**Betrayal and Redemption**

Betrayal, which can be considered a form of sin, is enduring and ends up being cyclical in *The Kite Runner.* For most of the novel, Amir attempts to deal with his guilt by avoiding it. But doing this clearly does nothing toward redeeming himself, and thus his guilt endures. That is why he still cringes every time Hassan's name is mentioned. When Amir finds out about Baba's betrayal of Ali (and subsequent betrayal of Hassan), he realizes that everything he thought he knew and understood about his father was false. And Amir himself feels betrayed. But Baba has been dead for fifteen years, and there is nothing he can do about the situation. Neither feelings of betrayal nor punishment are enough to redeem Amir. Rescuing Sohrab from Assef is not enough either. Only when Amir decides to take Sohrab to the United States and provide his nephew a chance at happiness and prosperity that was denied to his half-brother does Amir take the necessary steps toward atonement and redemption.

**Forgiveness**

Ideas about forgiveness permeate *The Kite Runner*. Hassan's actions demonstrate that he forgives Amir's betrayal, although Amir needs to spend practically the entire novel to learn about the nature of forgiveness. Baba's treatment of Hassan is his attempt at gaining public forgiveness for what he has not even publicly admitted to have done. Yet the person who speaks most poignantly about the nature of forgiveness is Rahim Khan. In his letter, he asks Amir to forgive him for keeping Baba's secret but also writes explicitly "God will forgive." Rahim Khan is confident that God will forgive all transgressions, and he encourages Amir to do so, too. Rahim Khan understands that it is God who readily forgives those who ask for forgiveness, but it is people who have a hard time forgiving. Thus, the only way complete forgiveness can occur is when one forgives oneself, and that will only occur when one has truly attempted to atone for the mistakes that one has made.

**Love**

Every relationship in *The Kite Runner* is strained at one point or another, thus providing multiple examples of the complexity of various types of love. Hassan's love for Amir is selfless, while Amir's for Hassan is mostly selfish. The two relationships thus demonstrate — albeit unknowingly to the characters — the nature of brotherly love, a love that includes jealousy and insecurity. Ali, Baba, the General, Hassan, Rahim Khan, and even Amir demonstrate varying degrees of paternal love, each having expectations for his child and providing physical and/or emotional support. Amir and Soraya illustrate romantic love, and their relationship plays an important part in Amir's character development. Hassan's character comes closest to demonstrating selfless love towards all others, and the other characters are able to learn from his example. Most of the characters are living a life that includes a personal quest for love. And most of them realize that both forgiveness and love of self are necessary before you are able to love another.

**Social Class and Ethnic Tensions**

The socioeconomic conditions in Afghanistan demonstrate the disparity between the majority (Sunni Muslims) and the minority (Shi'a Muslims) and how people discriminate against each other based on physical features and religious beliefs. The socioeconomic differences are also explored in the United States, as Baba and many other immigrants give up lives of relative prosperity and security for manual labor and little pay. In addition to the differences between Muslim sects, *The Kite Runner* also alludes to the differences between European and Western Christian cultures on the one hand, and the culture of the Middle East on the other. And the conservative Taliban, which outlaws many customs and traditions, also demonstrates the differences *within* the same religious groups.

**The Immigrant Experience**

*The Kite Runner* effectively demonstrates that the difficulty of the immigrant experience begins when one attempts to leave his homeland. Baba and Amir are among many Afghans who struggle to leave — under cover of night, unsure of the next passage, taking calculated risks. Obviously, some immigrants die before they even reach their new homes. In addition to the difficulties of their lives in a new country, the immigrants also have to deal with the perception of them among those who stayed behind. Amir realizes this when he returns to Afghanistan. Finally, the adjustment to a new country is not just about learning a new language; it is about maintaining traditions and some semblance of your own culture. Baba loses his status and still has his old world prejudices, thus demonstrating the precarious balance between old and new. Soraya and her mother also demonstrate the difficult role women have balancing the expectations of an old world culture with the new world in which they are living.