

Kite Runner: Chapter 1

Element	Notes
Plot summary	This very brief chapter begins with Amir reflecting on Hassan's rape, as an adult living in the US in 2000/2001. He realises how it has affected him throughout his life and then receives a phone call from Rahim Khan (in Summer 2000) in Pakistan. He tells him that <i>"there is a way to be good again"</i> , these words ringing in Amir's ears as he walks along Spreckels Lake. He notices kites in the sky.
Characters	Amir (main character, now an adult) and Rahim Khan (Baba's friend and business partner, who is dying).
Themes and features	Lots of time adverbials are used (e.g. <i>"one day last summer"</i>) to show the passing of time, as is the past tense. Amir hints at tragedy in his past with the phrase <i>"how you can bury it"</i> suggesting that in the <i>"alley"</i> he was traumatised by what he saw. This makes the reader wonder what could have affected him in such a significant way. The symbolic <i>"pair of kites"</i> who were <i>"soaring"</i> and <i>"danced"</i> suggests a kind of joyful freedom, however the fact that they are looking down on Amir <i>"like a pair of eyes"</i> hints that parts of his Afghan heritage always surround him - he cannot escape his past. Flashback and foreshadowing are also used to move between time zones, whilst the imagery of <i>"bury"</i> and <i>"clawing"</i> once again suggests that the past never leaves you.
Context	2001 was a significant year for the US, due to the 9/11 terrorist attack which saw Afghans and Muslims alienated from their communities, who viewed them as a threat. Amir refers to the winter of 1975, as if Hassan's rape changed him forever. This date is ingrained in his mind. The Golden Gate Bridge is significant as it is where a young Amir had always dreamed of visiting, as well as symbolising American greatness and San Francisco as an influential city. Kite flying is an important cultural tradition in Afghanistan, being one of the few pursuits that is enjoyed by everyone. The love for the sport was strengthened by the Taliban banning it, reinforcing a sense of pride and patriotism amongst Afghans. Indeed, it has become something of a national obsession and is now a form of vital escapism from the horrors of war.
Afghan vocabulary	<i>"Baba"</i> means father.