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**Home Sick**

*There’s no place like home.* A bit of a cliché, but the point is valid. Nobody enjoys dropping everything they own, leaving it all behind, and staring all over in a foreign place. Unless you are the world’s most interesting man of course. But in this case, with these two literary pieces of Claude McKay’s poem “America” and Khaled Hosseini’s book **The Kite Runner**, both characters might as well be alone on an island. That makes for a tough transition, mostly resulting in anger or despair. **Hate** is such a strong word, but if given the chance, both characters in each literary piece (McKay in his first person poem and Baba in **The Kite Runner**) would use that word to describe how they feel about their time living in America. As each literary piece goes on, they begin to soften up and realize that America is so special because it is a place with endless opportunities.

The theme of hate of America is prevalent throughout Claude McKay’s poem “America” as well as expressed by Baba in **The Kite Runner**. The resentment from both Baba as well as Claude McKay towards America stem from different reasons; McKay being African American in a segregated county (at the time) caused him to despise the country which was thought to be free and not prejudice. It made him feel unwanted—a cast out. The animosity began to take its toll, McKay referred to America as a women describing how, “she feeds me bread of bitterness, and sinks into my throat her tiger’s tooth, stealing my breath of life” (McKay, 2-4). Judging by McKay’s word choice, he obviously despises the way he is treated and describes it in such a way that he fears for his life. Baba has the same amount of hate, but it’s more related to being misunderstood than segregation. Baba and Amir fled to America to escape war and corruption in Kabul, but Baba has a difficult time adjusting to his new haven. In chapter eleven of Khaled Hosseini’s **The Kite Runner**, Baba gets into an altercation with a store owner over a petty remark to see Baba license at a local market where he had bought fruit; Baba becomes enraged at the question and begins to reek havoc on the store. Amir comes and tries to act like a hose to a fire and extinguish the altercation but Baba exclaims, ‘“What kind of country is this? No one trusts anybody!”’ (Hosseini, 128). Baba is stuck in his own beliefs of how things should be operated because of the way he was treated and raised in Kabul. So even though the gesture the owner of the store made to see Baba’s license wasn’t intended to upset Baba, it was (from Baba’s perspective) disrespectful for the owner to ask Baba such a question. Both McKay and Baba share the same struggle of adjusting to America, each one is up against an overwhelming task—trying to find their own way in a big country.

Another comparison between McKay’s poem “America” and Hosseini’s **The Kite Runner** are the similarities shown on how both McKay and Baba do not show any fear while being faced with a challenge. In McKay’s poem, he summarizes how he stands tall against the tasks of being African American and living in America during segregation. McKay proudly discusses how he would, “stand within her walls with not a shred of terror, malice, not a word of jeer” (McKay, 9-10). Showing his courage, McKay is stating he proudly stands up against discrimination against African Americans from racist people in America and he is not afraid to defeat this monumental task of ending discrimination. The same lack of fear is prevalent in the way Baba handles adjusting to his poverty in America. Baba is a proud, wealthy, respected man in Kabul, but in America his role couldn’t be more inversed. In America, Baba is nothing more than a poor blue collar worker; his career degraded from a successful businessman to a manager at a gas station. Even through all this adversity, Baba still possesses his dignity. So much so that he denied food stamps stating, ‘“I work always. In Afghanistan I work, in America I work. Thank you very much, Mrs.Dobbins, but I don’t like it free money”’ (Hosseini, 130). Baba still has his pride, and to him that is enough to drive him to make a living in America without the shameful food stamps. Both McKay and Hosseini base part of their literary pieces on showing no fear to show that these characters are courageous in a time of despair and to give hope that these characters will triumph by the time their respective legacies end.

Another similarity between McKay’s and Hosseini’s literary pieces is the way they both have characters that view America as a haven—a place that gives them hope. McKay looks past the segregation that takes place in America and focuses on how good America has the potential to be for a place to live. He realizes that America can be the melting pot that it is today with many different races and religions living in peace with one another. McKay states that, “darkly I gaze into the days ahead, and see her might and granite wonders there” (McKay, 11-12). McKay talks about how in his present situation he can only see dark days, but as time goes on, and he looks past the present he can see a brighter future. McKay hopes that even if it is not in his lifetime, he can help make a difference for future African American citizens in America. In **The Kite Runner**, Baba’s perspective on the possibilities of a future in America is the same way; he views America as a place with endless opportunities to become successful. As Amir and Baba settle into America, it becomes apparent that Baba wanted to move to America not for him, but for Amir’s future. After Amir questions Baba on why he tirelessly works Baba tells Amir, ‘“I didn’t bring us here for me, did I”’ (Hosseini, 130). Baba realizes that since he had left all his wealth in Kabul when they fled to America, he was out of his prime and now he works to better Amir’s life in the future. Baba knows America is a place of opportunity, and with hard work you can achieve great success in America. Both Baba and McKay see the good in America, a place for hope and occasion; both characters want to contribute to a brighter future for generations to come like parents to their children.

Claude McKay’s poem “America” is completely complimentary to Khaled Hosseini’s book **The Kite Runner** because there are so many corresponding events and themes that are shown to relate the two literary pieces together. It is interesting how people refer to America as a woman; a characteristic mostly given to things of kind, caring, and loving nature. Maybe it’s because most people are under the impression that America is where immigrants and cast outs can go and instantly be accepted and become successful. However, America isn’t always a fairy tale for each individual immigrant. America can be cold-hearted with no mother-like symptoms at all. There have been instances that Americans are not proud of such as war, scandals, and slavery. But America has grown, both figuratively and literally. America has overcome the poor decisions of being involved in those regretful incidents and has evolved into something that a father could be proud of. Many immigrants migrate to America like birds heading south because America is recognized as a place of peace, prosperity, and love. In both literary pieces, America is a savor to people in need of something better. America…isn’t she great?

Works Cited:

McKay, Claude. "America." *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, 12 Aug. 2010. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.

Hosseini, Khaled. "The Kite Runner." *Barnes & Noble*. Penguin Group, 08 June 2003. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.