

A Thousand Splendid Suns

by
Khaled Hosseini

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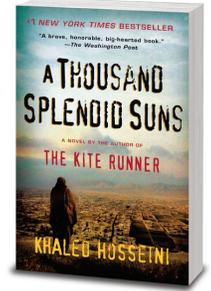
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INTRODUCTION

A Thousand Splendid Suns tells the intertwined stories of the lives of two Afghan women, Mariam and Laila, both married to the same abusive man, during the years of the Soviet occupation, then the civil war and the Taliban dictatorship. This guide is designed to aid teachers in selecting resources that provide background to the novel. It also provides discussion questions and activities for before, during, and after reading the novel. Teachers can select the activities which best fit the needs of their students. This guide may also be useful to independent readers of the novel who are looking for resources to guide their reading.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Biographies of the author are available at several different web sites. This short biography provides a link to the Khaled Hosseini Foundation which Hosseini set up following a trip to Afghanistan in 2007 for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): <http://www.khaledhosseini.com/hosseini-bio.html>.

Hosseini was selected as a Goodwill Envoy to UNHCR in the United States in 2006. UNHCR was established in 1950 to lead international efforts to protect and provide solutions for refugee problems. In June of 2006 after receiving a

humanitarian award from the agency, Hosseini was asked to serve as a goodwill ambassador. This site has an interview with Hosseini about his service to the UNHCR:

<http://www.unhcr.org/45d574692.html?gclid=CKjQ5ZSvIz4CFdA65QodFhf6pg>.

Hosseini was inducted into the Academy of Achievement in 2008. At this site you can listen to a podcast in which Hosseini describes why he became a writer: <http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/podcasts/artpod-4-hosseini-vid>.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF AFGHANISTAN

1. Students will benefit from an overview of the geography, history, and rich culture of Afghanistan. One reliable source which can serve as an introduction is the CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

Here students can learn significant facts about the political history, geography, government, and people.

2. “Google maps” provides an excellent map of the country. Students can select satellite and terrain views and can manipulate the map to view the country’s borders and land features. During reading, students can trace the journey of Mariam when she leaves Herat, the city where she was born, for Kabul. When Tariq returns to Kabul he describes the journey of his family as refugees (p. 334). Later Laila goes to Murree in Pakistan to live with Tariq until the war is over. Then she makes a return trip to Herat, through Mashad in Iran (p. 392).

Students can look at a city map of Kabul to locate the neighborhood where Mariam lives. Rasheed describes Deh-Mazang in detail and the surrounding mountains: “In the south and west part of the city. The zoo is nearby, and the university too” (p. 57)

“That’s the Asmai mountain directly in front of us ... to the left, is the Ali Abad mountain... Behind us, east... is the Shir Darwaza mountain” (p. 59).

3. Hosseini weaves the history of Afghanistan throughout the novel, starting in chapter 4 when Mariam’s father tells her about the bloodless coup of King Zahir Shah who had ruled for forty years. Ask students to begin to keep a timeline of these political/historical facts in their reading journals or as a class project on charts which will be posted in the class room for easy reference. Students can note the historic event at the top of the chart and the personal events of the main characters underneath. In this way students will begin to see how the personal events in the lives of the two women are affected by the events taking place in the wider world.
4. According to the web site of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, (<http://www.afghan-network.net/Landmines/>), Afghanistan has the heaviest concentration of landmines of any country in the world. Ask students to read this web article and then to locate two other articles on the web to cross check the statistics. Ask students to prepare a power point

or web “scrap book” of the main facts they discover about the landmine problem and its impact on the citizens of Afghanistan.

5. Throughout the novel, readers are reminded of Afghanistan’s ethnic diversity. For example, when Mariam is forced to marry Rasheed, her father’s wives assure her that he speaks Farsi even though he is a Pashtun. Mariam is a Tajik. Students can read about the different people who make up the ethnic diversity of Afghanistan at:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/asia/afghanistan/map_flash.html

A Lesson Plan at this web site provides useful graphics, representing the distribution of ethnic groups. Ask students to note references to ethnicity as they read. Is the ethnic difference negative or positive? Are people treated differently because of their ethnicity? How do these perceptions affect people’s interactions? What other barriers to national unity are evident in Hosseini’s description of the people and their history?

BEFORE READING

1. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* takes its title from a poem by the 17th century Persian poet Saib-e-Tabrizi which can be found at this site:

http://www.afghan-network.net/Culture/kabul_poem.html

Ask students to read the poem and make a list of the images the poet uses to praise the city of Kabul. Ask students if they have read other poems of praise, called odes. You might ask if they have read the odes of the Romantic poets: Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn” or Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind.” An ode uses hyperbole and inflated language to glorify and enhance the subject and to create feelings of appreciation in the listener.

Discuss: What do you learn about Kabul from reading this poem? What is your favorite image in this poem? What is the poet’s purpose? Does the poet succeed in creating a sense of the beauty of Kabul?

2. Although Afghanistan is very much in the news, students may have a vague understanding of the history of the war since 2001 and the impact upon the citi-

zens of this country. Ask students to read and make a list of what they learn from current news stories about the war in Afghanistan, the current political situation, and other issues confronting the people. Post these lists for students to review as they read the novel. Discuss how the situation is changing for the people. Is it improving or getting worse? After students have reviewed the news stories, discuss their sense of the future of Afghanistan. What are the problems facing the nation? Do they see things improving and in what ways?

3. Both Mariam and Laila are victims of spousal abuse. Before reading the novel, ask students to read one or more articles on identifying the signs of spousal abuse, such as this list of the classic signs and symptoms of abuse at:

<http://www.abusefacts.com/articles/Classic.php>

Make a chart outlining the roles of the abuser and the abused. Post this chart so that as students read, they can identify and note plot events that match these signs of abuse.

THEMES

Students may explore the following themes while reading the novel:

- Man’s inhumanity to man
- Systematic victimization of women by patriarchal institutions
- Spousal abuse
- Resistance to victimization
- Power of education
- Education for women
- Corrupting influence of absolute power

Introduce students to this list of themes and make sure that they understand what each theme means. Ask students to note particular themes in their reading journals or on post-it notes as they read the novel. After students have read several chapters, ask them to review their journal or post-it notes to identify what they consider the main theme of this particular section of the novel. List the theme(s) on a large chart and brainstorm the author’s possible meanings. Ask students: What is happening? Why is it important or significant? What does it mean? What is the author saying about this theme?

DURING READING

Building Vocabulary through Context Clues

The novel introduces students to Farsi words which they can understand using context clues. For example, Nana speaking about her father says, “He didn’t have the dil, the heart, for it” (p. 7). Students can infer that Nana is speaking about courage, the ability to stand up to do the right thing.

Ask students to collect these words (they are italicized) as they read in a vocabulary notebook, by copying the passage in which the word is used on one side of their notebook page and then explaining the meaning of the word based on context clues on the other side. When there are words that are difficult to decipher, students can work together to determine the best meaning.

Building Vocabulary through Self-Selected Vocabulary Strategy

Students can build their vocabulary when reading the novel by selecting words that are new to them. Students should collect words in a vocabulary notebook. Ask students to divide the page in half. They should write the word on one side and the dictionary definition on the other side. Each week students can contribute one of their words to a vocabulary wall based on the novel.

Discussion Questions and Reader Response Quotes

You can use the following questions to engage students in thinking about the characters, the plot, and what it means to us as readers. These questions can be adapted for reader response or as starters for small and whole group discussions. Reader response prompts are open-ended, asking students to articulate their reactions to a scene or development in the plot. Discussion questions generally build on students’ literal recall of the plot to build up inferences about what these events mean and what they tell the reader about the overall meaning of the narrative. Students go back to the text to identify and analyze key passages as they build meaning. Students can use the quotes or choose their own quotes as they read, explaining the meaning of the quote and its significance in their reading journals.



I. Part One Chapters 1-15

1. The novel opens with a curse word, uttered in frustration by Mariam’s mother, when Mariam breaks a treasured heirloom. What does Mariam’s memory of this suggest about her sense of herself and her relationship with her mother? How does this opening set the tone for the novel?
2. Based on Nana’s and Mariam’s experiences, what can you infer about the lives of women in Afghanistan in the sixties? Why does Nana forbid Mariam to go to school? What does Nana want for her and Mariam? Is Nana’s goal realistic?
3. Jalil, Mariam’s father, is a complex character. Does he love his daughter? How does he show his love? How does he show that he does not fully recognize her as his daughter? Why does he treat her as he does?
4. Why does Mariam ask her father to take her to the cinema for her fifteenth birthday present? What does she want?
5. Is Mariam right to feel guilt about the suicide death of her mother?
6. What is the motive of Jalil’s wives in finding a suitor for Mariam? Why does Jalil go along with them in this plan?
7. Why does Mariam finally say “yes” in the marriage ceremony to Rasheed? What does Mariam realize about her father? How does that make her feel? Does this explain why she goes along with the marriage to Rasheed?
8. The beginning of Mariam’s marriage to Rasheed seems to promise happiness. What are signs that this may be short lived?
9. How does Rasheed feel about the westernization of Afghanistan? What shows his ambivalence?
10. What are Rasheed’s reasons for making Mariam wear a burqa and what do they tell us about his ideas about his role as a husband and man and his expectations for Mariam?
11. Mariam learns some of her husband’s history when she looks inside the drawers in his room. Why does she rationalize about what she sees?
12. Why does Rasheed want a boy? How might life have been different for the family if Mariam could have had a baby?
13. Why does Rasheed become abusive?

Reader Response Quotes

“She [Mariam] was being sent away because she was the walking, breathing embodiment of their shame.” (p. 48)

“I thought about you all the time. I used to pray that you’d live to be a hundred years old. ...I didn’t know that you were ashamed of me.” (p. 55)

“Where I come from, a woman’s face is her husband’s business only.” (p. 70)

“Mariam grieved for this baby, this particular child, who had made her so happy for a while.” (p. 93)

“But after four years of marriage, Mariam saw clearly how much a woman could tolerate when she was afraid.” (p. 98)

II. Part Two Chapters 16-26

1. In this section we are introduced to nine-year-old Laila and her family. What were Laila’s parents like when they were young? How have they changed? What is undermining their relationship? How does their relationship affect Laila?
2. Why does Laila feel such a strong attachment to her father?
3. Why does Laila’s father believe in the importance of education for women?
4. What is wrong with Laila’s mother?
5. Laila’s friend, Tariq, lost one leg to a land mine explosion when he was five. How does Tariq deal with his disability? What does his behavior suggest about his character?
6. Laila enjoys spending time with Tariq’s family. How does her family differ from Tariq’s and why?
7. How is Laila’s family affected by the deaths of their two sons? How do you understand Laila’s reaction?
8. What is the role of religion in the novel? Does it give consolation to the people?
9. Why were Laila’s brothers fighting? What are the motives for the rebels fighting against the communists?
10. Why does Laila’s father take her to see the two Buddhas at Bamiyan? Later these statues are destroyed by the Taliban. Why?
11. Why does Laila’s father stay with his wife? How are the mother’s and father’s dreams different and why?
12. On their outing Laila’s father relaxes, re-reading Hemingway’s *Old Man and the Sea*. Why does the novel resonate with the father?

13. In what ways is Laila like her mother, and in what ways is she like her father?

14. How does the relationship of Laila and Tariq change?

15. What is the impact of the Soviet withdrawal on the citizens of Kabul?

16. What finally convinces Laila’s mother to leave Kabul?

17. How do Laila’s feelings about leaving Kabul contrast with her parents’ feelings?

Reader Response Quotes

“Babi had made it clear to Laila from a young age that the most important thing in his life, after her safety, was her schooling.” (p. 114)

“People...shouldn’t be allowed to have new children if they’d already given away all their love to their old ones. It wasn’t fair.” (p. 119)

“To me, it’s nonsense—and very dangerous nonsense at that—all this talk of I’m Tajik and you’re Pashtun and he’s Hazara and she’s Uzbek. We’re all Afghans, and that’s all that should matter.” (p. 130)

“Women have always had it hard in this country, Laila, but they’re probably more free now, under the communists, and have more rights than they’ve ever had before...” (p. 135)

“But Laila knew that her future was no match for her brothers’ past.” (p. 142).

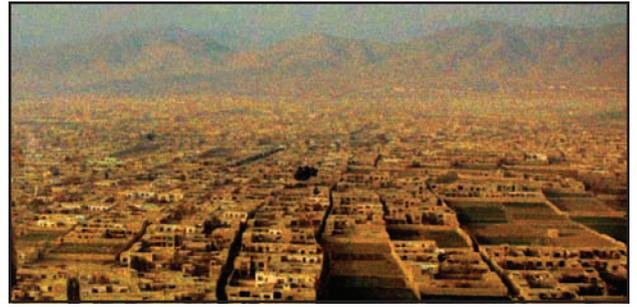
“Laila knew that the days of innocent, unhindered frolicking in the streets with Tariq had passed. For some time now, Laila had begun to sense a new strangeness when the two of them were out in public.” (p. 163)

“The Mujahideen, armed to the teeth but now lacking a common enemy, had found the enemy in each other. Kabul’s day of reckoning had come at last.” (p. 172)

III. Part Three Chapters 27-47

1. Rasheed digs Laila out of the rubble of the explosion that kills her mother and father and takes her into his home. Does his behavior seem unusual? What are his motives for taking care of Laila?
2. How has U.S. foreign policy led to the continuing chaos in Afghanistan?
3. Why does Laila agree to marry Rasheed, a sixty-year-old man, even when she considered the act dishonorable?
4. Why does Rasheed demand total submission from the two women?
5. Why does Mariam blame Laila for marrying Rasheed? Why does she see Laila as a competitor for Rasheed?

6. How has the death of his son affected Rasheed?
7. Why does Rasheed continue to taunt Mariam when he has absolute control over her?
8. What is the effect of wearing a burqa on Laila?
9. What are Mariam's changing feelings as Rasheed becomes more upset with Laila?
10. What is the significance of Mariam and Laila having tea together?
11. How is the violence in the streets of Kabul parallel to the violence in Rasheed's home?
12. Mariam and Laila ask a young man for help when they are trying to leave Kabul. Why does he betray them to the soldiers?
13. Why has Rasheed become so cruel to Mariam and Laila? How has the breakdown of society, as a result of the war, allowed this to happen?
14. How does the presence of the Taliban in Kabul affect Rasheed differently from Laila?
15. Why does Laila not go through with aborting Rasheed's baby?
16. What does Mariam come to understand about motherhood?
17. How is Laila's son being educated in the male-dominated culture of the Taliban? How does Zalmay show that he is following his father's example in how he responds to Laila and Mariam? How is Laila's daughter taught to conform to the role laid out for women?
18. What is it about the movie, *Titanic*, that is so interesting to the people of Kabul?
19. Why does Laila confront Rasheed with his inability to keep a job when she risks being beaten by him?
20. How does Mariam feel when she finds out that her father tried to visit her when he was dying and she refused to see him?
21. What does the suffering that Laila endures to visit her daughter in the orphanage say about the Taliban's effect on society?
22. How is Aziza changing in the orphanage?
23. Is Mariam justified in killing Rasheed? How is the act of murder a kind of fulfillment for Mariam?
24. After the murder of Rasheed, how has the relationship between Mariam and Laila changed?
25. How will Laila's lying to her son affect him when he realizes the truth?



26. What enables Mariam to have the courage to bring about Laila's escape from Rasheed's home?
27. Why does Mariam request no visitors when she is put in prison?
28. What is ironic in what the judge says to Mariam about carrying out God's laws?
29. How does Mariam show that she has grown into a woman of strong character before her death?
30. How does Mariam find peace before she dies?

Reader Response Quotes

"I have friends who have two, three, four wives. ... what I'm doing now most men I know would have done long ago." (p. 215)

"She knew that what she was doing was dishonorable. Dishonorable, disingenuous, and shameful. And spectacularly unfair to Mariam. ... Laila already saw the sacrifices a mother had to make. Virtue was only the first." (p. 219)

"...I am your husband now, and it falls on me to guard not only *your* honor but *ours* That is the husband's burden." (p. 223)

"... for the first time, it was not an adversary's face Laila saw but a face of grievances unspoken, burdens gone unprotested, a destiny submitted to and endured." (p. 249)

"...she [Mariam] marveled at how, after all these years of rattling loose, she had found in this little creature [Aziza] the first true connection in her life of false, failed connections." (p. 252)

"What a man does in his home is his business." (p. 266)

"It seemed worthwhile, if absurdly so, to have endured all they'd endured for this one crowning moment, for this act of defiance that would end the suffering of all indignities." (300)

"He'd not been a good father, it was true, but how ordinary his faults seemed now, how forgivable, when compared to Rasheed's malice, or to the brutality and violence that she had seen men inflict on one another." (p. 309)

“The more Tariq talked, the more Laila dreaded the moment when he would stop. The silence that would follow, the signal that it was her turn to give account, to provide the why and how and when, to make official what he surely already knew.” (p. 337)

“Mariam saw now in those same eyes what a fool she had been.” (p. 346)

“I’ll never escape your son’s grief.” (p. 358)

“God made us differently, you women and us men. Our brains are different. You are not able to think like we can.” (p. 365)

“...she was leaving the world as a woman who had loved and been loved back.” (p. 370)

Part Four Chapters 48-51

1. How does Laila’s life in Murree contrast with her life in Kabul?
2. Is Laila’s expectation that Zalmai will learn to accept his father’s absence realistic?
3. Will Laila’s nightmares about her life in Kabul ever cease? What is the worst thing that happened to her there?
4. Why is Laila afraid to hope for peace in Afghanistan, after the U.S. war on the Taliban is over?

5. What forces tug on Laila to return to Afghanistan?
6. Why does Laila want to visit the home where Mariam had lived as a girl?
7. How does the letter of Mariam’s father show his character? Does it redeem him in some way? In what ways is it ironic?
8. What is fitting about Laila’s return to Kabul and her work at the orphanage?
9. How do the drawings by the children in the orphanage express their experiences? How do they show the contrast between the time when Aziza was there and now?
10. How has Mariam become a symbol of Kabul for Laila?

Reader Response Quotes

“Laila knows that this shameful lie will have to be told again and again.” (p. 379)

“Kabul is waiting. Needing. This journey home is the right thing to do.” (p. 392)

“Laila thinks of her own life and all that has happened to her, and she is astonished that she too has survived....” (p. 395)

“...Mariam is in Laila’s own heart, where she shines with the bursting radiance of a thousand suns.” (p. 414)

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

Discussion activities, thematic explorations, and creative exercises after reading the novel are designed to get students to re-read and think critically about their initial reactions. Most of these activities can be done with a partner or in a small reading circle. Again teachers should choose the activities that best meet their goals for students.

1. Examine the role of religion in the lives of the main characters. Divide the class into three groups, assigned to Mariam, Rasheed, and Laila. Ask students to go back through the novel, noting the references to religious training, prayer, and the characters’ references to Allah, the Prophet, or the Koran. Based on this review, ask students to write a profile of the character, emphasizing their religious upbringing and orientation.
Discuss as a group: Who is the most religious person in the novel? Why? What is the main motivating factor for each character?
2. Compare Mariam and Laila by looking for pertinent passages which describe their family background, ed-

ucation, experiences, and character. Prepare a graphic organizer for each woman. Then discuss as a group: Do the women change in the novel? How? Who undergoes the most significant changes? How are the women similar? How different?

3. While Rasheed is the overwhelming male presence in the novel, there are other male characters. Ask students to go back through the novel to identify the personality traits of other men in the novel. Write these lists on chart paper for easy comparisons. Look at Jalil, Babi, Zaman the orphanage director, and Sayeed owner of a small hotel in Murree who is kind to Tariq. What qualities do they have in common? How do they compare to Rasheed? How can you explain Rasheed’s behavior?
4. Tariq says that he wrote letters to Laila, “volumes” (p. 338). Knowing Tariq’s history, first in Kabul and then as a refugee, imagine what he might wish to say to Laila from prison. Write the letter that Tariq would have written.

5. The novel describes in detail the plight of civilians as war is waged on and around them. Review the passages describing the impact of the war on the population of Kabul. Write a newspaper account of one of these incidents.
6. In the late nineteenth century, Lord Acton wrote, “Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Discuss: How is this phrase an apt slogan for the novel? Ask students to create their own phrase or slogan which best suggests one or more themes of the novel. They should write their slogan on long, narrow sheets of paper and post around the classroom.
7. There are lots of parallels between Rasheed’s treatment of his wives and the treatment of slaves by slave owners. Read a short excerpt from Frederick Douglass’ autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. In chapter 6 Douglass describes how his kindly mistress changed in her behavior towards him. Discuss the parallels between this account of the character of a slave owner and the changes that occur in Rasheed over the course of the novel.
8. Laila and Mariam are not only victims of abuse; they also resist. Ask students to go back through the novel to identify the small acts of resistance by the two women and to gather quotes that show these acts. Then students can combine these quotes into a “found poem.” If you need more information about how to teach found poems you can visit this web site of the National Council of Teachers of English: http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=33
9. Ask students to consider if Mariam’s punishment would have been different if she had been tried by a “jury of her peers.” Have students read the Susan Glaspell short story, “A Jury of Her Peers.” The full text is available at: <http://www.learner.org/interactives/literature/story/fulltext.html>
Then review the trial of Mariam, starting on p. 364. What parallels do students see between the short story and the trial scene. What are the male judges missing in their examination of Mariam?
10. The novel ends in April 2003. Research the current situation in Afghanistan in news sources. Based on your findings, write a sequel to the novel, describing the circumstances for Laila and Tariq and their children, living in Kabul.
11. Ask students to look up the definition of patriarchy and list what patriarchy means in terms of social organization. Then ask students to outline the social organization that is evident in the families of Mariam and Laila before they marry Rasheed and then after they marry Rasheed. Discuss: What gives Rasheed authority over his wives? How is this authority reinforced in society?
12. How does the proverb, “Like father, like son,” fit the novel? Trace the development of Zalmai. In outline form, show how Zalmai might have followed in his father’s footsteps.
13. Mariam at first finds it hard to wear a burqa but then finds it “comforting” (p. 73). Ask students to research the history and uses of the burqa. Where is it commonly worn? Is it still worn in Afghanistan even after the fall of the Taliban? Why might some women prefer the burqa? Why might some women find it oppressive? Students should prepare a list of arguments pro and con for wearing a burqa and engage in a mini debate.

USING OTHER RESOURCES

Films

View one of the following films and write a review in which you describe how the film depiction of Afghanistan compares to the descriptions in the novel, particularly in the depiction of the lives of women.

- *The Kite Runner*. 2007. Directed by Marc Forster. Screenplay by David Benioff, based on the novel by Khaled Hosseini. The official site of the movie is at: <http://www.kiterunnermovie.com/>
- *16 Days in Afghanistan*. 2007. Directed by Mohammad Anwar Hajher. This documentary looks at Afghan culture and life after the fall of the Taliban. For more information, <http://www.kdkfactory.com/16days/>
- *Kandahar*. 2001. Directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf. Avatar Films. This film depicts the journey of the main character across Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban. A review is available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1664617.stm>
- *Beyond Belief*. 2006. Directed by Beth Murphy. Principle Pictures. Two women who lost their husbands in the World Trade Center travel to Afghanistan to understand the root causes of terrorism. <http://www.principlepictures.com/beyondbelief/>
- *Osama*. 2003. Directed by Siddiq Barmak. A young girl living in Afghanistan under the Taliban disguises herself as a boy to support her family in this Golden Globe-winning film from Afghanistan.

Pictorial Depictions of Afghanistan

Bring to class or ask students to find photographic collections about Afghanistan. Two good examples are listed here:

- *Afghanistan* by Chris Steele-Perkins (Mariner Books: 2001) provides photos of the daily lives of the people in the midst of the ravages of civil war. Steele-Perkins' diary account provides context for the photos.
- *Arms Against Fury: Magnum Photographers in Afghanistan* by Magnum Photos Inc. Robert Dannin, editor (powerHouse Books, 2002) provides 400 photographs of life in Afghanistan from the late 1940s to the present, showing both urban and rural scenes.

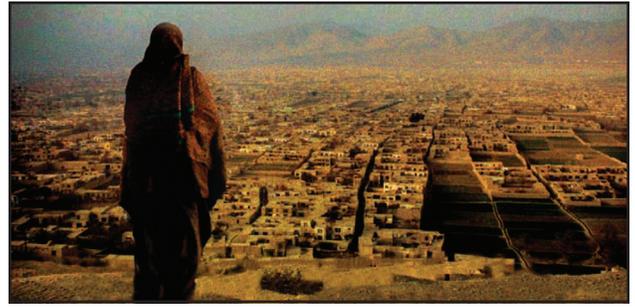
After studying the photos, ask students to create their own photographic essay on Afghanistan. First they should search for images on line. Then they should decide on the theme of their "essay." Will it focus on the culture of Afghanistan or the people or the war or the children? Students should collect photos into a Power Point with brief commentary. Students can share their "essays" as class presentations.

Related Books

Babi works with Laila each evening on her homework and encourages her to be successful in school. He wants Laila to take advantage of the new opportunities for education under the communists. Later under the Taliban, schools are closed to girls and they can only study in secret.

Invite students to read one of Greg Mortenson's books about increasing girls' opportunities for access to education:

- *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin (Penguin, 2006).
- *Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books, not Bombs, in Afghanistan and Pakistan* by Greg Mortenson (Viking, 2009).



Then ask students to make a poster, listing the values of comprehensive educational opportunity for both boys and girls.

Ask students to read the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights at http://www.barvennon.com/-liberty/UN_Bill_of_Rights_.html, particularly Article 26 which describes the right to education.

ARTICLE 26

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Discuss: Why is the right to education so central to the well being of an individual and of a nation?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

Jeanne M. McGlenn, Professor in the Department of Education at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, teaches Children's and Adolescent Literature and directs the field experiences of 9-12 English licensure candidates. She is a Board member of NC English Teachers Associa-

tion and the Children's Literature and Reading SIG of the IRA. She has written extensively in the area of adolescent literature, including a critical book on the historical fiction of adolescent writer Ann Rinaldi for Scarecrow Press Young Adult Writers series.