

Khaled Hosseini

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, on March 4, 1965, and was the oldest of five children. Just as he describes in *The Kite Runner*, Kabul was a cosmopolitan city at the time. Western culture, including movies and literature, mixed with Afghan traditions, such as kite fighting in the winter. Lavish parties were normal at the Hosseini family's home in the upper-middle class neighborhood of Wazir Akbar Khan. Hosseini's father served as a diplomat with the Afghan Foreign Ministry, and his mother taught Farsi and history at a local high school for girls. Then, in 1970, the Foreign Ministry sent his father to Iran. While the family only spent a few years there, Hosseini taught a Hazara man, who worked as a cook for the family, how to read and write. By this time, Khaled Hosseini was already reading Persian poetry as well as American novels, and he began writing his own short stories.

Repeated moves marked the next decade of the Hosseini family's life. They returned to Kabul in 1973, the year Mohammad Daoud Khan, overthrew his cousin, Zahir Shah, the Afghan King, in a coup d'état. The Afghan Foreign Ministry relocated the Hosseini family to Paris in 1976. Though they hoped to return to Afghanistan in 1980, that was not possible because of a military invasion by the Soviet Union. Instead, the Hosseinis moved to San Jose, California after they were granted political asylum in the United States. Khaled Hosseini went on to graduate from high school in 1984 and attended Santa Clara University, where he received his bachelor's degree in Biology in 1988. In 1993, he earned his Medical degree from University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine, and in 1996 he completed his residency at Cedars-Sinai medical Center in Los Angeles, making him a full-fledged doctor.

While Khaled Hosseini has said before that his first novel is largely fictional, he acknowledges that the Afghanistan he knew as a child inspired it. Like his main character, Amir, Khaled Hosseini enjoyed Western films and kite fighting. He also lived in a pre-revolutionary Afghanistan that had not yet been ravaged by the Soviet invasion and subsequent Taliban rule. In a 2003 interview with *Newsline*, Khaled Hosseini said the passages in the book most resembling his life are those of Amir and Baba as immigrants in the United States. When the Hosseinis arrived in California, they had difficulty adjusting to the new culture, and for a short time his family lived on welfare. He also remembers the local flea market where he and his father worked briefly among other Afghans, just as Amir and Baba did in the book.

Although the period of adjustment passed and Khaled Hosseini became a successful practicing doctor in 1996, he felt deeply influenced by what he recalled of his homeland, and he began writing "The Kite Runner" in March 2001. Two years later, in the midst of the U.S. war in Afghanistan, Riverhead Books published the book. "The Kite Runner" became an international bestseller, with more than eight million copies in print. It also received numerous book awards, including the the Boeke Prize, the Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Award, and the Literature to Life Award. In 2007, it was made into a feature film. In May 2007, Khaled Hosseini published his second book, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, which also became a bestseller, as was his most recent book *And the Mountains Echoed*, published in 2013.

Khaled Hosseini's literature also changed his personal life. After nearly twenty-seven years, he returned to Afghanistan to see what had become of his country and his people. Like Amir, he was able to find his father's old home, but he also recognized that war and brutality destroyed the place where he grew up. His efforts to bring attention to the plight of refugees earned him the Humanitarian Award from the United Nations Refugee Agency in 2006, and he became a U.S. goodwill envoy to the organization. It was during a 2007 trip as an envoy that he was inspired to start his own non-profit group. He created the Khaled Hosseini Foundation, which funds projects to empower vulnerable groups in Afghanistan, such as women and children. Today, Khaled Hosseini writes full-time. He continues to live in Northern California with his wife, Roya, and their two children.