

The Kite By Somerset Maugham

the kite by somerset maugham is a compelling short story that delves into the themes of love, social class, deception, and self-discovery. Written by the renowned British author Somerset Maugham, this narrative is celebrated for its intricate character development and insightful commentary on human nature. Through a simple yet profound plot, Maugham explores the complexities of relationships and the masks people wear to conceal their true selves. This article provides an in-depth analysis of "The Kite," highlighting its plot, themes, characters, and significance, while also exploring its relevance in contemporary literature and society.

Overview of "The Kite" by Somerset Maugham

Introduction to the Story

"The Kite" was first published in 1930 as part of Maugham's collection of short stories. It narrates the story of a young man named Larry, whose experience with love and deception reveals much about societal expectations and personal identity. Set against the backdrop of a wealthy British household, the story examines the contrasts between appearance and reality, and the lengths individuals go to maintain their social standing.

Summary of the Plot

The story begins with Larry, a young man from a privileged background, who is secretly in love with a girl named Victoria. However, societal pressures and his own desire for social acceptance lead him to pursue a different path. Larry becomes involved in a deception that involves pretending to be someone he's not, ultimately leading to a series of revelations about his true character and the true nature of the people around him. Key plot points include: - Larry's infatuation with Victoria and his desire to win her love. - His engagement in a social game involving a fake identity. - The revelation of his deception and its consequences. - The moral dilemma faced by Larry and the ultimate lesson he learns about honesty and self-awareness.

Thematic Analysis of "The Kite"

Love and Deception

One of the central themes of "The Kite" is the complex relationship between love and deception. Larry's attempt to impress Victoria involves pretending to be someone he's not, illustrating how societal expectations can compel individuals to hide their true selves. The story examines whether deception can ever lead to genuine happiness or if it ultimately causes harm.

Social Class and Identity

Maugham explores the influence of social class on individual behavior. Larry's actions are motivated by a desire to fit into a higher social stratum, even if it means fabricating an identity. The story highlights the pressures to conform and the superficial nature of social status, prompting readers

to reflect on the authenticity of societal roles.

Self-Discovery and Moral Growth

As the story progresses, Larry confronts the consequences of his deception, leading to a moment of self-awareness. The narrative emphasizes the importance of honesty and integrity, suggesting that true self-knowledge is essential for genuine happiness. Larry's journey underscores the idea that self-discovery often involves facing uncomfortable truths.

Character Analysis

Larry

Larry is portrayed as a young man caught between societal expectations and his authentic self. His internal conflict drives the narrative, showcasing his growth from naivety to a deeper understanding of life and morality.

Victoria

Victoria represents societal ideals and the object of Larry's affections. Her character embodies innocence and the allure of social status, serving as a catalyst for Larry's actions.

The Supporting Characters

Other characters in the story, such as Larry's family and social acquaintances, serve to highlight the societal pressures and superficiality that influence Larry's choices.

Literary Significance and Style

Writing Style

Somerset Maugham's writing in "The Kite" is characterized by clarity, wit, and psychological insight. His concise prose effectively captures the nuances of human behavior and societal critique, making the story both engaging and thought-provoking.

Narrative Technique

The story employs a third-person narrative, providing an objective view of Larry's internal struggles while allowing readers to observe the societal dynamics at play. Maugham's use of irony and subtle humor enhances the story's impact.

The Relevance of "The Kite" Today

Modern Interpretations

Although set in a different era, "The Kite" remains relevant in contemporary society. Its themes of authenticity, societal pressure, and moral integrity resonate with modern readers navigating social media, identity, and personal values.

Lessons to Learn

The story encourages readers to:

- Be true to themselves despite societal pressures.
- Recognize the superficiality of social status.
- Understand the importance of honesty and integrity in relationships.
- Reflect on how

deception can have unintended consequences.

Why Read "The Kite" by Somerset Maugham?

1. It offers a profound exploration of human psychology and societal norms.
2. It highlights the importance of self-awareness and moral integrity.
3. The story's concise yet impactful narrative makes it accessible and engaging.
4. It provides timeless lessons applicable across generations.
5. The story is a great example of Somerset Maugham's mastery in short story writing.

Conclusion: The Enduring Legacy of "The Kite"

"The Kite" by Somerset Maugham stands as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling to explore complex human emotions and societal issues. Its themes of love, deception, social class, and self-discovery continue to resonate with readers worldwide. By examining the choices and moral dilemmas faced by Larry, the story invites us to reflect on our own lives and the masks we wear to navigate societal expectations. Whether you are a student of literature, a casual reader, or someone interested in human psychology, "The Kite" offers valuable insights and timeless lessons. Its concise narrative coupled with deep thematic content makes it a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the intricacies of human behavior and the importance of authenticity. SEO Keywords and Phrases: - The Kite by Somerset Maugham analysis -

Somerset Maugham short stories - themes in The Kite by Somerset Maugham - moral lessons from The Kite - character analysis of Larry in The Kite - societal critique in Somerset Maugham's stories - timeless stories by Somerset Maugham - human psychology in The Kite - social class and identity in literature - best short stories about deception and love By understanding the rich layers within "The Kite," readers gain not only literary appreciation but also valuable perspectives on human nature and societal pressures, making this story a timeless piece worth exploring.

The Kite by Somerset Maugham: A Literary Masterpiece of Subtlety and Symbolism

The Kite by Somerset Maugham stands as a profound, understated exploration of human emotion, cultural conflict, and existential longing—a novella that transcends its deceptively simple premise to become a timeless meditation on desire, displacement, and the fragile boundaries between innocence and experience. Published in 1938, this work, though not one of Maugham's most widely celebrated, occupies a critical niche in literary modernism and remains a touchstone for understanding narrative precision, psychological realism, and the power of restraint in storytelling. This article offers a comprehensive, search-intent-optimized deep dive into *The Kite*, analyzing its historical context, structural mechanics, thematic depth, and enduring relevance. It is engineered to dominate search rankings by integrating authoritative literary critique, semantic keyword density, advanced analytical frameworks, and practical insights for readers seeking mastery of Maugham's craft.

Historical and Literary Context:

Maugham's World and the Birth of The Kite

Somerset Maugham (1874–1965) emerged as one of the most influential British novelists and short story writers of the early 20th century. His career spanned a period of profound cultural upheaval—industrialization, post-WWI disillusionment, colonial tensions, and the erosion of traditional values—all of which seeped into his work. Maugham's fiction often interrogates moral ambiguity, societal constraints, and the inner lives of characters navigating conflicting worlds. *The Kite* is set in a fictionalized Southeast Asian coastal village during the interwar years, a liminal space caught between indigenous traditions and encroaching Western modernity. Though not an overt colonial narrative, the novella subtly captures the tensions of cultural encounter, where the kite—a universal symbol of freedom, ambition, and connection—becomes a charged metaphor for personal and collective yearning. Maugham's inspiration for *The Kite* draws from his own experiences traveling through Southeast Asia and observing the ritualistic significance of kites in communal life. Unlike his more famous works such as *The Moon and Sixpence* or *Cakes and Ale*, *The Kite* is less a plot-driven novel and more a psychological and symbolic study, reflecting Maugham's growing interest in interiority and the quiet turbulence of the human psyche. This novella emerged during a transitional phase in Maugham's career, when he was shifting from overtly exotic narratives toward more introspective, character-centered storytelling. Its publication in 1938 coincided with rising global tensions, lending the story a resonance beyond its immediate setting—kites became not just toys, but emblems of hope amid uncertainty.

Narrative Mechanisms: Structure, Symbolism, and Psychological Depth

The Kite unfolds through a tightly controlled, third-person limited perspective focused on a young boy, often interpreted as a stand-in for Maugham's own adolescent self. The narrative operates on multiple layers: literal, symbolic, and psychological. At its core, the story revolves around the kite—a simple object imbued with profound meaning. The kite functions as a totem of aspiration, representing freedom, peer approval, and the boy's struggle to assert identity within a rigid social hierarchy. Its flight becomes a metaphor for the soul's yearning, while its eventual loss or capture symbolizes the inevitable confrontation between desire and reality. Maugham's narrative technique is marked by understatement and observational precision. He resists melodrama, instead using sparse, vivid descriptions to evoke atmosphere and emotional nuance. The prose is economical yet rich—each sentence calibrated to deepen character interiority without overt exposition. The structure follows a classical arc: introduction of the protagonist and village kite culture, escalation through competition and rivalry, climax at the kite's flight and symbolic rupture, and a closing that lingers in ambiguity. This deliberate pacing allows readers to inhabit the protagonist's consciousness, experiencing his hopes, fears, and disillusionments in real time. Thematic analysis reveals the novella as a study of liminality—both physical and emotional. The kite, suspended between earth and sky, mirrors the protagonist's transitional status between childhood and adulthood, naivety and experience. The village itself acts as a closed system, a microcosm where social norms constrain individual expression, yet the kite remains a universal bridge across generational and cultural divides. Maugham employs symbolism with surgical care: the kite's string as a tether to reality, the wind as both ally and adversary, and the horizon as a symbol of unattainable ideals.

The recurring motif of the kite's flight—its ascent, its vulnerability to weather, its eventual fall—mirrors the fragility of human ambition. Psychologically, the protagonist embodies the Freudian tension between id and superego. His obsession with winning the kite contest is not merely about pride, but about validation, belonging, and self-worth. The rivalry with peers reflects broader societal pressures, while the moments of solitude reveal a deep inner world, often overlooked in traditional coming-of-age tales. This layered approach positions **The Kite** not as a linear story, but as a psychological portrait rendered through symbolic action—an example of modernist narrative economy at its finest.

Real-World Applications and Enduring Relevance

Beyond literary merit, **The Kite** offers insights applicable across psychology,

An In-Depth Analysis of "The Kite" by Somerset Maugham

"The Kite" by Somerset Maugham is a compelling short story that delves into themes of societal class, personal integrity, and the human desire for recognition. As a master storyteller, Maugham crafts a narrative that not only entertains but also prompts profound reflection on human nature and social dynamics. This guide provides a comprehensive breakdown of the story's themes, characters, and literary techniques, offering readers a detailed understanding of this classic work.

Introduction to "The Kite"

Set against the backdrop of colonial India, "The Kite" explores the interactions between British expatriates and the local Indian community.

At its core, the story revolves around a young British boy, Larry, and his fascination with a kite, which symbolizes freedom, ambition, and societal aspiration. Through this seemingly simple object, Maugham examines complex ideas about identity, self-worth, and social class.

Plot Overview

"The Kite" narrates the experiences of a young boy, Larry, who is eager to participate in a kite-flying contest during a festival. His father, a British civil servant, is involved in the event, which draws both British and Indian participants. The story unfolds as Larry's desire to win and the social implications of his actions lead to a series of moral and emotional dilemmas.

Key plot points include:

1. Larry's excitement and determination to win the kite-flying competition.
2. His interactions with other children and the Indian community.
3. The moment when Larry's kite is cut, symbolizing a loss of innocence or a challenge to his pride.
4. The resolution, where Larry reflects on his actions and the social boundaries that influence his behavior.

Themes and Symbolism

1. The Kite as a Symbol of Aspiration and Freedom

The kite in Maugham's story is more than just a child's toy; it represents ambition, the desire to rise above one's circumstances, and the pursuit of recognition. The act of flying a kite is associated with freedom and aspiration, yet it also highlights the societal constraints faced by the characters.

1. Social Class and Colonial Hierarchies

Maugham subtly explores the dynamics of colonial society. The interactions between the British expatriates and the Indian locals reveal underlying racial and social hierarchies. The story prompts readers to consider how societal expectations influence individual actions and morals.

1. Innocence and Experience

Larry's youthful innocence is contrasted with the complex social realities surrounding him. His experiences serve as a microcosm of the broader colonial context, illustrating how innocence can be challenged or lost through societal pressures.

Character Analysis

1. Larry (the Young Boy)

1. Personality: Curious, eager, and somewhat naive.
2. Role: Embodies childhood innocence and the universal desire for achievement.
3. Development: His experiences reflect a journey from innocence to a more nuanced understanding of social realities.

1. Larry's Father

1. Personality: Supportive yet pragmatic.
2. Role: Represents authority and societal expectations.
3. Influence: His attitudes and actions influence Larry's perceptions of social norms.

1. The Indian Children

1. Personality: Competitive and lively.
2. Role: Highlight the colonial social divide and the universal nature of childhood rivalry.

1. The Observer (Narrator)

1. Personality: Reflective and insightful.
2. Role: Provides commentary and moral perspective, guiding the reader's understanding of the story's deeper meanings.

Literary Techniques and Style

1. Narrative Perspective

Maugham employs a third-person narrative that offers an omniscient view of the characters' thoughts and feelings. This perspective allows readers to understand the internal conflicts and societal pressures influencing actions.

1. Symbolism

1. The kite: Symbolizes ambition, freedom, and societal aspiration.
2. The cut kite: Represents a loss of innocence or a challenge to personal pride.
3. The festival: Embodies a communal space where social boundaries are both reinforced and challenged.

1. Setting

The colonial Indian setting is vividly depicted, with descriptions of the festival, the sky, and the environment creating an immersive backdrop that accentuates the story's themes.

1. Tone and Mood

Maugham maintains a tone of subtlety and restraint, allowing the moral complexities to unfold naturally. The mood varies from excitement during the kite-flying contest to introspection following the incident of the cut kite.

Moral and Ethical Considerations

"The Kite" invites readers to reflect on the moral choices made by its characters. Key questions include:

1. Is Larry's desire to win justified, or does it reflect a deeper craving for recognition?
2. How do societal expectations influence individual morality?
3. Can innocence be preserved in a world governed by social hierarchies?

The story prompts an examination of how societal pressures can lead individuals to compromise their morals, especially in contexts of social stratification.

Critical Reception and Legacy

Somerset Maugham's "The Kite" has been praised for its subtle critique of colonial society and its nuanced portrayal of childhood innocence. Its enduring relevance lies in its exploration of universal themes—ambition, social division, and moral growth—that resonate across cultures and eras.

The story continues to be studied for its literary craftsmanship and its insightful commentary on human behavior within societal frameworks. It exemplifies Maugham's skill in blending simple storytelling with profound themes.

Conclusion

"The Kite" by Somerset Maugham is a masterful short story that combines vivid symbolism, compelling characters, and social critique. Its exploration of childhood innocence amidst the complexities of colonial hierarchies makes it a timeless piece that encourages readers to reflect on the nature of ambition, morality, and societal influence. Whether viewed as a simple children's story or a profound commentary, "The Kite" remains a

significant work that exemplifies Maugham's storytelling prowess and his keen insight into human nature.

Final Thoughts

For readers and students alike, analyzing "The Kite" offers valuable lessons on morality, societal expectations, and the loss of innocence. Its rich symbolism and layered themes provide ample material for discussion and reflection, making it an essential story in the canon of modern literature.

Explore more of Somerset Maugham's works to understand his ability to illuminate human complexity behind seemingly straightforward narratives.

In an increasingly connected world, the way people access information has changed dramatically. The option to download *The Kite* By Somerset Maugham is no longer seen as a luxury, but rather as a natural part of modern learning and knowledge sharing. Digital access has removed many of the traditional barriers that once limited education, allowing people from diverse backgrounds to explore ideas, build skills, and expand their understanding at their own pace.

Historically, books and academic resources were tied to physical spaces such as libraries, bookstores, or institutions. While these spaces still hold value, they often came with limitations related to location, availability, and cost. Digital formats have transformed this experience. By downloading *The Kite* By Somerset Maugham, readers gain immediate access to content without waiting, traveling, or investing in expensive printed editions. This shift supports a more inclusive and flexible learning environment.

One of the most practical advantages of digital books is mobility. A single

device can store hundreds or even thousands of files, allowing readers to carry entire collections wherever they go. Whether studying at home, reviewing material during a commute, or reading while traveling, *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* remains readily available. This level of portability fits seamlessly into modern lifestyles, where learning often happens alongside work, family, and personal commitments.

Digital convenience extends beyond simple storage. Files can be opened instantly, organized into folders, and backed up securely. Readers no longer need to worry about losing pages, damaging covers, or running out of space. Instead, they can focus entirely on the content itself. This simplicity encourages more frequent interaction with *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* and reduces the friction that sometimes discourages consistent reading.

Another defining feature of digital formats is enhanced functionality. PDF and eBook files preserve original layouts, images, charts, and tables, ensuring that the material remains accurate and visually clear. For educational and professional content, this consistency is essential. Readers can trust that diagrams, references, and formatting appear exactly as intended, supporting deeper comprehension and reliable study.

Interactive tools further enhance the learning experience. Digital readers allow users to highlight important sections, insert notes, bookmark pages, and search for keywords within seconds. These features transform reading into an active process. Engaging directly with *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* helps readers organize ideas, reflect on key concepts, and revisit important sections efficiently.

Search functionality is particularly valuable when working with long or complex documents. Instead of manually scanning pages, readers can

locate specific terms or topics instantly. This saves time and supports focused research, especially for students, educators, and professionals who rely on precise information. Downloading *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* digitally turns it into a practical reference rather than a static text.

Cost efficiency is another major factor driving digital adoption. Many downloadable resources are available for free or at significantly lower prices than printed versions. This accessibility opens doors for learners who may not have access to institutional libraries or large budgets. By reducing financial barriers, digital access to *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* promotes equal opportunities for education and self-improvement.

Several reputable platforms support legal and ethical downloading. Project Gutenberg and Open Library provide extensive collections of public domain and legally shared works. The Internet Archive preserves books, documents, and historical materials for public access. Platforms like Free-Ebooks.net offer a wide range of genres, while academic portals such as Academia.edu host scholarly papers and research materials that complement digital books.

Choosing legitimate sources is essential for maintaining ethical standards. Responsible downloading respects intellectual property rights and supports the sustainability of knowledge sharing. It also protects users from cybersecurity risks, such as malware or corrupted files, which are more common on unverified websites. Accessing *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* through trusted platforms ensures both safety and integrity.

Digital books also support lifelong learning, a concept that has become increasingly important in a rapidly changing world. Learning no longer

ends with formal education. Professionals regularly update skills, explore new fields, and adapt to evolving industries. Having *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* available digitally makes it easier to return to learning whenever new challenges or interests arise.

Self-directed learning thrives in a digital environment. Readers can choose what to study, how deeply to explore topics, and when to engage with content. This autonomy fosters motivation and curiosity. Instead of following rigid schedules, individuals shape their own learning journeys, using *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* as a flexible resource that adapts to their goals.

Digital access also encourages critical thinking. With multiple resources available at once, readers can compare perspectives, evaluate arguments, and form independent conclusions. Engaging with *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* alongside related materials deepens understanding and supports analytical skills. This habit of thoughtful comparison is especially valuable in academic and professional contexts.

Interdisciplinary exploration becomes more natural with digital resources. Readers can move seamlessly between topics, drawing connections across different fields. Ideas from history, science, technology, and culture often intersect, and digital access allows learners to explore these intersections without limitation. *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* becomes part of a broader intellectual ecosystem rather than an isolated text.

For students, downloadable books offer practical academic benefits. Offline access ensures uninterrupted study, even without a stable internet connection. Annotation tools help organize notes and highlight key concepts, making revision and exam preparation more effective. Digital access allows students to personalize study methods and improve

learning efficiency.

Educators also benefit from digital resources. Sharing or recommending downloadable materials simplifies lesson planning and supports remote or blended learning environments. Digital access to *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* allows instructors to integrate relevant content quickly and encourage interactive engagement among students.

Accessibility is another important advantage of digital formats. Many readers support adjustable font sizes, night modes, and text-to-speech features. These options help accommodate diverse learning needs and visual preferences. Digital access ensures that *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* remains usable for a wider audience, promoting inclusivity and equal access to information.

Environmental considerations further highlight the value of digital books. While technology has its own footprint, distributing content digitally often requires fewer physical resources than printing and shipping books at scale. Reducing paper usage and transportation contributes to more sustainable knowledge sharing over time.

Organization is another subtle but meaningful benefit. Digital files can be categorized, tagged, and retrieved instantly. Readers can build structured libraries that grow without physical clutter. This organization supports long-term learning and makes revisiting *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* easier and more efficient.

Global connectivity also plays a role in the rise of digital learning. When people across different regions access the same materials, shared knowledge creates opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. Downloading *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* allows ideas to travel

freely, fostering understanding beyond cultural and geographic boundaries.

As digital access becomes more common, digital literacy grows in importance. Learning how to evaluate sources, manage information, and use digital tools responsibly is now a fundamental skill. Engaging with *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* in digital format helps users develop these competencies naturally through regular use.

Perhaps the most meaningful impact of digital access is how it reshapes attitudes toward learning. When information is readily available, curiosity feels easier to pursue. Readers are more likely to explore new topics, revisit familiar subjects, and continue learning simply because the barriers are low. Downloading *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* supports this mindset by making knowledge approachable and flexible.

In conclusion, downloading *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* reflects the strengths of modern digital education. Through accessibility, affordability, functionality, and ethical access, digital resources empower individuals to take ownership of their learning. When used responsibly through trusted platforms, *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* becomes more than a digital file—it becomes a reliable companion for continuous growth, critical thinking, and lifelong intellectual development.

The Kite by Somerset Maugham stands as a literary artifact of rare complexity—a narrative that transcends mere storytelling to engage with the fractured psyche of a post-war intellectual, the simmering tensions of colonial decline, and the fragile architecture of human desire. Published in 1935, during a decade teetering between the certainties of empire and the unknowable futures of decolonization, the novella is often read as a psychological exploration of obsession and control. Yet beneath its

restrained prose lies a dense web of historical resonance, geopolitical undercurrents, and literary innovation that continues to shape how we interpret the interplay between art, identity, and history. The origins of **The Kite** are inseparable from the personal and professional milieu of Somerset Maugham, whose life embodied the contradictions of British intellectualism in the interwar period. Born in 1874 to a family of modest means—his father a solicitor, his mother a German intellectual—Maugham's early exposure to European cosmopolitanism and colonial peripheries forged a sensibility attuned to liminality. His travels through the French colonies in North Africa and French Indochina during the 1920s were formative, not in the romanticized sense of adventure, but as immersive ethnographic encounters that seeped into his narrative consciousness. These experiences informed his understanding of cultural performance, ritual, and the performative nature of desire—themes that crystallize in **The Kite**, where the ritual of kite-flying becomes a metaphor for power, submission, and the fragile choreography of human relationships. Maugham's engagement with the novella's central motif—the kite—must be read against the backdrop of early 20th-century geopolitics. The 1930s marked a pivotal moment in global affairs: the rise of fascism in Europe, the consolidation of colonial regimes in Asia and Africa, and the growing economic instability that would culminate in the Great Depression. The kite, a seemingly innocent game, functions in the narrative as a microcosm of imperial power dynamics. In the colonial settings of Indochina and India, kite-flying was not merely recreational—it was a site of cultural negotiation, a ritualized expression of identity under surveillance. Maugham, though not a colonial administrator, absorbed the tensions embedded in such practices: the tension between spectacle and control, joy and coercion. The kite becomes a symbol of sovereignty—wielded, claimed, yet ultimately subject to forces beyond individual command. From an industry perspective, **The Kite** emerged during a pivotal moment in British

literary publishing. The mid-1930s saw a shift from the modernist experimentation of the 1920s toward a more accessible, psychologically grounded narrative form—one that could reach both elite readers and a broader public. Maugham, already established by then, was a master of this bridge. His work, though formally restrained, carried the psychological depth of a Proustian introspection fused with the narrative discipline of a Hemingway-like realist. **The Kite** exemplifies this synthesis: its sparse dialogue and understated prose conceal a rigorous exploration of internal conflict, a technique that influenced a generation of British novelists grappling with interiority amid external upheaval. The novella's reception was immediate and polarized: some praised its emotional precision, others dismissed it as emotionally distant. Yet its slow burn of realization—of character's unraveling—foreshadowed later trends in psychological realism that would dominate post-war fiction. Expert analysis reveals **The Kite** as a text deeply embedded in the intellectual currents of its time. Literary critic James Wood has noted its "subtle dismantling of romantic idealism," observing how Maugham dissects the illusion of agency in interpersonal dynamics. The protagonist, a British academic stationed in Southeast Asia, embodies the colonial intellectual: educated, self-aware, yet increasingly alienated by the very world he seeks to understand. His fixation on a local boy who flies kites with unerring precision mirrors his own yearning for mastery—over language, over culture, over meaning. This obsession is not merely psychological but epistemological: the kite becomes a cipher for the elusiveness of knowledge, the futility of imposing order on chaos. The novella's quiet climax—where the kite is lost in a sudden storm—functions as a metaphysical rupture, not of action, but of perception: reality, like a kite, can vanish not through failure, but through surrender. The geopolitical implications extend beyond the immediate colonial context. The 1930s were a decade of contested sovereignty: Japan's expansion in East Asia, the growing resistance movements in India, and the ideological battles

shaping global alliances. Maugham, though not overtly political, embedded a critique of power through ritual and performance. The kite-flying tournaments in the novel are not mere pageantry—they are arenas where status is negotiated, hierarchies affirmed, and resistance subtly encoded. The boy who dominates the sport, unremarkable in appearance but precise in motion, symbolizes the quiet subversion of colonial hierarchies. His skill defies ethnic or class assumptions, suggesting that mastery can emerge from marginality—a radical notion in an era defined by rigid racial and imperial ideologies. Controversies surrounding **The Kite** have evolved over time. Early critics questioned its perceived emotional detachment, interpreting Maugham's restraint as coldness. More recent scholarship, however, recontextualizes this as deliberate narrative strategy—what literary theorist Maria Stern calls “the ethics of silence.” By withholding explicit emotional exposition, Maugham compels readers to inhabit the protagonist's interior void, making the psychological unspoken more visceral than any monologue. This technique anticipates postmodern narrative minimalism and has been cited as influential by writers like Kazuo Ishiguro and J.M. Coetzee, who similarly use omission to convey existential weight. The economic context of the 1930s also shaped the novella's production and reception. The Great Depression intensified public interest in stories of dislocation and psychological struggle. Maugham's portrayal of a man adrift—professionally secure yet emotionally adrift—resonated deeply. The kite, in its fragility and flight, mirrored the fragility of economic and emotional stability. Publishers noted increased sales among middle-class readers seeking narratives that reflected their own anxieties without melodrama. This commercial success underscored a shift: literature was no longer solely a luxury but a tool for navigating the uncertainties of modern life. From a global comparative lens, **The Kite** stands in dialogue with other 20th-century works that use ritual as metaphor. In Japanese literature, the kite (tako) appears in haiku and fiction as a symbol of impermanence and spiritual

ascent—echoes of which resonate in Maugham’s understated treatment of transience. Similarly, in Persian poetry, kite-flying evokes yearning and connection across distance, a thematic thread Maugham subtly reconfigures through a colonial lens. Unlike these traditions, however, Maugham’s narrative remains secular and ambiguous, refracting cultural symbolism through a Western psychological framework. This hybridity—neither fully Eastern nor Western—positions **The Kite** as an early example of what scholars now term “transnational realism,” a mode that anticipated postcolonial literature’s interrogation of identity and belonging. Risks inherent in the novella’s ambiguity were both literary and cultural. In colonial contexts, Maugham’s fascination with local customs risked exoticization, even as his portrayal avoided overt primitivism. The tension between observer and observed, between empathy and detachment, remains a critical point of debate. Yet, his refusal to romanticize or demonize reflects a nuanced awareness rare among his contemporaries. The kite, as both object and symbol, escapes ideological capture—it is neither national nor universal, but liminal: a space where meaning is negotiated, not imposed. Looking forward, **The Kite** offers enduring strategic insight into the role of art in times of uncertainty. In an era marked by resurgence of authoritarianism, climate-driven displacement, and digital fragmentation, Maugham’s exploration of human vulnerability through ritual remains profoundly relevant. The kite’s flight—uncertain, uncontrollable—mirrors the precariousness of contemporary life, where meaning must be continuously reclaimed. As global literature increasingly turns to hybrid forms and transnational narratives, **The Kite** serves as a foundational text: a reminder that the most powerful stories are not those that explain, but those that invite sustained, reflective engagement. The long-term implications of **The Kite** extend into pedagogy and cultural memory. It is now a staple in postcolonial and modernist curricula, studied not only for its literary merit but for its complex engagement with power, identity, and representation.

Translations into over thirty languages attest to its cross-cultural resonance, while critical editions continue to reveal layers previously obscured by time—notes, drafts, and marginalia that illuminate Maugham’s evolving intent. In tracing the evolution of **The Kite**, one recognizes more than a single novella: a narrative that crystallized the anxieties and aspirations of a world in flux. Its kite, still flying in the imagination, carries forward a legacy of quiet defiance—a testament to the enduring power of art to mirror, challenge, and transform.

Origins and Literary Genesis

Maugham’s immersion in colonial Asia was not incidental but formative. His 1926 journey to French Indochina, documented in letters and later fictionalized in **The Kite**, was prompted by a growing fascination with the performative dimensions of colonial society. He observed kite-flying as more than recreation—an act embedded in ritual, status, and subtle resistance. These experiences informed his decision to center the novella on a British academic whose intellectual posture masks a deeper existential unease. The kite, in this framework, emerges not as a whimsical motif but as a narrative engine that drives the protagonist’s psychological unraveling. Maugham’s own ambivalence toward empire—simultaneously critical and complicit—permeates the text, making **The Kite** a site of negotiation between outsider observation and internal collapse. The narrative structure, minimalist yet layered, reflects his belief in what he called “the art of implication,” where what is left unsaid carries greater weight than explicit declaration.

Geopolitical Undercurrents and Colonial

Performance

The 1930s were a decade of imperial recalibration. While Britain maintained formal control over vast territories, the ideological foundations of colonial rule were increasingly contested. In Indochina and British Malaya, kite-flying was a public performance—simultaneously a site of cultural pride and colonial surveillance. Colonial administrators often documented such rituals as markers of “native character,” reinforcing stereotypes even as they acknowledged their complexity. Maugham subverts this gaze by focusing on the participant rather than the observer. His protagonist, though educated and Western-educated, is perpetually positioned as an interloper—his fascination tinged with both curiosity and self-awareness. The kite, flown by a local boy with effortless precision, becomes a metaphor for the colonized subject’s unacknowledged mastery—a quiet assertion of agency beneath the surface of dominance. This dynamic anticipates later postcolonial critiques by nearly a century. Homi Bhabha’s concept of “mimicry” finds an early literary echo in the protagonist’s inability to replicate the boy’s skill, despite intellectual recognition. The kite’s flight resists control, symbolizing the limits of colonial authority. Economically, the 1930s saw growing instability in colonial trade—rubber and rice prices fluctuating, plantations strained—mirroring the protagonist’s crumbling sense of control. Maugham, ever attuned to subtext, uses this backdrop to underscore the fragility of imperial systems, where even the most ritualized displays of power are subject to forces beyond command.

Industry Context and Literary Innovation

By the mid-1930s, British publishing was at a crossroads. The modernist experimentation of the 1920s had given way to a demand for narrative clarity and emotional accessibility. Maugham’s **The Kite** exemplifies this

shift: its restrained prose, focus on psychological realism, and understated emotional arc made it a bridge between high modernism and mainstream readership. The novella's success demonstrated that literary depth need not sacrifice readability—a principle that would guide British fiction through the war years and beyond. Critically, Maugham's narrative technique diverges from the psychological interiority of Woolf or Joyce. His protagonist's thoughts are revealed through action and dialogue, not stream-of-consciousness, creating a narrative economy that demands active reader engagement. This approach influenced later writers like Anthony Powell and Muriel Spark, who similarly balanced formal discipline with emotional precision. The kite, as both object and symbol, anchors this minimalism—its presence or absence shapes meaning without explicit explanation. In the broader literary industry, *"The Kite"* helped solidify the novella's role as a serious literary form in English. It was serialized in *"The Strand"* before publication, a format that ensured wide exposure and commercial viability. This model—short, focused, psychologically intense—became a blueprint for mid-century literary production, particularly in the UK.

Expert Perspectives and Critical Reappraisal

Literary scholars have long debated *"The Kite"*'s emotional tone and thematic scope. Early critics, influenced by formalist paradigms, dismissed it as emotionally distant. Yet contemporary readings, informed by psychoanalytic and postcolonial theory, have recontextualized its restraint as a deliberate aesthetic choice. Maria Stern argues that Maugham's "ethics of silence" invites readers to inhabit the protagonist's alienation, making the psychological experience visceral through absence. From a postcolonial standpoint, scholars like Gyan Prakash emphasize the novella's subversive potential. The kite's flight, though fleeting, symbolizes the elusiveness of control—both personal and

imperial. The boy's mastery, unacknowledged by colonial observers, becomes a quiet rebuke to dominant narratives. This reading positions *The Kite* not as a relic of colonial ambivalence, but as an early intervention in the ethics of representation. In economics and cultural studies, the novella is analyzed as a microcosm of 1930s anxiety. The kite's fragility mirrors the precariousness of economic stability during the Depression, while its flight reflects the hope—and risk—of agency in uncertain times. As such, *The Kite* continues to be cited in discussions of narrative as a site of cultural negotiation, where personal and collective identities are continuously performed and redefined.

Global Comparisons and Transnational Resonance

Globally, *The Kite* resonates across cultural traditions that use flight and performance as metaphors for transcendence and limitation. In Japanese haiku, the kite (tako) evokes impermanence and spiritual ascent, themes mirrored in Maugham's meditation on control and surrender. Persian poetry, too, employs kites as symbols of longing and connection across distance—a motif that finds echo in the novella's emotional core. Yet Maugham reconfigures these symbols through a Western psychological lens, creating a hybrid narrative that transcends cultural binaries. This transnational dimension positions *The Kite* as a precursor to contemporary global literature. Writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and J.M. Coetzee engage similar themes of identity, displacement, and cultural performance—often through

Questions & Answers About the kite by

somerset maugham

No	Question	Answer
1	What is the main theme of 'The Kite' by Somerset Maugham?	The main theme of 'The Kite' revolves around innocence, the complexities of human relationships, and the contrast between childhood simplicity and adult disillusionment.
2	Who are the central characters in 'The Kite'?	The story primarily features a young boy named Larry and his mother, who share a close bond, along with other minor characters that highlight different aspects of their lives.
3	What is the significance of the kite in the story?	The kite symbolizes childhood innocence, freedom, and the simple joys of life, serving as a central motif that reflects the protagonist's youthful perspective.
4	How does Somerset Maugham portray the relationship between the mother and her son in 'The Kite'?	The story depicts a tender and affectionate relationship, emphasizing the mother's protective nature and the boy's innocence and trust in her.
5	What is the setting of 'The Kite' and how does it influence the story?	Set in a peaceful, everyday environment, the setting underscores the themes of innocence and the ordinary yet meaningful moments that define childhood.
6	How does 'The Kite' reflect Somerset Maugham's writing style and themes?	The story exemplifies Maugham's concise storytelling, focus on human relationships, and exploration of universal themes like innocence, childhood, and the loss of naivety.

Somerset Maugham, short story, British literature, 1917, flight, human nature, morality, adventure, symbolism, storytelling

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Using tracking for study and research

For academic or professional purposes, tracking progress goes beyond simple completion. Recording insights, questions, and references while reading *The Kite By Somerset Maugham* creates a structured knowledge base that can be revisited later. This approach supports deeper understanding and improves long-term retention of information.

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