One of the most important lessons that my family has taught me throughout my life is to never take anything at face value. I have always been skeptical of those in authority, and that is in large part due to my family constantly pushing me to look beyond what people say and try to discern their intentions; this has made me a very big fan of politics, since I find a lot of fun in finding the subtle lies and deception that many politicians weave into their campaigns. In the novel, Mariam’s mother, Nana, also encouraged her to be skeptical, teaching her that people can be untrustworthy and deceitful. However, Mariam reacted differently than I did and dismissed most of these claims because they where mainly aimed at Jalil, whom Mariam adored. Mariam was completely enthralled with Jalil. In fact, when Hosseini first introduces him in the novel, he describes Mariam’s attitude towards Jalil: “when Jalil talked … Mariam would listen with enchantment” (Hosseini 5). Mariam’s love for Jalil blinded her from seeing his clear faults. But as she got older, Mariam became more aware of how Jalil was deceiving her and eventually came to distrust him.

While I have at times been enthralled with people, I have never let it become strong enough that I am no longer capable of questioning their words or actions. Although being able to see through people’s actions has definitely enabled me to avoid situations such as the betrayal that Mariam experienced with Jalil, it has also made it hard for me to connect with other people, since I can easily see when they are being dishonest or attempting to push their own agenda. The idea of questioning people in power was most prevalent from my parents between 2006 and 2008. When I would go to school, we would learn about presidents, how wonderful they were, and a bunch of other nonsense designed to appeal to small children. But almost everyday when I came home from school, my father would break down every decision, policy, and ambiguous statement that our president at the time, George W. Bush, had made in order to justify finishing the war his father started. My father’s stark words at first caused me to rebel. During the 2008 election, I aligned my self with John McCain, but as I got older I started to think more deeply about people’s words and actions, and this has lead me to become a fiscally conservative independent. Similarly, Mariam was at first completely obsessed with Jalil, but after learning that he didn’t really care for her that much, she become much less trusting in others, especially men. 

(Image Source: <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnnnext/dam/assets/150401134700-donald-trump-gallery-4-super-169.jpg>)

Donald Trump, the man pictured above, has reinvigorated these very educational discussions with my parents about analyzing the motives and actions of public figures. Mr. Trump has been at the center of many of our family’s recent debates about people’s intentions, and analyzing his actions with my parents has been one of the most interesting and amusing experiences of my life. He is a very intriguing political character, since he is a reflection of everything wrong with the average American’s concept of reality, and yet people vilify him for saying the same crazy ideas that many Americans have been thinking for decades. The way he has been marketing himself to the American voter in his campaign has lead to a whole series of intellectually stimulating conversations with my parents about whether you should demonize the people (like Trump supporters) who can’t control their internal depravities when tempted by a figure in power or the person who appeals to such base instincts in order to advance his economic and political agenda (such as Mr. Trump). My parents are constantly pushing me to challenge the status quo, and that has made me a very critical thinker, which is a skill that I think is criminally under taught in public schools.