



## CHILDHOOD UNDER SIEGE N THE SELECTED WORKS OF KHALED HOSSEINI

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### Abstract

*Childhood represents innocence, emotional security, and freedom; however, in war-ravaged societies, childhood is often shaped by fear, trauma, and loss. Khaled Hosseini, a prominent Afghan-American novelist, presents powerful narratives of children whose lives are deeply affected by war, political instability, and social oppression. His novels *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *The Mountains Echoed* portray suppressed childhood through emotional trauma, violence, guilt, displacement, and fractured family relationships. This research paper examines how Hosseini depicts childhood as a silent casualty of war. The study explores physical suffering, psychological scars, loss of innocence, and forced emotional maturity experienced by child characters. Hosseini's portrayal emphasizes the long-term impact of war on children and highlights how suppressed childhood continues to shape adult identity. The paper argues that Hosseini's fiction offers a poignant critique of war by foregrounding the suffering of children.*

### Keywords

*Suppressed Childhood, War Trauma, Khaled Hosseini, Loss of Innocence, Afghan Literature, Child Psychology, etc.*

### Full Article

#### **Introduction:**

Childhood is universally perceived as a protected phase of life associated with emotional warmth, learning, and innocence. However, war and political turmoil destroy this protective space, forcing children to encounter violence, fear, and loss at an early age. Modern war literature increasingly highlights children as the most vulnerable victims whose emotional and psychological development is permanently damaged. Khaled Hosseini's novels present a deeply human portrayal of Afghanistan's turbulent history through the eyes of ordinary people, particularly children. His narratives reveal how war, betrayal, displacement, and social inequality suppress childhood innocence. By focusing on child protagonists and their emotional journeys, Hosseini exposes the invisible wounds inflicted on children. This paper examines the representation of suppressed childhood in Hosseini's selected novels, emphasizing the loss of innocence and lasting psychological trauma. Concept of Suppressed childhood refers to the denial of a child's fundamental emotional, social, and psychological needs. In conflict-ridden societies, children are deprived of safety, education, family stability, and emotional freedom. Exposure to violence, displacement, and loss forces children to mature prematurely. Psychologically, suppressed childhood leads to trauma, fear, guilt, and emotional repression. Socially, children are burdened with responsibilities or subjected to abuse and neglect. Hosseini's novels illustrate how childhood



suppression does not end with youth but continues to shape adult identity and memory. Khaled Hosseini draws heavily from Afghanistan's socio-political history to depict personal suffering caused by war. His narratives combine historical realism with emotional depth. Hosseini frequently uses childhood memories as a narrative lens to show how innocence is destroyed by violence and betrayal. Hosseini's child characters are not passive observers; they are emotionally complex individuals whose experiences reveal the moral consequences of war. His writing emphasizes empathy, guilt, and redemption, making childhood suffering central to his literary vision. *The Kite Runner* presents the story of Amir and Hassan, whose childhood friendship is shaped by class division, betrayal, and political unrest. Hassan's childhood is particularly suppressed due to ethnic discrimination, poverty, and violence. His silent suffering following abuse represents the loss of innocence caused by both personal betrayal and social injustice. Amir's childhood is marked by emotional neglect and guilt. His failure to protect Hassan haunts him into adulthood, demonstrating how suppressed childhood experiences leave permanent psychological scars. Hosseini shows that childhood trauma does not disappear with age but continues to influence moral identity.

Suppressed Childhood in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* primarily focuses on women, it powerfully depicts suppressed childhood through characters like Mariam and Laila. Mariam's illegitimate birth and emotional rejection deprive her of a secure childhood. Her early exposure to abandonment and loss shapes her submissive identity. Laila's childhood is disrupted by war, the death of her parents, and forced marriage. The novel portrays how children, especially girls, are denied safety and choice in patriarchal and war-torn societies. Hosseini highlights how childhood suffering prepares individuals for lifelong endurance rather than happiness.

In *And the Mountains Echoed*, Hosseini explores childhood suppression through separation and emotional loss. Abdullah and Pari's forced separation symbolizes how poverty and social inequality destroy familial bonds and childhood security. Pari grows up without memories of her brother, experiencing emotional emptiness despite material comfort. Abdullah's lifelong longing reflects unresolved childhood trauma. Hosseini emphasizes that emotional suppression can be as damaging as physical violence.

Psychological Impact of War on Children in Hosseini's novels reveal deep psychological consequences of suppressed childhood, including guilt, trauma, emotional numbness, and identity crisis. Children learn to silence emotions to survive, resulting in internalized pain. The characters' adult lives are shaped by childhood memories of loss and fear. Hosseini portrays memory as a burden, showing how childhood trauma continues to influence moral decisions and emotional relationships. Forced Maturity and loss of innocence is a recurring theme in Hosseini's fiction. Children are exposed to violence, death, and moral dilemmas beyond their understanding. This forces premature maturity and emotional restraint. Hosseini suggests that war accelerates adulthood while denying childhood joy. Innocence becomes a fleeting phase replaced by survival instincts and emotional suppression.

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, Khaled Hosseini's novels powerfully portray suppressed childhood as a lasting consequence of war, social inequality, and emotional betrayal. Through child characters, Hosseini exposes the deep psychological scars inflicted by violence and displacement. Childhood in his fiction is marked by loss, guilt, and emotional silence rather than safety and freedom. The study confirms that Hosseini presents childhood as a silent victim of war whose suffering continues into adulthood. His work contributes significantly to war literature by foregrounding the emotional realities of children and emphasizing the moral responsibility of protecting childhood innocence in conflict-affected societies.



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**Article Received:**17/02/2026

**Article Accepted:**26/02/2026

**Published Online:**30/03/2026

**To Cite the Article:** Lokhande, Shradha and Yadav, S. "Childhood Under Siege in the Select Works of Khaled Hosseini." *Literary Cognizance: An International Refereed/Peer Reviewed e-Journal of English Language, Literature and Criticism*, Vol.-VI, Issue-4, March, 2026, 228-230. [www.literarycognizance.com](http://www.literarycognizance.com)

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