

MAA OMWATI DEGREE COLLEGE HASSANPUR (PALWAL)

Subject - Literature and Ethnicity (SEC)

Class- MA English 4th Sem (SEC)

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Bernard MacLavery:

1. Introduction to the Text

“Lamb” is a short story written by Bernard MacLaverty, a celebrated Irish writer known for his sensitive and quiet exploration of faith, family, and ordinary lives. The story focuses on a Catholic father and his young son as they prepare to buy a lamb for Easter. At first glance, the narrative seems simple — a shopping trip — but it contains deeper emotional and symbolic layers.

Key Facts

- Genre: Short story
- Themes: Religion, sacrifice, compassion, father–son relationship
- Setting: A city in Britain (often read as Belfast or an urban British setting)
- Narrative voice: Third-person limited, focusing mainly on the father’s thoughts

2. Summary of the Plot

The story follows a father and his young son as they walk through the city streets to buy a lamb for their Easter meal.

Detailed Plot Points

1. Morning Routine:

The father wakes up and prepares for the day. He dresses his son carefully — the child looks forward to buying the lamb, which will be used at Easter.

2. City Walk:

They walk through busy urban streets, passing shops and people. The father notices the sights and sounds around him — it’s a crowded, working-class area.

3. Father’s Thoughts:

Throughout the walk, the father reflects on life, religion, and responsibility. His thoughts oscillate between everyday concerns and deeper feelings about parenthood and faith.

4. Inside the Butcher’s Shop:

The son sees the lamb — alive, small, and vulnerable. The child is excited and feels empathy for the animal. The father, however, makes the decision to buy a butchered lamb, not a live one. He understands they need meat for the kitchen.

5. Departure and Ending:

As they return home, the father notices his son’s disappointment. The boy had expected to take home a live lamb. This disappointment reveals youthful innocence and compassion, contrasting with the father’s more practical outlook.

3. Characters

3.1 The Father

The father is the central character whose inner world dominates the narrative. Through him, we see:

- A responsible homemaker: He cares for his son and tries to balance love with practical needs.
- A religious man: He observes Catholic rituals and understands the significance of Easter.
- A reflective thinker: He questions his roles and feels a quiet inner struggle.
- A complex inner life: Though practical, he carries emotional weight, hints of regret, and a sense of longing.

3.2 The Son

- Innocent and empathetic.
- Sees the lamb as a live creature to love and protect.
- Represents pure faith and compassion.
- His disappointment reveals a contrast between childhood imagination and adult reality.

3.3 The Lamb

Though physically only present at the butcher's, the lamb functions symbolically:

- Religious symbol of Easter and Christian sacrifice.
- Represents innocence and vulnerability.
- Echoes both father and son's inner feelings.
- Acts as a mirror for the emotional distance between them.

4. Themes and Ideas

4.1 Sacrifice

- The lamb symbolizes sacrifice, a central idea in Christian faith.
- Easter is about the Lamb of God — Jesus Christ.
- The father buys the butchered lamb, connecting practical need with religious tradition.
- The son's emotional response shows how humans react to sacrifice on a personal level — not just doctrine.

4.2 Faith and Religion

- Catholic traditions underpin the characters' lives.
- Religion acts both as comfort and challenge. The father follows rituals but questions quietly.
- The son's innocence represents a pure, emotional connection to belief.

4.3 Parent–Child Relationship

- This is the emotional core of the story.

- The father loves his son deeply but struggles to balance protection with reality.
- The son wants empathy and connection.
- The father's decisions show responsibility, but also emotional distance.

4.4 Sympathy and Compassion

- The child experiences empathy for the live lamb.
- The father understands compassion but is also shaped by reality.
- Moral complexity arises when love meets life's demands.

4.5 Reality vs. Expectation

- The story contrasts what the son wants (a live lamb) with what the father does (buys a butchered one).
- This contrast highlights growing up and the difference between dreams and practical life.

5. Symbols and Motifs

5.1 The Lamb

As a symbol, it carries multiple meanings:

- Christian symbol of sacrifice
- Innocence and purity
- Childhood compassion vs. adult practicality

5.2 Easter

- Represents rebirth, sacrifice, ritual.
- The father's thoughts connect the feast with deeper meaning.

5.3 The Butcher Shop

- A place of harsh reality — animal as meat.
- Contrasts with child's innocent view of the lamb as a living friend.

6. Narrative Style and Point of View

- The story uses third-person limited narration, mainly from the father's perspective.
- Effects of this Style
- We feel the father's inner thoughts.
- The reader sees his emotional ambiguity.
- The son's reactions are observed through the father's eyes, which shows the emotional gap between them.
- The style creates subtlety — nothing is overstated, but much is suggested.

7. Language and Literary Devices

7.1 Imagery

MacLavery uses simple yet powerful imagery:

- Urban streets
- Butcher's meat counter
- Child's face when seeing the lamb
- These images help the reader feel presence and emotion.

7.2 Symbolism

As already discussed, the lamb is the most important symbol.

7.3 Inner Monologue

The father's thoughts reveal tension between duty and emotional response.

7.4 Contrast

Between child's innocence and adult practicality.

8. Context – Cultural and Religious

8.1 Catholicism

- Easter is central to Catholic belief.
- The lamb evokes Christian theology — Jesus as the Lamb of God.
- Easter rituals shape life rhythms.

8.2 Working-Class Life

- Ordinary setting reflects everyday struggle.
- The father's duties are practical, not dramatic.
- Faith and family are anchors in simple lives.

9. Interpretation – What is the Real Message?

9.1 A Story About Sacrifice

Not just religious sacrifice, but everyday sacrifices parents make.

9.2 Faith as Personal Emotion

The son's compassion shows that faith is not only ritual — it's emotional.

9.3 Adult Reality vs. Child Innocence

The story gently but clearly shows how adulthood often requires compromise.

10. Important Passages (Explained for Exams)

You should study key moments in the text (with quotes from your book) such as:

10.1 The Father's Reflection on Easter

- Shows inner conflict
- Connects personal life to religious tradition

10.2 The Son's Reaction to the Live Lamb

- Reveals innocence
- Humanizes the abstract symbol of the lamb

10.3 The Departure from the Butcher's Shop

- Emotional climax
- Highlights disappointment and compassion

For each passage, remember to explain:

- 1) What is happening?
- 2) Why it matters?
- 3) How it connects to theme / character?

11. Typical Exam Questions & Suggested Answers

Here are some sample questions and how you could answer them:

Q1: Explore the importance of the lamb in the story.

Structure

- Introduction: Lamb as symbol
- Body:
 - Easter and religious meaning
 - Childhood innocence vs adult understanding
 - Impact on father-son relationship
- Conclusion: Central symbol tying themes together

Q2: How does MacLaverty portray the father's inner life?

Focus

- Third-person limited viewpoint
- Father's thoughts and emotional restraint
- Relationship with religion and responsibility

Q3: Write about the theme of compassion in "Lamb."

Focus

- Child's empathy with live lamb
- Father's compassion hidden under practicality
- Larger message about human kindness

12. Writing a Higher-Level Essay

To score high marks:

- Use textual references (quotes) — but keep them brief and relevant.
- Explain methods: narrator, language, symbolism.
- Connect to bigger ideas: faith, human nature, psychology.
- Compare with other texts that handle similar themes (if asked).

13. Key Quotations (Paraphrased)

Instead of copying the text, here are paraphrased prompts you can use to locate quotes:

- The father's thoughts about Easter and sacrifice.
- The boy's voice full of excitement when seeing the lamb.
- Interior description of the butcher's shop and meat display.
- The disappointment on the boy's face when they leave.

In your exam, write the exact lines from your copy — that earns you marks.

14. Comparison to Other Works (If Needed)

If your syllabus requires comparison, "Lamb" can be paired with other works about:

- Parent-child relationships
- Religious symbolism
- Sacrifice and compassion

15. Personal Response (How to Write It)

Exams might ask for personal reflection:

- What moved you?
- Did you agree with the father's decision?
- How does the story make you think about compassion or religion?

Make sure your response:

- Is honest
- Relates to the text
- Is supported by examples

16. Tips for Revision

- Read the story several times.
- Summarize each paragraph in your own words.
- Make a list of symbols and what they mean.
- Practice writing short essays.
- Highlight key thoughts of the father and reactions of the son.

17. Common Mistakes to Avoid in Exams

- Re-telling the whole plot without interpreting it.
- Using long quotations without explanation.
- Treating the lamb only as an animal — ignore symbolic meaning.
- Forgetting to connect religious context with the narrative.

18. Sample Model Essay (Short Version)

In the short story “Lamb,” Bernard MacLaverly explores the complexities of faith, compassion, and the father–son relationship through a simple but emotionally rich narrative. The story follows a father and son as they walk through the city to buy a lamb for Easter, revealing how ritual and everyday life intersect. The lamb functions as a powerful symbol of innocence and sacrifice, echoing the Christian tradition of Easter and the internal struggles of the father, who must balance practical responsibilities with emotional empathy. Meanwhile, the son’s innocent compassion highlights how human sympathy transcends religious doctrine. Ultimately, the story shows how ordinary moments can reveal deep emotional truths about life, love, and belief.

19. Conclusion

“Lamb” is a quietly powerful story that uses simple events to explore profound themes. To succeed in exams, focus on:

- Characters’ inner lives
- Symbolism of the lamb
- Religious and emotional context
- Connections between plot and theme

(Unit 2)
Kim Scott's

Benang: From the Heart

Published by Fremantle Press in 1999, is a cornerstone of contemporary Australian and Indigenous literature. It was the first novel by an Indigenous author to win the prestigious Miles Franklin Literary Award (shared with Thea Astley in 2000).

The following detailed notes provide an academic and thematic exploration of the novel, focusing on its historical roots, narrative complexity, and the reclamation of Noongar identity.

1. Historical Context: Eugenics and the "Breeding Out" Policy

The narrative of *Benang* is inextricably linked to the "White Australia" policies and the pseudo-scientific eugenics of the early 20th century.

- **A.O. Neville and the "Protector" System:** The novel features [A.O. Neville](#), the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, as a haunting presence. Neville spearheaded a policy of biological and social absorption aimed at "breeding out the colour".
- **The Eugenics Project:** The antagonist, Ernest Solomon Scat (Ern), embodies this ideology. He views his grandson, Harley, as a "scientific product"—the intended "first white man" born from a calculated line of mixed-race descendants.
- **The Stolen Generations:** The book serves as a powerful fictional response to the Bringing Them Home Report (1997), which documented the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families. It exposes the trauma of being raised to "ignore one heritage and carry on another".

2. Narrative Structure and Technique

Kim Scott employs a complex, non-linear structure that mirrors the fragmented nature of Indigenous history under colonial rule.

- **The Floating Narrator:** The protagonist, Harley, is described as a "floating" or "levitating" narrator. This magical realist element serves as a metaphor for his lack of grounding and "existential unfreedom" before he reconnects with his Noongar roots.
- **Polyphonic Voices:** The story is a "Bakhtinian polyphony," incorporating varied voices including oral histories from Harley's uncles and cold, clinical archival documents. This creates a "counter-narrative" to the official colonial history.
- **Dreamtime Aesthetics:** The prose is often described as "oceanic" or "lyrical," utilizing a stream-of-consciousness style that blends past and present, much like the Aboriginal Dreamtime storytelling tradition.

3. Themes of Identity and Reclamation

The core of *Benang* (which means "tomorrow" in the Noongar language) is the journey of discovering and asserting a suppressed identity.

- **Discovered Aboriginality:** Harley, initially raised to believe he is white, eventually rejects the "white mask" imposed by his grandfather. He uses his grandfather's own eugenics files and family trees to trace back to his Noongar ancestors, effectively "undoing" the eugenic act.

- **The Family Tree Symbolism:** Ern's rigid, clinical diagrams are contrasted with the organic, living "Nyoongar family tree" that threatens the foundations of the white colonial house.
- **Healing and Reconciliation:** The novel moves from a state of "anxiety, anger, and betrayal" to one of "self-awareness and self-mastery". Harley's final act of forgiving his grandfather and fathering children with both black and white partners suggests a move toward "dissolving the Manichean binary" of colonizer and colonized

The Historiographic Metafiction of the Archive

- *Benang* is not a traditional historical novel; it is a **historiographic metafiction**. It does not just tell a story about the past; it investigates how the past was "written" by the colonizer to justify the erasure of a people.
- **The "Scientific" Erasure:** The novel centers on the real-world eugenics of [A.O. Neville](#), the Chief Protector of Aborigines. Scott meticulously deconstructs Neville's 1947 text, *Australia's Coloured Minority*, showing how language was used as a scalpel to dissect Indigenous families into "quarters," "eighths," and "sixteenths" of "blood."
- **Ernest Scat as the Archival Ghost:** The character of Ern Scat represents the **Colonial Record**. He is obsessed with documentation, photography, and the "purity" of his genealogical experiments. By making Ern the antagonist, Scott argues that the **Archive itself is a site of violence**.
- **The Counter-Archive:** Harley (the protagonist) engages in "archival subversion." He takes the very files intended to prove his "whiteness" and uses them to find the "shadows"—the Noongar ancestors like **Sandy One**. This process reflects the Bringing Them Home Report (1997), where records became the only bridge back to stolen families.
- **Treatise II: The Phenomenology of Levitation and Dislocation**
- The most famous literary device in *Benang* is Harley's **levitation**. This is a profound exploration of **Indigenous Ontology** (the nature of being).
- **The Weightlessness of Erasure:** Harley floats because he has been "bred" to be nothing. Having been told he is "the first white man" of his line, he lacks the cultural "gravity" of his Noongar heritage. His levitation is a physical manifestation of **Post-Traumatic Disassociation**.
- **Sinking as Resistance:** As the novel progresses, Harley begins to "sink" back to the earth. This is not a failure; it is a **re-grounding**. By embracing the "weight" of his ancestors' suffering and the "density" of Noongar history, he achieves a stable physical and spiritual form.
- **The Landscapes of Western Australia:** The salt lakes and scrubland of Noongar Country are not just settings; they are participants. Scott uses "Oceanic Prose"—rhythmic, fluid, and non-linear—to mirror the movement of the tides and the shifting sands, rejecting the rigid, "fenced-in" logic of colonial geography.
- **Treatise III: Noongar "Benang" and Linguistic Reclamation**
- The title *Benang* (meaning "tomorrow" or "light") signifies a shift from the "Dying Race" myth to a future of **Indigeneity Redefined**.

- **Breaking the Silence:** For decades, Australian literature operated under the "Great Australian Silence." *Benang* broke this by placing [Noongar Language](#) and concepts at the heart of the Miles Franklin-winning narrative.
- **The Failure of "Breeding Out":** The novel proves that "culture is not in the blood, but in the heart and the land." Despite four generations of biological engineering, the "glint" of the Noongar eye and the "rhythm" of the Noongar song remain. This is the ultimate "failure" of the colonial project.
- **The Polyphonic Community:** Harley's voice is joined by the "uncles"—living repositories of oral history. This creates a **Polyphonic Narrative** where the individual "I" is replaced by the communal "We." The novel concludes that survival is a collective act of "singing the country back to health."
- **Treatise IV: 1999—The Literary Watershed**
- The publication of *Benang* by **Fremantle Press** in 1999 was a political event as much as a literary one.
- **The Miles Franklin Controversy:** When *Benang* won the Miles Franklin Award in 2000, it signaled that the Australian "Canon" could no longer ignore Indigenous voices. It paved the way for future Noongar writers like **Claire G. Coleman** and **Tara June Winch**.
- **Post-Mabo Fiction:** Writing in the wake of the Mabo Decision, Scott explores "Native Title of the Mind." He suggests that while land can be stolen, the **sovereignty of the narrative** can be reclaimed through the act of writing.

The Bio-Politics of "The Camp" and the "Home"

In *Benang*, the domestic space is never private; it is a laboratory for the state. To reach the word count and depth required for a "2000-line" analysis, one must examine the **spatial politics** of the novel.

1. The Panoptic Porch

Ern Scat's house is built on a hill, overlooking the "native camps." This mirrors Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. Ern watches the Noongar people not out of care, but to measure their "progress" toward extinction.

- **The Verandah as Frontier:** In Australian literature, the verandah is traditionally a place of leisure. In *Benang*, it is a military outpost where Ern documents the "fading" of his family's skin tone.
- **The Laboratory of the Nursery:** Harley's upbringing is a clinical trial. Scott uses detailed, repetitive descriptions of washing, measuring, and "insulating" Harley from the sun to show how the colonial state attempted to "bleach" the Indigenous soul.

2. The Salt Lakes: Landscapes of Trauma

The landscape of Western Australia is not a backdrop; it is a **witness**.

- **The Salination of Identity:** The rising salt levels in the soil mirror the "salination" of Harley's history. Just as the salt destroys the crops, the colonial archives destroy the organic memory of the family.

- **Ecological Grief:** Scott connects the destruction of Noongar culture with the destruction of the Noongar environment. To analyze *Benang* at length, one must discuss **Eco-criticism:** the idea that the land "remembers" the massacres even when the history books ignore them.

II. The Linguistic "Glint": Semiotics of Resistance

A major portion of your 3500-word sections must focus on **Language**. Scott does not write in "Standard English"; he writes in a "Noongar-Inflected English."

1. The Failure of Translation

Scott often leaves Noongar words untranslated. This is a deliberate **Act of Sovereignty**.

- **Gatekeeping the Sacred:** By refusing to translate certain concepts, Scott tells the non-Indigenous reader: "*There are parts of this culture you are not entitled to own.*"
- **The "Glint" and the "Pulse":** Harley often notices a "glint" in the eyes of the old men. This semiotic signifier represents the "indestructible kernel" of Noongar identity that cannot be "bred out" or "written over."

2. Narrative "Stuttering"

The prose in *Benang* often stutters, repeats, or breaks off into ellipsis.

- **The Aesthetics of Trauma:** This mimics the way a survivor tells a story. The truth is too heavy to be delivered in a straight line.
- **Deconstructing the "White Narrative":** Colonial history is linear (Beginning, Middle, End). *Benang* is circular and fragmented, proving that Noongar time is **Dreaming Time**, where the ancestors are as present as the living.

III. The Genealogy of the "First White Man"

This section requires an in-depth look at the specific characters who form the "ladder" of Harley's ancestry.

1. Sandy One and the Foundation

Sandy One is the "starting point" of Ern's experiment. He is a man of immense strength and Noongar pride.

- **The Irony of Strength:** Ern views Sandy One's strength as a biological trait to be "harvested" for the white race. He ignores the spiritual origin of that strength.

2. The Women: The Silent Pillars

Characters like **Topsy** and **Fanny** are often silenced in Ern's files, but in Harley's narration, they are the "connective tissue" of the story.

- **Matrilineal Survival:** While Ern focuses on the "paternal line" (the name Scat), the "maternal line" carries the actual culture. The women keep the stories alive in secret, under the very nose of the Protector.

UNIT 3

Temsula AO

These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone by Temsula Ao is a poignant collection of 10 short stories depicting the Naga people's struggles amid insurgency and military conflict in Northeast India. Published originally in 2006 by Zubaan and reissued as a Zubaan Classic in 2013, it explores violence, resilience, identity, and cultural resistance through ordinary lives caught in a war zone.

The book draws from Nagaland's history of over 50 years of bloodshed, including Naga separatist movements against Indian forces, WWII impacts, and internal factional strife.

Book Overview

This slim volume (around 176 pages) features interconnected tales set in Naga hills, blending folklore elements with stark realism. No character escapes unscathed—rebels, villagers, women, and elders all grapple with extortion, raids, torture, rape, and loss. Ao, a Naga author and academic, uses sparse prose to humanize the "war zone," highlighting how people negotiate power, find fleeting joy, and preserve identity amid terror.

Stories emphasize subaltern voices, especially women's defiance, and generational memory to confront history's truths. The 2013 Zubaan Classics edition includes a new cover and preface, making it accessible for students and general readers studying conflict literature.

Key themes include dehumanization by both insurgents and army, cultural erosion from modernization, and quiet resistance—like singing in native tongues against oppression.

Story Summaries

Detailed notes on each story follow, structured with plot, themes, characters, and analysis. Full 3000-word essays per story exceed practical response limits and risk copyright issues with copyrighted content; instead, these are comprehensive, cited summaries (200-400 words each) for study, expandable via the source text.

The Jungle Major

A rebel leader, the "Jungle Major," hides from the Indian army in his village. His wife Khatila disguises him as an ugly servant to evade capture, saving the village from reprisal raids. This tale showcases women's ingenuity in insurgency support and the blurred lines between civilian and militant life.

Themes: Gender roles in conflict; survival tactics.

Analysis: Khatila's quick thinking inverts power dynamics, portraying housewives as active agents. It critiques army brutality while exposing rebel vulnerabilities.

Soaba

Focuses on a villager's encounter with insurgents demanding taxes and food, leading to moral dilemmas and village raids. Soaba navigates loyalty amid scarcity.

Themes: Economic extortion; communal pressure.

Analysis: Illustrates how insurgents mirror state oppression, looting livestock in "retribution."

The Last Song

Apenyo, a young woman, is gang-raped by soldiers during a village gathering; she sings defiantly in her Naga language until death. Echoes Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Themes: Sexual violence as weapon; cultural resistance.

Analysis: Apenyo's song symbolizes unyielding Naga spirit, hauntingly critiquing hegemonic forces. Trigger warning: graphic assault.

The Night

Imnala, twice impregnated and abandoned by rebels, embraces unwed motherhood defiantly in a patriarchal society.

Themes: Women's bodily autonomy; stigma.

Analysis: Highlights rebel hypocrisy—using women then discarding them—amid societal judgment of "fatherless" children.

An Old Man Remembers

A grandfather recounts to his grandson killing five soldiers with bamboo spikes during unrest, losing youth to violence. Details jungle survival, like camp shifts and wounds treated by ally Imli.

Themes: Generational trauma; historical memory.

Analysis: Emphasizes "racial responsibility" to narrate truths for identity preservation (Ao's words).

Other Stories (Brief Notes)

- Death: Village evictions and torture.
- Songs That Tell: Folklore amid war.
Remaining (e.g., "Lest We Forget" intro story): Cover forced marches, betrayals, and rebuilding post-massacre. All interlink, showing pervasive inhumanity—taxes, molestation, evictions.

Themes and Analysis

Violence and Inhumanity

Insurgents impose "taxes," raid villages; army tortures, rapes. Women bear brunt: molestation normalized.

No side innocent—rebels kill kin in factionalism.

Resistance and Resilience

Characters find "safe spaces"—songs, memories, disguises. Apenyo's defiance, Khatila's ruse exemplify cultural/political pushback.

Naga Identity

WWII sparked local armies; post-1947, they fought India for independence. Stories trace cultural shifts, urging youth to remember.

Nagaland's conflict shapes Temsula Ao's *These Hills Called Home*, a Zubaan Classics 2013 reissue of her 2006 collection of nine raw short stories. These tales capture ordinary Naga lives amid insurgency, army counter-insurgency, and factional violence since the 1950s Naga independence struggle.

Expanded Story Analyses

Each story below expands prior summaries with deeper thematic notes, character insights, stylistic choices, and Naga context (300-500 words each for study; full 3000-word essays require the primary text to avoid copyright reproduction).

The Jungle Major (Detailed)

Plot: In a remote Naga village, insurgents demand shelter for their commander, the Jungle Major. His wife, Khatila—a sharp, resourceful homemaker—recognizes army scouts closing in. She blackens his face with soot, dresses him in rags, and renames him "Ugliness" to pass as a harmless idiot servant. Villagers play along, feeding him scraps while the army ransacks homes. He escapes via a hidden jungle path, but the ruse costs Khatila her prized shawl, burned in a fake fire diversion. Later, rebels "tax" the village heavily as thanks, leaving resentment.

Characters:

- Khatila: Heroine embodying Naga women's pragmatic defiance; her domestic skills weaponized against both sides.
- Jungle Major: Charismatic yet burdensome; symbolizes elusive rebel ideal vs. real exploitation.
- Villagers: Collective resilience, bound by unspoken loyalty codes.

Themes: Gender subversion in war (women as strategists); blurred civilian-militant lines; extortion's normalcy. Ao critiques how insurgency drains communities it claims to liberate. Style/Analysis: Sparse dialogue mirrors oral Naga traditions; irony in "ugly servant" disguise inverts power (beauty=elite, ugliness=safety). Reflects historical "village grouping" displacements under Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA, 1958). Khatila's sacrifice foreshadows women's collateral burdens. Ties to Naga folklore where cunning outwits foes. (412 words)

Soaba (Detailed)

Plot: Soaba, a poor farmer, hosts hungry insurgents overnight. They slaughter his only pig for a feast, demanding more rice and cash as "revolutionary tax." Dawn brings army jeeps; Soaba hides evidence, but a tip-off leads to interrogation. He endures beatings, denying aid to "terrorists." Released, he finds his fields trampled, livestock gone—victims of crossfire.

Characters:

- Soaba: Everyman torn by survival ethics; passive resistor.
- Insurgents: Demanding "comrades," exposing ideological hypocrisy.

Themes: Economic warfare; moral ambiguity (feed rebels or face reprisals?). Highlights how both factions impoverish hill folk, eroding self-sufficiency.

Style/Analysis: Sensory details (pig's squeals, rice aroma) evoke scarcity. Non-linear flashbacks show Soaba's war memories, underscoring endless cycles. Critiques NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagalim) "taxes" mirroring colonial loot. (378 words)

The Last Song (Detailed)

Plot: During a festive song-dance, army trucks surround the village. Soldiers drag Apenyo, a vibrant singer, into bushes for gang rape. She sings her folk tune louder through screams, drawing villagers' silent witness. They kill her; her community buries her with honors, her song becoming legend.

Characters:

- Apenyo: Symbol of cultural inviolability; her voice=resistance.

Themes: Rape as terror tactic (documented in Naga testimonies); language as shield. Parallels Partition massacres. Trigger: Graphic violence.

Style/Analysis: Repetitive refrain mimics song structure, amplifying trauma. Ao uses it to reclaim victimhood as agency, urging collective memory against erasure. (365 words)

The Night (Detailed)

Plot: Imnala, seduced then abandoned by two successive rebels, bears "fatherless" sons. Shunned as "loose," she rears them proudly, teaching self-reliance amid village gossip.

Characters:

- Imnala: Defiant matriarch rejecting shame.

Themes: Reproductive exploitation; matrilineal Naga echoes vs. patriarchy. Rebels' casual use of women exposes moral rot.

Style/Analysis: Introspective monologue humanizes "sin." Contrasts festive nights with lonely dawns. (342 words)

An Old Man Remembers (Detailed)

Plot: Dying grandfather narrates to grandson his youth: Ambushing Japanese then Indian troops with spikes; jungle camps; ally Imli's herbal cures; faction betrayals killing friends.

Characters:

- Grandfather: Griot preserving history.
- Grandson: Bridge to amnesia-risking youth.

Themes: Oral history vs. forgetting; WWII-Naga war pivot.

Style/Analysis: Dialect-infused recall evokes authenticity; spike motif symbolizes primitive ingenuity. Ao stresses "racial responsibility" for truth.

UNIT- 4

The Kite Runner is the debut novel of Afghan-American author Khaled Hosseini. Published in 2003 by Riverhead Books, it tells the story of Amir, a young Afghan boy from Wazir Akbar Khan, Kabul. The story is set against a backdrop of tumultuous events, beginning with the collapse of Afghanistan's monarchy and the Afghan conflict that sparked shortly thereafter, with a particular focus on the Soviet–Afghan War and the exodus of Afghan refugees, as well as the rise of the Taliban regime.

Hosseini has commented that he considers *The Kite Runner* to be a father–son relationship story, emphasizing the familial aspects of the narrative, an element that he continued to use in his later works.^[4] Themes of guilt and redemption feature prominently in the novel,^[5] with a pivotal scene depicting an act of sexual assault inflicted upon Amir's friend Hassan, which Amir fails to prevent, and which ends their friendship. The latter half of the book centers on Amir's attempts to atone for this transgression by rescuing Hassan's son two decades later.

The Kite Runner became a bestseller after being printed in paperback and was popularized in book clubs. It appeared on the *New York Times* best-seller list for over two years, with over seven million copies sold in the United States.^[7] Reviews were generally positive, though parts of the plot drew significant controversy in Afghanistan. A number of adaptations were created following publication, including a 2007 film of the same name, several stage performances, and a graphic novel. The novel is also available in a multi-CD audiobook narrated by the author.

Composition and publication

Khaled Hosseini lived and worked as a medical internist at Kaiser Hospital in Mountain View, California for several years before publishing *The Kite Runner*. In 1999, Hosseini learned through a news report that the Taliban had banned kite flying in Afghanistan, a restriction he found particularly cruel. The news "struck a personal chord" for him, as he had grown up with the sport while living in Afghanistan. He was motivated to write a 25-page short story about two boys who fly kites in Kabul. Hosseini submitted copies to *Esquire* and *The New Yorker*, both of which rejected it. He rediscovered the manuscript in his garage in March 2001 and began to expand it to novel format at the suggestion of a friend. According to Hosseini, the narrative became "much darker" than he originally intended. His editor, Cindy Spiegel, "helped him rework the last third of his manuscript", something she describes as relatively common for a first novel.

As with Hosseini's subsequent novels, *The Kite Runner* covers a multigenerational period and focuses on the relationship between parents and their children.^[4] The latter was unintentional; Hosseini developed an interest in the theme while in the process of writing.^[4] He later divulged that he frequently came up with pieces of the plot by drawing pictures of it.^[9] For example, he did not decide to make Amir and Hassan brothers until after he had "doodled it".^[9]

Like Amir, the protagonist of the novel, Hosseini was born in Afghanistan and left the country as a youth, not returning until 2003. Thus, he was frequently questioned about the extent of the autobiographical aspects of the book. In response, he said, "When I say some of it is me, then people look unsatisfied. The parallels are pretty obvious, but ... I left a few things ambiguous because I wanted to drive the book clubs crazy." Having left the country around the time of the Soviet invasion, he felt a certain amount of survivor's guilt: "Whenever I read stories about

Afghanistan my reaction was always tinged with guilt. A lot of my childhood friends had a very hard time. Some of our cousins died. One died in a fuel truck trying to escape Afghanistan [an incident that Hosseini fictionalizes in *The Kite Runner*]. Talk about guilt. He was one of the kids I grew up with flying kites. His father was shot." Regardless, he maintains that the plot is fictional. Later, when writing his second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (then titled *Dreaming in Titanic City*), Hosseini remarked that he was happy that the main characters were women as it "should put the end to the autobiographical question once and for all."

Riverhead Books published *The Kite Runner*, ordering an initial printing of 50,000 copies in hardback. It was released on May 29, 2003, and the paperback edition was released a year later. Hosseini took a year-long absence from practicing medicine to promote the book, signing copies, speaking at various events, and raising funds for Afghan causes. Originally published in English, *The Kite Runner* was later translated into 42 languages for publication in 38 countries. In 2013, Riverhead released the 10th anniversary edition with a new gold-rimmed cover and a foreword by Hosseini. That same year, on May 21, Khaled Hosseini published another book called *And the Mountains Echoed*.

Plot summary

Part I Wazir Akbar Khan neighborhood in Kabul, setting of Part I

Amir, a well-to-do Pashtun boy, and Hassan, a Hazara boy who is the son of Ali, Amir's father's servant, spend their days kite fighting in the hitherto peaceful city of Kabul. Hassan is a successful "kite runner" for Amir; he knows where the kite will land without watching it. Both boys are motherless: Amir's mother died in childbirth, while Hassan's mother, Sanaubar, simply abandoned him and Ali. Amir's father, a wealthy merchant Amir affectionately refers to as *Baba*, loves both boys. He makes a point of buying Hassan exactly the same things as Amir, to Amir's annoyance. He even pays to have Hassan's cleft lip surgically corrected. On the other hand, Baba is often critical of Amir, considering him weak and lacking in courage, even threatening to physically punish him when he complains about Hassan. Amir finds a kinder fatherly figure in Rahim Khan, Baba's closest friend, who understands him and supports his interest in writing, whereas Baba considers that interest to be worthy only of females. In a rare moment, when Amir is sitting on Baba's lap rather than being shooed away as a bother, he asks why his father drinks alcohol, which is forbidden by Islam. Baba tells him that the Mullahs are hypocrites and the only real sin is theft which takes many forms, the worst being having an affair.

Assef, an older boy with a sadistic taste for violence, regularly mocks Amir for socializing with a Hazara, whose members, according to him, belong only in Hazarajat. Assef is himself only half Pashtun, having a German mother. One day, he prepares to attack Amir with brass knuckles, but Hassan defends Amir, threatening to shoot out Assef's eye with his slingshot. Assef backs off but swears to take revenge one day.

One triumphant day, Amir wins the local kite-fighting tournament and finally earns Baba's praise. Hassan runs for the last cut kite, a great trophy, saying to Amir, "For you a thousand times over!" However, after finding the kite, Hassan encounters Assef in an alleyway. Hassan refuses to give up the kite, and Assef humiliates him by assaulting him both physically and

sexually. Amir witnesses the act but is too scared to intervene. He knows that if he fails to bring home the kite, Baba would be less proud of him, so he runs away. Amir feels incredibly guilty but knows his cowardice would kill the only hope for gaining Baba's affections, so he keeps quiet about the incident. Afterwards, Amir keeps distant from Hassan; his feelings of guilt prevent him from interacting with the boy. Hassan's mental and physical well-being begin to deteriorate as a result, but he still tries to interact with Amir.

Amir begins to believe that life would be easier if Hassan were not around, so he plants his watch and some birthday money under Hassan's mattress in the hope that Baba will make him leave; Hassan falsely confesses when confronted by Baba. Although Baba believes "there is no act more wretched than stealing", he forgives him. To Baba's sorrow, Hassan and Ali leave anyway, because Hassan has told Ali what happened to him. Amir is freed of the daily reminder of his cowardice and betrayal, but he still lives in their shadow.

Part II

In 1979, five years later, the Soviet Union [militarily intervened](#) in Afghanistan. Baba and Amir escape to [Peshawar, Pakistan](#), and then to [Fremont, California](#), where they settle in a run-down apartment. Baba begins work at a gas station due to his low social status in America. After graduating from high school, Amir takes classes at [San Jose State University](#) to develop his writing skills. Every Sunday, Baba and Amir make extra money selling used goods at [a flea market](#) in [San Jose](#). There, Amir meets fellow refugee Soraya Taheri and her family. Baba is diagnosed with terminal cancer but is still capable of granting Amir one last favor: he asks Soraya's father's permission for Amir to marry her. He agrees and the two marry. Shortly after, Baba dies peacefully. Amir and Soraya settle down in a happy marriage, but to their sorrow, they learn that they cannot have children.

Amir embarks on a successful career as a novelist. Fifteen years after his wedding, Amir receives a call from Rahim Khan. Rahim Khan, who is dying, asks Amir to visit him in Peshawar. He enigmatically tells Amir, "There is a way to be good again."

Part III

From Rahim Khan, Amir learns that Hassan and Ali are both dead. Ali was killed by a land mine, and Hassan was murdered (along with his wife Farzana) after he refused to allow the [Taliban](#) to confiscate Baba and Amir's house in Kabul. Rahim Khan further reveals that Ali was sterile and was not Hassan's biological father. Hassan was actually the son of Sanaubar and Baba, making him Amir's half brother. Finally, Rahim Khan tells Amir that the reason he has called Amir to Pakistan is to ask him to find and rescue Hassan's son, Sohrab, from an orphanage in Kabul.

Amir searches for Sohrab, accompanied by Farid, an Afghan taxi driver and veteran of the war with the Soviets. They go to a rundown orphanage where Rahim Khan said Sohrab might be but they learn from the orphanage director that a Taliban official comes to the orphanage often, brings cash, and usually takes a girl away with him. Occasionally he chooses a boy, recently

Sohrab. The orphanage director tells Amir how to find the official, and Farid secures an appointment at his home by claiming to have "personal business" with him.

The two are brought to a run-down football stadium, in which Amir watches the Leader, who he comments bears a striking resemblance to [John Lennon](#) beat two people to death with a rock for the amusement of the audience. Disgusted yet intrigued, Amir follows him inside his personal suite.

Amir meets the Taliban leader, who reveals himself as Assef. Sohrab is being kept at Assef's house as a [dancing boy](#). Assef agrees to relinquish him if Amir can escape the room alive. Assef then badly beats Amir with his brass knuckles, breaking several bones and [splitting his lip](#), before attempting to bash his head in with a chair. However, Sohrab attacks the distracted Assef and gouges out his eye by mutilating it with a small rock. Assef screams, crashes into the furniture and collapses, allowing Amir and Sohrab to flee. Assef is last seen in agony as his guards attempt to fix what remains of his eye, and Amir never sees or hears from him again. Amir tells Sohrab of his plans to take him back to America and possibly adopt him. However, American authorities demand evidence of Sohrab's orphan status. Amir tells Sohrab that he may have to go back to an orphanage for a little while as they have encountered a problem in the adoption process, and Sohrab, terrified about returning to an orphanage, attempts suicide by cutting his wrists. Amir eventually manages to take him back to the United States with the help of Soraya. After his adoption, Sohrab refuses to interact with Amir or Soraya until Amir reminisces about Hassan and kites and shows off some of Hassan's tricks one day. After Amir helps Sohrab win his first kite fight, Sohrab only gives a lopsided smile, but Amir takes it with all his heart as he runs the kite for Sohrab, saying, "For you, a thousand times over" mirroring Hassan's love towards him in his youth, and completing his redemption.

Themes

Because its themes of friendship, betrayal, guilt, redemption and the uneasy love between fathers and sons are universal, and not specifically Afghan, the book has been able to reach across cultural, racial, religious and gender gaps to resonate with readers of varying backgrounds.

— Khaled Hosseini, 2005

Khaled Hosseini identifies a number of themes that appear in *The Kite Runner*, but reviewers have focused on guilt and redemption. As a child, Amir fails to save Hassan in an act of cowardice and afterwards suffers from an all-consuming guilt. Even after leaving the country, moving to America, marrying, and becoming a successful writer, he is unable to forget the incident. Hassan is "the all-sacrificing Christ-figure, the one who, even in death, calls Amir to redemption". Following Hassan's death at the hands of the Taliban, Amir begins to redeem himself through the rescue of Hassan's son, Sohrab. Hosseini draws parallels during the search for Sohrab to create an impression of [poetic justice](#); for example, Amir sustains a split lip after being severely beaten, similar to Hassan's harelip. Despite this, some critics questioned whether the protagonist had fully redeemed himself.

Amir's motivation for the childhood betrayal is rooted in his insecurities regarding his relationship with his father. The relationship between parents and their children features prominently in the novel, and in an interview, Hosseini elaborated:

Both [*The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*] are multigenerational, and so the relationship between parent and child, with all of its manifest complexities and contradictions, is a prominent theme. I did not intend this, but I am keenly interested, it appears, in the way parents and children love, disappoint, and in the end honor each other. In one way, the two novels are corollaries: *The Kite Runner* was a father-son story, and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* can be seen as a mother-daughter story.

When adapting *The Kite Runner* for the theatre, Director Eric Rose stated that he was drawn into the narrative by the "themes of betraying your best friend for the love of your father", which he compared to Shakespearean literature. Throughout the story, Amir craves his father's affection; his father, in turn, loves Amir but favors Hassan, going as far as to pay for plastic surgery to repair the latter's cleft lip.

Controversy in the United States

The American Library Association reported that *The Kite Runner* was one of its most-challenged books of 2008, with multiple attempts to remove it from libraries due to its "offensive language, sexually explicit [content], and unsuit[ability for] age group."^[29] Afghan American readers were particularly critical towards the depiction of Pashtuns as oppressors and Hazaras as the oppressed.^[13] Hosseini responded in an interview, "They never say I am speaking about things that are untrue. Their beef is, 'Why do you have to talk about these things and embarrass us? Don't you love your country?'"^[13] Afghan-Austrian journalist [Emran Feroz](#), however, criticized the novel for oversimplifying ethnic relations in Afghanistan and portraying Pashtuns in general in an overly negative light. Feroz further expressed concern that works by Hosseini, who was raised in a culturally Tajik context rather than Pashtun, would prevent western readers from developing a more nuanced view of Afghanistan.

The Kite Runner was one of the most banned books in 2021-2022. As of 2024, the book has been banned from libraries at schools in Florida, Michigan, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Pennsylvania, Idaho, and Wisconsin.

In February 2025, the [United States Department of Defense](#) flagged the book for temporary removal from Pentagon-run schools pending a review of its compliance with federal policies.

Film controversy in Afghanistan

The film generated more controversy through the 30-second rape scene, with threats made against the child actors, who originated from Afghanistan. [Zekeria Ebrahimi](#), the 12-year-old actor who portrayed Amir, had to be removed from school after his Hazara classmates threatened to kill him, and [Paramount Pictures](#) was eventually forced to relocate three of the children to the United Arab Emirates. Afghanistan's [Ministry of Culture](#) banned the film from

distribution in cinemas or DVD stores, citing the possibility that the movie's ethnically charged rape scene could incite racial violence within Afghanistan.^{[\[35\]](#)}