CHAPTER 7

1. a) How does Hosseini’s word choice in the opening paragraph create an unsettling mood on the morning of the kite tournament?

The final sentence in the opening paragraph creates the unsettling mood as it tells us that there is a ‘monster’ in the lake and that it has been swimming at the bottom, ‘waiting’. The idea that there is a monster is already unsettling as we see these as something disturbing and not to be trusted. It is a malevolent being. It is made worse by the point that the monster is ‘waiting’. There is a sense that it is lurking there, biding its time before it launches an attack or take some innocent.

b) Show how this mood changes in the telling of the rest of the dream.
The mood changes from unsettled to happy and exultant. The word choice demonstrates this – we read the people are ‘clapping’ for Amir and Hassan telling us they are applauded for their actions and therefore revered. The idea of them being revered and celebrated is also suggested in the name-change for the lake, it becomes the ‘Lake of Amir and Hassan, Sultans’. Here they are viewed as heroes and their actions catapults them to the highest rank in the land of ruler.
c) How does this dream mirror a later event in the chapter?
In the dream Amir and Hassan work together to prove there is no monster in the lake and are applauded by the adoring crowd. In the kite tournament, Amir and Hassan win, and are congratulated by the tournament audience. The monster however, comes to represent Assef. He is the lurking danger in the two boys life and although he shouldn’t really be a problem he is the thing that splits the two boys up.

2. Comment on the significance of the description of the snow covered scene on p. 57 in terms of later events. Look closely at word choice and imagery.

The snow in this scene is significant because it comes to represent purity and innocence. We are told that everything ‘glistened with fresh snow’ and that it was a ‘blinding white’. The snow should be seen to represent Hassan. The alliteration of the ‘blameless blue’ drags your attention to the odd word choice. The word choice suggests an event is going to happen for which someone should have taken responsibility. We know this event will be Amir’s betrayal of Hassan.
Building on this Amir notes that Ali “always said a prayer when his son left the house” – Ali knows Hassan is in permanent danger of discrimination because he is a Hazara. It is important that this is mentioned now. It gives a sense of foreboding to the chapter.
Both of these phrases are at odds with the purity image, suggesting something bad is going to happen.

3. Explain how the writer conveys the thrill of kite flying on p. 60

The section on kite flying conveys how thrilling it is in several ways. First of all Amir says a prayer – ‘koran ayat’ – before he plays. This is like a charm to protect himself. A series of similes are used to reinforce the thrill of kite-flying. He says the players are like Olympic athletes showing their gold medals. This suggests that they have gone through a tough competition to get where they are and suggests feelings of victory. The kites are also described as “paper sharks roaming for prey”, this makes it sound like the game they are playing is deadly and dangerous, again ramping up the sense of adrenaline. The last simile is that the kites looked “like shooting stars”. This tells us how beautiful they were to watch.

4. Show how sentence structure helps to reinforce how focused Amir is on winning both the tournament and his father’s approval on p. 61

There are a series of short sentences used which demonstrate Amir’s focus like ‘the blue kite’. His thoughts are becoming very centred on winning. In particular he tells us and convinces himself that “I was going to win”. A colon is used to add information that the competition is near an end point and that now there is only two of them left.
Parenthesis also adds that all Amir was thinking about was winning.
The use of ‘I’ and ‘me’ at the start of sentences demonstrates Amir is aware of only himself and the tournament.

5. Study Hosseini’s description of Amir’s ‘out of body experience’ on p. 62. How does this momentary pause motivate Amir into action?

This pause allows Amir to see what he needs to do. He can see himself and he smiles at himself which pushes him onto victory.

6. Comment on the effectiveness of the structure of the sentence beginning “and that right there was the single greatest moment…” p. 63

A list is used to build up a sense of Amir’s emotions. The sentence begins with the conjunction ‘and’ which tags it on to the rest of the paragraph and emphasises that this is a separate but linked point which expresses this is the happiest Amir had been up until that point. The placement of “at last” at the end of the sentence emphasises just how long Amir had been waiting for Baba’s approval.

7. What is the significance of Hassan’s final word to Amir on p.63

Hassan’s final words to Amir are “for you a thousand times over” shows the extent of Hassan’s devotion to Amir. Also becomes a motif throughout the novel of one’s devotion to another.

8. In light of later events, how do these words seem poignant?

Hassan refuses to give up the kite, proving he meant what he said. Amir’s loyalty to Hassan does not work like this though as he betrays Hassan by not stepping forward.

9. How do word choice and sentence structure reinforce Amir’s buoyant mood in the first paragraph on p. 64?

colon – to expand on how he plans the scene in his head
One word sentences – places a great deal of importance on these things. This shows how much Amir wants them from his father.
Rhetorical questions – Amir doesn’t know what else will happen. He has not planned beyond that point of celebration.
Elipses – a moments pause whilst Amir and the reader envision the scene.

“warrior”, “hero” – word choice, victorious champions of violence .
“prized trophy” – treasured reward for which one worked hard
“bloodied hands” – pride in his wounds, which prove his might
“worthiness” – deserving of his father’s attention.
“grand entrance” – dramatic scene
“Rostram and Sohrab” – pictures a happy ending to the tale, over the sad.
Vindication, salvation, redemption. – everything will be fine now

CHAPTER 9

1. Why is the list of presents given? And what does it reveal about Amir’s mood?

In chapter 9 it is Amir’s birthday. The presents he receives are listed to show us just how much he has been given (spoilt) but also that despite all these new play things he struggles to focus on anything. His mind is racing with the guilt and confusion of falling out with Hassan.

2. Why does Amir compare the colour of his bike to blood?

The colour of the bike being compared to that of blood is a reminder of the Eid sacrifice and therefore the assault on Assef.

3. Why does Ali and Hassan’s present make Amir feel like crying?

Ali and Hassan get Amir a copy of the Shahnamah for his birthday. This is a brand new hardback copy of the stories Hassan and Amir read together under the pomegranate tree. Amir feels like crying when he receives this because so much thought and care has gone into selecting the present but at this point he and Hassan are not talking. It is a reminder to him of how good a friend Hassan truly is and how bad a friend Amir is currently being in not giving Hassan any support. At this point Amir is actually shunning him.
4. Why is Hassan’s answer to Baba’s question surprising? What does it reveal?

Amir frames Hassan, by making it look like Hassan was jealous of all his presents and hiding the watch and money under Hassan’s pillow. Amir does this in the hope that Baba will get mad and send Hassan away, that way Amir will no longer have to look at Hassan, who makes him constantly feel guilty. When Hassan is called in by Baba for questioning he actually admits to stealing the watch – even though he didn’t! He is still prepared to stick up for, and protect and defend, Amir no matter what it costs him.

Baba’s response is even more shocking. Instead of getting angry, as Amir was expecting, Baba immediately forgives Hassan. He doesn’t even shout, he just calmly tells Hassan that he is absolved. We are just as shocked as Amir. Obviously later, this weird moment of forgiveness is explained through the discovery that Hassan is actually Baba’s child. He would clearly not want to give up his son.

5. On p. 98 why does Amir not understand Baba’s forgiveness? How is Amir’s confusion shown?

At the end of the chapter Hassan and Ali leave whilst Amir watches from the window. We are told that “all he saw was the rain through windowpanes that looked like melting silver.” Here the stormy downpour mirrors Amir’s terrible mood. He is heartbroken that Hassan is leaving but doesn’t know how to deal with it. The silver disappearing down the outside of the windowpane is like something precious getting away – Amir is losing his best friend.

CHAPTER 16

1. Whose voice do we hear at the beginning of this chapter? Is it significant that the first news of Hassan comes from Rahim Khan?

At the beginning of Chapter 16 we hear Rahim Khan’s voice. Rather than relate the story of Hassan second-hand through Amir, Hosseini has chosen to tell it to us straight from Rahim Khan. This is a significant choice, as Rahim Khan would have been the closest person to Hassan in his later years and so when we are told about Hassan’s death it has a greater emotional impact.

2. Why does Hassan take such pains to return the house to its former glory?

Hassan had been living in Amir and Baba’s old house, helping Rahim Khan look after it for them. Hassan went to such pains to return the house to its former glory because he took a pride in his old home and he wanted to keep it ready for Baba and Amir’s return.

3. What is the significance of Hassan’s choice of name for his son?

Hassan names his son Sohrab after the character in his favourite tale – Rostram and Sohrab. There is a certain irony in his name choice for his son as the Sohrab in the Arabic tale never knows who his true father is, much like Hassan is completely unaware that Baba is his biological parent.

4. On p. 189-90, how is Hassan’s village made to seem like a wasted land?

There is a short paragraph about Hassan’s village which create an impression of it as a wasteland. First there is the rutted and dried track one must drive along to reach it. The village is so hidden and unreachable that it either doesn’t have a name or people have forgotten it. The people who live there take no pride in their home as they have left a donkey carcass to rot at the side of the road. The plants and trees that have taken root there are all dying from a lack of water. The people live in what are described as mud huts creating a sense that life out there is primitive. Lastly, the mountains that shelter the village are compared with sharp teeth creating a sense that this area will eat you alive and that death in some form is always imminent.

5. Think about how Amir views his relationship with Hassan and his visit to Afghanistan. How does Hassan’s list of questions for Amir compare with Amir’s avoidance of Hassan and his visit?

For a very long time Amir has not bothered to think about Hassan or Afghanistan finding the topic of his childhood to painful and guilt-ridden. In contrast to this Hassan has thought constantly about his lost friend and has even gone to the trouble of learning to write so he can contact him. In his letter, Hassan asks a number of questions in between telling Amir all about himself and what life is like for him now with a son and wife. Hassan appears interested whereas Amir doesn’t want to go near the subject of their childhood or friendship and Amir has to be forced to do so by Rahim Khan.

6. On p. 193 it says Hassan cleaned the house “Like he was preparing the house for someone’s return.” Whose return was he hoping for? Why? Hassan had cleaned the house ‘like he was preparing for someone’s return’. This statement is odd because we know he was actually preparing it for someone’s return, specifically Amir’s. He wanted to see his old friend again to remind himself of a time before invasions and war had torn his homeland apart.

7. On page 196, we are told Sanaubar takes really good care of Sohrab. Why do you think this might be? Sanaubar is Hassan’s mother, and she makes reappearance at the village Ali removes Hassan to. She takes great care of Sohrab. Firstly, this is because it is her only grandson, and so she naturally dotes on him. There is also an element here of making up for things that were lost. This is Sanaubar’s redemption. If she takes good care of Sohrab it might make up for her not being around to raise Hassan.

CHAPTER 20

1. Why does Hosseini choose the phrase “rubble and beggars” to sum up Kabul?

Hosseini chooses the phrase “rubble and beggars” sum up Kabul as this is what the city has been reduced to. It gives a perfect snapshot of what has happened to the buildings and the people. Everywhere has become derelict or has been bombed or is no longer looked after and so is a shell of its former self. The people have nothing to live off of – there are very few jobs, very little food and there homes have become simple shelters. They are reduced to poverty under the Taliban’s regime.

2. On p. 226 why is the description of Jadeh Maywand as a “giant sandcastle” an apt description?

Jadeh Maywand was Amir’s home that Rahim Khan was asked to care-take for Baba. It is described a “giant sandcastle” as the building is no longer kept. There are no longer decorations in the garden and so it is a simple sandy colour, the comparison to a sandcastle also references its delicate state – it could collapse at any moment as there is no longer anyone living in it.

3. How is the simile about returning to Kabul effective on p. 227?

The simile about returning to Kabul is effective as he describes it as bumping into an old friend you no longer recognise. Clearly there are things he recognises about the city, like his home, certain streets and the cemetery where he used to play as a child. But the changes in the mood from a vibrant and lively place to a dead town make it feel unfamiliar to him.

4. How are the Taliban made to sound threatening on p. 228?

The Taliban are made to sound threatening on several counts. They drive a red pickup truck. The colour red is associated with danger and so we are subconsciously made wary of them. They seem young compared to the other men begging in the streets, and they travel in a pack. Their youth and large grouping makes them intimidating. They also have large guns and a lot of them which shows us they are not to be messed with.

5. What is the purpose of Amir’s conversation with the beggar from p. 229-31? The conversation with the beggar in this chapter proves to us how far Afghanistan has fallen as a country. The beggar, a poor destitute man, was once a great professor of learning, he educated the masses and would have held a stable job and lived in a nice home. Now under the Taliban regime he lives in the streets and has no income. This is because the Taliban have no place for people who can think for themselves and would teach others to do the same.
The orphanage is in a horrific state. There is no longer government or local funding to help look after the children. The children have no formal education as there are no longer proper schools. The manager has elected to stay behind with the children despite having a family of his own to look after. The children live in poor conditions with little food or shelter and no toys. The Taliban provide sporadic aid for the children. 6. What kind of state is the orphanage in? What difficult situation is the orphanage director, Farid, in on p. 234-6? It turns out that Farid, the orphanage director, is in the difficult position of letting the Taliban select children to take with them when they visit the orphanage. It becomes very clear that the children the men remove probably end up sexually abused. Farid states that the children who are left behind are at least now provided with food and clothing. He lays the blame and judgement at Allah’s door, knowing that if he didn’t let the Taliban men take these few children in return for money and food then the Taliban would just take the children anyway.

CHAPTER 21-2

1. In your own words describe two things that suggest the state of chaos experienced in Kabul.

Two things at the start of Chapter 21 that suggest the chaos experienced in Kabul are the state of the restaurant building and the dead body. Amir describes for us the restaurant that he and his father used to visit. The building has been padlocked but people have smashed the windows and parts of the sign have fallen off. This suggests it has been left in a hurry by its owners and that people have tried to break in. The body is that of a hanged man that has been left to rot. The body has been torn at by other people and so is covered in blood but the people going about there business on the day Amir sees it pay it no heed as if this has become a normal part of their lives.

2. Why does Wazir Akbar Khan remain largely unscathed by the civil disruptions?

Wazir Akbar Khan remains largely unscathed by the civil disruptions because this was one of the nicer suburbs of Kabul. As the country went through war and now civil unrest many of the houses had been appropriated by various leaders. The houses in Wazir Akbar Khan are now lived in by the more prominent Taliban members and so they remain largely untouched by the fighting.

3. What is the purpose of the italicised narrative on p. 239 and why is it important?

The italicised description of Amir’s old house shows us a colourful and vibrant home. The garden is overflowing with plants, there are painted sections and the whole place dances with colour. This creates a sharp contrast with the house Amir now stands in, which has become derelict and sapped of colour.

4. “The carving had dulled, almost faded altogether, but it was still there.” Why is it relevant that Amir goes to check this on p. 243?

The fact that Amir goes back to check on the carving tells us that he still thinks Hassan is important. This tree stands for their friendship and the carving shows that it still endures. “The carving had dulled, almost faded altogether, but it was still there”. Despite Hassan’s death and Amir’s forced ignorance of the situation, their friendship is still strong enough that Amir will go back into this war-torn country to save his nephew.

5. How do the crowd react to the character referred to as John Lennon on p. 249?

When Amir attends the football match we are introduced to a man referred to as John Lennon for his round sunglasses. The crowd treat this man with fear and contempt. He is clearly a bit of a bully and has done things to hurt people in the past.

6. Why is it Assef that Amir must face?

It is later revealed that this character is actually Assef and that it is he who has taken Sohrab. This is important as it was Assef who assaulted Hassan, and if Amir had intervened during the assault there is a big possibility that the later events of the novel wouldn’t have had to happen.

7. Why do you think Assef enjoys being in the Taliban?

Assef is a bully and the Taliban does nothing but bully people, hence Assef’s strong enjoyment as a member.

8. “My body was broken – just how badly I wouldn’t find out until later – but I felt *healed*. Healed at last. I laughed.” Why does Amir feel healed on p. 265-6?

Amir states “My body was broken – just how badly I wouldn’t find out until later – but I felt healed. Healed at last. I laughed.” Amir feels healed because he has finally redeemed himself against Hassan. If he had stopped Assef from raping Hassan all those years ago then the result would have been Assef beating the two boys up. Amir laughs because he feels a huge sense of relief at realising this.

9. What is the significance of Sohrab’s actions?

Sohrab stops the fight and saves Amir by firing a slingshot pellet into Assef’s face, blinding the man. This allows time for Amir and Sohrab to escape. This is significant as we remember Hassan using the same weapon to defend himself and Amir countless times as a child, and often against Assef and his gang of bullies.

CHAPTER 24-5

1. On p. 298 what do you think Amir feels “lifting off his chest”?

Amir experiences a sensation of a weight being “lifted off his chest” at the beginning of the chapter. We get a feeling here that things are starting to work out. Amir feels that he has righted the wrongs of his past, that Sohrab can begin to heal and that Amir and Soraya will finally have a version of the family they have longed for.

2. What are we supposed to make of Mr Andrews on p. 300-4?

Mr Andrews is the American Ambassador and to begin with we see him as largely unsympathetic to Amir’s plight. He does not seem to care about Sohrab’s unusual situation and seems jaded by all the paperwork. It is later revealed that his daughter committed suicide which softens Amir’s attitude towards him.

3. What are we to make of Omar Farsal on p. 306-11?

Omar Faisal, the adoption lawyer seems much more sympathetic to Amir and Sohrab’s plight. He seems overworked and underpaid but he offers what he feels is the best and soundest advice, suggesting that SOhrab be placed in a Pakistan orphanage till Amir and Soraya can fill out official adoption papers.

4. Look at p. 313. Why does the thought of going back to an orphanage terrifies Sohrab so much?

The thought of going back to an orphanage obviously traumatises Sohrab. He has already spent time in the Afghan orphanage where he would have spent most of the time hungry and cold. He would have received little comfort whilst grieving the murder and loss of his parents. He was then snatched from the orphanage and abused. This is all he knows about orphanages, it is understandable that he would not wish this to happen again.

5. On p. 313 what is the significance of the weather when Amir receives the phone call?

The weather during Amir’s phone call is dramatic epithet. It has become dark and rainy, this is a premonition of what is to come – Sohrab’s attempted suicide.

6. Comment on the language used to describe Amir’s screams on p. 314.

When Amir finds Sohrab half-dead in the bath he tells us “suddenly I was on my knees, screaming. Screaming through my clenched teeth. Screaming until I thought my throat would rip and my chest explode.
Later they said I was still screaming when the ambulance arrived.” Amir feels torn apart by seeing Sohrab in this state. He has fought too hard for his nephew to end up dead. The repeated “screaming” tells us that this is almost a aprimal reaction to seeing Sohrab this way. He clearly doesn’t remember much either, probably going into shock as he claims others had to tell him about how long his screams lasted.

7. On p. 316 why does Amir feel compelled to visit the mosque? When had he last prayed?

Amir feels compelled to visit the mosque when Sohrab is recovering in hospital as he is desperate and has no other options. Even though he is not religious he decides to give praying a shot.

8. How is the simile about the “timid guest” effective on p. 326?

The “timid guest” analogy for Sohrab’s hope is an apt one. Sohrab has lived in fear for so long that he has forgotten what hope is and so it occupies his body shyly, as if he has no right to feel this emotion.

9. Look at the last three lines recounting the dinner scene on p. 331. What change do we see in Amir?

At the end of the dinner scene with Amir, Soraya and her parents we see a complete change in Amir. In the past he would have bowed down to the General’s wishes and not wanted to start a fight. In this scene though, he sticks up for Sohrab when the General insults him and puts the General in his place by commanding him to refer to Sohrab by his name and not as “that Hazara boy”.

10. On p. 340 why is it important that the book ends with kite flying and running?

Kite flying and running is what connected Amir and Hassan and showed us how strong their relationship was to begin with. It is also something that Hassan used to do with Sohrab when they were back in Afghanistan. It is important that the book should end this way as this is how Amir will bond with Sohrab, and it is how Sohrab can begin to heal himself. It is also a way for Amir and Sohrab to remember Hassan.