Jordan p. 2

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Precise Analysis

Happiness

Some people grow up living in a one bedroom trailer, some in a lavish mansion, some living off food stamps, and some eating fillet mignon and caviar. Humans are a product of the environment they grow up in; they cannot truly see the world around them until they are mature enough to look beyond themselves. In the book *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini uses literary elements to help communicate his theme. For him, instead of fixating on present war atrocities, one must aspire for equality, peace, and happiness in the future. In the beginning of the book Amir is caught in his isolated mindset of his grandiose, sheltered world. He is lost in the perfect picture of kites flying in the sky and can’t see beyond himself. When he moves to America and is no longer the privileged rich kid, he realizes the atrocities in Afghanistan. Towards the end of the book Amir knows something must be done to help his fellow citizens in Afghanistan, because he was overtaken with remorse for his actions when he was younger. Most importantly, he understands that in order to live a better future he must learn to spread happiness.

In the beginning of the book the symbolic use of the kite, character relationships, and imagery illustrates Amir’s childhood and ignorance towards his future. While Amir flies his kite, he directs his attention towards Baba; “I kept stealing glances at Baba… wondering what he was thinking… did apart of him enjoy watching me fail?”( Hosseini 63). Baba and Amir’s relationship is underscored through the Kites. Amir appears more focused on Baba, “wondering what he was thinking”(63). The pressure Amir feels at a young age through the kites carries on throughout his life. Amir feels approval from his father is essential to his survival in the world because of his single concern for himself and aspiration to be his father. His lack of concern for more pressing matters such as the tremendous amounts of poverty in his nation is disregarded by his selfishness. The imagery of the kite is very distinct; “They fell from the sky like shooting stars with brilliant, rippling tails… your mind drifted with the kite”(63). The words “rippling” and “drifted” create peaceful, weightless imagery. Throughout all the darkness in Afghanistan, the kites were the only thing people could use to escape reality. Khaled clearly paints a picture of kites flying in the air with the use of imagery most humans have once experienced: flying a kite. The book is like a roller coaster: constantly going through emotional ups and downs. In the beginning of the book the imagery of the kites is more prevalent, which thus creates a more positive picture; the kites are associated with freedom and happiness. Baba says to Amir, “You don’t keep your eyes to the sky, you won’t last much longer”(63). Amir is so focused on impressing his dad; he doesn’t fixate enough on his goal of flying the kite. The kite is a symbol for the future. In order for the kite to fly, Amir must let go of it into the air while controlling its destiny. Much like the future, Amir looks up to new possibilities. Baba conveys that Amir must look forward and keep trying or he “won’t last much longer”(63). This relates to the symbolism of Amir’s future because if he looks down and gives up nothing will happen for Amir or Afghanistan.

In order for Amir to understand the world and tragedies around him, he first had to experience what it feels like to be an outcast. He grew up living a lavish life, but when he moved to America as a poor immigrant he learned the value of life is far more than riches. Amir realizes that Afghanistan is in shambles, “I want to tear myself from this place, from this reality, rise up like a cloud and float away”(345). Although the connotation of the sentence is heart breaking with the use of the phrase “tear myself” the rest of the sentence has a contrasting feel. The imagery of “rising up like a cloud and floating away” adds a lighter, heartwarming feel. The cloud relates to that of the kite symbol, adding hope for the future even in the most desperate of times. Amir feels the pain of his fellow citizens and only wants to “melt into this humid summer night and dissolve somewhere far, over the hills”(345). The use of the words “melt” and “dissolve” create a hopeless tone. Because Amir has never fully understood the devastation of the country the only thing that seems probable is to escape the situation. Although Amir is aware of the atrocities, he doesn’t know how to make a change or deal with them, rather, he wants to run from them. During this hopeless stage in his life, he is transforming from his innocent, ignorant mindset to one of panic. The use of metaphor helps to illustrate how Amir continues on in the face of adversity: “But I am here, my legs blocks of concrete, my lungs empty of air, my throat burning.”(345). He compares his legs to “blocks of concrete” to establish that although he wants to “dissolve somewhere far,” he must stay and face his problems. Amir’s description of this scene provides an uncanny visualization for the reader. The word “but” is a very powerful word in this passage because of its use to bring the main character back to reality. He closes the passage with “There will be no floating away”(345). The word “floating” ties back to the peaceful term used in the beginning of the book used to describe the kites in the wind. Amir is no longer able to withdraw himself from reality.

At the end of the book, Amir finally realizes the true meaning of happiness and learns how to cope with problems. Amir witnesses Sohrab smile: “It was only a smile, nothing more… It didn’t make anything all right”(371). A smile symbolizes resolution, happiness, and peace. Although Amir wasn’t able to change any of the war barbarity, he was able to make a small difference that may lead to further, greater change. Throughout the entire book, there were only small glimpses of hope through symbols such as the kite, but the smile represents a more permanent way of coping with the horror. Amir was first blind to reality, then accepts it, and finally is able to achieve perpetual bliss. The book ends with a tranquil metaphor: “A tiny thing. A leaf in the woods, shaking in the wake of a startled birds flight… when spring comes, it melts the snow one flake at a time, and maybe I just witnessed the first flake melting”(371). Much like one leaf in the woods, Sohrab’s smile seams irrelevant. But, the word “spring” defines the start to a greater change. Not all the snow in a forest can melt all at once, it takes steady progression. The smile represents a snowflake in a large forest, glistening with beauty, waiting to melt. Earlier in the book the word “melt” was used in a negative sense, hoping he could “melt in this humid summer night”(345). Now, melting is used positively, in order to describe the transformation of winter into spring. The winter embodies darkness and depression, whereas the spring symbolizes light and hope for a peaceful future. The book ends with sanguine imagery: “I ran with the wind blowing in my face, and a smile as wide as the Valley of Panjsher on my lips. I ran”(371). Alluding to the “Valley of Panisher” illustrates the magnitude of a smile. The image of running shows Amir running towards the future. He is not running away from his problems, instead he is embracing his devastating nation with a smile on his face. Throughout the book, the Taliban took everything away from their citizens, but Amir shows they were unable to take away his happiness.

Amir grew up blindsided to the world around him; instead he only cared about his wealth and importance to his father. When he finally saw the mess Afghanistan had become, all he wanted to do was run away from the issue. It took him nearly his entire life to accept that the world is nowhere near perfect and just one smile can start to rebuild the happiness of the country. In America, our developed, democratic country shelters most people from reality. Americans may know other countries are not as privileged as we are but fail to do something about it. Khaled uses literary devices to communicate a theme that humans are a product of the environment they are grown up in. One cannot truly see the world until they are mature enough to look beyond themselves. Happiness can make any terrible situation brighter and more bearable.

Works Cited

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. New York: Riverhead, 2003. Print.