**Dialectical Journal 1: *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, by Khaled Hosseini**

**Part 1, Chapters 1-12**

**Common Core Standards: RL 1 (support, inference); RL 2 (theme); RL 3 (characterization); RL 4 (word choice, tone); RL 6 (cultural p.o.v.)**

Directions: In the left column, write a meaningful, important quotation from different parts of this section. You may not use quotes from only one or two chapters. In the right column, you should completely analyze the importance of the quote, noting any literary devices that occur and how this quote adds to the overall novel or highlights an important aspect. The first several quotes have been given to you as a model; you should complete the remainder of the journal on notebook paper (or you may type them up—you can access a copy of this journal on the wiki).

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| Note Taking | Note Making |
| “Mariam was five years old the first time she heard the word *harami*…At the time, Mariam did not understand. She did not know what this word *harami*—bastard—meant. Nor was she old enough to appreciate the injustice, to see that it is the creators of the *harami* who are culpable, not the *harami*, whose only sin is being born. Mariam *did* surmise, by the way Nana said the word, that it was an ugly, loathsome thing to be a *harami*, like an insect, like the scurrying cockroaches Nana was always cursing and sweeping out of the *kolba*…a *harami* was an unwanted thing; that she, Mariam, was an illegitimate person who would never have legitimate claim to the things other people had, things such as love, family, home, acceptance” (3-4). | The opening episode sets the tone of Mariam’s childhood. The reader learns that she is an illegitimate child, and that she learns at a young age that this makes her worthless or “loathsome.” The cultural double standard is, of course, beyond the five-year-old’s ability to understand, so her sense of self is established by this idea. The most startling aspect of this incident is that it is her mother who has used the ugly word and given the child this strong impression of herself as being on the level of an unwanted cockroach. |
| “Mariam would listen with enchantment. She would admire Jalil for his vast and worldly knowledge. She would quiver with pride to have a father who knew such things.“’What rich lies!’ Nana said after Jalil left. ‘Rich man telling rich lies. He never took you to any tree. And don’t let him charm you. He betrayed us, your beloved father. He cast us out. He cast us out of his big fancy house like we were nothing to him. He did it happily.“Mariam would listen dutifully to this. She never dared say to Nana how much she disliked her talking this way about Jalil. The truth was that around Jalil, Mariam did not feel like a *harami*. For an hour or two every Thursday…Mariam felt deserving of all the beauty and bounty that life had to give. And, for this, Mariam loved Jalil” (5). | Here, there is a clear contradiction between Nana’s and Jalil’s versions of the past and present. Nana brutally destroys the beautiful ideas Jalil gives Mariam, reminding her daughter consistently that she is of no real value to her father. She reiterates Jalil’s abandonment of them. Mariam, desperate for a sense of love and belonging, cannot accept Nana’s bitter words. She prefers to believe Jalil, who makes her feel special. The question the reader is left with: which parent is telling the truth? |
| “Nana said, ‘Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: Like a compass needle that points north, a man’s accusing finger always finds a woman. Always. You remember that, Mariam’” (7).  | The placement of this warning, at the very end of a chapter, highlights its importance to the novel. It is a bitter sentiment, consistent with Nana’s view of the world, but it rings true to readers. These are the words of a woman familiar with the double standards of her culture, standards that have hurt her personally. It is a warning that suggests some foreshadowing in the novel. |
| “In Nana’s account of the day that she gave birth to Mariam, no one came to help…She said that Jalil hadn’t bothered to summon a doctor…She lay all alone on the *kolba*’s floor, a knife by her side, sweat drenching her body.“’…no one came to wipe my face or give me a drink of water. And you, Mariam jo, you were in no rush. Almost two days you made me lie on that cold, hard floor…’“’I’m sorry, Nana.’“’I cut the cord between us myself. That’s why I had a knife.’“’I’m sorry.’Nana always gave a slow, burdened smile here, one of lingering recrimination or reluctant forgiveness, Mariam could never tell. It did not occur to young Mariam to ponder the unfairness of apologizing for the manner of her own birth.“…She believed Jalil’s version, that though he’d been away he’d arranged for Nana to be taken to a hospital…Jalil shook his head with sadness when Mariam told him about the knife” (11-12). | Again, there is a disconnect between Nana’s and Jalil’s version of events. Nana’s version seems intended to make Mariam feel guilty for her birth or at least grateful to her mother. Nana seems to want always to emphasize that she and Mariam are alone in the world with only each other. Mariam cannot accept this. She believes her father provided for her and her mother. Again, the reader must wonder whose version is closest to the truth. |
| “’Are you coming?’“’Yes, Nana.’“’They laugh at you. They do. I hear them.’“’I’m coming.’“’You don’t believe me?’“’Here I am.’“’You know I love you Mariam jo’’(14-15). | This brief exchange after Jalil’s sons have brought supplies highlights the unhealthy dynamic Nana has established. She consistently reminds Mariam of her status in the world: unwanted, rejected. She seems to want Mariam to mistrust everyone, to feel that others are laughing at her, that she is worthless in their eyes. Yet she counters this with an assurance of her own love. Perhaps Nana truly feels that the only way to love her daughter is to isolate her from a cruel world. |
| “’It’s our lot in life, Mariam. Women like us. We endure. It’s all we have. Do you understand? Besides, they’ll laugh at you in school. They will. They’ll call you *harami*. They’ll say the most terrible things about you. I won’t have it…If you really care about her, then you make her see that she belongs here at home with her mother. There is nothing out there for her. Nothing but rejection and heartache. I know, *akhund* sahib. I *know*’”(19). |  |
| “Nana said that one of these days he would miss, that she, Mariam, would slip through his fingers…break a bone. But Mariam did not believe Jalil would drop her. She believed that she would always land safely into her father’s clean, well-manicured hands”(21). |  |