

Summer Reading Guide
World Literature 9

A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini

Set in war-torn Afghanistan, this contemporary novel explores the power of friendship between two Muslim women as they face the oppression and violence of the Taliban regime. From childhood, Mariam, the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy man, grows up in a hut, harassed because she is a *harami*. In contrast, Laila, the beautiful daughter of a loving, generous family, is abruptly deprived of her simple and safe home. Through a series of unfortunate circumstances, Mariam and Laila both come to live in the house of Mariam's much older husband, Rasheed. The women's friendship develops slowly, but eventually their devotion to each other helps them overcome their differences and leads to acts of heroism in their troubled country.

You are required to engage in a close reading of your summer text.

You may be wondering, "What exactly is close reading?" Well, it involves getting to know the text through annotation—taking notes in the book itself as you read.

You should read not just to get the facts of the story—*who does what when*—but also thinking about why the author tells the story the way she or he does. As you read, mark passages that seem especially important in terms of theme or character development. Mark whatever you feel is striking or significant. To annotate effectively, you should identify and consider interesting uses of language in each work, such as: imagery, diction,* figures of speech,* tone,* and symbolism*—all of which illuminate the author's style and purpose.

This activity, which you may feel slows down your pace, helps you process the literary significance of the story and creates a practical referencing tool. When you return in the fall, your annotations will help refresh your memory before class discussions and writing assessments.

Note: Because annotation is subjective, you may find that your peers have marked or that your teacher is citing words, phrases, or entire passages that you did not. That is okay. You will likely note similar important ideas.

*diction—choices of vocabulary and sentence structure that create a specific effect. Think, for instance, of the different connotations among words like "smell," "fragrance," and "stench." Consider the impact of short, choppy sentences versus long, fluid ones. Does the way a character speak indicate something about her educational level or social class?

*figures of speech—non-literal uses of words to create powerful imagery and meanings; examples include similes, metaphors, personification, etc.

*tone—*the prevailing attitude of a passage or speaker.* Authors use word choice, sentence structure, and figurative language to convey the way a character or the

narrator feels about and event, topic, or another character. Ask how a passage would be spoken out loud: sarcastically? reverently? approvingly?

*symbolism ó A symbol can be a person, object, action, or situation that plays a role in the story but also takes on added significance. A child, for instance, may come to represent the loss of innocence; a tree may represent a memory of happier days; a trip may represent a journey of self-discovery. For something to function as a symbol, it usually appears multiple times in the story in ways that accumulate associations and significance.