Necessary Targets Study Guide

Necessary Targets by Eve Ensler

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Eve Ensler's *Necessary Targets*, first produced in 1996 (and later published by Villard Books in 2001), was inspired by the author's trip to the former Yugoslavia. Ensler went there to interview Bosnian women war refugees. It was from Ensler's experience with these women that *Necessary Targets* was born. "When we think of war," Ensler writes in the introduction to her published play, "we think of it as something that happens to men." The focus is on bombs and the immediate destruction that they wreak. Little media attention or conscious thought on the part of people living in other countries is focused on the aftermath of war. "But after the bombing," Ensler continues, "that's when the real war begins." Ensler wrote *Necessary Targets* in an attempt to change this focus.

In Bosnia, Ensler met women who were forced to deal with the aftermath of war, and it was their stories that inspired her. "It was their community, their holding on to love, their insane humanity in the face of catastrophe, their staggering refusal to have or seek revenge," Ensler writes, "that fueled me and ultimately moved me to write this play." The outstanding performances of many actresses have paid tribute to *Necessary Targets*. In 1996, Meryl Streep and Anjelica Huston read the play at a benefit performance in the United States; Vanessa Redgrave did the same in London. In Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, Glenn Close and Marisa Tomei performed the play.

Ensler, who won international fame for her award-winning play *The Vagina Monologues* (1996), has stated that she dreams of building a world in which women are safe and free. *Necessary Targets* is one of the first steps toward that goal. It is the story of two American women who go to Bosnia in the hope of teaching five female survivors of war how to cope with their trauma. By the end of the play, it is one of the American women who has learned the more valuable lesson. After Ensler won an Obie in 1997 for *Vagina Monologues*, *Necessary Targets* gained renewed interest and, in 2001, was performed in Connecticut and Washington, D.C. The following year, it opened off Broadway at the Variety Arts Theatre in New York.

Author Biography

Nationality 1: American

Birthdate: 1953

Eve Ensler was born on May 25, 1953, in New York City. Her childhood was not a happy one. She has revealed that she was sexually and physically abused by her father. After her father's death, Ensler told her mother about the abuse. Ensler has stated that it was this revelation to her mother that set her free. □At that moment,□ Ensler told Cora Llamas, a writer for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, □my entire life changed. I went from a depressed, self-hating person to a free one.□ Llamas went on to write in the same interview that it was because of these difficult experiences that Ensler has been able to empathize with women around the world who also have suffered abuse.

In 1975, Ensler graduated from Middlebury College in Vermont. Later, she worked as an editor for *Central Park Magazine*. The first of her plays to gain media attention was *Floating Rhoda and the Glue Man* (1995), about a dysfunctional relationship between a man and a woman. Ensler's stepson, Dylan McDermott, played the male protagonist, whose character often stepped back from the action of the play to dissect his feelings.

Ensler's next play, *Necessary Targets* (1996), enjoyed public readings by such famous actresses as Meryl Streep, Vanessa Redgrave, and Glenn Close, to raise money for Bosnian war refugees. The play garnered little media attention, however, until Ensler gained international fame for her successful 1996-1997 production of *The Vagina Monologues*, in which she performed all the roles. This play won her an Obie Award for playwriting and launched her career not only as a dramatist but also as an activist for women's rights. Jack Helbig describes *The Vagina Monologues* in *Booklist* as a □witty, wildly popular meditation on female sexuality.□ The play also is referred to, in an article by Marc Peyser for *Newsweek*, as □one of the biggest theater successes in years.□

The success of *The Vagina Monologues* caused quite a strong reaction around the world. China, at first, banned it. According to one newspaper headline, Japan braced for it. Many women, however, wrapped their arms around the play. As a result of the enthusiasm, Ensler founded the V-Day movement to stop violence against women. From the founding of the movement on, Ensler has been a political activist. She travels around the globe, raising people's awareness about the plight of women subjected to violence. The V-Day movement is so powerful that many people credit Ensler with stimulating a new wave of feminism.

In 2003, Ensler produced the film documentary *What I Want My Words to Do to You: Voices from Inside a Woman's Maximum Security Prison*. *The Good Body*, in which she also starred, premiered in 2004. In addition, Ensler published the book *Vagina Warriors* (2005) and, as of 2005, had begun writing two new works, *I Am an Emotional Creature* and *V-World*. Other plays include *When I Call My Voices* (1979) and *Rendezvous* (1983).

Ensler was married for a brief period to Richard McDermott. During their marriage, Ensler adopted McDermott's son, Dylan. Dylan, only a few years younger than Ensler, has gone on to become an accomplished actor, crediting Ensler for his success. In 2005, Ensler was sharing her life with Ariel Orr Jordan, a psychotherapist.

Plot Summary

Scene 1

Necessary Targets is not broken down into acts, only into scenes. It begins in a plush apartment somewhere in New York City. Two women are onstage. The first to speak is Melissa, who is described as □a young, strong woman who sits awkwardly on the sofa.□ The second woman, called J.S., is a □reserved woman near fifty.□ Through the conversation, the audience can tell that Melissa is very laid back, whereas J.S. is just the opposite.

J.S. is a psychiatrist, but Melissa refers to her as a □shrink□ and becomes self-conscious about the questions J.S. asks her. She senses that every time she offers an answer, J.S. is analyzing her. This is especially apparent when Melissa makes the comment, □Well, I've been through a lot.□ Melissa offers this information to make the point that she is older than her calendar years. Melissa has come to J.S.'s apartment for an interview. Melissa is a trauma counselor and a writer, and the two women are planning to travel together to meet with Bosnian women who are refugees from the war. Melissa has worked in other countries, with other victims of war. J.S., on the other hand, has never been to a war-torn country. This is why J.S. has asked Melissa to go with her to Bosnia.

Melissa challenges J.S. about her lack of experience. J.S., however, states that □trauma is trauma,□ indicating that her background in dealing with such problems as anorexia should qualify her to work with women who are suffering from the violence of war. Melissa expresses doubts about this. She also objects to being called J.S.'s assistant. She is used to working alone.

Scene 2

The setting is a refugee camp in Bosnia. J.S. complains of the filthy conditions in the bathroom. She would prefer to stay in a hotel. Melissa points out that the distance and the dissimilarities between the camp and the hotel would foster resentment among the women they have come to interview.

Scene 3

The third scene opens with J.S. and Melissa in a room with Jelena (a middle-aged woman), Zlata (a sophisticated older woman), Nuna (a teenager), Seada (a young adult), and Azra (an elderly woman). The Bosnian women are a bit testy, and they make fun of the American women. One woman refers to J.S. as a □loony doctor.□ Then the Bosnian women talk among themselves, kidding one another and appearing not to listen to J.S., who is trying to set up the guidelines for their sessions together. The Bosnian women are reluctant participants. Instead of responding to J.S.'s questions,

they ask their own questions, including questions about the process of the counseling. J.S. attempts to keep the conversation on course, but the Bosnian women point out the irrelevance of J.S.'s questions. Melissa, too, is impatient. When J.S. asks whether one of the women is from Bosnia, Melissa is the first to respond, and the words she has chosen□□Of course she's from Bosnia.□□reflect her irritation at J.S.'s seeming lack of awareness.

Zlata then says, □We're all from Bosnia. What do you think we're doing here?□ This comment adds to the tension, as the women gang up on J.S., mocking her as a way of pointing out how ridiculous it is that she is there. Jelena steps in at this point and subtly reminds the other women of their manners. □We are very honored that you Americans came all the way here,□ she says; then she proceeds to introduce the other Bosnian women. The Bosnian women ask why the Americans have come. Melissa tries to explain. First, she tells the women that they have come to help them talk. The Bosnian women scoff at this. All they have been doing is talking, they say.

J.S. tries to make it clearer. She tells them she has come to help them talk about the war, in particular. This makes even less sense to the refugees. Several of them make condescending remarks before Zlata says: □You flew all the way here for that?□ She asks J.S. what she thinks they have spent most of their days talking about since they arrived at the camp: □Our lingerie, our dinner parties . . . ?□ The Bosnian women are tired of talking. They are tired of people coming from the outside and wanting to hear their stories.

Melissa tells the women that she wants to record their stories so that the whole world knows about them. Even Jelena, who had been supportive of the Americans up to this point, finds this difficult to swallow. At the end of the third scene, Nuna says, □So this is American therapy?□ To this, Azra responds: □It just feels like another terrible day to me.□

Scene 4

Scene 4 begins in J.S.'s room at the camp. She has given up and is packing her suitcase. She says that she feels embarrassed and ludicrous. She does not believe she has anything to offer the women. Melissa tries to talk her out of this. She reminds J.S. that the women are only taking out their frustration, anger, and fear on the two of them. It is here that the title of the play is explained. Melissa tells J.S. that the women are attacking them because she and J.S. are □necessary targets.□ But Melissa and J.S. are interrupted when Nuna runs into their room. □Baby Doona won't stop crying,□ she says. Melissa leaves the room. Nuna tells J.S. that the women are not as bad as they first appear. When Melissa comes back with the baby, she tells J.S. that one of the Bosnian women is ready to talk to the Americans. Melissa does not say which one.

Scene 5

Jelena opens the next scene, talking about her husband and the awful changes in his personality since the war. Jelena is talking to Azra, but Azra is not really connecting with her. Rather, Azra is lost in her own world. She wants her goats and her cow.

Scene 6

It is nighttime when scene 6 opens. Someone creeps into J.S.'s room. It is Seada, who refers to J.S. as □mama.□ Seada wants to sleep with J.S. and climb into her bed. J.S. feels awkward and tries to talk Seada out of it, to no avail.

Scene 7

A rainstorm begins scene 7. All the women are sitting around a table. Some of the women are willing to talk, but Zlata continues to refuse. Jelena says that everyone knows everyone else's story, but no one knows Zlata's story. Azra is the first to tell her story. When she starts to cry, Zlata wants to know how this is helping anyone. Coffee is poured for all the women, but J.S. does not drink hers. When she is asked why, she tells the women that she has given up caffeine. The Bosnian women think that this sounds like an American thing to do. Nuna takes offense at J.S.'s not drinking coffee with them. She thinks it means J.S. does not like them. When Jelena explains this to her, J.S. hesitates but finally sips the coffee.

Scene 8

Zlata is sitting in a room by herself, crying, when J.S. walks in. J.S. feels awkward about her intrusion and, to cover her awkwardness, starts up a conversation about the weather. Zlata quickly switches the topic to J.S.'s wealth and profession. J.S. refuses to answer Zlata's questions, explaining that she is trained to pose questions, not answer them. Zlata confronts her on this, asking whether J.S. is even able to hold a normal conversation. The women start talking about the war. Zlata says she used to blame the leaders for the war, but now she thinks that there is a monster in all human beings that waits for an opportunity to come out. They each laugh at themselves when they try to describe the monster inside of them. And when Zlata's body begins to shake, J.S. becomes concerned, wanting to help. She tells Zlata that she wants to be her friend.

Scene 9

In scene 9, J.S. confronts Melissa. She asks Melissa to stop using her tape recorder. J.S. thinks the recorder makes the women feel uncomfortable. Melissa does not believe this. J.S. is warming up to the women, but Melissa is standing back, seeing it as the way

to help the women as quickly and efficiently as possible and allowing her to move on to the next assignment.

Scene 10

In scene 10, the women are sitting by a river. A French company has sent skin cleansers, and the women are having facials. The women start talking about what they miss. Nuna tells how she is of mixed heritage and belongs to neither side of this ethnic conflict. Then Jelena produces a bottle of booze. The women sing, drink, and dance. J.S. notices that Zlata is missing. She goes to find her.

Scene 11

In scene 11, J.S. finds Zlata and talks about how she can no longer sing. J.S. is a professional woman, she says, who cannot allow herself to be sloppy. Zlata urges J.S. to sing. The other women join J.S. and Zlata, singing and dancing.

Scene 12

At the start of scene 12, J.S. finds Azra lying in a large hole in the earth. Azra says she wants to die. She is in her grave. J.S. persuades Azra to talk to her cow. This cheers Azra up, and she crawls out of the hole.

Scene 13

Seada's story unfolds in the next scene. Zlata is mending Jelena's black eye, the work of Jelena's husband. Melissa blames this injury on the drinking from the night before. But the Bosnian women claim that it was one of the best nights they have had in a long time. J.S., however, is concerned that she has crossed a line and needs to be more professional. Melissa keeps pushing for the women to open up. Zlata resists. Their stories belong to them, she tells Melissa. Seada is not in the room, but Nuna begins to tell Seada's story. Soldiers came into their village and were threatening to rape all the women. Seada's husband hides her, but the soldiers find her. When her husband tries to protect Seada, the soldiers shoot him in the head. Seada starts running with her baby. In her panic, she drops the baby but does not realize she has done so until too late.

Seada walks into the room. The women are unaware that she is hearing her story told. When Nuna talks about Seada's having dropped her baby, Seada unwraps the rags she has been cradling and realizes there is no baby there. She starts screaming and running. The women go after her. J.S. and Melissa are told to stay behind. J.S. berates Melissa for pushing the women too hard to open up and tell their stories. J.S. fears that Seada was not ready to face reality. Nuna runs in and yells that they have found Seada and she is hurting herself badly.

Scene 14

Seada is eating dirt and pulling out her hair. She is crying for her mother. She thinks J.S. is her mother. J.S. holds Seada but tells her she is not her mother. Seada offers details of the rape that she suffered after losing her baby. J.S. holds her and sings a lullaby to soothe her. Melissa tells everyone that she did not mean to hurt anyone. She was just doing her job.

Scene 15

When scene 15 opens, Melissa is packing her bags. She tells J.S. that she is going to Chechnya to gather material for the final chapter of her book. Melissa suggests that she herself suffered some kind of trauma when she was young. She tells J.S. that she used to have terrible nightmares. When she started traveling to war-torn countries and dealing with the problems of other women, the nightmares went away. Melissa takes her bag and leaves.

Scene 16

Scene 16 focuses on J.S. and Zlata. The women are sitting outside, under the stars. Zlata opens up to J.S. and tells her about the massacre of her parents. They were beheaded. Then Zlata recounts the beauty that once was Bosnia. With its friendliness and openness, Bosnia was once a paradise, she says.

Scene 17

J.S. is back in her apartment in the United States in the final scene. She is talking into a recorder. She directs her thoughts to Melissa. J.S. tells Melissa that she feels empty but happy. She says that the women in Bosnia have changed her forever. She cannot return to what she once was. She wants only to be with the women in Bosnia.

Scene 1

Scene 1 Summary

This play tells the story of a pair of American women, one a therapist and the other a researcher, as they develop relationships with a diverse group of female refugees from the ethnic civil war that raged in Bosnia in the late 1990s. Written after a period of intense research in Bosnia, the play explores themes of violence, loneliness and pretense, developing them within a context of personal transformation in the face of despair.

This scene takes place in J.S.'s apartment in New York. Melissa, a young trauma counselor and writer, has come to be interviewed by J.S., a middle-aged female psychiatrist. J.S. is looking for an assistant to take with her to Bosnia, where she is to work with a presidential commission to investigate trauma suffered by female refugees from the ethnic civil war there. Melissa is nervous and defensive, convinced that J.S. is asking questions more to analyze than to interview her. She protests, perhaps too strongly, that she can handle whatever trauma she and J.S. will find. For her part, J.S. veers between asking simple questions and slipping into therapist mode, particularly when Melissa's words and manner hint at a history of eating disorders.

Further conversation reveals that Melissa has visited the scenes of other socially and culturally traumatic wars. J.S., on the other hand, clearly has little or no knowledge of these sorts of situations. She asks Melissa's advice, for example, about what to wear. When Melissa challenges her about her credentials to deal with the sort of traumas they'll be encountering, J.S. protests that while the specifics may be different, the general situation is essentially the same (see "Quotes," p. 9).

Late in the conversation, Melissa insists that she is not to be an assistant, but to go to Bosnia in her own right. She has a contract with a major publisher to write a book about the women refugees. Eventually, however, she accepts the designation as J.S.'s assistant, but as she does so she accidentally spills her glass of water. J.S. observes that she makes Melissa nervous. Melissa comments that, "...it's what [she] can't see that frightens her."

Scene 1 Analysis

On the most evident level of function, this first scene serves as exposition to establish the central characters, their relationship, their situation, and the situation of the play. All of this is essential groundwork for the story and conflict to follow, particularly the conflict between J.S., the protagonist, and Melissa, a key antagonist. This conflict, in this first scene and throughout the play, is grounded in the different strengths and vulnerabilities of the two characters: Melissa's experience with war trauma as opposed to J.S.'s lack of such experience, not to mention J.S.'s maturity and personal security as opposed to

Melissa's youthful ambition and nervousness. As the action of the play develops, these differences become more and more pronounced, more and more differences are revealed, and eventually the two women, here starting out on the same path, end up on two very different journeys: J.S. into herself, Melissa away from herself.

On a deeper level, this scene functions as a foreshadowing of the conversations J.S. and Melissa have with the Bosnian women, beginning in Scene 3. The format is essentially similar, in that the Bosnians are interviewed by the Americans, who are in this scene essentially interviewing each other. They are both, in many ways, presenting each other with their professional facades, their best professional faces. This is an embodiment of one of the play's key themes: the presence of and dangers associated with false pretenses.

It's also important to note the reactions of the various characters, in this scene and throughout the play, to being interviewed. The Bosnian women, like Melissa, tend to resent this aspect of J.S.'s personality and work; her clinical, therapeutic manner in particular. As a result of these perspectives J.S. is forced, over the course of the play, to question and eventually alter her manner and her way of working; an alteration that echoes her personal, inner transition into someone with a deeper and more sensitive spirit. The second noteworthy point here is an ironic one: Melissa, for all her resistance to being interviewed and analyzed, does exactly the same thing to the Bosnian women in order to get the material she needs from her book. Ultimately she's guilty of exactly the same kind of agenda-driven, borderline insensitive probing that she blames J.S. for.

Scene 2

Scene 2 Summary

This scene is set in a "barracks-like" room in the Bosnian refugee camp. Melissa unpacks as J.S. complains about the filthy, unpleasant location, protesting that she's older, that she has a right to her little comforts, and that to live in such discomfort will make her do her job badly. Melissa tells her the Bosnian refugee women are more likely to open up to her if they see her living in the same conditions as they are. J.S. responds by suggesting that it's all a charade, since everyone knows she and Melissa can leave any time they want. Melissa suggests that J.S. should just go, and J.S. starts to but then comes back and starts to unpack. Melissa comments with amused disbelief on how comfortable her socks seem to be. J.S. asks whether Melissa has an issue with comfort. Melissa accuses her of going into therapist mode again, but J.S. says it's simply a curious question from a fellow traveler. Melissa comments that, "...comfort ... tends to terrorize [her]." J.S. says that she can't respond to that.

Scene 2 Analysis

The first key aspect of this scene is contrast between the living conditions of this scene and the previous scene, as well as between the two women's respective attitudes towards those conditions. This contrast heightens the sense of difference and potential for conflict between the two women, potential that deepens as the play develops and eventually climaxes in the confrontation in the latter part of Scene 13. That said, however, J.S.'s acceptance of the misery of the living conditions at the end of the scene can be seen as foreshadowing her gradual acceptance of, and empathy with, the spiritual misery of the women she's living with.

The second key element here is the introduction of the idea of charade, or pretense; specifically, J.S.'s accurate comment on how she and Melissa are able to leave the misery of the refugee camp at any time, and that by pretending to share the lives of the Bosnian women they're all complicit in a pretense that they're alike. This is a key development in one of the play's central themes: the dangers associated with such pretense. The reference here foreshadows several instances throughout the play in which characters indulge in make believe of one kind or another. These include Seada's false belief that her dead baby is alive, the indulgence of the other Bosnian women in her fantasy, Melissa's masking of her insecurities with her determination to write her refugee book, and the make-believe appearance of Azra's cow that lures her out of the pit in which she's prepared to let herself die.

The final element to note about this scene is Melissa's reference to terrorism, a word and concept loaded with highly charged meaning in contemporary society. At first glance, it may seem strange for someone to be, as she says, terrorized by comfort; if terrorism is defined, for the sake of discussion, as a means of violent resistance to the

status quo, an explosive expression of a desire for change, how is it possible for comfort to be terrorizing? Her evident unease with the concept of comfort is perhaps an explanation of her evident lack of ease in J.S.'s apartment in Scene 1, which seems to have all the hallmarks of being a very comfortable place to live.

Scenes 3 and 4

Scenes 3 and 4 Summary

Scene 3: J.S. and Melissa meet with five Bosnian refugee women: Zlata, Azra, Seada, Nuna, and Jelena. J.S. introduces herself and Melissa, explaining that their intent is to talk to the women and help them heal from their experiences. The women react with initial mistrust and uncertainty, at first cracking jokes and bantering in response to J.S.'s habitualized efforts at starting therapeutic conversations. Eventually they become serious and tell her she can't give them the help they really need. They don't need to talk, they say. They've talked enough. What they need is to have their homes and lives back. Conversation reveals that Zlata is a doctor, that Seada has a baby (Doona) with her, that Nuna is fascinated with America, and that the women feel exploited and manipulated and used by others, particularly journalists, who say they've come to help them and then abandoned them. When Melissa gets out a tape recorder and asks the women's permission to tape their stories, Zlata angrily leads the chorus of refusal. J. S. says they won't be taped.

Scene 4: This scene takes place in the barracks room shared by Melissa and J.S. As J.S. angrily throws her belongings back into her suitcase getting ready to go home, Melissa struggles to convince her to stay. J.S. protests that she can't work under conditions like these—so much resentment and resistance from people they're trying to help. Melissa explains that the women's attitudes are the natural result of being in this situation (see "Quotes," p. 39). Nuna runs in, asking for help, for Doona is choking, Seada is near hysterics, and the other women are ready to attack them both if they're not quiet. Melissa runs out to help, but J.S. stays where she is. Nuna asks her why she doesn't like the women, saying that they like her. Melissa comes back in, carrying the now calm Doona and saying she'll tell about what happened.

Scenes 3 and 4 Analysis

These two scenes shift the action of the play in a new and different direction, as J.S. and Melissa begin their work. In Scene 3, the individual characters of the five Bosnian women are vividly defined, as are their essential reactions to what they're being asked to do. It's important to keep in mind here that the play is the result of painstaking research interviews conducted with actual Bosnian refugees (in all likelihood, interviews not all that dissimilar to those conducted by Melissa and J.S.). In that context, it may not be going too far to suggest that the Bosnian characters are not just representative of actual, living refugees; they can also be seen as representatives or embodiments of an entire culture. Thus Azra, for example, can be seen as representing both individual longing and the simple, agricultural, bewildered, lost lives of many refugees, while Zlata can be seen as representing both individual loss of status and the loss of status suffered by an entire social strata. In particular, Nuna can be seen in two very powerful lights: she's an individual with troubling individual circumstances, but she can also be

seen as an embodiment of the war itself. Since the war was grounded in conflict between two passionately independent ethnic and religious factions, Nuna (who is the child of two individuals on either side of the ethno-religious divide) is essentially an embodiment of that conflict. Interestingly, it's also Nuna who is the most Americanized of the Bosnian women, and as such, she can also be seen as representing the fascination of an entire, less developed culture with that which seems spectacularly, and wealthily, prosperous, successful, sophisticated, and enlightened.

All that said, the most important component of the characters of the Bosnian women is their reaction to J.S., the first attacks on J.S.'s self-containment and self-assuredness. They are, in fact, the first stage of her process of transformation, as she suddenly and almost violently is confronted with the possibility that what she understood about herself, her work and her world will not and does not apply here. Scene 4 documents her initial resistance to this confrontation, while the scenes following (until Scenes 7 and 8) document the actions she takes to reinforce this resistance. Meanwhile, Scene 3 also contains several key elements of foreshadowing. The women's vague evasiveness on the subject of Doona foreshadows the later revelation (Scene 13) that Doona is actually dead, while the women's comments about feeling exploited foreshadow similar arguments on that subject throughout the remainder of the play. Finally, Zlata's discomfort with the tape recorder foreshadows J.S.'s own growing discomfort later in the play (Scene 9) with both the machine and what it represents.

The action at the end of Scene 4 gives rise to a question of logic. Later in the play, Scene 13, it's revealed that the bundle held so closely by Seada is not her daughter Doona, but is a bundle of rags. How is it possible that Doona can be heard choking? Yes, the other Bosnian women later admit that they indulged Seada's fantasies about her baby in the name of keeping Seada calm, but if that's the case why do they involve the Americans in the fantasy and risk it all falling apart? How can Melissa carry the bundle and not know that it's not alive? What does she mean when she says Doona will tell them the truth? One possible explanation is that Melissa comes back into the room having discovered the truth, but if that's the case, why doesn't she say so? Why does she not tell J.S. what she's discovered? Another possible explanation is that Melissa can't know; the baby may well be wrapped tightly so it can't move, and have its face covered by a blanket. Still, the end of the scene stretches credibility somewhat.

For consideration of the titular phrase "necessary targets," see "Questions."

Scenes 5 and 6

Scenes 5 and 6 Summary

Scene 5: Azra and Jelena share small shots of alcohol as they reminisce about their lives before the war. J.S. stands in nearby shadows, unnoticed, and listens. Jelena speaks sadly about her husband Dado, how he used to treat her so specially, how they used to have a lot of great sex, and how since the war he's become angry, miserable and tired. Azra speaks of her longing for her cows and her farm. Jelena teases her about never having had sex, adding that a man is better than a piece of salami.

Scene 6: Seada runs into the room shared by Melissa and J.S., hallucinating that J.S. is her mother and desperately, fearfully trying to climb into bed with her. J.S. at first tries to keep her out, saying firmly it's not appropriate. Seada persists, climbing into J.S.'s bed and asking "Mama" to sing to her. J.S. doesn't sing, but does hold Seada awkwardly in her arms. Seada quiets down as Melissa continues to watch.

Scenes 5 and 6 Analysis

These two brief scenes contain J.S.'s first encounters with the reality of the Bosnian women's experience. Scene 5 reveals to her the human depths of suffering experienced by the women, with both Jelena's and Azra's comments foreshadowing later action in the play: Jelena's beating at the hands of her violent husband (Scene 13), and Azra's drunken longings for the companionship of her cow (Scene 12).

Scene 6, meanwhile, functions on several levels: it vividly portrays Seada's desperation and mental derangement, and it again dramatizes a direct challenge to J.S's beliefs about herself and her work (another step along her journey of transformation). On a more metaphorical level, it can be seen as a manifestation of what both J.S. and Melissa believe to be the spiritual, emotional state of all the Bosnian women: frantic, needy, and fearful. On an even deeper level, it can also be seen as the playwright's commentary on American reaction, as a society, to such need from other societies. As discussed in the "Objects/Places" section, J.S.'s attitudes can be seen as representing those of American society and belief systems as a whole. In this context, it's possible to see her attempts at keeping Seada at a distance as representing America's determination to keep realities other than its own at bay.

Scenes 7, 8 and 9

Scenes 7, 8 and 9 Summary

Scene 7: All the women (the Bosnian refugees and the American interviewers) have gathered for a therapy session. The Bosnian women drink coffee and listen with varying degrees of interest or resentment as Azra talks weepily about having been driven from her farm home and separated from her beloved Blossom. Zlata comments cynically as Melissa records Azra's story (see "Quotes," p. 50), Nuna distracts J.S. by asking insistent questions about life in America, and Melissa and J.S. argue politely about how the session should proceed. At one point Nuna asks J.S. why she isn't drinking any of the strong coffee on the table. J.S. says she quit, and Nuna comments that, "Americans are always quitting things." As Seada enjoys standing in the sun (see "Quotes," p. 54), Nuna reveals that she's really upset that J.S. hasn't really "joined" them—i.e., isn't drinking their coffee. J.S. takes a sip, takes another sip, and finally starts drinking as much, and as happily, as the other women.

Scene 8: Zlata sits outside weeping. J.S. joins her, and they make small talk about the weather (see "Quotes," p. 57), about how J.S. looks older and sadder without her makeup, and about whether J.S. is wealthy. The two women then debate the value of therapy, with J.S. saying "People pay [her] to listen to them" and Zlata commenting, "People must be very lonely in America." She also comments that she believes that the evil of the situation isn't only in the leaders, but that everyone, even her, has the capacity in them for darkness (see "Quotes," p. 61). She asks J.S. what would drive her to violence and at first J.S. is reluctant to say, but then reveals that people who constantly apologize make her crazy, as do people who don't listen. Their conversation becomes more comfortable and joking. This last only for a moment, though, for Zlata suddenly becomes angry, thinking that everything J.S. has said has been a therapeutic trick to get her to talk. J.S.'s protests that she wants to be Zlata's friend have no effect. Zlata speaks at angry length about how she and the other women have been exploited and continue to be exploited by people like J.S. and Melissa (see "Quotes," p. 64). When J.S. tries to protest that she just wants to help, Zlata angrily comments that "Americans don't know how to stop helping. You move so fast, cleaning things up, fixing." Further angry conversation reveals that Zlata, like J.S. is a doctor, the former head of pediatrics at a large hospital. "Now," she says, "I am a refugee. Now I stare off at the stars without explanation. I look out at the beet fields and weep for no reason."

Scene 9: This scene is set in Melissa and J.S.'s quarters. Seada sleeps on J.S.'s bed as Melissa listens to recordings from the tape recorder. J.S. enters and tells Melissa that she thinks using the tape recorder is making their job more difficult. Melissa argues that it's in fact making the job easier and better (see "Quotes," p. 67), reacting defensively when J.S. suggests that perhaps she (Melissa) should be less aggressive. Seada wakes up, calling out to "mommy" that it's morning. Calling her "mommy," Melissa tells J.S. that she'll do as she asks.

Scenes 7, 8 and 9 Analysis

These three scenes define the true beginning of J.S.'s journey of transformation. The confrontation about the coffee, J.S.'s opening herself to Zlata and Zlata's challenge to her motivations, J.S's discomfort with the tape are all signs that her original, self-protective and self-defining attitudes and belief systems are beginning to change. She still has a long way to go, as indicated by her still uneasy response to Seada calling her "mommy," but the process is well underway.

The tape recorder functions here and throughout the play on a pair of symbolic levels. On one level, it represents the way both Melissa and J.S. strive to keep a sense of distance between themselves and the anguish being experienced by the Bosnian women. The stories on the recorder are just that - stories. Told in person, they are relived. Therefore, listening to them on the machine is safer. The fact that at this point J.S. is starting to find the recorder unwelcome suggests that she is finding the level of distance unwelcome as well.

On another symbolic level of function, the tape recorder here represents Melissa's determination to write and sell her book. The point must be made that her idea for the book is not in itself a bad thing, to bring the plight of these refugee women to the world's attention. The problem, as J.S. points out later in the play (Scene 13), is that Melissa comes to view this aspect to her work as something of a lesser goal than receiving public recognition or acclaim. She pursues this latter goal with substantial aggressiveness, culminating in her apparently ruthless pursuit of Seada's story. The tape recorder, therefore, carries with it the metaphorical value of Melissa's forcefulness and ambition.

Scenes 10, 11 and 12

Scenes 10, 11 and 12 Summary

Scene 10: All the women sit by a river, laughing as Nuna applies beauty masks to the faces of Azra and Jelena. Conversation reveals that the masks came in aid packages from France, and the women joke about the impracticality of the gift (see "Quotes," p. 69). Jelena comments on how the packages also contain sardines, comparing the way sardines are packed together in tight spaces to the way the refugees are packed together, waiting. This leads to a conversation about the things the women are waiting for, with Melissa attempting to turn the conversation into a formalized session, a creation of a poem. As Azra comments that she's waiting to return home to Banja Luka and her home, Seada panics because Nuna is about to put the beauty mask on J.S.'s face. Seada, it seems, already thinks J.S. is perfect. Conversation turns to Nuna's family background, and she reveals she's equal parts Serb and Croat (the two sides in the civil war) and that she sometimes feels as though the one part of herself would like to kill the other. As Melissa attempts to get Nuna to tell more of her story, Zlata calls her a "story vulture," and J.S. tries to get her to ease up. Jelena, meanwhile, says she's waiting for booze so she can get drunk and forget the misery of life. As the other women cheer, she produces a bottle of alcohol. The women drink, sing and dance. J.S. becomes entranced and Melissa tries to join in, but becomes uncomfortable with the drinking. J.S. suddenly realizes Zlata is gone and goes looking for her. Melissa is dragged into the dance.

Scene 11: Music and shouting from the other women continue in the background as J.S. discovers Zlata, sitting by herself. J.S. sings and dances as she reveals that she was named after the famous composer J.S. Bach, that her highly trained musician father wanted her to be a musician, and that she instead chose the regimented training of being a psychiatrist (see "Quotes," p. 78). She says her training has ensured she keeps from being sloppy and sentimental, and when Zlata urges her to sing she at first refuses, saying she doesn't want to be, and can't be, sloppy. She spins in circles until she collapses. Meanwhile, Jelena leads the singing and dancing women on, and they encircle Zlata and J.S.

Scene 12: J.S. looks down a deep hole into which the drunken Azra has fallen. J.S. tries to get her to climb out, but Azra says she's fallen into her grave and is prepared to die. J.S. tries several tactics to get her to come out and live, finally succeeding when she convinces her that Blossom, her beloved cow, is out there waiting for her to come and get her. Azra imagines that she can see Blossom in a field, and then manages to crawl out of the hole. J.S. supports her, and together they make their way back to the camp.

Scenes 10, 11 and 12 Analysis

There are several important elements in this sequence of scenes, the first of which is that all three scenes are anchored in narrative by the deepening of J.S.'s continued transformation. In other words, they all move J.S. and her story forward, almost inevitably, to the moment at which she embraces both her own spiritual fullness and the true reality of the Bosnian women's suffering.

Another key element here is the appearance of the beauty mask. Masks and facades of various sorts appear throughout the play, but this is the only occasion when a mask is physical or literal. On all the other occasions, the masks are masks of character, belief, or fantasy. The reference here reinforces the play's thematic point about masks in general—that they are ultimately superficial and frivolous, not accurate representations of reality, not appropriate, not realistic.

It's interesting to note that Seada, who perhaps wears the strongest psychological mask of all the women, (i.e., the belief that her child is alive) is the most resistant to J.S.'s having a mask placed on her face. On one level, this is because Seada doesn't want her fantasy to be disturbed. On a more thematic level, however, because J.S.'s journey of transformation involves the removal and destruction of her mask of self-security, for her to wear a mask would represent a step backward. Here, Seada's action is a manifestation of her ongoing steps forward—steps which appear in literal form in the improvised dance steps she performs at the end of Scene 10 and the beginning of Scene 11. J.S. is clearly letting go of her inhibiting belief systems and attitudes, a process that continues and deepens through her conversation with Zlata and her warm, compassionate treatment of Azra. She still has a way to go, however, as indicated by her reference to her past relationship with music. In other words, until she embraces the music in her she will be unable to embrace the life around her and with her. This embracing, the final phase of her journey of transformation, takes place at the end of Scene 14, a moment of music flowing fully through her foreshadowed here as she dances.

Finally, the scene here with Azra can be seen as foreshadowing the scene with Seada - both women are deeply troubled, both women are lost, both women are helped through their loss by physical, emotional and spiritual support offered by J.S. In fact, J.S.'s action in talking Azra out of the pit is a metaphor for her goal throughout the play: to get the Bosnian women out of the "pit" of suffering in which they find themselves. It's interesting to note here there's a clear progression in the means by which she goes about accomplishing this goal. In the early stages of the action, she's intent upon applying her usual, familiar techniques of "talk about it" therapy, but they obviously don't work. In the scene with Azra, as she does later in the scenes with Seada (Scenes 13 and 14), her methods and tactics are different; actual human contact is involved, physical as well as emotional. Through their physical contact, J.S. makes spiritual contact as well, with herself and with the Bosnian women. Only Melissa remains beyond her reach, running away into the misery of her (apparent) eating disorder and then into

her usual technique for avoiding that misery: exploring and exploiting the misery of others.

A note about Johann Sebastian Bach: He was one of the most prominent composers in the history of music. He composed in, and essentially defined, the early stages of the Baroque period, a style of music anchored in precision, order, and structure. It's no coincidence, therefore, that J.S. has many similar characteristics: she's precise, ordered, and structured. The music she experiences here, however, has much less order about it. There seems to be a relaxation, a flow to it that seems to resonate more clearly and fully and deeply with J.S.'s true soul. In other words, she is freed from Bach-like strictures of structure, experiencing a kind of wild abandon for what seems to be the first time of her adult life.

Scenes 13 and 14,

Scenes 13 and 14, Summary

Scene 13: As she's being treated for a black eye and bruises, Jelena speaks of having woken Dado up the night before as part of her drunken celebration, of how he reacted with sudden fear and anger, reliving earlier attacks in the war, how he hit her, and how she feels now as though none of it matters. She "was with the old Dado," she says. Melissa says that getting out the booze was not a good idea, suggesting that drinking can become a dangerous habit. She and Jelena argue about whether it is or isn't, an argument that leads to a discussion about Seada (who is missing from the group, having drank too much the night before). Melissa argues that Seada's delusions (a reference to Seada's calling J.S. "mommy") are a form of denial, and that they're keeping her from facing reality. Zlata argues that Seada's delusions are the only thing keeping reality bearable. J.S. suggests that Melissa needs to slow down to allow the human process of healing to take its natural course. Melissa insists that Seada needs to tell her story in order to heal, J.S. insists that it's up to Seada to decide when she's ready, and Melissa suggests that J.S. doesn't understand the situation (the consequences of being a victim/refugee of war) the way she (Melissa) does. Nuna interrupts with the beginning of Seada's story. Melissa turns on the tape recorder. Zlata storms out and Seada appears in the shadows as Nuna and Jelena tell of how Seada was the most beautiful girl in the village, kept hidden during the worst of the fighting to keep her from being raped. They tell that she saw her parents killed for protecting her, how she grabbed her baby and ran and how she dropped her baby, who died. As J.S. reacts with shock, Seada realizes that the bundle she's holding isn't really her baby and runs off to find the real Doona. The Bosnian women run off to protect her, telling J.S. (who says she wants to help) to stay behind.

J.S. confronts Melissa, saying Seada wasn't ready and shouldn't have been confronted, adding that Melissa's agenda (collecting stories for her book so she can become well known) isn't helpful. In a fit of anger, J.S. smashes the tape recorder on the ground. Melissa, in her defense, says she only wants the women's stories to be told so the world can know of the pain that's being caused by the war, and then accuses J.S. of being a typical, self-serving, self-interested American. She adds that she believes J.S. is jealous of her, jealous of being young, of having had a life, and of being able to feel. Just as J.S. is about to lose her temper, Nuna runs in, tells them Seada is injuring herself, and asks them to help her stop.

Scene 14: Melissa and J.S. discover Seada, digging frantically in the ground. The other Bosnian women stand by, watching helplessly. When Melissa approaches, Seada thinks she's a soldier and reacts with terror. J.S. approaches, and at first Seada believes that she (J.S.) is "mommy," but J.S. manages to convince her of her true identity. At first Seada's upset, but then accepts the comfort offered by J.S.'s arms and begins to tell the story of how she was captured and gang raped. She breaks down and J.S. continues to hold her and comfort her, eventually singing to her. Her voice gains more and more

power as she connects more and more deeply with Seada. Melissa attempts to apologize, struggling to find the words to express what she's there to do. Seada completes her sentence with the word "hurt." The Bosnian women think that it's funny, saying that Seada wants Melissa to hurt. Melissa takes it seriously, running out as she shouts that she's not there to take up space with her pain. Azra comments, with relief, that it's a good thing they don't have to pretend there's a real baby anymore.

Scenes 13 and 14 Analysis

These two scenes comprise the play's climax, the high point of its narrative and thematic action. There are several important components of that climax, the first being Jelena's story of the violence she encountered at the hands of her once beloved husband. On one level, this is simply a sad, frightening personal story of how war affects innocent lives. On another level, it foreshadows the violence done to Seada, both the violence of the rape she speaks of in Scene 14 and the violence of Melissa's forcing of the story. This, in turn, is represented and embodied by the tape recorder, which here and throughout the play represents both Melissa's determination to get the stories she wants and the distance she feels she needs to take in order to not be affected by that story. The irony of her actions is that while she forces Seada to confront the truth beneath her delusions, she (Melissa) is unable to face the truth of hers; she is, in pursuing these stories and the completion of her book so aggressively, sustaining her delusion that she has her (apparent) eating disorder under control. Her confrontation of Seada with the truth is echoed by J.S.'s confrontation of Melissa with hers; that is, the destruction of the tape recorder. Without its distancing factor to protect her, Melissa becomes overwhelmed by reality, (apparently relapsing into her eating disorder) in the same way as Seada is overwhelmed here and relapses into madness. In other words, both Melissa and Seada have their masks, their facades forcibly ripped away from them —a dramatization of one of the play's key themes.

Another key component of this climax is the clash of style and intent between J.S. and Melissa, with their argument dramatizing the way J.S. has been transformed by her experience. Rather than attempting to dictate the course of the therapeutic experience, as she did in the early scenes of the play, she argues passionately and convincingly for the natural healing process to take its course. Melissa, as part of her previously discussed determination to get what she wants and needs for her book, pushes and pushes. The result is an apparent catastrophe, but there is irony here as well, in that Seada actually does begin the healing process.

The nature of this healing process is yet another key component of the play's climax, or, more specifically, J.S.'s involvement in that process. She reaches out to Seada in a way that, to this point, she hasn't been able to reach out to any of the characters, including herself. She connects on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level with Seada and also with herself; at the same time as Seada's fazade crumbles, so does J.S's. It's important to note here that Melissa's does not. Unable to face any sort of emotional reality, she takes refuge in her eating disorder, as manifested in the opening moments of the following scene.

The final component of the play's climax is the confrontation between Melissa and J.S. after Seada runs off. Here, in dialogue that admittedly sounds somewhat forced and under-motivated, Melissa and J.S. confront each other with even more uncomfortable truths. J.S. throws Melissa's ambition in her face, while Melissa taunts J.S. with her American-ness, her self-absorbed, self-protectionism. It becomes clear at this point that on some level, the playwright's intent is to at least make the suggestion that J.S., in all her clinical, self-possessed distancing from the world, is a representative of the equally distant stance America can sometimes take in relation to the rest of the world's suffering.

Scenes 15 and 16,

Scenes 15 and 16, Summary

Scene 15: This scene takes place in J.S. and Melissa's quarters. Melissa is heard offstage vomiting as J.S. comes in. Melissa comes in shortly afterwards and, embarrassed at being overheard, resumes packing. Conversation reveals that she's on her way to Chechnya; she thinks the research she conducts there will unearth good material for the last chapter of her book. J.S. asks whether Melissa is eating (the implication being that J.S. suspects Melissa's eating disorder has resurfaced). Melissa tells J.S. to not get involved, adding that she used to have nightmares but once she started traveling the world and documenting the stories of other ravaged women, the nightmares stopped. When J.S. asks her what she dreams about now, Melissa says she doesn't dream any more (see "Quotes," p. 109).

Scene 16: In a deliberate echo of Scene 8, Zlata again sits looking out into space, again J.S. joins her, and again J.S. talks about needing the breeze to sleep, using identical phrasing to their first, similar encounter (Scene 8 - see "Quotes," p. 57). Zlata comments ironically on how Melissa is off to write "the Russian chapter" of her book, and then congratulates J.S. "doctor to doctor" on how she handled the situation with Seada. J.S. speaks of how her patients back home in America never seem to change. Zlata comments that J.S. and Melissa's arrival was what was needed for real change. J.S. reveals that she's having difficulty packing, and Zlata suggests that she doesn't really want to go. After J.S. scratches herself, Zlata diagnoses her as having a heat rash, fetches some cream, and applies it. As J.S. sighs with comfort and relief, she suddenly finds herself close to tears and doesn't know why. Zlata says it's because Bosnia is so beautiful, and speaks at poetic length about how it's easy to endure the cruelty of the war, but the loss of beauty is what is truly painful (see "Quotes," p. 115).

Scenes 15 and 16, Analysis

These two scenes are essentially denouement, or falling action, or, in other words, what happens to the characters in the aftermath of the climax. Once again, the contrast between the two central characters, Melissa and J.S., could not be more vivid. For both of them, the emotional catharsis (release) of the previous scene has been deeply intense. However, whereas J.S. ultimately embraces the pain of the experience, empathizing and in effect weeping over it with Zlata, Melissa can't handle it, hence the apparent return of her eating disorder, which seems to surface every time Melissa fails to protect herself from the intensity of emotion around her, that of others or her own. Further to that point, the final lines of Scene 15 are, in effect, the key piece of evidence suggesting that Melissa travels the world documenting the suffering of other women in an ongoing effort to avoid dealing with her own.

The soothing cream Zlata applies to J.S.'s heat rash can be seen as representing the way J.S. has been healed by her experience in Bosnia—although "healed" is perhaps not the most appropriate word. "Released" is possibly more accurate, in that her apparent narrowness of perspective has been opened by her encounters with the Bosnian women. In the aftermath of her reconnecting with the side of her that loved and celebrated music (at the end of Scene 14), J.S. is whole. She has, in effect, completed her journey of transformation; she has opened herself to new worlds of feeling and experience, re-connected with an old world of joy (her music), and as the following scene indicates, seems prepared to move into the unknown world of deep involvement in her own future, and that of the world. Here again there is contrast with Melissa. It seems that here, at the end of the play, Melissa is still determined to only observe and write about the world. J.S. seems determined to live in it.

Scene 17

Scene 17 Summary

Back in her New York apartment, J.S. speaks into a tape recorder to Melissa (even though, as she herself says, she has no idea where Melissa is). She speaks of Zlata having made her American life impossible. America makes no sense to her, she says, and that she is happy. She says she has no ambition anymore, adding that her ambition was what made her "always unhappy, always long for more. Longing to be someone, to count, to matter, to make it."

As the Bosnian women appear in the shadowy background, making coffee, J.S. says she is with them "in that refugee camp in the middle of nowhere," sitting and trying to trust each other, "and in between the tears," she says, "we take little sips of mad, thick coffee."

Scene 17 Analysis

The first level of function to this brief scene is to reinforce the idea that J.S. has undergone some kind of spiritual awakening as the result of her experience in Bosnia. This reinforcement comes not only from her words, which in the reference to coffee repeats the image of the coffee (last seen in Scene 7) as a means of connection between the women and their two worlds. Reinforcement also comes from the visual presence of the women—they linger in J.S.'s inner world in the same way as they linger in the theatrical world in which their story has been told.

The second level of function here is, on the other hand, ironic; specifically, in the fact that it's set in J.S.'s New York apartment. The apartment, as previously discussed, symbolizes safety, security, and somewhat narrow ways of thinking. The fact that the scene is set in the apartment with only partial presence of the Bosnian women, as opposed to fully *in* Bosnia, suggests that J.S.'s transformation may only be temporary, that she may not have been changed as much as she thinks, or that the change may not be lasting.

Characters

Azra

Azra is the oldest woman of the group. She is from the countryside and is known for repeating her stories, especially stories about her cow. Azra complains a lot. She wants to go home. She wants a doctor to look at her and ease her pains. Azra stands for the traditional Bosnian woman, a woman tied to the earth and her country ways. She exists at one end of the spectrum, while Nuna, who is described as a very Westernized teenager, is positioned at the other.

Azra is one of the first women upon whom J.S. has an effect. J.S. talks Azra out of a so-called grave that Azra has discovered and climbed into. Azra wants to die. She feels as if she has nothing more to live for. J.S. uses Azra's pleasant memories of her cow to bring Azra back into the world of the living. Although Azra is the oldest woman of the group, she does not necessarily represent wisdom. She does, however, have Old World charm. At one point, she tells everyone that talking about Seada behind her back is bad luck. In some ways, this turns out to be true, as Seada hears the women talking about her and is thrown into a desperate fit of anxiety. Azra is not among the women who later soothe Seada, however. Her character does not exhibit any nurturing or mothering skills. The exception is the loving way that Azra talks about her cow. Azra has apparently never been married and has never experienced sex, which, someone suggests, is the reason she is so grumpy.

Doona

Doona is the name of Seada's baby. Throughout most of the play, the women talk about Doona as if she were present in their midst. They talk about her being cold and about her crying, which is so loud that they become annoyed and worried. However, at the end of the play, the audience discovers that the bundle that Seada has been carrying around is merely a bunch of wrapped rags. Doona was lost during the time when Seada was running away from men who wanted to rape her. Seada dropped her baby and did not realize it until it was too late. There is no mention of the real Doona's fate, whether she is still alive or not.

Jelena

Jelena is described as an earthy woman. She is in her forties, and it is she who calms the group of Bosnian women and reminds them to be respectful of the American women rather than continually mocking them. While the other women respond to the American women in sarcastic tones, Jelena takes a more nurturing attitude, as she attempts to understand why J.S. and Melissa are there and then to explain it to the Bosnian women.

Jelena has the only connection to a man in this play. Her husband fought in the war and suffers psychologically from his memories. He takes out his pain on Jelena, who appears one day with a black eye. The rest of Jelena's story remains untold. She is the most optimistic of the refugee women, however, and continually tries to represent hope for the future. She finds things to feel good about, despite her hardships, and encourages the other women to do the same. She is the most down-to-earth character and the most resilient.

J.S.

J.S. is a well-established and successful psychiatrist, living a comfortable life in New York City. She has been appointed by the president to go to Bosnia to help war refugees there. J.S. has never been in a war zone and is very uncomfortable when she arrives at the camp. She dislikes the filthy conditions and wants to stay in a hotel rather than live with the refugees.

At first, the refugees mock J.S.'s attempts at therapy. They feel her separateness and try to bring her down from her pedestal. It almost defeats her. J.S. comes close to giving up and returning home. She gives it one more try, however, and slowly drops the walls she has built around herself. She does this first with Seada, whom she allows to sleep in her bed and to pretend that J.S. is her mother. Then J.S. drinks with the women one night and talks about personal aspects of her life. For instance, she tells Zlata that she has not been able to sing as an adult, although she loves singing. This is Ensler's way of demonstrating that the most pleasurable things J.S. enjoyed have been locked away inside her, because she has donned what she believes is the mask of professionalism. She hides behind this mask until Zlata challenges her to take it off.

Of the two American women, J.S. is the one who is transformed by her experiences in Bosnia. She is the opposite of Melissa in many ways. The most telling of these is that she is able to see who she is and what she does not like about herself, and then she is able to alter her life's course.

Melissa

Melissa, a young woman in her twenties, is a writer and a trauma therapist. She has traveled all over the world trying to help women who have suffered from war. She is in the process of collecting stories from these women so that she can write a book about their experiences. Melissa stands in diametric opposition to J.S., the American psychiatrist. Melissa, too, is an American, but she is much more experienced in international settings and war-torn circumstances. Melissa is also very wary of psychiatrists. Her sensitivity and defensiveness in response to J.S.'s questions suggest that Melissa herself might have been in therapy.

Still, Melissa is somewhat in awe of J.S., as well as being disdainful of her. While visiting J.S. in her posh apartment, Melissa feels uneasy and admits that comfort unsettles her. However, in Bosnia, Melissa demonstrates her strength. There seem to

be fewer barriers between herself and the other women, despite their differences. She mocks J.S.'s need to keep a distance between herself and the refugees.

Melissa, though, has troubles of her own. She is trying to run away from an ugly past. She does not stand still and take stock of her life, as she strongly suggests that the other women do. Instead, when she is confronted and challenged by J.S. for being too harsh with the women, Melissa packs her bags and rushes off to yet another country. She fulfills the Bosnian women's definition of her: Melissa turns out to be just another journalist trying to capture a story.

Nuna

Nuna is the youngest of the Bosnian women. She likes everything American, and the other women tease her about watching too many American movies. Nuna is fascinated with J.S. and asks her many questions about American culture. Nuna is lost in a fantasy of what she thinks America is, and it has become her escape. As a character, Nuna provides an occasional break in the tension by saying something that is entirely bizarre or by displaying a rather comical view of Americans. Her character also shows the Western influence on the people of Bosnia before the war.

Seada

Seada is the second-youngest Bosnian woman, referred to as the □gorgeous one.□ Seada's story is the most tragic. Her character draws the strongest emotional response from the audience. She has lost a husband and a mother. She dropped her baby somewhere along the path while running from the soldiers. She was raped unmercifully by them. And she is the character who is most caught in denial. She is the catalyst that brings J.S. out of her objective, professional stance. She is also the character around whom all the other Bosnian women come together. Seada's abrupt and brutal awakening is caused by Melissa's sharp and possibly heartless demands. Seada's healing process, on the other hand, begins with J.S., who soothes her and even rocks her in her arms and sings a lullaby to her.

Zlata

Zlata is a medical doctor and a Bosnian refugee, and she relates to J.S. better than the other women do. This could be because of their similar education, knowledge, and experience. But it is also because of Zlata's background that she dislikes what J.S. and Melissa are doing. Of all the women, it is Zlata who knows that the American women really have nothing at stake and will one day leave. This barrier of awareness is difficult for Zlata to break down. She does not want to be treated as if she were sick. She does not feel that there is anything wrong with her. If there were, she believes that she could heal herself, so she closes herself off to the Americans and their desires to do good.

It is through Zlata, more than any other character, that Ensler develops the concept of the □other.□ Ensler portrays what she believes is a general notion among Americans that people who are not Americans are different. Taken to an extreme, some people remove their sense of humanity from specific groups of people and think of them as the □other.□ Zlata confronts J.S. with this. She tells J.S. that before the war, she and her family and friends were just like a typical American family. They had wealth, comfort, and leisure time. J.S. sees them after the war has utterly destroyed their way of life, but that does not mean that the Bosnian women are any different from the Americans.

By the end of the play, Zlata has undergone a certain transformation. She is one of the few characters that experience change. She can put down her barriers after she sees J.S. dropping hers, and the two women become friends.

Objects/Places

J.S.'s Apartment

The apartment is the setting for the first and final scenes of the play, bookending the trauma and the squalor of the internal Bosnian scenes with scenes of relative safety, security and wealth. The apartment can also be seen as representing J.S.'s comfort zone, the level of communication and experience within which she feels secure operating. In Scene 1, for example, her life and work and beliefs and understanding seem to come easily to her. At the end of the play, however, when she returns to this setting, she no longer feels comfortable in these external circumstances because her inner, emotional circumstances have changed so completely. Her physical home is no longer her spiritual home, which it was at the beginning of the play.

New York City

J.S.'s apartment is located in New York City, a source of physical and spiritual security for her. The city is almost mythic in status, representing for many non-American societies (and even a few American ones) a cultural and economic Mecca. Above all, it is in many ways a symbol of the so-called "American Dream" of freedom and prosperity. It's therefore extremely significant that J.S. makes her home here, as opposed to a city like Boston, Dallas or Los Angeles. Each of these cities can be seen as representing an aspect of that dream, but only New York brings all its aspects together into a teeming, flourishing, beacon of hope.

America

America, with its relative wealth, its confidence in its beliefs, and its insular lack of deep awareness of the external world, is perhaps the greatest and most significant source of J.S.'s security. It's interesting to note how Nuna, one of the Bosnian refugee women, is so fixated on American culture and belief systems. It is, for her, a kind of escape, another of the play's many masks and facades (see "Themes - Facades"). As the result of her process of transformation, by the end of the play J.S. comes to see many aspects of America in exactly those terms.

Bosnia

Bosnia is an eastern European country, torn apart by ethnic civil war in the 1990s. In the aftermath of this war, a great many refugees were traumatized, and displaced from their homes and families. These real life refugees, and the equally real-life American interest in their lives and experiences, were the main inspiration of the play, with characters and situations drawn from these real life experiences forming its central core.

Banja Luka

A city in Bosnia, Azra's much longed for home.

The Refugee Camp

The main action of the play is set within various areas of a camp for Bosnian refugees, home to thousands of individuals displaced by the war. Dirty, inefficient, crowded and unhappy, the refugee camps (in life as in the play) are essentially pits of despair and misery. The essential experience of being caught in such a camp is dramatized and embodied in the encounter between J.S. and Azra in Scene 12 - Azra has fallen into a literal pit, and is waiting to die.

The Tape Recorder

This is the device used by Melissa to record the stories of the Bosnian women refugees. The women, particularly Zlata, are unhappy about being recorded; there is the sense that for them, it reduces their experiences to stories and commodities, as opposed to real life traumas. For them it represents the shallow casualness, or the casual shallowness, of American interest in them. For Melissa, it represents control and power; with the recorder, she can get what she wants, hold onto it, and preserve it. For J.S., however, it comes to represent a misuse of power—pressure, manipulation, and exploitation.

Music

Music is the great freer in this play. As the Bosnian women sing and dance, they are freed from their everyday traumas and miseries. More importantly, however, music gives J.S. her freedom. She describes herself as having repressed her musical talents in favor of a clinical, therapeutic objectivity and coolness. As the action of the play progresses, however, and she becomes open to a deeper experience of humanity—that of the Bosnian women as well as her own, the power of music returns to her life. By the play's climax, she comes to embrace the freedom it represents, freeing herself to feel at the same time as she frees her musical voice.

Coffee

Coffee represents the relationship between the Bosnian women and J.S. At first J.S. refuses both, but eventually opens herself to both the experience of drinking coffee and opening herself to the Bosnians. At the end of the play, as J.S. is telling Melissa's tape recorder that she (J.S.) has a new perspective, the Bosnian women are seen in the background pouring coffee for themselves and for her. This represents the way that she is now more spiritually and emotionally connected to them than to her own, old life.

The Breeze

On two occasions, J.S. refers in identical terms to the cooling breeze she needs to help her sleep. The breeze does literally help to cool her in the oppressive Bosnian heat, but it also has a metaphorical level of function—as a manifestation of the spiritual and emotional change moving across her and through her. In other words, for J.S. the fresh breeze equals fresh awareness.

Themes

Isolation

The theme of isolation is apparent in many of the characters in *Necessary Targets*. First, there is the overall environment of the war in Bosnia, which isolated one ethnic group from another. People in villages were cut off from people who lived in cities, as neighbor fought neighbor. There is also the isolation that the victims of war, the female refugees of the play, suffer in its aftermath. The Bosnian women are not the only ones who feel isolated from their past, from their families, and from themselves. The American women also suffer from isolation.

J.S., the American psychiatrist who travels to Bosnia, has built for herself what she once considered a safe haven. She lived within the psychological walls of her castle, believing that this was the proper way to conduct her life. She was a professional, and her job was to maintain an objective distance between herself and her patients. It was not until she arrived in Bosnia and was confronted by the women there that she realized that the so-called safe haven she had constructed kept her isolated and alone.

J.S. was able to break through this isolation. Melissa, J.S.'s American counterpart, is not so fortunate. The nature of Melissa's suffering is not fully explained, but some trauma in her childhood made Melissa build walls around herself also. Melissa's walls are more transparent, more fluid. They are easily penetrated, so she must keep moving in order to keep everyone and everything outside herself from touching her. Despite her efforts to get the Bosnian women to break through the walls that keep them in isolation, Melissa cannot stand still long enough to allow anyone to help her deconstruct her own psychological barriers. In the end, Melissa is the most isolated character in the play.

Trauma

The aftermath of trauma is one of the main themes of Ensler's play. As a result of the war in Bosnia, hundreds of thousands of war victims poured into refugee camps. These masses of people are represented by the five Bosnian women characters. These women all suffer from similar traumas, but each manifests her trauma differently. Nuna, the young girl who is fascinated by all things American, does not speak of her trauma but rather fantasizes about what life in America, a safer world, is like. Azra, the oldest woman, had to abandon her animals, while Seada cannot face having abandoned her baby. Seada has lost all touch with reality because of her shock. Zlata is forced into silence and bitterness, after seeing her parents beheaded in front of her. She is a trained physician, and yet she could do nothing to save their lives. She reacts in anger toward anyone who attempts to save her.

The American women travel to Bosnia to help alleviate the trauma the Bosnian people have been through, but these Americans also suffer from trauma. It is a more subtle

form, one that they do not completely face until their confrontations with the Bosnian women force them to do so. J.S. has never dealt with people who have suffered through a war. She believes that trauma is trauma, whether it is produced by the debilitating mental stress her American patients suffer or the devastating ordeals that war victims experience. She learns, through her visit to Bosnia, that there are different kinds of trauma. The challenges she faces in Bosnia shake her so completely that she wakes up to a new vision of herself. Melissa, the victim of another kind of trauma, is not so fortunate. Possibly, as Melissa states in the play, her trauma came at too early an age and, therefore, has become a part of her that she cannot shed. Instead, she continually tries to run away from it.

Therapy

There are two therapists in the play: J.S., who is a psychiatrist, and Melissa, who has been trained as a trauma counselor. These two are at odds with each other in their therapeutic techniques. J.S. uses a soft, even subtle approach, while Melissa is in a hurry and, therefore, is very blunt. She throws psychological punches at the Bosnian women, in attempts to get them to open up. It is not clear whether (as the Bosnian women suspect) Melissa wants to obtain her stories quickly and then travel to another country to gather more, so she can complete her book, or if (as Melissa believes) she is a focused therapist who wants to get to the heart of an issue instead of tiptoeing around it.

Despite the fact that both the American women have been trained as therapists, they have failed to apply their knowledge to themselves. It is Zlata who acts as J.S.'s therapist; trained as a medical doctor, she uses her bedside skills to help J.S. work through her own issues. Jelena, on the other hand, uses alcohol as therapy one night, encouraging the women to drink, dance, and sing their cares away, at least for a few hours. Although alcohol offers Jelena a short reprieve from her worries, drinking only worsens her husband's condition. Alcohol, J.S. and Melissa both agree, is not an effective therapy for trauma.

Therapy is often criticized or mocked in the play. Melissa rejects J.S.'s attempts to figure her out, and so do the Bosnian women. Zlata accuses J.S. of hiding behind her therapy techniques and encourages her to embrace their interactions, not as a trained, objective asker of questions but as one person communicating with another. Toward the end of the play, J.S. seems to follow Zlata's advice and wraps her arms around Seada, rocking her, while singing a lullaby. It is implied that this is not what J.S. had learned in school or in all her years as a therapist. J.S. finds her way to her own cure through the therapy of friendship.

Empathy

The theme of empathy weaves through the play, in stark contrast to the accounts of the lack of empathy that existed during the war, when whole throngs of men were

massacred, women were raped, and villages and cities were destroyed. Despite that horrifying lack, the women in this play, for the most part, find or recover their empathetic natures. One of the strongest illustrations of this can be seen in the way the Bosnian women play along with Seada's need to believe that she is carrying her baby in her arms. Although Seada merely holds on to a bundle of rags, the women complain of the baby's loud crying. They worry that the baby might be sick, and they hold the so-called baby in their arms to make Seada comfortable. In the face of this, J.S.'s objective stance breaks down for Seada's sake, and, finally, she empathizes with the young woman's need to be cuddled by her mother. J.S. takes on the maternal role out of empathy for a woman who needs to be loved. She allows Seada to sleep with her in her bed.

The Bosnian women stand up for one another in various empathetic ways. They protect one another from intrusions from the American women, and yet Jelena, in particular, also empathizes with J.S. and Melissa and goes to them, telling the Americans that the Bosnian women are not as unfriendly as they seem. Again, it is Melissa who stands out in the group. She is so hardened by her personal trauma that she appears to have no room in her heart or no understanding of how to empathize with anyone else. Still, she is drawn to their situation and wants to help. Taking a broad view, perhaps Melissa feels empathy too.

Violence

There are many sorts of violence referred to in this play. Some are mostly sub-textual, functioning beneath its apparent action and dialogue. The actual physical violence and death of the war is one such type of violence, while another is the ethnic and cultural violence referred to by Nuna in Scene 10. Another type of violence is the physical violence experienced by the women; in particular, the rapes experienced by Seada and referred to several times by the other women. In this context, rape is far more a crime of violence and power as opposed to having anything to do with sex. Yet another type of violence might be described as fallout violence; specifically, the violence that victims of the war like Jelena's husband exhibit. This is violence of frustration, a way (for some the only way) that feelings of rage and misery and pain can be released. This sort of violence is, in turn, related to a sort of violence more emotional and spiritual than physical - the violence done to the Bosnian women's sense of home and safety by the war. It's important to note that J.S. and Melissa experience a variation on this sort of violence when their sense of identity and safety and understanding is harshly challenged not only by the experiences of the Bosnian women, but by the women's resistance to the Americans' methods and attitudes.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, *Necessary Targets* explores and defines ways in which women participate in violence against themselves. The most vivid embodiment of this aspect of violence is the way Seada, at the point at which she is forced to confront the truth about her delusions, does physical violence to herself. In this moment, action defines and manifests theme. Other less overt manifestations include, for the Americans, Melissa's violence against her own body (her eating disorder) and J.S.'s

violence against her spirit (suppressing the full expression of herself in music). For the Bosnians, this includes Seada's violence against her natural grief for her daughter (denying the grieving process by taking refuge in a false reality), Nuna's violence against her own cultural identity (taking on American characteristics in the name of avoiding her torturous Bosnian split identity), and Jelena's self-inflicted violence in accepting the violence inflicted upon her by her husband.

There are, of course, many sorts of reactions to all these forms of violence: denial (Seada, Melissa, Nuna), grief (Azra, Zlata), resignation (Jelena), and transformation (J.S.). All of these women, however, share on one level or another a common reaction to the violence around them and within them, a reaction that serves as the second of the play's key themes: loneliness and desperation.

Loneliness and Desperation

As discussed above, each of the women experiences degrees of loneliness and desperation as a direct result of their encounters with violence. Seada, lonely and driven mad by her experiences of being raped and of losing her child, desperately takes refuge in delusions. Nuna, lonely because she truly belongs to neither side in Bosnia's ethnic war, desperately takes refuge in what she believes to be an all-welcoming perspective and way of living, American-ness. Azra and Zlata both grieve intensely for what has been lost. Azra's grief may seem more comic simply because her loss is anchored in her cow, but in reality both women have lost everything that has ever defined them, nationally as well as their personal identity. Jelena, in spite of her efforts at bravado, bravery and perhaps foolishness in maintaining that she loves her husband and that he loves her in spite of his violent tendencies, is nevertheless desperately lonely for a return to the simple, sensual security that defined her previous life.

As for the Americans, there are clear indications that Melissa has been lonely and in pain all her life. Her apparent eating disorder and tendency to avoid emotionally difficult situations come across as desperate attempts to avoid dealing with both her loneliness and her pain. For her part, J.S. begins the play unaware that she has isolated herself, that she is lonely and desperate for true connection, both with herself and with those in her therapeutic care. Her journey of transformation, undergone in Bosnia, includes moments at which she realizes that she is, in fact, lonely and isolated, and also moments when she takes action to fill that loneliness with something meaningful: music, and true, meaningful relationships with both the Bosnian women and their experiences. Her efforts, as well as those of Zlata, are virtually the only genuine efforts at adapting to and living within the terrifying reality of war-life in Bosnia. Almost all the other characters indulge in pretense of one form or another, and in doing so dramatize and manifest the play's third principal theme.

Pretense

Pretense plays a key role in the action throughout the play. In the first scene, there is Melissa's pretense of going along with the idea that she is to be J.S.'s assistant, when in fact she's going there to pursue her own agenda. Then there's pretense that J.S. points out in Scene 2, that because the Americans are staying in the refugee camp, they are more likely to identify with the Bosnian women. This pretense is notable for the fact that everyone buys into it; nobody challenges it directly (Zlata challenges it indirectly, but never comes right out and speaks about the situation). Other pretenses explored in the action include Seada's pretense that her baby is alive, and the way the other Bosnian women go along with her in order to preserve a "pretense" of normality. Even Zlata, who for most of the play is an important touchstone and advocate of bare-bones honesty, goes along with this pretense, again in the name of preserving Seada's pretense of emotional peace.

A near-comic pretense appears in the way J.S. leads Azra out of the pits (literally and emotionally despairing) into which she's fallen by pretending with her that her cow is alive. On the other hand, a near-tragic pretense is Melissa's continued protesting that she doesn't have an eating disorder. It's interesting to note that J.S. begins the play experiencing a kind of pretense as well-that she has a complete sense of how the therapeutic experience should work, and that she's mature and sophisticated as a human being. Through the course of the play, however, that pretense is broken down and truth is revealed to her. In much the same way, in fact, as Seada's delusions are also broken down and she is violently confronted with a truth. All these pretenses are symbolized by the beauty masks the women apply to their faces in Scene 10, which are laughingly described as superficial and ultimately not useful in confronting reality. Ultimately, the masks and facades worn by all the women at one point or another all prove, at one point or another and in one way or another, prove to be ultimately useless when it comes to coping with the various reality of violence they all are confronted with.

Style

Character Arcs of Growth

A character arc charts the change that a character goes through in the course of a work of dramatic fiction. In *Necessary Targets*, many of the characters experience change in the form of growth□some more than others. First there is Azra, who is coaxed back into the world of the living after she is found lying in a hole in the ground that she calls her grave. This is a significant change for Azra, who had until that moment not felt that she had any reason to live.

The most dramatic growth is exemplified by Seada, who has created an imaginary world, because she could not face the fact that her husband and mother are gone, as is her baby. Seada's growth happens in a piercing moment when she hears Nuna recounting the truth of her life. In one clashing confrontation, all of Seada's pretenses are shattered. She tries to hurt herself, wanting to physically manifest the emotional pain she is suffering from. Although, by the end of the play, Seada is not depicted as a fully healed person, the audience can anticipate her recovery, or at least partial recovery, and that is growth.

Zlata does not, for most of the play, tell anyone her story. She is bitter and angry and often lashes out at or completely excludes herself from the group of other women. She is particularly upset with the two Americans, whom she looks upon as yet another intrusion into her life. However, Zlata grows through her encounters with J.S. and finally reveals the trauma she has suffered. She also is able to find a way, through their shared training, education, and past experiences, to make friends with J.S. In reaching out, Zlata demonstrates her willingness to change, a willingness that she knows is necessary if she wants to grow.

J.S. returns to the United States so completely changed that she cannot go back to doing anything she once did. In her friendship with Zlata, J.S. has found a new center. She finds happiness in friendship, where once she would not allow anyone to come close to her. Melissa is portrayed as a flat character, one who seems not to change. Many critics of the play point this out as a weakness. When a character does not transform in any way, it is difficult for the audience to empathize with her. Without some indication of growth, the character appears less real and becomes something of a stereotype, standing only for a certain sentiment or one-sided belief.

Symbols of Hopelessness and Frivolity

The most poignant symbol in this play is the bundle of rags that Seada carries in her arms, pretending that it is her baby. When the bundle is unfolded and there is no baby inside, the tragedy of war suddenly becomes that much more apparent to the audience. The moment is designed to elicit a gasp from a live audience, as the truth of Seada's

trauma is revealed. The baby (or the lack of baby) signifies the hope that is lost, the dreams that are shattered. The women's talk of the atrocities they have endured has had a significant impact on the audience, but the overwhelming need of the women to pretend that Seada's baby is not only alive but also well protected and cared for pierces the hearts of those watching the play.

Other symbols include the journalists, who personify the outside world. In the minds of the Bosnian women, at least, the journalists do not seem to really care about the Bosnian people. They come to Bosnia to capture stories and images but do nothing to stop the war and suffering. In the play, the journalists represent everyone who has come to Bosnia and who, after seeing what is happening, leave and return to their comfortable lives, forgetting the pain and anguish they have witnessed. The journalists have collected their stories, and that is all they wanted.

Nuna, in some ways, also represents the outside world, at least in all its frivolous aspects. Nuna is a young teenager who is fascinated by American culture, mostly the surface glitz and glitter. She focuses on things like clothes and makeup rather than on deeper, psychological topics. Although Nuna is typical of teenagers all over the world, it is through her character that the play makes fun of Americans. In contrast to what the Bosnian women are living through, Americans, as seen through the play, appear frivolous.

Insignificant Plot

Unlike many plays, Ensler's *Necessary Targets* has an insignificant plot. The American women go to Bosnia to help war victims; in exchange, one of them is transformed by the experience. Although this is enough of a plot to make the play interesting, it is the dialogue and development of the characters that make the play worth seeing. In other words, a major plot or dramatic action is not required to stir the interests of an audience. People may be interested in this play for a variety of other reasons, including wanting to know about the sufferings of Bosnian women during the war, how these experiences have affected them psychologically, and whether the American women will be able to help them. The development or changes of the characters drive the play, rather than a well-thought-out line of action.

Conflict: World Events and Personal Lives

The conflict in this play comes, for the most part, through the accounts of the challenges of life after a war and how people deal with them. But there is also the internal conflict that all the characters face. Melissa suffers from nightmares, so she constantly keeps herself on edge by surrounding herself with the conflicts that other people are facing. J.S. wants to sing, but she believes that by acting out her own emotions, such as the joy she might express in singing, she is coming into conflict with her image of what a psychiatrist should be□a stoic, objective receiver of information. Jelena wants to love her husband for what he once was and yet has to deal with the present reality of his

abuse. Zlata, who has been trained to help other people, must face the fact that there are many thousands of people she cannot help. The conflict in this play builds, as all the forces come together when the characters help Seada face the strongest conflict in the play: that between her fantasy world and the world of reality.

Opposing Forces

Opposing forces are represented by the disputing characters, J.S. and Melissa. Their theories of how to conduct their therapy sessions differ quite drastically. Their lifestyles are at opposite ends of the spectrum, with J.S. living in luxurious comfort and controlled organization and Melissa living out of her suitcase in war-torn countries. J.S. wants to work slowly with the Bosnian women, while Melissa wants to hit them over their heads and crack their stories open. Despite the fact that they are in opposition, for the sake of the play and its development, these opposing forces work together, providing tension that eventually erupts, stimulating a catharsis, or at least a partial resolution.

Point of View

Because *Necessary Targets* is a play, there is no particular narrative voice—no first person/third person, no past/present, no objective/subjective. The point is not made, however, to suggest that there is no point of view; on the contrary, the play's point of view is quite clear, and can be inferred from the way it develops its various themes. *Necessary Targets* takes, in no uncertain terms, the point of view that violence against women, in whatever form, is a deeply negative value. It's important to note here that this thematic point is not made only about violence within the context of war, although that is certainly its most vivid manifestation. The point is also made, perhaps even more deliberately in the context of the violence women do to themselves (see "Themes - Violence). The three most powerfully portrayed aspects of this sort of violence are J.S. suppressing the full flowering of her music-nurtured soul, Seada's physical violence to her body as well as the spiritually violent living of her delusions, and Melissa's bodily and spiritual violence combined into a single state (her eating disorder).

However, by portraying many of the women (the notable exception is Melissa) as being willing and able to transcend self-violence, the play also offers the point of view that violence can be transcended, and the suffering inflicted by violence can, at least, begin to be healed. The play makes no guarantees - Melissa, for example, continues to self-victimize - it does, however, offer the possibility, the chance that with the kind of courage and openness displayed by J.S., and indeed by Seada, the human spirit can and will not only survive, but blossom.

Setting

Setting is a powerfully important component of this play. As discussed in the "Objects/Places" section of this analysis, the setting of the play's opening and closing scenes in J.S.'s New York apartment defines the safety and security experienced by

both J.S. and Melissa at the beginning of their journey. At the end of the play, the setting and its associated security provide an ironic, vivid contrast for J.S.'s apparently awakened spirit, while at the same time representing (as does the tape recorder) the security that Melissa continues to embrace (albeit on her own, somewhat perverse terms). Meanwhile, the setting of the play's internal scenes in Bosnia provides a powerful and effective setting for J.S.'s journey of transformation. J.S.'s encounters with the emotional and physical aftermath of war lead her to an awareness that her own soul has been torn apart by the inner war between therapeutic coolness and musically-inspired celebration, between her easy, comfortable, entrapping professionalism and jargon and what she calls "sloppiness." In other words, external circumstances of setting reveal inner circumstances of feeling and spirit; in this context, it's interesting to note how key moments of J.S's transformation (her conversations with Zlata, the confrontation with Seada) take place outside, in the open air, away from tents and enclosures. In these moments J.S. is in an open-emotional world as well, no longer spiritually enclosed by what and who she thinks she has to be.

Language and Meaning

Because this is a play, the language of the story is almost exclusively dialogue. There are a few stage directions giving essential indications about action, including setting, the various uses of the tape recorder, the way the women react to the French beauty masks, and Melissa's vomiting (Scene 15). Without these stage directions, various levels of the play's meaning might go undetected. That being said, for the most part indications of who the characters are, what they're doing and why, and what it all means or communicates are to be found in what the characters say. In some instances, meaning is clearer than others - it's quite apparent, for example, that Melissa is very sensitive on the subject of eating disorders and troubled childhoods, evidence that suggests she has personal experience with one or the other, or both.

The dialogue also is quite apparent in the earlier Bosnian scenes that J.S. has a particular, routine way of working, a way that seems vividly at odds with the way the Bosnian women communicate and understand the workings of the war and the world.

Finally, dialogue is very effectively used to evoke emotion. This is done, for the most part, in two ways. There are times in which the language used by the women is simple and clear, yet powerfully visceral - examples of this are the loving, sensual way Jelena speaks of her husband and their past life, the horrific details of Seada's experience of rape, and Azra's simple, overwhelming longing for her home and her cow. There are also moments of intense poetry, particularly in the quiet scenes between Zlata and J.S. in which Zlata reveals the depths of her grief and sense of loss at what's happened to her and her country. In short, even though it may appear to be limited in the technical ways in which it's used (i.e., in dialogue with little prose), language in *Necessary Targets* actually has great versatility, variety, depth and meaning.

Structure

The play is broken into seventeen relatively short scenes. The first and last are set in J.S.'s apartment in New York City, which as previously discussed begins and ends the play with a sense of security quite missing in the middle scenes. There is irony in this security in the final scene, but in the first scene the security is straightforward, if ultimately revealed to be a lie, and is effectively placed in order to lay a thematic and character-based foundation for the action to follow. The Bosnian scenes are of various, inconsistent lengths, perhaps giving a sense of the inconsistency of life in Bosnia in the aftermath of the civil war. These scenes almost invariably end after their key dramatic point is made. In other words each has a beginning (in which the context of the scene is established) and a middle (in which the conflict of the scene is developed), but a sudden, almost truncated end. There is the sense here that the play's structure functions as memory does - in short, vivid images, rather than as lengthy, detailed wonderings and wanderings in the landscape of the day to day. Yes, there are momentary glimpses of day-to-day activities (Melissa's reference to the sanitary facilities, coffee drinking) but these are in fact key elements in defining the emotional experience of the characters as opposed to just activities. In short, the structure of the play echoes its substance, the ways and beings of its characters - terse, intense, pointed, vivid, and transforming.

Historical Context

Bosnia: The Land and the People

Bosnia is located in south-central Europe, east of the Adriatic Sea, and shares borders with Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro. The country, about the size of Missouri, is officially called the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the capital at Sarajevo. The country's geography features both mountains (with the highest point being Maglic in Herzegovina) and plains, which spread out from the Sava River. The people at lower altitudes enjoy moderate weather (cold and snowy, but bearable, winters and humid, but tolerable, summers). Most areas of Bosnia are under constant threat of powerful earthquakes.

Bosnia is a land of many different cultures, most based on the population's religious beliefs, which include Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Protestantism. Although outlying villages tend to be homogeneous, the cities (this was especially true before the war) have populations that are quite diversified, and people of different backgrounds and beliefs accept one another. The majority of the population in Bosnia is made up of Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox Christians), Croats (Catholics), and Bosniaks (Muslims). Despite the fact that the three different groups have chosen different names for the language they speak, it is basically the same, differing only in a few mutually understandable dialects and individual alphabets.

War and Its Aftermath in Bosnia

Trouble for Bosnians began in 1990 with the breakup of Yugoslavia, of which Bosnia was a part. Bosnia officially became independent the following year and was ruled by Croat and Muslim political parties, which had come together to defeat the Serb nationalists. This angered the Serbs, who were adamant about creating a so-called greater Serbia by uniting the Serbs in Bosnia with those in Serbia. Serbs in Bosnia began to worry about rumors of mass killings, despite the fact that parliament had declared equal rights for all ethnic groups. Tensions exploded during a demonstration in Sarajevo in 1992, when Serb gunmen shot into the crowds. At that point, civil war broke out.

Serbs were committed to their plan of a greater Serbia and began to expel all Muslims from northern and eastern Bosnia. Homes and mosques were destroyed. Thousands of Muslim men were massacred, and women were raped. In the summer of 1992, Croats took up arms against the Bosniaks (Muslims). The killings in this war culminated in 1995 with a massacre of an estimated six thousand Muslim men in Srebrenica. It has been estimated that at least two hundred thousand people died during the conflict. The city of Banja Luka (which is mentioned in the play) became the provisional capital of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia during the war in the 1990s. One of the largest concentration camps was built there, and it has been estimated that the city suffered the

most extreme of the war's ethnic cleansings, a term that arose out of this conflict and refers to forced deportation and even genocide.

For three weeks, from November 1 to November 21, 1995, the Serbian president Slobodan Miloševic, the Croatian president Franjo Tuđman, the Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic, the chief American negotiator Richard Holbrooke, and General Wesley Clark met in Dayton, Ohio, to work out a peace agreement that would end the civil war in Bosnia. Through what has become known as the Dayton Accord, the country was divided into two parts, the Muslim-Croat Federation and a Serb state, called the Republika Srpska. Despite the seeming success of the Dayton Accord in stopping the fighting, the country struggled in the aftermath of the war. Cities were destroyed and families were torn apart and murdered. The psychological scars remain to contribute to tensions. War tribunals have tried and convicted many of the war criminals, but peace is not assured. In 2005, the European Union Force, an international military group, continued to police the towns and cities. There were no plans for removal of these troops in the foreseeable future.

American Theater, 1990s

Large, extravagant musicals with corporate backing prevailed among the productions that were staged on Broadway in the 1990s. Mainstream plays that could pull a large audience became the mainstay. More provocative plays were often seen off Broadway and in regional theaters. Low budgets curtailed the building of lavish sets in these smaller productions, and many of these off-Broadway plays had only a handful of characters at best.

There was concern, among critics and others who study drama, that the gap was widening between the entertaining, extravagant productions on Broadway, such as the Walt Disney Company's *Lion King*, and the somewhat radical, small-audience dramas produced in regional theaters. Although the second category of plays might be thought-provoking, very few people had the chance to see them. There was seldom enough money in the budget for these plays to travel around the country, and only if the play was adapted to a film script and made into a movie did anyone outside the region have a chance to experience it.

This does not mean that there were not big successes in the production of serious plays. For example, Tony Kushner was not daunted by the prevalence and popularity of musicals. His *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* and *Angels in America: Perestroika* (1993), a two-part work, won two Tony Awards and a Pulitzer Prize. The plays deal with the very serious topic of the epidemic of AIDS. Other thought-provoking plays that were successful in the 1990s included two by the elder statesmen□dramatists Edward Albee, author of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*? (1962), and Arthur Miller, author of *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Both of these playwrights are considered masters of American drama. Albee's *Three Tall Women*, a play that looks back at three stages in the life of an elderly woman, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1994. That same year saw the production of Miller's *Broken Glass*. Prompted by the civil war in Yugoslavia, Miller wrote

a play concerning the troubled marriage of a Jewish couple, set in 1930s Brooklyn at the time when Nazi mistreatment of Jews was beginning to make headlines around the world.

Critical Overview

Necessary Targets went through several public (and celebrated) readings before it was staged as a play in the United States. Movie stars read the play in benefits to raise money for war refugees. Ensler then gained fame, even world recognition, with the successful run of her Obie-winning *Vagina Monologues*. This brought interest in her earlier play, and *Necessary Targets* was staged.

The first staging in the United States took place in Connecticut in 2001. Despite the many previous readings the play had received, Markland Taylor, writing for *Variety*, finds that Ensler's work still needs some polishing. □If it's ever to be the shattering cri de coeur [protest] it seemingly intends,□ Taylor writes, □more work is needed.□ Taylor faults the writing, stating that Ensler's characters need more depth. In the end, however, Taylor offers an oblique word of praise when he says that □Ensler must deliver the assured theatrical sophistication the play needs if it is to live up to its admirable intentions.□

The *New York Times* critic Alvin Klein also has trouble with the play. Klein recognizes the play's □transparent manipulation□ but then goes on to write that □it takes an ingrate to lack appreciation for ensemble acting so fine, and a curmudgeon to think that there is nothing here that cannot be fixed.□ Another *New York Times* critic, Ben Brantley, finds *Necessary Targets* to be □more artistically introspective□ than Ensler's more famous play, *The Vagina Monologues*. However, he also finds weaknesses. □Yet while 'Targets' bristles with enough tantalizing topics to fuel a year's worth of symposiums, it never shapes its themes into a seductive dramatic structure,□ he writes.

Joy Press of the *Village Voice* mentions the fact that the audience appreciated the play by honoring it with a standing ovation, but Press does not find that much to applaud. She finds that the play tends to stray □into cliched territory once or twice too often□ and that Ensler's vision was often □clouded by ambivalence.□ Charles Isherwood, writing for *Variety*, finds the play to be □awkwardly structured, chopped up into brief scenes that meander around and seem to end just when they should be beginning.□

Although Karen Bovard, for *Theatre Journal*, also notes the play's weaknesses, she praises Ensler for her focus on the American women in the play. □By centering on the American psychiatrist's story, Ensler avoids the most egregious kind of speaking for 'the other' and thereby committing an arrogant act of imagined empathy,□ Bovard writes. Instead, Ensler is concerned about the □changes in consciousness□ that the Americans experience, the effect that the war refugees have on the foreigners, who come from a □position of privilege and relative safety.□ It is this focus that Bovard thinks produces □some of the most telling lines□ in the play.

Tricia Olszewski, writing for the *Washington Post*, takes just the opposite position from Bovard's. Olszewski finds that the focus on the American women □prevents anyone from being terribly sympathetic□ with any of the characters. Although □Ensler takes a few satisfying jabs at American culture,□ Olszewski writes, □in a play allegedly about

the atrocities of war, the sharpest commentary shouldn't be about the absurdity of the States.

Looking at the play through a director's eye, the *Washington Post* reporter Dan Via quotes Cornelia Pleasants, who directed *Necessary Targets* at the Olney Theatre in Maryland. Pleasants readily admits that the play presents challenges but had this to say: I think it's a play worth discussing and it's a time in the world's history that we need to look at closely.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Hart is a freelance writer and published author with degrees in English and creative writing. In this essay, she examines what Ensler refers to as the death of trust and what Ensler suggests that it takes to bring trust back into life.

In her introduction to the published version of *Necessary Targets*, Ensler refers to the difference between the loud and obvious catastrophes that occur while a war is in progress and the less observable psychological wounds that the victims must endure after a ceasefire has been proclaimed. □It is the bombing, the explosions in the dark,□ she writes, □that keep us watching.□ She refers here to the media coverage that is sent out to television stations around the world. People are often glued to their TV sets while the bombs are falling, but then, when the streets of the war-torn countries become quiet, the journalists and their cameras disappear. All that is left is the physical rubble of the buildings, along with the terrible destruction of people's lives. A camera can broadcast pictures of the buildings, but how does one capture images of a person's shattered mind and soul? How can one depict the trauma that a victim of war has suffered? And yet it is when the impoverished victims face the horrors they must live with in the aftermath that □the real war begins,□ Ensler writes.

□When we think of war, we do not think of women,□ Ensler continues, □because the work of survival, of restoration, is not glamorous work.□ Ensler is referring to the fact that the media is not interested in this type of story. It is too difficult to pinpoint, to dramatize in a single shot. But this □real war,□ Ensler believes, can be found □in the broken-down fabric of community, in the death of trust, in the destruction of the everyday patterns of living.□ Ensler wrote her play to dramatize what she felt the media had skipped over and ignored. In this play, she portrays one element of the psychological wounds the Bosnian women have suffered, the death of trust, and what they do in an attempt to resurrect trust.

Ensler describes several variants of the destruction of trust. Some of the women who survived the war are so badly wounded that they distrust their own versions of reality. Others are suspicious of outsiders, those who have come merely to talk about the war but have not suffered from it. But the American women, who admittedly are not survivors of a war, also suffer from lack of trust. Their wars are more personal and internal. All of these women appear to suffer from the same affliction. Some are more deeply wounded than others and are unable to heal. A few have buried their trust deep within themselves, yet it is not quite dead. They may not be fully aware of it, but they appear to reach out, hoping that someone will come along and help them learn to trust again.

Ensler, who based the writing of her play on interviews she conducted with real victims of the war in Bosnia, has the war refugees mock the American women when they first arrive at the refugee camp. J.S. and Melissa want to help them, but the Bosnian women are suspicious of the therapists' motives. The Bosnians accuse the Americans of being no more empathetic to their condition than the journalists who once crawled all over

their country, gathering stories so they could send their reports to their respective publications and other media. The journalists invaded the victims' lives, stole the grimy details of their circumstances, and disappeared unscathed. As a group, the Bosnian women no longer trust anyone who has not suffered through the war and who can leave all the destruction behind and return to a cozy life somewhere else. Their trust in outsiders has been broken. The words of outsiders hold little meaning for them, because the refugees found that words were empty. The journalists did nothing to improve the Bosnian women's lives. They did not stop the war; they did not save their families. Now that the war victims have nothing left, why should they trust these American women?

Death of trust does not mean, however, that the women have lost their sense of humanity, despite the horrendous crimes they have both survived and witnessed. One brave woman, Jelena, is not entirely broken. She still has hope, and therefore a little trust, left in her. She steps forward and tries to build a bridge between her comrades and the American women. Jelena's trust, though shattered, is amazingly strong. It is through her example, her willingness to try yet one more time to breathe life into the fragile remnants of her trust, that some of the other women gain the strength to piece together, slowly but surely, their own sense of faith in humanity.

Standing in opposition to Jelena's willingness to trust is Zlata, the physician, who is the least trusting of the Bosnian women. She turns her back on the American women, literally, and walks away from them. She will have nothing to do with their attempts at therapy, which she finds lack any personal involvement. She is vehemently opposed to Melissa's use of a tape recorder, which too obviously reminds her of the journalists. She does not want her life, yet again, to be captured and then forced, slavelike, to reveal itself not in the intimate connection between one person and another but broadcast by a camera into the square eye of a television set, so that strangers she will never meet can watch it while eating dinner.

Zlata, if she answers the therapists' questions at all, does so sarcastically, mocking their insensitivity. She is in no way taken in by the Americans. She wants to know why they are there, what they intend to do, and how they plan on doing it. She takes a logical stance, as if she were mirroring the objective stance she sees the American women taking. When she is dissatisfied with their answers, she tells them that she and the other women are □sick of talking.□ She does not, in other words, trust their intentions. Why should she? All the other outsiders came and took what they wanted. What do the Bosnian women get from the exchange?

Ironically, it is Zlata who finally makes the deepest connection with the Americans, or at least with J.S. After confronting J.S. about her own inability to open up to anyone, Zlata slowly begins to reveal herself. She does so after watching J.S. help Seada. Seeing J.S. break down her own barriers, stepping out of the role of psychiatrist and allowing Seada to sleep with her, causes Zlata to reevaluate her perception of J.S. Maybe this outsider is not just like the journalists. Maybe J.S. has real compassion for these women. With these thoughts, Zlata begins to mend her broken trust, one small step at a time.

Zlata's trust grows when she and J.S. are sitting alone. Zlata notices that J.S. has scrubbed her face and is in a natural state. "You look different without your makeup," she says. Her statement has symbolic meaning, demonstrating that Zlata feels as if J.S. has taken off her mask; she is now more like the Bosnian women. Without her makeup, J.S.'s true emotions are revealed. Zlata sees sadness in J.S.'s clean face, something that Zlata can relate to. Even though J.S. is not a victim of the Bosnian war, J.S.'s sadness probably indicates to Zlata that J.S. has been wounded by some other kind of war. This is important to Zlata—not that J.S. is wounded, but that, because of her wound, J.S. might actually have real compassion.

Melissa, on the other hand, does not express any recognizable compassion. She appears to be in Bosnia for herself. She wants to write a book, and she wants to put herself in the midst of other people's tragedies so that she can forget her own. Melissa does not trust any of the women, including J.S., and none of the women trust her. Melissa is, indeed, like the journalists of whom the Bosnian women speak—journalists who got what they wanted and then left as soon as they could.

By comparing J.S. to Melissa, in terms of their relationships with the refugees, audiences grasp Ensler's message. They see that in some ways, both American women came to Bosnia without any trust. They both arrived with the impression that they were doing a job. They both had personal problems of their own that diminished their ability to trust. The circumstances that ravaged the American women's trust remain undefined. J.S. mentions locking herself up in a very conservative and objective suit of armor, which she thought was required by her profession. Melissa hints that something awful happened to her when she was young. Whatever originally caused these two women to close themselves off from others is not the issue. The issue is that J.S. changes and Melissa does not. The change in J.S. occurs when she allows her compassion to lead her. Thus, Ensler dramatizes with J.S. that it is through compassion that trust is rebuilt. The implication of this statement might be that if trust is rebuilt, perhaps there will be no reason for future wars.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on *Necessary Targets*, in *Drama for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Quotes

"I am a psychiatrist. Twenty-six years. In private practice. I've been involved in a war of sorts, mental skirmishes and attacks. Trauma is trauma." J.S. to Melissa, p. 9.

Nuna: "So this is American therapy." Azra: "It just feels like another terrible day to me." p. 36.

"These women need an outlet for their rage and despair. We are necessary targets." Melissa to J.S., p. 39.

"Recording tears, recording refugee tears - sexy business." Zlata to Melissa, p. 50.

"Please, I want you to record that Seada feels safety on her face." Seada to Melissa, p. 54.

"I need a breeze to sleep, the air, the sense of going somewhere." J.S. to Zlata, p. 57.

"I used to think it was the leaders, that men really made this war because of their hunger for power. But now I really believe it's in all of us - this thing, this monster, waiting to be let out. It waits there looking for a reason, a master, an invitation. If we are not aware of it, it can conquer us." Zlata to J.S., p. 61.

"...[Americans] all want it to be logical - you want us to be different than you are so you can convince yourselves it wouldn't happen there, where you are. That's why you turn us into stories, into beasts, Communists, people who live in a strange country and speak a strange language - then you can feel safe, superior ..." Zlata to J.S., p. 64.

"This recorder has helped women everywhere I've been. It is a device which legitimizes their experience, documents it, heals it ..." Melissa to J.S., p. 67.

"Of course it's French. Who else would think of skin cleansing in the middle of ethnic cleansing?" Zlata, p. 69.

"I am so goddamn well trained. I'm no different than a soldier. Marching. Marching. Marching through people's brains. I don't murder people, well, I do, really. I kill them with all my boundaries and rules and perfect training." J.S. to Zlata,p. 78.

"One of the boys who beat me with a stick - I breast fed him when he was an infant, when his mother was too sick." Azra to Melissa, p. 95.

"I don't dream at all. Not my verb. I write, I do, I go." Melissa to J.S., p. 109.

"Cruelty is easy. Cruelty, like stupidity, is quick, immediate. They break in, they wear masks, they smell bad, they have machetes, they chop off the heads of my old parents sitting on their couch ... cruelty is generic. Cruelty is boring, boring into the center of the

part of you that goes away. We are dead - all of us- to the suffering." Zlata to J.S., p. 115.

Topics for Further Study

Think about the title of this dramatic work. Read the passage in scene 4 in which Melissa states that she and J.S. are the necessary targets. What does she mean by this? Write a paper focusing on your interpretation of the title. To demonstrate your understanding and interpretation, use an extended example from your own life or from the life of someone you know that would demonstrate how a person could be a necessary target. If you do not have a real example, make up a situation to use as a model.

Research the human rights violations that occurred during the Bosnian civil war. Then read accounts about segregation and human rights abuse in the South during the first half of the twentieth century in the United States. How were the circumstances in the two countries different? How were they the same? Write a paper about your findings.

Take a poll of people's knowledge and understanding of the war in Bosnia and its aftermath. First make a list of five to ten questions, such as these: Do you remember the war in Bosnia? Do you know what the war was about? Do you know who the Serbs were? Then go to three different locations in your vicinity (for example, the grocery store, the post office, or the library). Tell the people you encounter that you are taking a survey for a study project and ask if they could answer a few questions. Ask at least fifteen people at each location. Keep a record of how many people you talked to and how many questions they were able to answer. Present your results to your class.

Pretend that Nuna is your pen pal. Write her a long letter, telling her about your life in the United States. You might want to describe two different days, a school day and a weekend day. Next, imagine that you are Nuna. Research life in a refugee camp and compose a letter as if she were responding to your correspondence, telling you what her life is like.

Write a scene, at least three pages long, between two characters that do not have much interaction in this play. You might focus on Seada and Melissa or Nuna and Azra. Write your scene as if it were a part of the play. Be careful not to let the dialogue bring either of your characters out of sync with what is happening in the play.

What Do I Read Next?

The Vagina Monologues (1999) has caused a stir throughout the world. This play made Ensler a celebrity and inspired her to organize what is referred to as the V-Day movement, to stop violence against women. Ensler performed all the roles and was awarded an Obie for her writing. In the play, women talk about their bodies and their sexual experiences. The women represent just about every age group, from a six-year-old to a septuagenarian.

As with her other plays, Ensler gathered material from interviews with women from around the world to write *The Good Body* (2004). The focus in this play is on women's stomachs. The dialogue is often funny, and the subject matter reveals women's different cultural attitudes about their bodies.

David Rieff's *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (1996) provides a journalist's point of view of the war in Bosnia. Although the details are terrifying, Rieff relays the story through an objective eye. In this account, he tells of ethnic cleansing, the efforts of the UN forces, and the systematic murder of Muslim leaders.

Some of Ensler's peers are represented in the collection *Women Playwrights: The Best Plays of 1998*, published in 2000. This book contains plays by Erin Cressida Wilson, Wendy Weiner, Val Smith, Jill Morley, Wendy MacLeod, Jessica Goldberg, Aviva Jane Carlin, and Jocelyn Beard.

Another collection, *Feminist Views on the English Stage: Women Playwrights 1990-2000*, was published in 2003. It offers the changing perspective of feminist views through the eyes of British playwrights during the last decade of the twentieth century.

Further Study

Malcolm, Noel, *Bosnia: A Short History*, New York University Press, 1996.

Noel Malcolm wrote this short history to provide a background for the conflicts that took place in Bosnia in the 1990s. Malcolm, a columnist for London's *Daily Spectator*, gives a politically interesting perspective on how Bosnia's civil war was fueled.

Manuel, David, *Hope in the Ashes*, Paraclete Press, 1996.

David Manuel traveled to Bosnia many times during the conflict there to gather information on how such atrocities could happen. In the process of talking to Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks, he discovered that despite the fighting, everyone was hopeful for a peaceful future for their children. This book relates stories of people who lived through the war.

McLaughlin, Buzz, *The Playwright's Process: Learning the Craft from Today's Leading Dramatists*, Backstage Books, 1997.

McLaughlin spent time interviewing members of the Dramatists Guild to come up with enlightening tips for writing plays. Step by step, he takes his reader through the process, offering many examples and strategic materials that illustrate the process.

Sudetic, Chuck, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia*, Penguin, 1999.

Chuck Sudetic, a writer for the *New York Times*, has family members living in Bosnia. He covered stories for the *Times*, written in a journalist's objective voice. For this book, however, Sudetic writes from the heart, telling the story of the events that led up to the massacre in which more than six thousand Muslim men were killed in the town of Srebenica, in one of the worst massacres of the war.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's"For Students" Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently

studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals— helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man–the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

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