

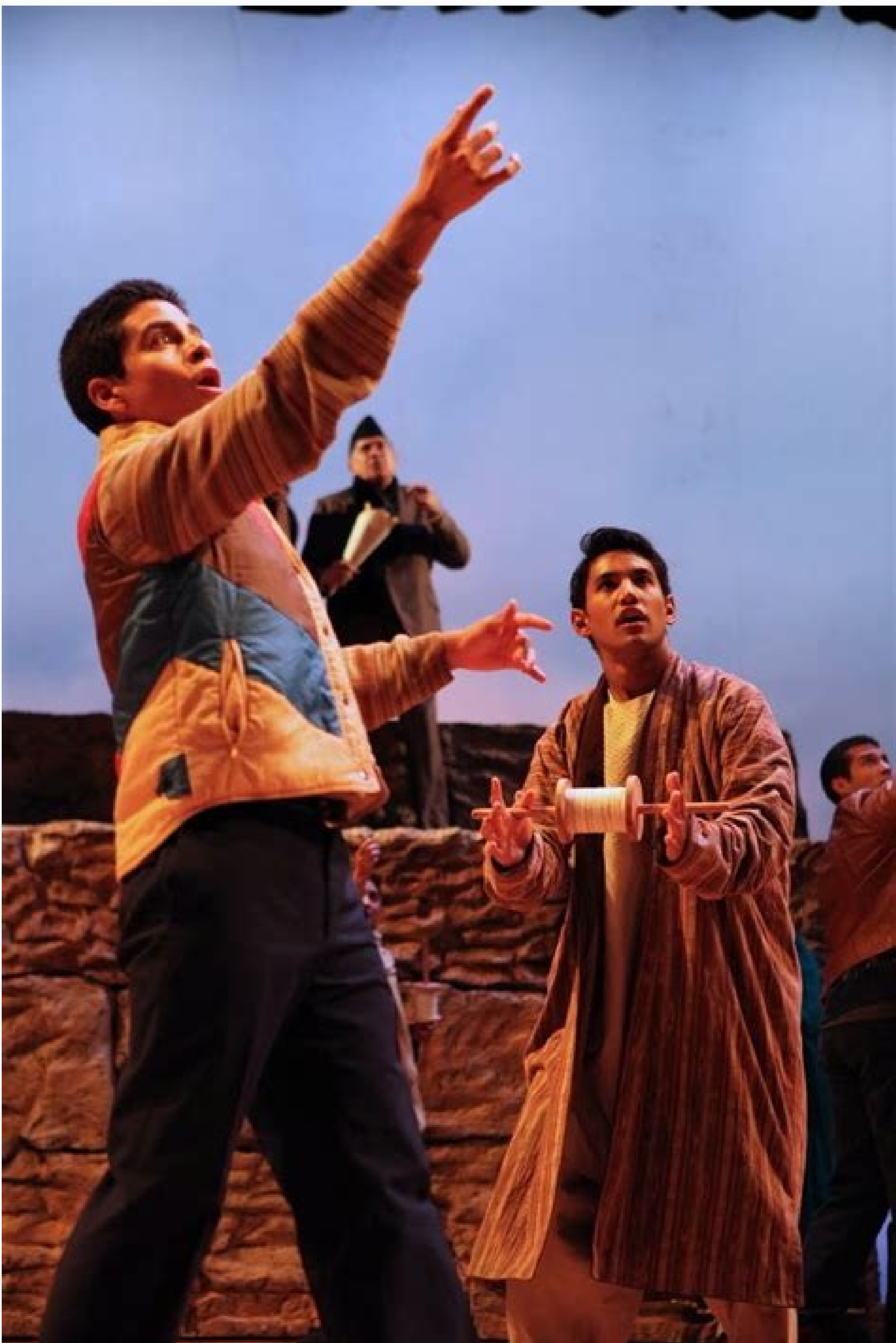
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The Kite Runner

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Isabel Allende

KHALED HOSSEINI



of that. It's important to remember that the country is in a better place than it was seven, eight years ago. There is more personal freedom, the economy is better. Some would say it's largely because of drug trade, and it's better. Are women going to school? Khaled Hosseini: Women, at least in urban regions like Kabul, are back in the workforce. Some of the infrastructure has been rebuilt. So those are positive things. Education actually is one of the success stories of the regime. On the other hand, some things either have not changed at all or have got worse. Security certainly has gotten worse since the last time I was there in 2003. We have a full-blown insurgency in the south and in the east. The suicide bombs, which were unheard of in Afghanistan in the two decades before, have suddenly become commonplace. You have a flourishing opium trade which is criminalizing the economy and supporting the insurgency. And you still have, you have a populace that is growing disillusioned with the regime and Kabul and with the West, in that they are not seeing the promises that were made, they are not seeing the fruition of those promises, seeing that those promises have been kept. They are not seeing enough difference in their day-to-day life. They are still jobless, homeless, have no access to water, schools, doctors — not everybody, but a significant portion of people feel that way. I know that from visiting Kabul this past September, and actually going outside of Kabul to Northern Afghanistan, and talking with people who come back from Iran and Pakistan and have tried to resettle in Afghanistan, and the enormous challenges they face in Afghanistan and the little support they feel they get from the government. It should also be remembered that that government is still in its healing stages. It is trying to rebuild a country that has unraveled for the last 30 years and is recovering from a massive catastrophe. Even acknowledging that, though, I think most people felt that Afghanistan would be, seven years later, in a different place than it is today. There is a frustration with the pace of reconstruction and the pace at which people are seeing their lives change. How is the U.S. viewed in Afghanistan today? Khaled Hosseini: Still in a positive way. There is still, I think, a reasonable amount of goodwill for the U.S. They were never perceived in a negative way. I think Afghans are a sovereign people, they have a long history of not welcoming invaders. But I don't think the States, the U.S., or NATO are seen as invaders largely. I think what preceded the arrival of the Western forces was so horrible, namely the commanders, followed by the Taliban, that the West is seen as, at least hopefully an antidote to those ills. So people are still, have goodwill for the U.S. I think when you talk to people, there is actually a fear that the West will pack its bags and leave. They feel, not that there is a great love for having foreign troops on their land, but because they feel that if they were to do that, it is all too easy to imagine that the country would slide right back and be back into chaos and be, once again, a playground for commanders and big traders and extremists, which you have to agree with. And so there is still quite a bit of goodwill, but I think the danger is that we have to — we being the West — and I say this purely as a lay person, I don't think there is a military solution in Afghanistan. I think the military — I think the solution comes not only from military, but it comes really, I know a real cliché, of winning the hearts and minds of the people. It's a race between us and the Taliban to convince people which is better for them and which will keep their promises and which understands them better. And I'm not sure that that's a battle that we are winning right now. We spoke to President Hamid Karzai shortly before the last elections. Khaled Hosseini: Five years later, you have to say that, fairly or unfairly, that his image has eroded to some extent. I met him as well last September. He was very convincing in his optimism that things could get better fast. Five years later, it doesn't look like things have gotten better that fast. Khaled Hosseini: No, they haven't. To give an analogy, the rebuilding of Afghanistan is not a hundred meter dash, it's a marathon. And we have to be ready for long-term commitment. When you go to these conferences about Afghanistan, those three words come up again and again and again. It's natural to want to see results fast, and I also think things could be better than they are today. There's definitely some legitimacy to the concerns that people have, but I think we also have to wait. This is a country in which every meaningful institution was ravaged, and that saw massive human displacement. Millions of people live as refugees abroad, and in which there was a destruction of an already three-decade infrastructure. This country has to be raised from the ashes, basically. Is it reasonable to expect that in six or seven years it would be great? I think any success in Afghanistan has to be measured in decades. That's probably what we are looking at. Your poor country has had such a history of invasions and massacres. What is the draw for other countries? Is it geographical? Khaled Hosseini: Afghanistan's great draw is its position. As Afghans call Afghanistan the heart of Asia, it's always been a gateway, a passage, throughout history, for different empires to march through. Peter the Great always had dreams of the waters of the Indian Ocean, and for that, he needed Afghanistan. And of course, the British Empire wanted to prevent that, so they had a stake in Afghanistan, and it was the genesis of the Great Game in the 19th century. For the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan in the late '70s, there is a lot of debate over why exactly they did that. By no stretch of the imagination am I an expert, but one school of thought is that the situation had gotten out of hand in Afghanistan, that the puppet regime, the communist puppet regime was losing control of the country, and the Soviets invaded really to take matters into their own hands. But Afghanistan's draw has always been its position, and it's a passageway. The success of your first two novels has been astonishing, but there were a few negative reviews as well. How do you react to criticism of your writing? Khaled Hosseini: You have to have a very thick skin, and also to not dismiss somebody who is critical of your work right off the bat. It may be that they have a legitimate point about something. If it's personal — it's rarely personal, but if it's just done to be clever, to be glib, that is one thing. But I find that most people, most critics don't write that way, and whatever objection they have, whether I agree with them or disagree with them, comes from a viewpoint that has coherently been thought about. It's never easy to see unkind things said about your writing, but I actually have benefited from largely good reviews in both of my books. And certainly you can't have uniformly great reviews, but the reviews on both of my books have been great. And the fortunate thing for me is that the reviews for my second book were actually better than The Kite Runner, and that was rewarding for me, because I felt like as a writer, I definitely had grown, I had become a better writer the second time around than I was when I wrote The Kite Runner. But you have to take negative criticism of your writing with a grain of salt. It's a privilege to be published, and that comes, that is part of the game. One of the challenges of your second novel is writing largely from the point of view of a woman, something that writing teachers frown upon in college. Could you tell us about the challenge of writing from a woman's point of view? Khaled Hosseini: Had I known that college teachers frown upon that, I might have been less enthusiastic about doing it. I think part of my good fortune is that I trained in the sciences, so I have never been in those conferences. I never sat in those classrooms where you are told what is allowed and what is not. So I said I want to write this story, and it's going to be about a woman, and then I realized it's about two women. And I called my agent before I began writing the book, and I told her, "Here's what I think the book is," and there was a long pause at the other end of the line, and she goes, "Well, you have your work cut out for you." I said that I thought I would be okay, and then I began actually writing it and realized what I had taken on. This novel took me almost three years to write. The Kite Runner took me a year, and that was with working full-time. I wrote this novel largely away from medicine. I had already quit my career and yet it took longer. I struggled with the notion that I'm writing from a woman's perspective, and the last thing I want is to sound like the reader to read it and say, "Oh, yeah, this is a guy imagining what it's like." You know, I became borderline obsessed with the idea of capturing that voice, definitely, of writing with the understanding that women live in a slightly different emotional arena than men do, and that they perceive the world in a different fashion than men do. And that somehow I have to find that. I have to slip my feet into those shoes and live in that skin. And until I do, it's never going to work. And of course, the harder I tried, the worse the writing and the more self-conscious and stilted and contrived it came across. Eventually, all of the solutions that I've ever found in writing have been very simple, but I have to go through all of those blind valleys to get to it. And of course, with this one, I finally gave up on this and said, "Look, I'm just not going to worry about it, I'm just going to write these people as people, as human beings, and just focus on what it is that they fear, what it is that they hope, how were they disappointed by life, what are their illusions, their disillusion. You know, what way are they deluding themselves, in what way are they honorable or less than honorable. Let's just figure those things out and just write them as people and not worry about whether it's a man or a woman." And of course when I did that, suddenly I began to notice that my voice was fading away and that these women, these characters, were starting to speak for themselves. And that was, for me, in the writing of this book, really a watershed moment. I should not think of these characters as Afghan women in italics, but rather are just people. Write them and hopefully it comes across as genuine. And I haven't had too many complaints about the voice and so on, and so I feel, personally I feel pretty pleased with it, and I'm glad to see that a lot of people agree. Does having a medical background help you in any way as a novelist? Khaled Hosseini: To some extent. I never really thought about it that way. I think writers have the ability to kind of get out of their own skin for a while and imagine what it would be like to live in somebody else's skin. And for me, there were periods where I imagined what it would be like to be wearing the burka and to see the world through that grid. Okay, so imagine you are standing on that street corner with five or six kids to feed and that's the life you have. What is your next move, what do you feel, what are you thinking? There is some element of that, and maybe writers have slightly a better ability of doing that than people who aren't writers. I don't know, but once I made that I discussed, it seemed far more natural for me. I had also the benefit of talking to my mom and my wife and consulting them now and then on things, and they were very helpful, they were very helpful. But I met women in Afghanistan and I heard their stories. I mean, you can't walk up to a woman in a burka on a street corner and talk to her. I don't want to give that image, but I spoke to women who work for NGOs, who were taking care of those women who are fully covered and who won't talk to men. You know, and I heard a lot about their lives, about what they go through and the hardships and the challenges and what is the hope. And what I found is, by and large, the things that they want were very modest in scope, basically a roof for their kids and water. And so I always kept honing back on that and to come back to the idea. And these characters, these women Mariam and Laila, were not based on any individuals that I met in Kabul, but rather they are created out of that collective experience of those collective voices that I heard during that trip. It takes tenacity to survive a bad first draft. If you feel like you have to write Nobel Prize-winning prose when you begin, it can be paralyzing. How do you find the patience to go through all of those drafts? Khaled Hosseini: Writing a book, as I said earlier, is largely an act of perseverance, and you have to stick with it. The first draft is very difficult to write, and it's often quite disappointing. It hardly ever turns out to be what you thought it was, and it usually falls quite short of the ideal in your mind when you began writing it. But what I would say is a first draft is just really a sketch on which you can now add layer and dimension and shade and nuance and color. So I use the first draft purely as a frame on which to build the actual story. So a lot of my writing is done through rewriting. And I don't become discouraged by the notion that my first draft is not going to win any prizes or that it's not going to be — I understand that it's going to be lousy, but I want all of the essential elements to be there. The heart of the story has to be in in that first draft, and then I can use that to create something and discover things about the story. When I wrote, for instance, The Kite Runner, there were a lot of things in that first draft that stayed, but some things in that first draft were tossed, and the transformation in some passages were very dramatic. I wrote an entire draft where the two kids were not brothers, and it really wasn't until a subsequent draft when I realized that the kids, suddenly the idea came — well, what if the kids are brothers, and that changed the whole tone of the story. And when I rewrote it, writing it with that knowledge, it changed everything. And so you can get discouraged. Writing is largely about rewriting, and I abhor writing the first draft. I love writing subsequent drafts because that's when I can see the story getting closer and closer to what I intended and what my original hopes for it were. What other advice would you give young fledgling novelists? Khaled Hosseini: I have met so many people who say they've got a book in mind, but they've never written a word of it. I think to be a writer, you have to write. You have to write every day, and you have to write whether you feel like it, whether you don't, and be stubborn. And you also have to read a lot. Read the kinds of things you want to write, read the kinds of things you would never write. I find I learn something from everybody. I would never say I've been influenced directly by a given writer, but I feel like I've learned something from every writer that I have read. And I read with kind of a different — I read to pay attention to the voice. I pay attention to how they write dialogue. I pay attention to how they form structure, the rhythm of a story. Sometimes with a critical eye, often with an admiring eye with really great writers. And so keep writing and — probably the best advice that I can give is to write for an audience of one, and that is yourself. The minute you start writing for an outside audience, that immediately taints the entire creative process. I wrote both of these books because I was telling myself a story. I really wanted to find out what happens to Amir after he betrays his friend. Why does he go to Afghanistan? What does he find there? I wanted to find out for myself how the relationship between these two women changed. You really have to tell it to yourself, and then when you are done with it, hope that other people will enjoy it, and just shut everybody else out during the writing process and put yourself in a mental bunker. Do you think that the more you can do that, the more others will respond to it? Khaled Hosseini: Well, you hope so. Sometimes it doesn't happen, and I'm sure a day will come when that won't happen for me, but I've been lucky twice now. What is in your future? Are you working on another novel? Khaled Hosseini: I hope to be starting on a new novel very soon. I have mentally been working on it for some time and turning ideas over, but hopefully I will start something quite soon. But that's all I can say. What do you think of the American Dream? Do you have a conception of that? Khaled Hosseini: I feel like I'm the poster child for it, whatever that phrase means now. I came here basically penniless, with a suitcase of clothes, a family of nine people. I find myself now having written these books, and even well before the books, I was already a poster child because I had a very successful career as a doctor, I had married a great woman, had healthy children. But certainly, anybody who writes an article about the American Dream today should call me. I feel like I am a good example of it. Is it about accomplishing something you couldn't even imagine? Khaled Hosseini: It's about discovering what you can be and giving yourself the chance to do it and be open to the possibility that it will actually happen and taking a risk. For me, writing these books, I am taking a chance with them and hoping that it will be perceived the way it eventually was received. I mean, it is a dream, whether it's an American dream or a personal dream, but for me certainly the entire thing has a dreamlike quality about it, these last five, six years. Thank you very much. Khaled Hosseini: My pleasure. Thank you very much.

Updating Khaled Hosseini family information... Tags: Khaled Hosseini Khaled Hosseini net worth Novelist 55 years old March 4 birthday Afghanistan celebrities Pisces Zodiac Sign Millionaire Celebrity Net Worth. Khaled Hosseini is a member of. Job: Novelist. Born in ... The Kite Runner, by Khaled Hosseini, follows the maturation of Amir, a male from Afghanistan who needs to find his way in the world as he realizes that his own belief system is not that of his dominant culture.Set in Afghanistan and the United States, The Kite Runner is a bildungsroman that illustrates the similarities as well as the differences between the two countries and the two ... 26/07/2018 · Updated on July 26, 2018. A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini is superbly written, has a page-turning story, and will help your book club learn more about Afghanistan. Use these book club discussion questions to probe deeper into the story. Spoiler Warning: These book club discussion questions reveal important details from the novel. 21/08/2021 · For Hosseini, watching the situation unfold over the last week has been utterly gut wrenching. Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born American novelist and physician. He ... 01/10/2006 · Mr. Hosseini was interviewed about his novel, [The Kite Runner] ... More information about Khaled Hosseini Interview: 2.033 Views Program ID: ... Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born novelist. Some of his award-winning books include The Kite Runner and AThousand Splendid Suns. Childhood And Early Life. Khaled Hosseini was born on March 4, 1965, in Kabul, Afghanistan.His father Nasser was a diplomat in Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His mother taught Farsi at a girl's high school. The family enjoyed a middle ... Khaled Hosseini - He was born in Kabul in 1965 - His family moved to San Jose in 1980 after receiving political asylum - He graduated from Santa Clara University and UC San Diego School of Medicine - He is a doctor in San Jose - His first novel, The Kite Runner, has sold over 3 million copies worldwide An interview with Khaled Hosseini. In two separate interviews, Khaled Hosseini discusses The Kite Runner (2003) and A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007); his experience growing up in Afghanistan before the Soviet invasion and the rise of the Taliban; the role of women in Afghan society; how Afghans view the USA and much else... In a separate interview that follows, ... 24/09/2017 · Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born American novelist and doctor. His 2003 introduction novel, The Kite Runner, was an international shattering hit. Similarly, his 2nd novel, A Thousand Splendid Suns besides made it to The New York Times Best Seller list for paper-back book fiction. Very few people pen down successful first novels, still fewer ... 01/06/2007 · A Thousand Splendid Suns, Khaled Hosseini A Thousand Splendid Suns is a 2007 novel by Afghan-American author Khaled Hosseini. It is his second, following his bestselling 2003 debut, The Kite Runner. Mariam is a illegitimate child, and suffers from both the stigma surrounding her birth along with the abuse she faces throughout her marriage.

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