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Theory in Practice in the High School Classroom: Using

*The Kite Runner* to Teach Literary Theory

Khaled Hosseini's debut novel, *The Kite Runner*, is one of the newer modern sensations to hit high school classrooms. In a setting where a majority of the studied texts were written before the start of the twentieth century, this is quite an achievement. Especially when that text was written by a first-time author and native of Kabul, Afghanistan, published in 2003 in the wake of the terrors of 9/11, and centered on the experiences of an Afghan immigrant. With these characteristics, it is indeed fascinating, and some would say surprising, that *The Kite Runner* so quickly became a staple in many upper level secondary classrooms. The novel is rich in character development, figurative language, and historical significance. Yet these are not its only selling points. In an age of educational reform, what I and many other high school teachers appreciate most about Hosseini's text is its ability to hold up under the close study of multiple critical lenses. While literary criticism has not always been, nor does it continue to be, a major aspect of the secondary English classroom, it is texts like *The Kite Runner* that prepare the way for high school teachers and students to begin to delve into theory in a way that is both un-intimidating yet still scholarly and enriching.

Since taking a hiatus from the high school classroom and beginning my Masters degree, I have become more convinced than ever of the importance of critical theory both for the secondary levels and the entire discipline of English. The credibility of English as an area of study relies upon its ability to teach individuals to read skillfully and with purpose. It must be more than simply a guide to reading comprehension if it is to survive as a meaningful vein of study in secondary, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs. The National Center for

Education Statistics reports an alarming trend that coincides with many current fears regarding the future of English Studies. In 1970-1971, the number of students majoring in English Language and Literature/Letters in postsecondary institutions totaled 63,914, making up 7.6% of the total number of undergraduate students in the nation. The number in 2011-2012 reaches to only 53,767, or 3% (U.S. Dept.). With the decreasing numbers of enrollment in English related fields, it is more critical than ever for teachers at the secondary levels to begin to refine how English should be taught if it is to continue to foster academic achievement and intellectual growth. In the words of Deborah Appleman, "Our job is not simply to help students read and write; our job is to help them use the skills of writing and reading to understand the world around them" (2). Literary theory does just that. This paper works to explore the importance of teaching and implementing critical theory in the high school classroom, with an emphasis on *purposeful* reading and what this looks like. Using Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* as a foundation, a Feminist literary theory will be applied followed by a discussion on various applications for the high school classroom and concluding with a discussion of other lenses that work well with the text, thus highlighting the ideal process for introducing students to a diverse sampling of literary theories.

While literary theory as a topic has typically been reserved to those students in the upper levels of English study, it is equally, if not more, important to students at the secondary level. Appleman quotes a study done by A. Applebee in *Literature in the Secondary School: Studies of Curriculum and Instruction in the United States* which "found that 72% of the high school literature teachers he surveyed in schools that had a reputation for excellence 'reported little or no familiarity with contemporary literary theory'" (5-6). One teacher from this study stated that "These [theories] are far removed from those of us who work on the front lines" (6). This is both

alarming and unfortunate, not to mention untrue. Speaking as someone from the “front lines”, literary theory is not only possible in the high school classroom, but it also greatly enhances the educational experience for students. Teaching students to be aware of and even use literary theory in their own reading gives them not just purpose but also power and diversity: “The purpose of teaching literary theory at the secondary level is not to turn adolescents into critical theorists; rather, it is to encourage adolescents to inhabit theories comfortably enough to construct *their own* readings and to learn to appreciate the power of multiple perspectives” (emphasis added, Appleman 7-8). Expanding upon this, Stephen Bonnycastle affirms that studying theory “helps you to discover elements of your own ideology, and understand why you hold certain values unconsciously. It means no authority can impose a truth on you in a dogmatic way—and if some authority does try, you can challenge that truth in a powerful way, by asking what ideology it is based on” (qtd. in Appleman 4-5). This is what students should be encouraged to do: challenge and critically apply knowledge to the texts that they read, be they literary or otherwise.

A large part of the importance of theory is to discover the difference between passive reading and purposeful reading. I define *passive* as what many would term ‘reading for pleasure.’ In *passive* reading, one is not necessarily attempting to draw connections with outside texts or the world at large; it is similar to viewing a blockbuster film simply for the cursory entertainment experience. *Purposeful* reading, on the other hand, is when an individual sets out to analyze a text with clear intentions of making connections, asking questions, forming predictions, and drawing conclusions. This type of reading is the goal of any educational subject; it is what the English classroom should be fostering. Unfortunately, the current habit of plot-based questions serving as final exams to prove competency in students does not foster purposeful reading skills.

On the other hand, purposeful reading *is* a skill that can be taught by using literary theory. By making students aware of the lenses with which they can view literature, teachers are asking them to be more aware of the type of readers that they naturally are and the type of readers that they can condition themselves to be.

Multiple critical theories work especially well with *The Kite Runner* which makes it an ideal text with which to introduce a unit or project on literary theory. One that I will especially focus on to illustrate this is Feminist theory. While other theories such as Marxist, Psychoanalytic, and New Historicist also work exceptionally well with Hosseini's text, I want to specifically showcase how Feminism can be applied to the text and also dispel some of the common stereotypes surrounding the theory. Jessica Valenti indicates the reality of these negative stereotypes in her novel *Full Frontal Feminism*: "To most young women, feminism is ugly. It's unpopular. It's the anti-cool" (2). I would actually take this statement further; not only is *feminism* "ugly" to young women, it is also distasteful, perhaps more-so, to most young men. Valenti goes on to comment that, "For some reason, feminism is seen as super anti: anti-men, anti-sex, anti-sexism, anti-everything. And while some of those antis aren't bad things, it's not exactly exciting to get involved in something that's seen as so consistently negative" (6). Part of this understanding is because Feminism has been labeled as a mind-set carried solely by extremist women who hate men and believe every aspect of life to be controlled by patriarchal mindsets. While there are certainly valid analyses to be done in literature from a standpoint of exposing misogynistic viewpoints, it is important to not let this examination cloud the whole theory of Feminism.

In fact, it is critically important that teachers include the male perspective as valid and necessary to the study of texts from a Feminist lens in order to further the conversation of gender

issues, past and present. Appleman writes that “the point of reading with feminist (gender) theory, of course, isn’t to transform unsuspecting and largely apolitical high school students into feminists; the point is to help adolescent readers read texts and worlds more carefully as they become aware of the ideologies within which both are inscribed” (69). In this sense, Feminist literary theory can be extremely compelling in a high school classroom; with this lens, students are asked to consider the opinions of the opposing gender and analyze how those views may differ from their own. Also, it is important to note that Feminism as a movement has gone through multiple phases. Feminism of the 1960s is not the same as Feminism of the 2000s. It is important for modern youth to have conversations about gender as young adults so that they can help to shape the direction that such movements take in the future.

According to a classroom resource series from Prestwick House entitled *Multiple Critical Perspectives*, Feminist theory looks at three main areas of study including the “differences between men and women”, “the power relationships between men and women”, and “the female experience” (Kuntz 26). All three of these key areas are addressed in Hosseini’s first novel.

Appleman also defines the Feminist lens by what it does:

Feminist theory can help [students] to notice salient issues of gender—the portrayal of women in the world of the novel, the gender of the author and what relevance it may bear on how the work is both written and received, the ways in which the text embraces or confronts prevailing ideologies of how men and women are situated in the ‘real world,’ and the ways in which our own interpretations as individual readers are gendered. (69)

This definition helps to explain the importance of this conversation, not only in that it needs to take place between both women and men, but also that it needs to happen at an age when people

are beginning to formulate an understanding of their own identity and relationships with others and how their gender is a part of that.

*The Kite Runner* provides an interesting study from the Feminist lens *because* of the noticeable absence of women. The novel is largely made up of male characters and gives very little attention to the experiences of women outside of how their lives have affected those of the men, namely the three dominant figures of Baba, Amir, and Hassan. In fact, women either play minor, secondary roles or are absent from the story altogether. Yet, the role of the female is structured by Hosseini to create a striking, if not powerful, effect nonetheless. The most explicit example of this comes in the form of Amir's mother, Sofia Akrami. Her character is never present in the novel and is mentioned only a handful of times. Despite this, she exudes a powerful influence upon both Amir and Baba individually and upon their relationship as father and son.

This influence from an absent character is set up early on in the story. The second chapter of the novel details the history of Ali and Hassan, a father-son duo who work as servants to Baba and Amir. It is in this chapter that readers are told in an almost offhand manner what has happened to Amir's mother: "It was there, in that little shack, that Hassan was born in the winter of 1964, just one year after my mother died giving birth to me" (Hosseini 6). It is only in the discussion of Hassan's history that this important fact about Sofia is relayed, forcing the reader to wonder further about this mysterious missing mother. The same tactic is used in chapter three, which is devoted to the development of Baba's character. Functioning as the story's narrator, Amir explains Baba's desire to succeed and prove doubters wrong throughout his life. One example involves Sofia:

When people scoffed that Baba would never marry well—after all, he was not of royal blood—he wedded my mother, Sofia Akrami, a highly educated woman universally regarded as one of Kabul’s most respected, beautiful, and virtuous ladies. And not only did she teach classic Farsi literature at the university, she was a descendant of the royal family, a fact that my father playfully rubbed in the skeptics’ faces by referring to her as ‘*my princess.*’ (emphasis added, Hosseini 15)

Though readers are given a more distinct glimpse of Sofia Akrami, her character is again only revealed in order to prove an aspect of Baba’s. Her identity is found in that of the men’s. While this may seem to perpetrate the stereotype of women’s lack of importance in Muslim culture, I believe that Hosseini is in fact doing the opposite. Women, in multiple cases throughout the novel, are portrayed as figures to be worshipped and adored by men. In fact, it is through Sofia that Baba’s reputation improves as noted above; he calls her “my princess”, which could be a direct reference to her royal lineage or a clear signal of endearment. It is also Sofia that Amir more closely resembles in terms of interests with his love of reading and poetry, instead of following in the footsteps of his father by assuming more traditionally masculine characteristics. (19). Hosseini even indicates that the lack of a mother figure is largely the cause of Amir and Baba’s disconnect. Amir blames himself for his father’s disinterest, stating “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?” (19). Sofia, though absent in character, plays a role that is irreplaceable in the story; she is both the connecting point and the origin for strife for Amir and Baba that pervades the entire tale.

This positive, if not worshipful, view towards women in Hosseini's novel is further strengthened by Amir's wife, Soraya Taheri. After first meeting her at the flea market, Amir describes his own obsession with his future bride:

In Afghanistan, *yelda* is the first night of the month of *Jadi*, the first night of winter, and the longest night of the year. [...] I read in my poetry books that *yelda* was the starless night tormented lovers kept vigil, enduring the endless dark, waiting for the sun to rise and bring with it their loved one. After I met Soraya Taheri, every night of the week became a *yelda* for me. (Hosseini 143)

Amir, like his father, places great value upon the woman he loves. He finds it difficult to be apart from her, likening his response to "bedeviled moths [who] flung themselves at candle flames [and] wolves [who] climbed mountains looking for the sun" (143). Soraya becomes the first stable female force in Amir's life; she provides a connecting point for Amir and Baba that Sofia may have also done had she lived. It is Soraya who insists that they remain living with Baba after their marriage, giving Amir precious memories in Baba's final days (172). It is Soraya who finally gets Baba to become interested in Amir's writing (172). It is Soraya whom Amir refers to as "[His] Swap Meet Princess", reflecting back on Baba's own endearment for Sofia (142). Hosseini deliberately allows readers to see this connecting feature in both men; they cherish and value their wives, giving them status above what is considered typical. Though these women do not play major roles in the novel's storyline, they do have major impacts upon the men that love them. In this way, Hosseini works against the negative viewpoint often held towards women in the Middle East and provides an avenue with which his text can be discussed through a Feminist lens, perhaps from a unique perspective.

Hosseini further breaks away from conventional gender codes by setting up Amir's wife, Soraya, as a foil against Amir's character flaws. What is most interesting about this is not just that Hosseini uses a female character to illustrate attributes of bravery, honesty, and selflessness, but that he uses an event from Soraya's past that would classically bring shame to her. Four years prior to meeting Amir, Soraya ran away with another Afghan man and lived with him for a month without marrying (164). Like many other cultures, traditional Afghan values label these actions as disgraceful, not just for Soraya, but for her family as well. Because of the damage to her reputation, it would have been likely that Soraya would never marry. Though Hosseini sheds light on this event and explains its gravity, he does not use it to degrade women or Soraya's character. In fact, he directly places the re-telling of her past to coincide with Amir's own guilt over his. After Soraya confesses to Amir, he responds inwardly to the reader:

I envied her. Her secret was out. Spoken. Dealt with. I opened my mouth and almost told her how I'd betrayed Hassan, lied, driven him out, and destroyed a forty-year relationship between Baba and Ali. But I didn't. I suspected there were many ways in which Soraya Taheri was a better person than me. Courage was just one of them. (Hosseini 165)

The focus of this scene is not about what terrible choices Soraya made in her past; rather, it sheds light on the large impact that Amir's negative past is continuing to have on him. This is also not in an effort to shame Amir, though many readers find it difficult to sympathize with him at this point. From a feminist perspective, what is revolutionary about this scene is that Soraya comes out as the moral victor—even in light of her sexual shame—and Amir acknowledges it without hesitation. In fact, he seems to be perfectly content to give her that title because his fear of following her lead and confessing his past sins is so terrifying. Through this scene, Hosseini

reverses many of the traditional ideas about gender roles and opens up numerous discussion possibilities for a classroom setting.

As stated previously, there are numerous other literary theories that directly connect with *The Kite Runner*. I would like take some time to expand upon some of the possibilities that Hosseini has created for these other lenses especially focusing on Marxism, New Historicism, and Psychoanalytic. Brief analysis using each of these theories with *The Kite Runner* can be found in the Appendices along with classroom application ideas for incorporating literary theory. While it is not necessary that all of these theories be taught for the same text, it is also inadequate to use only one lens. In order to effectively teach the concept and practice of literary theory, students should be given the opportunity to work with at least two or three lenses.

As Deborah Appleman writes in the Preface to her book *Critical Encounters in High School English*, she “hoped to bridge the divide between secondary language arts teachers and college English professors over whether we should teach theory to secondary students” (ix). While I wholeheartedly agree with her purpose, I believe that the need for theory at the secondary level goes beyond simply bridging a gap in instruction. For the discipline of English to maintain, and even regain, its prestige in the academic and professional world, theory must be made a part of high school English curriculum. Teachers must do away with the basic mindset that reading comprehension is the end goal of a literary unit and encourage more *purposeful* reading for their students. By introducing literary theory at the secondary level, not only are English teachers raising the level of expectations for their students, but they are providing students with tangible skills that they can take with them into further levels of study. Many secondary level texts, like Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner*, work marvelously when paired with multiple critical lenses and resources for teachers who are interested in advancing the

curriculum of their classroom are becoming more plentiful. Furthermore, by including literary theory in a novel unit, teachers are enhancing that novel, showcasing its literary value by holding it subject to the analysis of numerous scholarly ideologies. Secondary level students need not be future English majors, authors, critics, or teachers to benefit from the inclusion of literary theory in their education. The goal of literary theory in the high school classroom is rather to uphold the goals of the discipline of English and produce individuals who are capable of analyzing their own position in society and recognizing the ideologies that surround them, creating critical, scholarly thinkers.

#### *Appendix One: Marxist Lens*

The *Multiple Critical Perspective* series from Prestwick House separates Marxism into the following areas: economic power, materialism vs. spirituality, class conflict, and art, literature, and ideologies (Kuntz 13). For *The Kite Runner*, the concepts of power and class conflict are especially prevalent because a large part of Hosseini's novel works to bring awareness and knowledge about Afghan history and culture, including the reality of racial and ethnic tensions. The power relationship of the Shi'a over the Sunni Muslims and the Hazara over the Pashtun ethnic groups is highly evident in the novel; this dual dynamic is especially outlined in chapters two, four, and five when Amir describes the relationship between both himself and Hassan and Baba and Ali. Amir struggles with how to define his relationship with Hassan. On the one hand, he is his best friend. Ali reminds them that they share a special connection because "there was a brotherhood between people who had fed from the same breast, a kinship that not even time could break" (Hosseini 11). Yet, Amir also fully understands that Hassan is his servant—a Hazara; every morning Hassan prepares his breakfast, makes his bed,

polishes his shoes, irons his clothes, and packs his bag for the day (Hosseini 27). This conflict is put to the test when Amir and Hassan are confronted by Assef and his cronies. Assef accuses Amir of keeping a Hazara as a friend. Amir, in his own confusion cannot verbally respond.

*But he's not my friend!* I almost blurted. *He's my servant!* Had I really thought that? Of course I hadn't. I hadn't. I treated Hassan well, just like a friend, better even, more like a brother. But if so, then why, when Baba's friends came to visit with their kids, didn't I ever include Hassan in our games? Why did I play with Hassan only when no one else was around? (Hosseini 41)

He recognizes the social constraints placed upon their relationship, yet he cannot reconcile that with his own feelings and the history that they have. Because these power dimensions of religion and ethnicity are outlined early in the novel, the reader is led to view every event within those boundaries. In this way, Hosseini is especially leading his non-Afghan and non-Muslim readers to experience the story through an authentic lens.

This concept of power and class conflict does not end when Amir and Baba immigrate to the United States in chapter eleven, but it does shift. Now a Marxist lens can be used to explore the relationship between Americans and immigrants. A Marxist comparison can also be drawn between Baba and Amir's identity as they knew it in Kabul and what it becomes in America.

#### *Appendix Two: New Historic Lens*

New Historicism is another fruitful critical lens to use alongside *The Kite Runner*. Not only does Hosseini publish his text at the height of controversy between the United States and the Middle East, but he relies upon numerous references to historical events within his fictional tale in order to bring awareness to the plight of Afghans in their home country and those who

immigrate to the United States. Prestwick House's *Multiple Critical Perspectives* resource includes brief timelines of Afghan history in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Afghan history related to the novel, and Hosseini's own life. This tool sets up an interesting comparison from three perspectives in history as it is related to fiction. The workbook also includes activities that ask students to investigate bias and point of view in the text proving that literary theory can easily be assimilated into familiar English classroom activities. Furthermore, Khaled Hosseini's website (discussed in detail in Appendix Five) provides numerous videos and interviews that discuss his writing process, authorial choices, and historical connections, drawing the connection between an author and a text.

If a teacher is looking for ideas in how to present this novel on a larger scale, a New Historic lens would work extremely well to be used as an interdisciplinary project between an English and Modern American History class. The latter half of Hosseini's text especially welcomes a conversation between American and Afghan cultures, values, history, and present and future relationships. This topic is also highly relevant to present secondary students as the tensions between the United States and the Middle East continue to have a large impact on present culture and politics.

### *Appendix Three: Psychoanalytic Lens*

Though Prestwick House does not include the Psychoanalytic lens as one of the three options in *The Kite Runner Multiple Critical Perspectives* workbook, the basic areas of study in the theory can easily be applied to the novel: the multiple dream/memory sequences, Freud's Oedipus complex, and the principles of the id, ego, and superego. Though it would not be necessary to use more than the three given theories in the workbook (if one is using the

Prestwick House resource), I chose to do so for three reasons: 1) I had class sizes ranging from 20-26 students and found it much easier to create groups with four theories rather than three. 2) All four theories easily applied to the novel and did not require a lot of extra work on my part to put the fourth option together. 3) I wanted my students to have a good foundation on literary theory as this was the only unit that I specifically had them working with it. Certainly there are many options available for how a teacher can set a unit like this up in his or her classroom. I will give some examples from my own experience in Appendix Four.

Amir's multiple dream and memory sequences throughout the novel and the symbolic importance that Hosseini lends to them easily sets up a conversation from a Psychoanalytic perspective. Though Psychoanalysis focuses mainly on the importance of dreams to the subconscious, I would argue that Hosseini lends the same importance to the memory flashbacks that Amir especially experiences throughout the novel. By combining the two, students are given a plethora of options for which to study the effect of Amir's subconscious on his conscious actions. It also provides an insightful glimpse into the character of Amir when doing deep character analysis. Below are the memories and dreams that I find to be most telling throughout the novel:

<u>Dreams</u>	<u>Memories</u>
Monster in the lake (Hassan's dream) pg. 59	Amir & Hassan's brotherhood pg. 73
Amir in the snowstorm pg. 74	Amir, Hassan, & the fortune-teller pg. 73
Hassan's death pg. 239-240	Amir & Hassan with the turtle pg. 261
Baba & the bear pg. 295	Kite Flying with Hassan and Ali pg. 370
Assef in the hospital pg. 307	

Also, Amir's complex triangular relationship with his mother and father works as an example of Freud's Oedipus complex. In *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and*

*Cultural Theory*, Peter Barry gives a short definition for the Oedipus complex stating that it occurs when “the male infant conceives the desire to eliminate the father and become the sexual partner of the mother” (93). Now, Amir’s family circumstance is not set up for this definition to apply directly; his mother died at his birth, so he is not fighting to steal his mother’s affection from his father. Rather, he is instead forced into an impossible situation where both he and his father deeply grieve for the loss of Sofia Akrami. Amir feels that his father blames him for his mother’s death and consistently feels that he disappoints his father for not fitting into the typical masculine role. Hosseini routinely centers the father-son conflict on the absence and loss of the mother—providing some foothold for an Oedipus argument. Certainly this would be a worthy topic for debate in a classroom setting.

Finally, one of the popular tenets of Psychoanalytic theory (which would fit with any novel or short story study) is the application of the id, ego, and superego to the major characters of a work. These three elements are the various parts of the human subconscious which help to make up an individual’s personality. Definitions and examples of each of these areas can easily be found online to give to students as a resource. This can be used as a one day classroom activity or extended to a unit-length project. In a shortened form, students can be put into groups and given either a character or one of the types of subconscious to explore. As a group, they can find evidence from the chosen text to support their rationale that a character represents one of the three subconscious states or is a combination of multiple ones. Then, each group could present to the class. This same assignment could also be transferred to an essay prompt for a culminating project.

#### *Appendix Four: Practical Classroom Applications*

There are numerous possibilities for implementing literary theory into the study of a novel, or any other text. Students' intellectual capabilities and amount of prior experience with theory will dictate how in-depth or independent a teacher may require them to go with their analysis, but even with constant teacher-led instruction, it is still possible, and I believe necessary, to include theory as a part of secondary English education. Teachers should not feel pressured to cover in detail every theory available, but rather, teach the concept and processes of theory and what its goals are with direct application of a few select types that complement the chosen texts in the curriculum. It is not the goal of a secondary level student to become an expert in theory but to begin to intellectually process how using theory advances his or her skills as a critical reader.

1) One way of doing this is to choose three or four theories that work well with a chosen text and divide the class into groups in order to first research and then implement that lens in their analysis. Students are then able to present to the class their findings, thus giving the entire class three or four various ways of reading one text. This method worked well when I taught critical theory to an Honors-level English class for juniors. I began by spending one class period teaching the purpose of literary theory and how it is applied to texts. Because my students had never heard the phrases *critical* or *literary theory* before, I spent time making connections with what they knew about analyzing literature and showing how critical theory fit into that picture. Once they were given the terminology for what they had already been doing in English classes at a reader-response level, it was easy for them to make the jump to other critical lenses. Then, I spent time introducing the four lenses that were going to be applied to our text, providing background information and a list of questions to ask from each lens' point of view. I concluded this introduction with a sample application of each lens. Then, after being placed in small groups

of three to four members, students were given one of the four theories at random (because of class sizes, I sometimes had two groups working on the same theory; I preferred this option to having groups of five or six members). Then we began reading our chosen text just as if it were being taught without the inclusion of theory. One or two days a week, the student groups would meet and discuss their findings for how their theory was evident in the text thus far. They were required to take individual notes as they read to bring to these group meetings in order to guide conversation. Also, using the Prestwick House *Multiple Critical Perspectives* workbooks as a guide, I created activities that each group needed to complete at various checkpoints throughout the reading of the novel. Rather than copying directly from the workbook, I altered the activities to make sure that each group's activity was comparable in size and significance. At the end of the unit, groups presented to the class showing how the novel could be viewed through their critical lens. Students were first required to give a brief description of their theory along with its history and major figures. Then, they taught the rest of the class how the novel could be read from the perspective of their critical lens. They did this using their findings from the activities they completed throughout the unit, sometimes using video clips or questions to enhance their presentation. Because of the depth of the project, each of these presentations lasted anywhere from twelve to twenty minutes. While this requires multiple days from the classroom schedule, the benefits were clear. Students had participated in deep critical analysis from a specific point of view and translated their newfound knowledge into an imaginative and scholarly product that was then used to teach the other members of their class. This put a large part of the learning responsibility on the students and required them to use a high level of collaboration and time management skills.

2) If such an in-depth, student-led approach is not appropriate for a classroom, the teacher can structure the unit to have a much more guided approach. There are multiple ways of doing this:

A) A teacher could choose between two and four critical lenses and divide a text into that many parts based upon where the theories fit best. As the class is working through those corresponding sections, the teacher can then arrange activities or guiding questions to allow students to practice using that theory in a more structured environment.

B) If a text is difficult to divide or is too short to separate several times, a teacher can always use a general reader-response approach for the initial reading and then take turns looking at the entire text from the view of several lenses once the class has finished reading the text. Anywhere from one day to a week could be spent on each critical lens, using various activities and class discussions to emphasize a specific type of analysis. Both of these styles have the benefit of teacher-modeling and hands-on application.

#### *Appendix Five: Teaching Resources*

1) Prestwick House's *Multiple Critical Perspectives*:

Mentioned previously, one great resource for teaching literary theory at the secondary level comes from Prestwick House's *Multiple Critical Perspectives* series. Teaching guides can be purchased which correspond to many commonly taught secondary-level texts, each with three critical lenses to apply; these books include general resources to the text (synopsis, character lists, themes) along with explanations for each theory with activities for classroom instruction (individual/group projects, discussion questions, essay prompts).

Also, Prestwick House provides a free introductory slide show that gives a short summary of six literary theories along with an application of that theory to the story of

Cinderella. This can be found at <https://www.prestwickhouse.com/samples/307234.pdf>. These resources from Prestwick House are a valuable addition no matter which format a teacher may choose to use. Certainly, they provide a foundation from which a teacher can then build upon based on the experience and maturity of his or her own students.

2) Khaled Hosseini's personal website: <http://khaledhosseini.com/>

I found this to be an invaluable resource when I taught *The Kite Runner*. First, Khaled Hosseini has provided nine short videos explaining such things as his personal writing process and professional career, character and event choices for his novels, and current conditions in Afghanistan. While they are easily accessed on his website, I also found it effective to embed the videos on my personal classroom website to make access easier for my students. The videos work great to show as part of the introduction to the novel, though I typically saved some of the videos to show towards the end of the unit because of certain plot and character details that Hosseini discusses. The videos are all under five minutes in length, making them perfect to use individually as an anticipatory set or to assign to students as homework in preparation for class discussion.

A second useful resource is an audio recording of Khaled Hosseini reading aloud chapter one of *The Kite Runner*. This recording is only two and a half minutes long, matching the approximate one page length of the chapter. I always reserved one entire class period (50 minutes) to unpack this chapter as a large group. First, I would play the recording for this chapter two times. This gave students the opportunity to first listen and observe and then critically evaluate the chapter. Then, I lead a discussion with the whole class by asking, "What did you notice?" This has proven an extremely effective way to get students to use prediction skills and also to evaluate the author's word choice and figurative language use. I also make sure

that students recognize the flashback structure of the novel, taking notes of the specific dates given by Hosseini. I ask students to take note of what information they are not given in the first chapter and to phrase this in the form of questions, ex: Who is the narrator? What is his or her name? What is a kite runner? What is the significance of the winter of 1975? Because I have these notes written in my copy of the text, I recommend giving students post-it notes to mimic this process of note-taking. They can then leave these in the pages of the first chapter and can reference back to them at multiple points throughout the novel.

### 3) *The Kite Runner* film:

This adaptation was directed by Marc Forster, released on March 25, 2008, and nominated for awards at both the Golden Globes and Academy Awards in 2007. Most teachers recognize the benefits of using film to reinforce what is taught in the classroom. While the film has some noticeable differences and a shortened ending, this only serves to enhance its benefits for classroom discussion and debate. It also provides opportunity for a lesson on film analysis by asking students to think about various director decisions, camera angles, music, and language choices.

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