

THE KABUL PEACE HOUSE



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STUDY GUIDE

MARK ISAACS

PRE-READING INTRODUCTORY LESSON

Assess prior knowledge.

Whole class brainstorms ideas, teacher scribes responses on board as mind maps or dot points.

- For how long has there been warfare in Afghanistan?
- Why have various countries invaded Afghanistan in the past?
- Which ethnic and religious groups comprise the population of Afghanistan?
- Why do people leave Afghanistan to seek asylum in other countries?
- If asylum is denied, is it safe for these asylum seekers to return to Afghanistan?

Students record the class's responses to compare with their answers to these questions after reading the text.

INTRODUCTORY PAIR WORK

- Find Afghanistan on a map.
 - Name the countries with which it shares a border.
 - Use the satellite view on Google maps to examine the terrain of Afghanistan.
 - How would you describe this terrain?
(Hint: compare it with the satellite maps of Europe, India and Australia)
 - What effects will this terrain have on people living in Afghanistan?
- Study "Afghanistan's timeline of events"
(Appendix B p.271). Identify the various invasions by other nations and major political events.



RADIO BROADCAST:

ABC Radio National Breakfast 20th June 2019

Introduction to the book and the author

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/the-kabul-peace-house-envisions-an-afghanistan-without-war/11226990>

Listen to the interview with Mark and answer the following questions:

- Why did Mark originally go to Afghanistan in 2016?
- Why was Mark surprised to learn about the Kabul Peace House?
- Identify the ways in which the Peace House breaks the rules of Afghan society.
- What was the main source of suffering in the mountains of central Afghanistan?
- How does Mark describe the early version of the Peace House?
- How does the young woman Malvina hope to spread the message of peace?
- Give an example of Insaan turning Mark's scepticism on its head?
- How many street kids in Afghanistan are working to supplement the family income?
- How does the Kabul Peace House survive financially?

CLOSE STUDY OF THE TEXT

These questions could be answered by students individually or used by teachers to guide and focus the discussion of the text.

PROLOGUE:

STUMBLING UPON A PEACE MOVEMENT

- Pg 3 Explain the political situation in Afghanistan in 2016 when Mark visits for the first time.
- Pg 8 What is the “mission” of the community at the Peace House as explained by Insaan?
- Pg 10 What are the four major ethnic groups in Afghanistan? Where are they located? With which religions are they associated? For what reason does Insaan describe this diversity as “challenging”?
- Pg 12 Insaan identifies three crises and the goals to tackle them. What are they? How are they related?
- Pg 15 Why do some people in Afghanistan wish to migrate to other countries?
- Pg 16 Mark states “It would be impossible for any government to guarantee the safety of people deported to Afghanistan” – for instance, if Australia rejects asylum seekers and deports them back home. What situations make a guarantee of safety impossible?

CHAPTER 1:

GENESIS IN THE MOUNTAINS

- Pg 23 In which ways have the Hazara people been persecuted?
- Pg 24 Describe Hafizullah, Horse and Muslimyor and outline their daily routine.
- Pg 35-37 For which reasons does Muslimyor reach the conclusion "love is how we'll ask for peace"?



CHAPTER 2:

TO SERVE HUMANITY

- Pg 41-42 Mark asks the community "Do you think that peace is possible in Afghanistan?" Identify the various opinions expressed.
- Pg 51 "Insaan began to see that the best way to address these families' problems was to address the problem of war". What experiences brought Insaan to this conclusion?
- Pg 52 Insaan identifies "universal values" common throughout all religions. What are these?

CHAPTER 3:

CHIPS AND DUVETS

- TACKLING INTERGENERATIONAL POVERTY

Pg 55 "Muslimyor liked the project because it wasn't just a handout from foreigners; rather it encouraged Afghans to work for Afghans". How does the project achieve this aim? Is a project more effective than a handout? Explain your opinion.

Pg 59-60 Explain some of the problems people experience in Afghanistan because of economic inequality. How did Insaan help to address the financial problems of Nadir's family?

Pg 61 Why does Insaan believe that capitalism will never work for impoverished families in rural Afghanistan?

CHAPTER 4:

RADICAL THINKING

Pg 70-71 Explain Insaan's thoughts about the effects of ethnic division.

Pg 71-73 How successful is the first multi-ethnic live-in community?

CHAPTER 5:

WHEN WE DESTROY NATURE, WE DESTROY OURSELVES

Pg 79 Describe in detail the environmental pollution problems in Afghanistan.

Pg 81 Why is the peace garden important to the community members?



CHAPTER 6:

WHAT DOES EQUALITY MEAN?

Pg 89-94 Describe the experiences with the community of

- Chehrah
- Tara
- Mina

CHAPTER 7:

LESSONS AND ACTIONS IN NONVIOLENCE

Internet research:

Pg 117 “Afghanistan’s geopolitical position in the middle of the Eurasian steppe made it vulnerable to invasion and occupation from foreign empires”.
Use your research to explain this statement.

Pg 119-120 Outline the course of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Pg 121-122 What circumstances brought about the formation of the Taliban?
What effects did the Taliban have on the population of Afghanistan?

Pg 123 Why do you think “September 11 changed everything”?

CHAPTER 8:

COUNTERING A LEGACY OF MISTRUST

Pg 130-133 Why did the US president George W. Bush declare a “War on Terror”? What form did this “War” take? What was its effect on the population of Afghanistan?

Pg 137 Mark asserts that the US and its allies had lost the war in Afghanistan by December 2014.
What facts does he cite to back up this claim?

CHAPTER 13:

EVERYONE HAS CONSIDERED ESCAPING

Pg 172-173 Mark states that most Afghans have contemplated leaving their country. What are some problems faced by ordinary Afghans when they consider leaving and when they are on their journey to a safer and more prosperous place?



CHAPTER 15:

THE STUDENT BECOMES THE TEACHER

Pg 193 What classroom management techniques does Hafizullah use? How are these different to the ways in which he was treated as a young boy at school?

Pg 197 Describe the march to request public funding for a larger school. What were its outcomes?

CHAPTER 16:

WINDOWS INTO ALTERNATE UNIVERSES

Pg 205-207 Describe Hojar's experiences in India. What does she learn from these experiences?

CHAPTER 17:

EVEN OUR MISTAKES ARE PROGRESS

- Pg 210-213 Why is Abdul discriminated against? In what ways are others in the household discriminated against? How do Insaan and the community deal with these problems?
- Pg 217 Describe some of the ways in which the community has become Insaan's family.
- Pg 219 Explain Insaan's insight into the nature of the community relationships and how healing could come about.
- Pg 223-225 Explain how Insaan came to have the "volcano" inside him and how his healing began.

CHAPTER 18:

HUMANISING WAR, NOT NORMALISING WAR

- Pg 235 Explain Owen's description of his wartime experience in Afghanistan. How was he affected by this experience? Why was Muslimyor affected by his death?



CHAPTER 19:

PART OF A GREAT HUMAN FAMILY

- Pg 244-247 Why did Muslimyor and Horse decide to leave the community? Describe the effect of their leaving both on them and the members of the community.
- Pg 251 Explain why "Hojar was satisfied with the female community experiment".
- Pg 253-256 Describe the three acts of retaliation against the community committed by Zilal, Mirwais and Hamza. What was the effect of their actions on the community and on Insaan himself?

CHAPTER 20:

A NEW DIRECTION FOR THE COMMUNITY

- Pg 258-259 "After the centre opened, the community work began to develop along clearer and better-defined lines". Describe how this work developed.

EPILOGUE

- Pg 266-267 Explain how the members of the community moved on to new experiences. What was Insaan's reaction to these changes?

ACTIVITIES

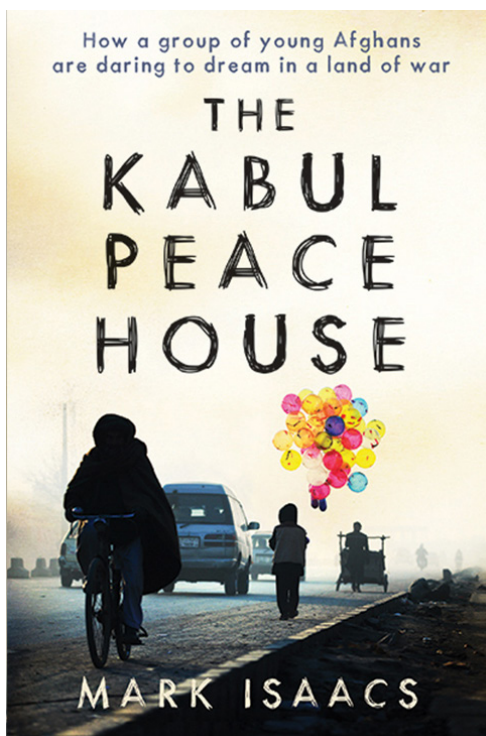
ACTIVITY 1

CLASS DISCUSSION

At the end of the book, Mark tells us "Insaan and the volunteers hope that the Helmand (peace march) group will stick to non-violent approaches and share the volunteers' commitment to building peace without weapons, armies and military means.

Insaan believes the Afghan people are at a point where they have the potential to say no to war and yes to nonviolent peace, though it may come at a great cost."

Using evidence from the text, decide whether you think Insaan's hopes can be fulfilled or not.



ACTIVITY 2

VISUAL AND TEXTUAL REPRESENTATION

- Analyse how the front cover uses text and visual elements to represent the book's main theme. You may refer to the table on the next page for assistance.
- Create your own front cover and explain your visual and textual choices.

VISUAL TECHNIQUES

Body language and gaze	Facial expression, position, gestures and stance convey the person's attitude, feelings or personality.
Composition	What is deliberately included or left out e.g. surroundings, objects, clothing.
Colour	Colours are used to represent feelings and provoke a response. Red may signify passion, anger or hell, while blue may signify peace, harmony or coldness.
Contrast	The positioning of opposite elements such as light and dark, large and small, rough and smooth, creates interest, excitement or drama.
Orientation or point of view	Is the viewer positioned above the image looking down, below or at eye level.
Positioning	Which objects have been placed in the foreground, middle ground or background?
Salience	Which part of the visual text is your eye first drawn to? The salient image is determined by colour, image and layout.
Symbolism	An image is used to represent one or more idea.
Vectors	A line that leads your eye from one element to another. It may be created by such things as gaze, pointing fingers or extended arms.
Words	Words are deliberately chosen to convey a message.

ACTIVITY 3

Looking at how Mark uses language to convey his ideas and emotions. From the text, find your own examples of each of the language techniques.

First, we must ask: what is the purpose of Mark's text? In telling these stories, he aims to demonstrate the ways in which Insaan and the community at the Peace House are attempting to bring about peace through love and nonviolence in a country divided and impoverished by war.

So, how does Mark engage and inform the reader?

- THIRD PERSON POINT OF VIEW:

Mark uses this technique to describe the experiences, thoughts and emotions of the community members.

This involving technique helps the reader to empathise with each of the characters and to view events from their perspective.

Example: "Horse woke up to bomb blasts; his eyes went instinctively left and right and his first thought was is everyone ok?"

YOUR EXAMPLE:

- USE OF FORMAL LANGUAGE:

(complex sentences, sophisticated vocabulary, no contractions).

Mark frequently uses formal language to describe the variety of experiences of people in the text and the history and politics of Afghanistan. The use of formal language gives authority to his comments, making them more persuasive to the reader.

Example: "Mina smiled and said hello to the volunteers as she walked in. Tara followed close behind her, keeping her eyes averted, her cheeks aflame with shyness. Custom dictated that women should be accompanied by a male escort, usually family, in their travel and interactions." (p. 92)

YOUR EXAMPLE:

Factual information is also conveyed using formal language. This technique gives authority to Mark's commentary.

Example: History of Afghanistan on pages 117 to 123.

YOUR EXAMPLE:

- USE OF FIRST PERSON PRONOUN "I" AND FIRST PERSON POINT OF VIEW:

assist us to view events from Mark's point of view, which assists Mark to persuade the reader to see things his way.

Example "I caught glimpses of community life through random incidents like when the kitchen erupted into screams and screeches and Muslimyor finally emerged holding a dead mouse. Over time I observed the community members, their interactions, their squabbles, and came to understand that the house dynamic resembled that of a family." (p. 38)

YOUR EXAMPLE:

- USE OF DIRECT SPEECH

is a powerful technique to directly involve us in the stories. This involvement assists in persuading the reader regarding the thoughts and feeling of various characters.

Example: "This is not helpful", Insaan said. "You're hurting yourself. It can't be resolved like this. We love you, but we don't love what you are doing." (p.255)

YOUR EXAMPLE:

- USE OF IMAGERY

Mark uses imagery to enhance and emphasise ideas and descriptions.

Example - alliteration and metaphor; "The synchronised sound of her four brothers' snoring acted as an aggravating metronome for her work." (p.100)

YOUR EXAMPLE:

- USE OF EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

Mark uses words and phrases that provoke an emotional reaction in the reader. Here Mark uses emotive language to emphasise the poverty and squalor of Horse's family.

Example: "He pushed open a gate and walked into a filthy courtyard, a smelly outhouse crumbled into itself in the corner." (p.66)

YOUR EXAMPLE:



ACTIVITY 4: WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Imagine that you are interviewing Mark about his experiences in Afghanistan.

Compose a transcript of the interview with at least ten questions and answers.

You may ask Mark about his reasons for going to Afghanistan, the people that he met there, the situation, the people he worked with, what emotions he experienced there, his successes and his feelings about the future of the Peace House.

Use the model below to organize your composition.

You may also like to use the radio national broadcast as a model for your interview.

MODEL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT.

Interviewer: *Your name*

Interviewee: *Mark Isaacs*

Interview setting: *you decide - maybe Mark is visiting your school to talk about his book and you are interviewing him in front of a group of students.*

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: *Welcome to our school, Mark. We are all looking forward to hearing about your experiences and how you came to write your book, The Kabul Peace House.*

Interviewee: *It is a pleasure to be here today and to have the opportunity to share my thoughts and feelings with you all.*

ACTIVITY 5:

VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Create a visual representation of either:

- The work of Insaan and the members of the Peace House community

OR

- Your personal response to Mark's story.

Use any medium – computer generated, created by hand or collated from magazine and newspaper cut outs. The visual text that you create should clearly convey your ideas through your choice of images and their placement in the frame.

ACTIVITY 6:

SUMMATIVE ACTIVITY: PERSONAL (or DISCURSIVE) RESPONSE

To what extent does the exploration of human experience in The Kabul Peace House invite you to reconsider your understanding of hope?

Suggested assessment criteria

Your answer will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate understanding of human experiences in texts
- analyse, explain and assess the ways human experiences are represented in texts
- organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and context