

ESSAY, Honorable Mention: Evie Mixon

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Fighting a Bear

Amir is a troubled man who has fought with guilt his whole life, guilt over his mother's death and guilt over what he did to Hassan. Amir's long road to redemption is riddled with guilt and healing, culminating in his moments in the hospital in chapter twenty-three, the topic of this excerpt. In the excerpt from *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini uses literary elements like repetition, imagery, and internal dialogue to explore the themes of redemption, guilt, and healing.

In Amir's first moments of consciousness, Hosseini involves internal dialogue, repetition, and imagery in his story telling to highlight the story's themes. In Amir's inability to talk during this excerpt, the author instead uses internal dialogue to show the themes of redemption, guilt, and healing. In response to being asked if Amir knows who he is and if he hurts, Amir's internal dialogue says "I know who I am" and "I hurt everywhere." This builds a theme of redemption as previously Amir does not confidently know who he is and protects himself from all pain except guilt. Amir's character arc has met a pivotal moment as he redeems himself from his guilt over Hassan by sacrificing himself for Hassan's son. The author uses imagery to further develop the theme of guilt when he describes the "jabbing at the side of [Amir's] chest." This description of his pain could be a physical pain or a figurative, emotional pain in one's chest, the physical pain of a broken rib or the emotional pain of his guilt. The author highlights the theme of healing through the use of repetition in the beginning of this excerpt. Hosseini repeats several phrases, such as "I fade out" and "I know him," to show Amir's healing process as he tries to remember the details of his life. This develops the theme of healing by illustrating the slow healing process as Amir claws his way back from near death.

Towards the end of this excerpt, as Amir shifts in and out of consciousness, the author further develops these same themes of redemption, guilt, and healing through the use of imagery, repetition, and internal dialogue. Hosseini uses internal dialogue to demonstrate the theme of healing with Amir asking himself "when was that?" and then illustrates Amir's dazed state with his response to his own question. Amir rearranges the timeline of his life, confusing when he met his wife and when he met the nurse. He labels the nurse as someone from years ago and his wife as someone from last week. This conveys his mental state as someone who needs healing. The author uses imagery in Amir's dream when Baba fights the bear to convey the theme of redemption. Hosseini describes the "loud thud" as Baba takes over the bear. The theme of redemption and of guilt comes in when Amir realizes that it is not his father but himself who is fighting the bear. Amir has defeated the bear that his father was fighting, he has overcome his guilt.

The process of redemption is one of healing. In this case, Amir's path to overcome his guilt and redeem himself requires a lot of sacrifice. Amir has silently fought with a bear that he created, his guilt and his fear rejection. When he finally comes out of his fight with Assef, Amir is a changed man. He finally knows who he is, he has defeated the bear, he has overcome his guilt. Often we have to give up our pride and sacrifice all we have in order to redeem ourselves from guilt and finally be healed.