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**The Kite Runner** By Khaled Hosseini **Critical Essays Symbols in *The Kite Runner***

**Kites, Kite Flying, and Kite Fighting**

Kites and everything associated with them (kite flying and kite fighting) are the most important symbols in the novel. Traditionally, kites symbolize both prophecy and fate, and both of these ideas can be applied to characters and events in *The Kite Runner.* However, kites symbolize so much more in *The Kite Runner.* The Afghan kites with their glass strings symbolize the dichotomy between beauty and violence, simultaneously representing Afghanistan and the half-brothers, Amir and Hassan. The two main kite fights in the novel — the tournament Amir wins and the one at the end of the book — not only also represent Amir and Hassan but also symbolize the juxtaposition of roles, for at the end Amir has become the kite runner. Thus, kites also symbolize the thematic topics and interrelationship between betrayal and redemption.

**Myth of Rostam and Sohrab**

Myths and stories about legendary heroes as well as stories and literacy in general symbolize both the similarities and differences between the Shi'a Muslims and the Sunni Muslims. Socioeconomic conditions may determine levels of literacy and understanding, but they do not guarantee heroic attitudes and actions. And the heroes of Afghan and Middle Eastern cultures are shared by those of differing beliefs and socioeconomic conditions. The character of Rostam, who acts dishonorably toward the king by sleeping with his daughter, symbolizes Amir. The character of Sohrab, who does not know who his father is, who becomes Hassan's favorite hero, and who meets an untimely death, symbolizes Hassan.

**The Pomegranate Tree**

While Amir and Hassan are young and carefree and as close as a servant and master can be, they carve their names in the tree, and it bears fruit. Thus, the tree symbolizes their relationship. Years later, after Hassan is dead and Amir is wracked with guilt, the tree — just like Amir's memories — still exists but no longer bears fruit. The tree not only symbolizes a unifying force between Amir and Hassan but also serves as a source of division. Amir wants Hassan to hit him with the pomegranate fruit in order to inflict a physical punishment and lessen his guilt; instead, Hassan breaks the fruit over his own head.

**Amir's Scar**

Amir spends most of his life trying to forget Hassan, yet only when he gets a physical reminder of his only childhood friend is Amir able to be at peace. The scar Amir has after being beaten by Assef symbolizes his brotherhood with Hassan. Amir now has his own "harelip" and is physically like his half-brother.

**Slingshot**

Representing two generations, the slingshot symbolizes both childhood as well as the need to stand up for what is right. Both Hassan and Sohrab use a slingshot to stop Assef, although Hassan only has to threaten to use his, and Sohrab actually inflicts pain.