

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

A Thousand Splendid Suns

by Khaled Hosseini

written by Kathryn Mitchell

Copyright © 2009 by Prestwick House Inc., P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938. 1-800-932-4593.
www.prestwickhouse.com Permission to copy this unit for classroom use is extended to purchaser for his or her
personal use. This material, in whole or part, may not be copied for resale.

ISBN 978-1-935464-72-3

Item No. 305296

A Thousand Splendid Suns

All references come from the Riverhead Books edition of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, copyright 2007.

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. understand the political upheaval in Afghanistan and the struggle its people face.
2. discuss the double standard of behavior of males and females in the novel, and identify ways the double standard is perpetuated.
3. decide on and discuss an overall theme for the book.
4. demonstrate an understanding of symbolism in the novel.
5. predict events in the novel.
6. identify flat and round characters and explain the difference.
7. define irony and identify examples in the novel.
8. make inferences based on events in the novel.
9. identify examples of figurative language in the novel.
10. identify foreshadowing in the novel.
11. describe major characters.
12. explain how the major characters have changed over the course of the novel.
13. explain how setting relates to the characters in the book.
14. identify the point of view of the novel, and demonstrate how a different point of view would affect the story.
15. identify the climax of the novel.

A Thousand Splendid Suns

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Explain whether you feel the ending of the novel is appropriate or realistic.
2. Write a character analysis of Laila, Mariam, Rasheed or Tariq. Be sure to include their personality traits, their motivation in the story, their strength and weaknesses, and your own opinion of each character.
3. What do you think is the central conflict in the story? Is the conflict internal or external? Support your answer with details from the novel.
4. How might the story have been different if Tariq really had died, as Abdul Sharif told Laila?
5. How might the novel be different if Hosseini used another point of view? Explain how the story might change if it were told in the first person or a non-alternating third person limited point of view.
6. Is there a hero in the novel? If so, who do you think it is? Explain, and be sure to include your definition of “hero.”
7. Consider Rasheed, Mariam, Laila, and Tariq. Of these characters, which are static (flat) and which are dynamic (round)? What major changes do the dynamic characters experience? Explain using details from the novel.
8. At which point in the novel does the climax take place? What effect does this climax have on the conflict and the characters?
9. What traits does Mariam have that would make her a good mother? Refer directly to the novel to provide examples of times when Mariam acts motherly.
10. Trace Laila’s and Mariam’s evolution over the course of the novel. How has each woman changed? What has each woman learned?
11. How might the novel be different if Mariam had lived?
12. Using details from the novel, explain the major political changes in Afghanistan from 1973 to 2003.
13. How might the ending of the novel been different if Laila had not received Mariam’s inheritance?

A Thousand Splendid Suns

Chapter 1

Vocabulary

bazaars – open-air markets
culpable – guilty, responsible
demurely – in a reserved manner
endearments – affectionate words or actions
facade – the front
harami – an illegitimate child; one born of two unmarried parents
illegitimate – the child of two unmarried parents
jinn – a demon or other possessing spirit
kolba – a hut or rudimentary house
loathsome – hated
minarets – steeples; towers on top of mosques
relic – a souvenir; memento
Sufis – Muslim mystics
surmise – to figure out; understand
trellised – covered with a screen or lattice work so vines can grow on it
ward off – keeps away

1. How old is Mariam at the beginning of Chapter 1?

2. Describe Nana's reaction to Mariam's breaking the bowl.

3. Why does the speaker assert that the *harami* is innocent?

Chapter 10

Vocabulary

absurd – crazy
adrift – lost
banter – joking; lively conversation
burqas – cloaks that cover the entire body
glint – a flash of light
havoc – devastation; destruction
hijab – a traditional head covering
plaintive – sad
ratcheted – moved by steps
receded – faded into memory
sofrah – a tablecloth
splayed – spread outward
stead – place
wracked – ruined

1. In Chapter 10, how much time has gone by, and how has Mariam responded to her new home?

2. What does Mariam do the day after Rasheed tells her he expects her to “start behaving like a wife”?

3. What does Mariam hear some of the other wives saying about their husbands?

5. What causes Laila to learn that “boys differed from girls” ?

6. What happens when Laila tells Tariq about Khadim and his squirt gun?

7. How do Babi’s and Mammy’s views of the communists differ?

Chapter 30

Vocabulary

disingenuous – not honorable; deceptive

recoiling – drawing back and away

translucent – showing light through

wincing – flinching

1. How does Rasheed afford to give Laila a ring?

2. What might make Rasheed “suspicious”?

3. Why does Laila cut her finger with the knife?

Chapter 42

Vocabulary

clandestine – secret
condescension – a superior attitude
cordial – friendly
dire – serious
disconsolate – joyless
duped – tricked
effusive – enthusiastic
ensued – followed
gesticulated – gestured
impotent – helpless
improvising – making do with what is available
magnanimous – sincere; generous
melancholy – sad
proprietary – possessive
provocation – the reason or cause
squalor – filth
tangential – passing quickly from one topic to another
tousled – rumpled
vener – a covering
waned – decreased

1. Ahmad Shah Massoud travels to France and asks the U.S. for help fighting the Taliban. What is Massoud's prediction?

2. What truth has Laila not been able to tell Aziza?

5. As Mariam signs her sentence, she remembers the last time she signed a document. How are both documents “death sentences” ?

6. What is ironic about the guard who rides in the truck with Mariam?

7. Why do you think people would want to witness an execution?

8. What does Mariam wish for in her last moments of life?

9. As Mariam draws nearer to her executioner, her regret is replaced by another feeling. Explain.
