3. “Coming of Age”** - Relate the story to other “coming of age” stories or films that students might be familiar with, such as:

### Novels

*The Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger  
*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, Betty Smith  
*The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan  
*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain  
*Little Women*, Alcott  
*The Color Purple*, Alice Walker  
*A Separate Peace*, John Knowles  
*Life of Pi*, Yann Martel  
*Look Homeward, Angel*, Wolfe

### Films

American Graffiti  
Boyz in the Hood  
Brighton Beach Memoirs  
The Dead Poet's Society  
The Cider House Rules  
The Graduate  
Little Women  
The Outsiders  
Stand By Me

- Have students consider their own coming of age story, the types of transitions they have had, their significance, and how they think their college experience will change their life.
- Have students write their own coming of age story for their high school to college years.
- Have students watch one of the movies and write an essay comparing the transitions, environments, cultures, and key events that shape the lives of the main characters.
- Have students compare the life transitions of Amir and Hassan

**4. Themes** - Tie a theme from the story into a course topic.

- Friendship – What is “friendship”? How do acts of betrayal affect friendship?
- Redemption – Is Amir redeemed? Why or why not?
- Realities of life – “It may be unfair, but what happens in a few days, sometimes even a single day, can change the course of a whole lifetime” (p. 142). Do students agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- Life of immigrants in the US – Do students have similar stories to share? How can people adjust to life in a very different place? How did the move affect Baba and Amir and their relationship? Who and what helped them adjust to their new lives in the US?
- Prejudice and classism – Why does Amir treat Hassan the way he does? Why is Hassan so subservient?
- Lifelong learning – Why does Amir go to college? How else does he learn to survive and be a successful writer?

**5. Author** – Check out a 30 minute DVD of an interview with the author and visit the website for a link to several resources, including an interview of the author on NPR. How does knowing more about the author add to the reading of the novel?

**6. Discussion** - Use specific questions about the story to engage students in a discussion.

- There are questions available from the publisher in the back of the book and at [http://us.penguinroup.com/static/rguides/us/kite\\_runner.html](http://us.penguinroup.com/static/rguides/us/kite_runner.html). There are more discussion questions at <http://www.uncw.edu/commonreading/faculty-teaching.htm>
- There are reading points in the Reading Guide provided with the book and online at <http://www.uncw.edu/commonreading/reading.htm>
- Ask students whether they enjoyed the book and why or why not.
- Why do you think the book has been so popular? (It has sold over 3 million copies worldwide and many universities and cities have adopted it for reading programs.) Do you think it will become a classic? Why or why not?
- What social issues does the author raise through the story?
- A movie, produced by Dreamworks, is set to be released in November. Do students plan to see the movie? What are their thoughts on adapting the novel to the screen?

**7. Writing** – Have students write an essay on a discussion question or essay questions. See above for examples and the website.

**8. Research** – Have students use the library to find information on kite fighting or something about Afghanistan or Islam relevant to the story.

**9. Current Events** – Ask students what they know about what is going on in Afghanistan. Have students clip and share current events from online or print news sources.