

LESSON TITLE: **EXPLORING AFGHANI CULTURE THROUGH LITERATURE**

Common Core Standards

RL 1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

RL 4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

RL 5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

RL 6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

W 4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

W 6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

L 5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

L 6 Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

**Key Questions/
Issues Addressed**

- What are specific characteristics of Afghani culture?
- How is it similar to and different from American culture?
- Use the following quotation by Khaled Hosseini as a framework to analyze both of the texts: "But better to be hurt by the truth than comforted with a lie."
- Discuss how the constantly changing politics in Afghanistan affect the characters in both of the texts.
- What is the role of women in Afghani culture? (For [A Thousand Splendid Suns](#))

**Lesson Goals/
Objectives**

- Through the analysis of Afghani literature, explore the changing social structures of Afghani society.
- Explore various literary devices in plot development such as suspense, foreshadowing, symbolism, and extended metaphor.
- Trace the development of an idea or argument in a work of literary nonfiction.
- Offer insightful inferences regarding the themes of the text.
- Create a clear, original, specific thesis statement.
- Organize concrete evidence and supporting textual details to support a thesis statement.
- Use precise language, avoiding casual language and clichés.
- Write appropriate transitions to organize paragraphs.
- Analyze how literary devices convey theme.

Key Terms

Antagonist, Colonialism, Denouement, Extended Metaphor, Foreshadowing, Irony, Mysticism, Paradox, Persona, Point of View, Post-Colonialism, Rhetoric, Satire

Materials

- Hosseini, Khaled. The Kite Runner. (Riverhead, 2003)
- Hosseini, Khaled. A Thousand Splendid Suns. (Riverhead, 2007)

**Background
for lesson
(if necessary)**

This lesson explores how literature written by an Afghani author offers insight into Afghani culture leading up to 9/11. Students should be familiar with the effects of the Middle Eastern colonial experience—and the subsequent challenges of the postcolonial era. They should consider religious, generational, and cultural conflicts, effects of modernization, political struggle, and other themes common to many literary works. In order to enrich their understanding, students should investigate the historical background for the selected works.

The set of questions below applies to both books, although each book highlights unique facets of Afghani life (i.e. A Thousand Splendid Suns specifically explores the role of women; The Kite Runner studies socioeconomic issues). The books, then, can either serve as an in-depth author study and be read in sequence, or serve as stand-alone units. Most of the questions are taken from the Core Curriculum Maps so to ensure relevance in your classroom.

Instructional Activity/ Procedures

1. Tell students they will examine the following questions by reading a work of literature:
 - *What are specific characteristics of Afghani culture?*
 - *How is it similar to and different from the role of women in American culture?*
 - *For A Thousand Splendid Suns: What is the role of women in Afghani culture?*
2. Assign students to read Kite Runner/A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini.
3. Over the course of the semester, Teacher will ask students to participate in seminars and to write essays based on the following topics:
 - Compare the experience of growing up in Afghanistan versus growing up in the United States. *What are the fundamental similarities and differences highlighted in the book? How did 9/11 change those experiences in both countries?*
 - Agree or disagree: *Moral choices are essentially choices between two sets of values: one belonging to one culture or era, one to another.* Use textual evidence to support your response.
 - Agree or disagree: *Personal crisis coincides with cultural change.* Discuss in seminar and then use at least three pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis in an organized essay. *How does this question relate to the perpetrators of 9/11?*

Evidence of Understanding

The essays will highlight students' understanding of specific characteristics of Afghani culture.

Extension Activities

- Working with a partner, choose a character facing a difficult choice. Write and perform two monologues, each one defending a particular option.
- Choose a Middle Eastern poem and recite it from memory. Include an introduction that discusses:
 - Who wrote the poem and when it was written (i.e., historical context).
 - How the form of the poem and its meaning are related.
 - How this poem illuminates a facet of Middle Eastern life and culture