

*A Thousand Splendid Suns Poem Analysis* (adapted from KenwoodAcademy.org) Standards Addressed: RL4, RL6, RL9

A poet who was traveling between Persia and India wrote this poem in the 17th century. He wrote this poem when he returned to Persia because he wanted to create an expression of the beauty he saw in Kabul.

**“Kabul” by Saib-e-Tabrizi**

Oh, the beautiful city of Kabul wears a rugged mountain skirt,  
And the rose is jealous of its lash-like thorns.  
The dust of Kabul's blowing soil smarts lightly in my eyes,  
But I love her, for knowledge and love both come from her dust.

I sing bright praises to her colourful tulips,  
The beauty of her trees makes me blush.  
How sparkling the water flows from Pul-i-Mastaan!  
May Allah protect such beauty from the evil eye of man!

Khizr chose Kabul to Paradise,  
For her mountains brought him near to heaven's delights.  
The fort's dragon-sprawling walls guard the city well,  
Each brick is more precious than the treasure of Shayagan.

Every street in Kabul fascinates the eye.  
In the bazaars, Egypt's caravans pass by.  
No one can count the beauteous moons on her rooftops,  
And *hundreds of lovely suns*<sup>1</sup> hide behind her walls.

Her morning's laugh is as gay as flowers,  
Her dark nights shine like beautiful hair.  
Her tuneful nightingales sing with flame in their notes,  
Fiery songs like burning leaves, fall from their throats.

I sing to the gardens, Jahanara and Sharbara.  
Even the Tuba of Paradise is Jealous of their greenery.

*In an alternate translation, these words translate as  
“a thousand splendid suns hide behind her walls;”  
it is this line that inspired Hosseini's novel.*

From <<http://oldpoetry.com/opoem/28283-Mirza-Muhammed-Ali-Saib-Kabul>> accessed on 18 August 2010.

**Questions to answer as you read the poem:**

Who and what is the rose jealous of? This line contains an example of what poetic device?

Explain the significance of the love the speaker feels for Kabul and the fact that the city hurts the speaker.

Why blush? What makes people blush? What kinds of “praises” might the speaker be singing?

Find an example of where the poet mentions and extols something man-made. What is the example really referring to and how is it used?

What kind of woman is Kabul?

**Questions to answer after you've read the poem:**

1. What do you learn about Kabul from reading this poem?
2. What is your favorite image developed in this poem? Why?
3. What is the poet's purpose?
4. How does the poet succeed in creating a sense of the beauty of Kabul?

**Questions to connect the poem back to the novel:**

1. Hosseini states in an interview that a line from this poem inspired the title of his novel (see footnote). Connect the poem to the novel and explain whether the poet's purpose and Hosseini's purpose intersect.
2. Explain how Hosseini's novel is about the "evil eye of man."
3. Connect the description of Kabul in the poem to the descriptions of Mariam and Laila. Which woman is the city most like (or which woman is most like the city)? Explain your answers.