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Taking The Road Less Traveled

In front of us all stand choices. Options that we must choose, and if we choose wrong we are stuck living with the consequences. However challenging these choices may be, everyone will face an infinite amount of them. Many will notice that it is common for authors to implement a huge choice for their protagonist to make. Sadly, not all the time do these main characters make the morally correct decision. In Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, there is a life changing decision to be made by the main character, Amir. He chose incorrectly. Many readers will stare at the pages wondering why this main character made such a horrific decision. Luckily, the answers can be found in the poem "Traveling Through The Dark" by William Stafford.

Hassan was a poor hazara and Amir was a wealthy son, already Hassan was an outcast. Amir was clearly aware of this gap between classes and was ashamed to be friends with his own servant. During the early chapters of the novel, Amir's best friend and servant—Hassan—was brutally assaulted after chasing down Amir's prize winning kite. Shockingly Amir witnessed the rape, yet made the choice of standing aside—debating whether he should attempt to stop it (75-77). Amir had such an internal conflict about what to do when Hassan was being assaulted,

however the evil inside of him won the fight. He chose to walk away and let his best friend get rapped. This action shocked readers, haunting them for quite some time; leaving them to wonder why Amir would leave his loyal friend in such a time of need. The answers lie within the poem “Traveling Through The Dark”. This poem reveals the true inhumane decision that all humans are instinctively wanting to choose, but are—more often than not—too ashamed to choose it.

William Stafford’s poem entitled “Traveling Through The Dark”, lays out the disconnected and unemotional side to the human decision making that many of us turn our heads from and pretend as though it is not even an option. In the poem, there lies a deceased doe on a narrow road, however in her belly sleeps an unborn fawn (Stafford, Line 10-11). A man parks his vehicle parallel to the heap of mammal and wonders to himself what shall he do: roll the corpse off the canyon—which is “usually best to” do (Stafford, Line 3)—or leave the body undisturbed and call for help to release the imprisoned fetus. In the end, the struggling gentleman gives his last push to roll the passed doe, and the unborn fawn inside, over the edge of the canyon—leaving the narrow road clear once again (Stafford, Line 17-18). Stafford cleverly describes why humans make these heart-wrenching decisions; it is no fair excuse, however the disturbing **choice is simply the easier decision**. For Amir, in *The Kite Runner*, it was the only choice you could expect out of a young boy: the easiest one. The unknowledgable child was just looking for the most unchallenging way for him to get out of a stinky situation. Being a young kid, his conscious had not fully developed to realise you cannot always make the most simple choice. Amir could no longer look towards any other option, he was now stuck in his ways, causing the tragic fate of his best friend Hassan.

No matter how terrible the decision was that Amir made, it was pure instinct. Many readers loathe Amir for his choice, but they don't realise he was just a young kid trying to choose the most uncomplicated option. Others will judge those who take the easy way out, yet the reality is we all think about it. Hosseini and Stafford give us their complementary pieces of literature to educate us not to turn our heads away from our instincts, yet acknowledge their existence and learn from them.

Works Cited

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. New York: Riverhead, 2003.

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