

Sophia Weller

Mrs. Rutan

AP Literature and Composition

23 October 2017

America the Somewhat Beautiful

Land of the free. A place for opportunity. The country one can start a new and better life. These phrases all represent America, and what Americans see. Often times though, immigrants don't see it the same way. While they see it as a place of refuge, it's not their home and they don't feel as much opportunity. In Khaled Hossieni's, *The Kite Runner*, he perfectly explains how immigrants *actually* feel with Baba's emotions. This idea is solidified in Claude McKay's, "America". Immigrants don't always feel great about America.

When Baba comes to America, he does it to escape his war torn country and keep his son safe. He is forced to leave his life-- his success-- behind in order to survive. "Baba loved the *idea* of America" (Hosseini, 124), but the reality of it wasn't his cup of tea. He was comforted by the safety, but clearly missed his home. To immigrants, America promises protection, "...I stand within her walls with not a shred of terror, malice, not a word of jeer," (McKay, lines 9-10). It's viewed as *the next best thing*.

Choose death or life-- a difficult one-- but life nonetheless. Baba and Amir left so they wouldn't be killed, not because they needed the new opportunities America had to offer (Hosseini, chapter 11).

After coming to the United States and living there for several years, Baba never several years, Baba never fit in like he did in Afghanistan. For one thing, he was very rich and successful at home, but was just scraping by in his new country. His job consisted of buying goods from garage sales and selling them the next day at flea markets. On a good day, "... a ramshackle Singer sewing machine purchased for \$10 might...bring in \$25," (Hosseini, 137). Going to two major ends of the social class scale took a toll on Baba and caused him to miss his homeland even more. Not only this, but Baba wasn't welcomed by the United States. "America" puts Baba's feelings best into words, "Her vigor flows like tides into my blood, giving me strength against her hate," (McKay, lines 7-8). He doesn't belong. When he dies, Baba is compared to Kabul, his home, not America or even California. Afghanistan was where he thrived and when he left, a part of Baba stayed there.

Immigrants don't always see America as home. Baba, like many immigrants, was accepted in the country and struggled to get by. He didn't get to accomplish the *American Dream*-- nor did he want to. All Baba really wanted was the life he had in Afghanistan. He wanted his home back.

Works Cited

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. Riverhead Books, 2003.

McKay, Claude. "America." *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, & Sense*, 11th ed., Wadsworth, 2012, p. 911.