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*Literacy Narrative Prompt - A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Growing up, reading and writing was simply just another duty that we had to complete, but over the course of years, I eventually became accustomed to it. From the basic writing techniques taught in first grade to preparing for state exams in middle school, my reading and writing comprehension skills had developed vastly. At the time being it all just seemed routinary and it had carried on up until I guess you can say now the present.

When I was younger I would always have a hard time putting my thoughts and ideas on to paper but eventually, with enough practice and effort, the thoughts and ideas began to flow more naturally. During my high school years was when I began to understand the significance of reading and writing. Of course, we had basic book reports and papers just as we did in elementary school but now it felt more engaging in a sense. We would take part in group discussions and Socratic seminars allowing us to share our thought and viewpoints on the different materials we would read and go over both in class and at home for homework. This had created an aura that was more captivating and further interested me into not just writing for the assignment but to put my own conjecture out there and to share.

One of the novels that I heavily enjoyed and opened up my horizon in regards to reading was “A Thousand Splendid Suns” by Khaled Hosseini. This novel carries a unique plot about a young girl named Mariam and the struggles she had faced growing up in a developing country at

the time, Afghanistan. After reading about the different endeavors and hardships Mariam goes through one can easily develop a very sympathetic connection. From the start of the novel, Mariam has immediately labeled a “harami” which in translation would be modern slang for “bastard”. Nonetheless, a series of unfortunate events continue to occur from her mother committing suicide, getting an arranged marriage to a stranger more than twice her age and of course living under oppression from the Afghan government. All these events though horrible in their own right build the character of Mariam and shape who she will become. The elements of tragedy and misfortune highly revolve around the theme of this novel leaving nothing but sympathy for the readers.

Moreover as an individual of a Southern Asian descent and Islamic religion origin, I myself can make a connection to certain struggles that the protagonist Mariam falls upon. This, in turn, helped me as a reader to develop empathy towards what she goes through. Although I myself am a male and do not have the same restrictions that are placed on women, many of my close family members such as my mother and even my sisters do face it today. For instance, just as in the novel, women including Mariam were not permitted education after a certain extent unless they came from a very wealthy family. My mother was also put in the same position back when she was still living in her mother country, Bangladesh. She was only capable of continuing her education up until primary school which is only equivalent to elementary in the US. In addition just like Mariam, my mom had to have an arranged marriage not only because of the religious aspect but also because it was necessary being that women were perceived to need a male figure in their life in order to survive.

Likewise, another predicament that continues to impact my two sisters just as in Mariam in Afghanistan is this suppression and set back due to cultural expectations/limitations. In the text, it mentions how the locals would always criticize the women who would stand out and or act out the social norm. My eldest sister was forced into wearing a hijab (Islamic garment to cover hair for women) throughout her whole childhood and soon enough once she decided to stop the judgment amongst neighbors and family members began. This removal of the hijab was seen as a disrespectful act against both members of the family and to God-given their perspective. Though they didn't label her as something as harsh as harami, they still looked down on her. Family members gave her side eye and would not have the same loving tone that they once had. They viewed my once "innocent and pure" sister as being capable of the worst, yet in reality, she was still the same person she always had been. The family would not hide their feelings either as each aunt would gossip in somewhat whispered tones only to be heard in the next room over very clearly. Although in reality all my sister had done was take off a small piece of religious attire and yet that one act had spiraled such negative feelings such as distrust and contempt from once supportive family members.

In conclusion, the novel "A Thousand Splendid Suns" by Khaled Hosseini had further strengthened and brought out a new form of interest for me in both reading and writing. I was able to connect to the protagonist allowing me to understand and relate to the context on a deeper level.

Works Cited

Hosseini, Khaled. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation, 2013.