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Atonement and The Kite Runner Parallels

The parallels that can be drawn between Khaled Hosseini’s novel The Kite Runner and the film *Atonement* are astonishing. For the first portion of the movie, it is difficult to place a finger on the connections between the pieces. It was obvious that the two pieces share similar themes of betrayal and redemption; however, toward the end of the film the similarities became more pronounced.

Class played an enormous role in characterization. In The Kite Runner, Amir is the son of an immensely wealthy man and Hassan was given the role of Amir’s “servant-sidekick”. Because of Amir’s status and the way he was raised, he believed that he was of more value than Hassan, which prompted him to pick at Hassan and play private jokes on him just because he coulc.

We see similar behavior with Briony in *Atonement* and the way she treats her own servants. Briony was also raised in a wealthy family and it is evident that until she became a young adult, her life was simply handed to her. When Briony was discussing putting on a play for her brother’s homecoming and was interrupted by a servant, her reaction and response to the servant mirrored the heartbreaking line Amir uttered, “he’s not my friend…he’s my servant!” (Hosseini, 41). In Briony’s facial expressions and Amir’s words, there is evidence of their awareness of the differences in social class.

Although the lies that Briony and Amir tell did not directly lead to their country’s strife, it is symbolic that a war followed their betrayals. Shortly after Hassan and Ali left their posts as Amir and Baba’s servants, Afghanistan plummeted into the chaos of war; in *Atonement*, after Briony’s lie sends Robbie to prison, the country enters a war and Robbie is released to join the army.

The significance of these changes within the countries sends us back to the “Foster theory” of violence. Violence is never *just there*; it is symbolic and strategic, and that much is obvious in The Kite Runner and *Atonement*. The suffering that Amir and Briony faced was their punishment for their irrevocable betrayals.

Both characters are also forced into situations that they have never experienced before – Amir moves to America, and Briony becomes a nurse who ultimately tends to wounded soldiers. Without these developments in their lives, they would not have been able to grow as characters. They were pushed out of their comfort zone and they matured, further allowing them to understand the extent of what they had done. For example, when Briony was tending to soldiers, she faced a brutal reminder of Robbie every day. In contrast, America cleansed Amir; America held “no ghosts, no memories, and no sins” (Hosseini, 136) and allowed him to build a life and become more than a guilt-riddled boy.

While neither Amir nor Briony achieved full redemption, they both took significant steps toward it. Amir saved Sohrab from Assef – something he had not been able to do for Hassan; Briony gave Cecilia and Robbie the happiness through her novel that she had taken from them in life.

Amir and Briony would never be able to fully redeem themselves because they have lost their chances; the people they have wronged are dead. However, we see the *ability* for them to forgive themselves because they do try to make up for their sins. That is the strongest parallel between the two pieces.