Afghanistan and *The Kite Runner* Research Projects

Just as our own cultural context creates our perception of the world around us, so too are author’s shaped by their historical and cultural contexts. In order to enhance our understanding of the novel, *The Kite Runner*, you will be responsible for researching a particular topic related to Afghanistan’s history and culture. You will become an expert on your topic, compile your research into a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation, and present your information to your classmates. This project will fulfill 10th grade writing, research, and speaking standards.

The class will be randomly placed into groups of four. You and your group members will research the topic below that matches up with your group number (on the card you draw from me).

**Below are the research groups, topics, and guiding questions:**

**GROUP #1: History/Geography**
1. Geographically, where is Afghanistan located? Include a picture of the Middle East area in your presentation. 
2. What is the capital of Afghanistan?
3. What is the weather like in Afghanistan?
4. What is the most common occupation in Afghanistan?
5. What happened in 1921?
6. What happened in 1933?
7. 1973 was a pivotal point in Afghanistan’s history. Why?
8. In what year did Afghanistan first start to experience political turmoil? (Hint: They take on the Soviet Union) 
10. When does Osama bin Laden make his first visit to Afghanistan?
11. Why does Osama shift his focus from the Soviet Union to the United States in 1988?
12. In 1992, Afghanistan endures yet another coup. Which group takes over this time? What are the problems with this group?
13. Why do most Afghans believe the Taliban takeover in 1993 is a good thing at first?
14. Why do more than a million Afghans flee to Pakistan between the years 1995 and 1999?
15. What was America’s answer to the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001?

**LINK:** [A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/pbs_newsHour/history/afghanistan.html) You can also consult our WHS database cites for solid and credible resources. Go to the WHS library home page and click on databases. Ask me if you’d like help finding this.

**GROUP #2: Afghanistan Daily Life (dress / food / recreation / economy)**
1. What is a qmis, a pagray, and a burqa?
2. What does traditional Afghan clothing suggest about cultural values?
3. What is the most popular dish of Afghanistan? What meats are common? Drink?
4. What occupation has been most effected by warfare?
5. What main livestock is tended in Afghanistan?
6. What are Afghanistan’s main exports?
7. Cultivation of what product supported the Taliban financially?
8. Describe the Afghan economy. What are its current challenges? Why?
9. How are weddings, feast days, and religious holidays celebrated in Afghanistan?
10. What rules does a family follow?
11. What is the main part of the family?
12. What is a mullah?
13. Where is the Khyber Pass and why is it important?
14. What subjects are taught in Afghan schools?

**LINKS:**
- [Overview of Pashtun culture including clothing description](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Pashtun-Culture.aspx)
- [Afghan food](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Afghan-food.aspx)
- [Turban tying and Kite Running](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Turban-tying-and-Kite-Running.aspx)
- [Brief economic overview](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Brief-economic-overview.aspx)
- [Fighting the Opium Wars](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Fighting-the-Opium-Wars.aspx)

You can also consult our WHS database cites for solid and credible resources. Go to the WHS library home page and click on databases. Ask me if you’d like help finding this.
GROUP #3: Islam
1. What is Islam? What does it teach/expect? 2. Do Christianity and Islam share the same origin? How do they differ (1 main way)? 3. What is the Qu’ran and why is it so important to people who practice Islam? 4. What would be the equivalent of the Qu’ran in our society? 5. What are the five main ‘pillars’ of Islam, and why are they important? 6. Explain the difference between the words Muslim and Islam. 7. Islam, at its core, is a peaceful, loving religion, so why do many people worldwide currently believe that Islam is evil or focused on violence? 8. What are three acceptable behaviors in Islam and three unacceptable behaviors?

LINKS: Overview of Islam
Thorough explanation of Islam with links to lots of helpful sites
You can also consult our WHS database cites for solid and credible resources. Go to the WHS library home page and click on databases. Ask me if you’d like help finding this.

GROUP #4: Hazara and Shi’a Muslims / Pashtuns and Sunni Muslims
Your presentation will need to cover the differences and similarities between the Hazara / Shi’a Muslims and the Pashtuns / Sunni Muslims. 1. What are the main ethnic groups of Afghanistan and who are they? 2. What are three main differences between the Pashtun people and Hazara people? 3. What is Pashtunwali? Namus? How might this ‘cultural code’ shape Afghanistan’s culture? 4. What does it mean to be an outsider in Afghan society? Why are people excluded? What does this exclusion look like? 5. How is treatment of Afghan “others” similar/different to other cultures’ history of oppression?

Relationship between Pashtun and Hazara in The Kite Runner
National Geographic photo gallery on “Afghanistan’s Outsiders,” the Hazara
Pashtun tribal structure
You can also consult our WHS database cites for solid and credible resources. Go to the WHS library home page and click on databases. Ask me if you’d like help finding this.

GROUP #5: Women in Society
1. What privileges don’t women have in Afghanistan? 2. How are women treated differently than men in Afghanistan? 3. What are some ‘crimes’ in Afghanistan that women can be punished for, but not men? 4. How have things changed/stayed the same for women since the Taliban lost power? 5. What challenges do modern Afghan women face, and how are these different than those of their mothers?

LINKS: Women under Taliban Threat-TIME Photo Essay
Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban Article
Women’s Rights
Afghan Women Soar to New Heights
You can also consult our WHS database cites for solid and credible resources. Go to the WHS library home page and click on databases. Ask me if you’d like help finding this.

GROUP #6: The Taliban
6. What were some of their punishments?  
7. How were the Taliban eventually driven out of Afghanistan?  
8. Is there any possibility that they could return to power there?

**LINKS:**  
Who is the Taliban?  
An Afghan-American speaks  
Restrictions of the Taliban  
Taliban treatment of women  
Taliban punishments  
You can also consult our WHS database cites for solid and credible resources. Go to the WHS library home page and click on databases. Ask me if you’d like help finding this.

**GROUP #7: Khaled Hosseini**  
Cover the basics about *The Kite Runner’s* author:  
(1) Describe his background and his life  
(2) What prompted him to write *The Kite Runner?*  
(3) What has his life been like, and what is he currently doing?  
(4) Is his work well-received by critics? Is he respected as a writer?  
(5) What does he hope his readers get out of reading *The Kite Runner?*  
(6) Is this novel about Khaled Hosseini’s life?  
(7) Other works?

**LINKS:**  
New York Times Article  
Biography of Khaled Hosseini  
You can also consult our WHS database cites for solid and credible resources. Go to the WHS library home page and click on databases. Ask me if you’d like help finding this.

**REQUIREMENTS:**  
Your group will prepare a **ten [10] slide PowerPoint presentation** about your topic which includes the following:

1. A **title slide** which contains:  
   - Your topic  
   - a graphic/picture, and  
   - your names.

2. At least five [5] **slides** which contain specific content about your topic. You will need to include graphics and pictures and make the slides visually appealing. Limit the amount of text you include on each slide. It’s better to spread out the text on more slides rather than cram it on just a few. Make certain you proofread and fix any misspelled words, punctuation problems, and capitalization errors. I will deduct points for errors that indicate you didn’t proofread.

3. Three [3] **reflection slides** which answer the following questions  
   - What was the most interesting about your research?  
   - How did your research enhance your understanding of Afghanistan?  
   - What did each individual person in the group accomplish and contribute to the project? Did you work well as a group? If not, what problems occurred? Did everyone contribute fairly equally? Explain as needed.

4. A **Works Cited** slide which lists the resources you cited in your presentation
5. Additionally, you will present your information to the class on the date assigned. You need to complete thorough research and present us with complete information. **We are relying on your group to teach us about your topic.**

**Due Date:** Tues 1/24 (maroon) / Weds 1/25 (gold)

**Point Total:** 60 points (summative category)

**You will have class time to work:** Fri 1/13 & Tues 1/17; Weds 1/18 & Thurs 1/19; (part of class) Fri 1/20 & Mon 1/24