



Study Guide for Educators

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About this Study Guide...

Foreword:

This study guide has been prepared as a tool for educators with information that can be shared with students prior to the presentation of *A Girl's War* and can also serve as a springboard for post-show discussion and activities. Students from a variety of disciplines will be viewing this play: Performing Arts, English Language Arts, History-Social Science and Armenian Heritage and Culture. As such, we encourage you to review the entirety of this guide, not only to identify areas of focus that most clearly parallel your curriculum but also to be open to other ideas, areas of discussion, and activities that will broaden your students' perceptions of the work. We hope the materials in these pages will inspire you to augment what is contained with contributions of your own with the goal of challenging and inspiring your students.

If your high school students are attending a performance of *A Girl's War* and are participating in the post-performance discussion, along with utilizing all of the materials in this guide, they are engaging in the following of California's Content Standards, as set forth by the State Board of Education:

Visual and Performing Arts (Theatre) Grades 9 – 12

Artistic Perception – 1.1 and 1.3

Creative Expression – 2.2

Aesthetic Valuing – 4.2

History-Social Science

World History, Culture, and Geography: The Modern World – 10.5, 10.6, 10.7, 10.9

United States History and Geography: Continuity and Change in the Twentieth Century – 11.9

Principles of American Democracy – 12.6

English Language Arts

Listening and Speaking – Grades 9 and 10 – 1.11, 1.13

Literary Response and Analysis – Grades 9 and 10 – 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.10

Listening and Speaking – Grades 11 and 12 – 2.3

Literary Response and Analysis – Grades 11 and 12 – 3.3

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Please note:

Our performance of *A Girl's War* will contain some stage violence including a gunshot. There are the briefest of moments of strong language and sexually suggestive language. While there is implied nudity, no actual nudity will be visible to the audience. These brief moments support the aesthetic integrity of the work and are in no way thematic.

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About the Play...

The Story...

During a stormy fashion shoot, Anna Sarkisian, a New York model, learns that her younger brother has been killed by enemy soldiers in her native Karabakh in the Caucasus Mountains. In the Armenian enclave of Karabakh, formerly part of the Soviet Union, an unresolved civil war still smolders between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The war has already killed Anna's older brother and driven her mother in to the army. When Anna hears the news about her younger brother, Seryozha, she goes home to her village for the first time in 15 years. Living with her fiercely partisan Armenian mother in the bombed ruin of her childhood home, Anna defiantly refuses to identify herself with the Armenian cause. Then a young Azerbaijani deserter named Ilyas shows up, claiming to be a former neighbor and Seryozha's childhood friend. Anna and Ilyas, powerfully drawn to one another, become lovers in secret.

In Act II, tensions ignite when Stephen, a New York fashion photographer and Anna's former lover, follows her to Karabakh with his young assistant. The cultural collision sparks humorous but ultimately deadly conflicts. As landmines begin to explode in the village, the question of Ilyas' identity becomes crucial for Anna, her mother, and the whole village. The competing desires of love and vengeance fueled by jealousy propel the characters toward an explosive climax with tragic consequences.

The Time and Place...

The action takes place in 2003, in a photographer's studio in New York City and in a mountain village in Karabakh, near the Karabakh-Azerbaijan front. In the play, the fictional Karabakh village is called Matarash by the Armenians and Madariz by the Azeris. It was customary for a town to have multiple names indicative of its Soviet, Armenian and Azerbaijani identities.

The People...

Anahid Sarkisian (called Anna)

An international fashion model. She is frustrated by her life and career and initially rejects her Armenian heritage. She ultimately becomes the lover of the young Azeri deserter (Ilyas).

Arshaluis Sarkisian

Anna's mother, a devoutly religious woman who has lost two sons in the conflict and is now a sniper in Karabakh.

Seryozha Sarkisian

Anna's young brother and childhood friend of Ilyas. A shepherd by trade, he visits the action as a ghost.

Stephen Wellington

A British-born photographer and former love interest of Anna, he now works in New York but has followed Anna back to her birthplace.

Tito Uccello

Stephen's young Italian-American photographic assistant, an unsuspecting victim of the conflict.

Ilyas Alizade

An Azerbaijani refugee and deserter from the army, who returns to the home that his family once inhabited and becomes Anna's lover. Seryozha's childhood friend.

Questions for Post-Show Discussion:

Anna says, "What do I have in common with the Armenians? I don't even have anything in common with myself." How much does national identity seem to define various characters in *A Girl's War*? How does nationality define your identity?

Arshaluis, like many Armenians, conflates Turkish people with Azerbaijanis when she says, "Turk, Azeri – same thing." How has her personal experience shaped her perspective? Have you experienced or witnessed cultural or ethnic prejudice caused by such preconceptions?



Joyce Van Dyke is an American playwright of Armenian descent. Her maternal grandparents were born in Kharpert. Her grandmother was deported from Mezireh in 1915 and came to America; her grandfather came in 1912. Joyce grew up in Orinda, California. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Stanford University, a Master's degree in playwriting from Boston University and a PhD from the University of Virginia. Before concentrating on playwriting, she taught Shakespeare and poetry for many years at Harvard and Wellesley, and also worked for several years as a speechwriter in Washington, D.C. She now lives in the Boston area with her husband and two sons. *A Girl's War* was first produced in a workshop production at Boston Playwrights' Theatre in 2001, where it was named by the Boston Globe as one of the "Top Ten" plays of the year. A revised version of the play received its world premiere at New Repertory Theatre in 2003, and was nominated for the American Theatre Critics Association's Steinberg New Play Award. It won the John Gassner Playwriting Award, the Provincetown Theatre Company Playwriting Award, and was designated as a finalist for the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award. The play was published in the anthology *Contemporary Armenian American Drama* (2004). Joyce has gone on to

win commissions and playwriting fellowships from Ensemble Studio Theatre in New York, the Huntington Theatre Company in Boston, and the MacDowell Colony. She is now working on a new play dealing with the intertwined lives of two women who come to America after the Armenian genocide.

The Playwright's Perspective...

How I came to write this play...

is a question I can only partly answer. My maternal grandmother, who was born in Kharpert in Ottoman Turkey, lost her parents, her husband, and her three children in the 1915 Armenian genocide. She survived the death march and reached Aleppo where she worked in an orphanage for five years; she then came to America and married an Armenian whose wife and children had been destroyed in the genocide.

I grew up in Orinda and we often visited my Armenian grandparents in Fresno. I don't remember my grandfather ever saying a single word about the Old Country. Not that my grandmother said much – just a few phrases, an image or two. But what I knew, even in dim outlines, of her experience cast her into a shadowy depth that drew me in and fascinated me. It made her more foreign than anything in my world. I remember feeling bewildered, as a child, that this physical person sitting across from me could have absorbed and contained so much suffering – without changing shape, or exploding. It was far beyond my imagination, and maybe that's why I couldn't stop thinking about it.

In 1996, while I was in the Boston University playwriting program, I wrote a few scenes that were set in New York, with an Armenian-American model, her Armenian seamstress-mother, and an older male fashion designer. The scenes fizzled, and I forgot about them. Two years later I found myself thinking about that model again, though. (Why? This part of the play's genesis I can't explain, except that an Armenian fashion model seemed to me like a contradiction in terms, and I liked that.) Taking the model more seriously this time, I asked where she had come from. I imagined her having come from Karabakh – which I had only recently learned about from an expatriate Armenian. Suddenly the idea for the play caught fire. I knew she would return to Karabakh, and that would create the action of the play.

I chose not to write about the Armenian genocide, but about a contemporary situation, the war in Karabakh which the 1994 ceasefire has repressed but not ended. When I began, because I knew almost nothing about the Karabakh conflict at that point, it seemed like a more 'manageable' subject, and I was grateful for what seemed its distance from the genocide. As I wrote, inevitably, the shadow of my grandmother and her experiences entered into the writing and fused in some ways with the experiences of the contemporary Karabakhtsis I was trying to bring to life. The characters of *A Girl's War* are fictional, though. The play does not depict my grandmother (or any actual person) and yet it's because of her that I wanted to write about these characters. It wasn't until after the play was written that it occurred to me that my grandmother's son – a boy who disappeared during the 1915 death march and who was a shepherd and flute-player – probably had something to do with the dead son in my play. But the play is not only about the Armenian character but about the Azerbaijanis, Americans and others who are struggling to find their place – with a nation, or beyond nationality.

Question for Post Show-Discussion:

The playwright has given her female characters careers that are less than traditional – a mother who is a sniper and a daughter who is a fashion model. If the writer had chosen a different career for Anna, perhaps a lawyer or a teacher would the character's motivations and actions have been different?

About the Language...

Armenian Phrases

Yes verch em. – I'm finished.

La-soom yes eents? -- Can you hear me?

Amahn! – an exclamation

Ga-mar-ah tsev shar-jheer. Hahs-geh-tsar? –
Make arcs. You understand?

Ahmot – Shame!

Ahn-amohit akh-cheeg! -- Disgraceful girl!

Anoon hor, yev vort-voh, yev hok-vooyin, ser-po, Amen. -- In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen.

Seryozha, seer-a-lis. Inch ha-je-li yes neh-va-goom. Inch lahv yer-ah-jeesht yes. Seryozha, darling. How sweetly you play. What a musician you are.

Vy -- an exclamation

Astvadz -- God

Deh-ghas. Balah jahn! --My son. My dear child!

Inch eh ga-dar-voom ice-degh? -- What's going on here?

Do Ilyas nes? Yes Olgan des-noom em ice-degh. -- Are you Ilyas? I see Olga here.

Soviet Anthem (Sung in Russian)

Unbreakable Union of freeborn Republics
Great Russia has welded forever to stand.
Created in struggle by will of the people,
United and mighty, our Soviet Land.

Note on Language:

Anna is fluent in English—her native language is the Karabakh dialect of Armenian. Armenian was disallowed under the Soviets so she grew up fluent in Russian. Arshaluis is fluent in the dialect and Russian, and uses broken English. Ilyas's native tongue is Azerbaijani, closely related to Turkish, and like Anna, he is fluent in Russian—his years with an American woman facilitated his English. Seryozha speaks the Karabakh dialect. This dialect is notably different from the Armenian spoken in the U.S. (Western) or the Armenian spoken in Armenia proper.

Glossary

Madzoon – Armenian yogurt (Yogurt is a Turkish word)

Martyr's Corner –an altar with candles and photos of those who gave their lives for a cause

Yerevan – capital of Armenia

Stepanakert – Armenian name for capital city of Nagorno-Karabakh

Khojali – hundreds of Azerbaijanis were killed when Armenians stormed this town in February, 1992

Matarash/Madariz – Armenian/Turkish names for this fictional location, the setting of the play

Baku – capital city of Azerbaijan

Tamadah – Master of Ceremonies

Saatli – location of an Azerbaijani refugee camp

Adana – capital city of the Adana province in South Turkey

Fedayee – rebels engaged in guerilla warfare, literal translation is martyr

Bandolier – belt for holding ammunition

Kurds— Indo-European people scattered in and repressed by Turkey, Iran, Iraq

Hakkari – city in Southeast Turkey on border of Iraq

Kirk Kerkorian – Armenian-American billionaire known for substantial interests in Las Vegas

Vermag – homemade quilt

Doshag – mattress

Sarma – grape leaves filled with meat, rice, onions, spices

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a military alliance for collective defense

Colin Powell – retired general, US Secretary of State 2001-2005

Minsk Peace Process – multinational peace initiative, part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Yalanchi – rice-stuffed grape leaves, meatless

Hambartsum – Ascension Day, celebrated 40 days after Easter with daytime outdoor enjoyment, night of miracle

A Neighbor's War...

Comparative Facts: Armenia

- **Geography:** a landlocked country of total area 29,743 km² (18,481 square miles), bordering on Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, and Turkey.
- **Population size:** 2,968,586 (as of July 2008 CIA estimate).
- **Languages:** Armenian 97.7%, Yezidi 1%, Russian 0.9%, other 0.4% (as of 2001 census). Armenian is an Indo-European language, like English, French, and Spanish, but it occupies its own unique linguistic branch of the family tree.
- **Ethnicities:** Armenian 97.9%, Yezidi 1.3%, Russian 0.5%, other 0.3% (as of 2001 census).
- **Religions:** Armenian Apostolic 94.7%, other Christian 4%, Yezidi 1.3%.
- **Important history:** Armenia is known by many as the first Christian country, having adopted Apostolic Christianity sometime in the fourth century CE. Over the centuries, the region was dominated by various empires, including the Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Persians, and Ottomans. The eastern half of the country—the area that is modern-day Armenia—became Russian in 1828. A move for reform brought the Hamidian Massacres of 1894-1896 in which hundreds of thousands of Armenians were murdered by the Ottoman government. Subsequent pogroms followed in 1909 in which whole towns were pillaged and destroyed. In World War I, imposed resettlement, confiscation of property, forced marches, mass burnings, public executions and brutal systematic extermination by the Ottoman Turks led to 1.5 million Armenian deaths, a tragedy now known as the Armenian Genocide. With Azerbaijan and Georgia, Armenia attempted to form a Transcaucasian republic after the Russian Revolution, but they soon splintered into independent republics in 1918. After its brief independence, Armenia was conquered by the Soviet Red Army in 1920. Armenia became a Soviet Socialist Republic in the Stalinist era, and then finally declared its independence in 1991—one of the first fracture points in the breakup of the USSR.



From "Armenia," *CIA – The World Factbook*, 18 Dec. 2008, 8 Jan. 2009
<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html>>.



From Thomas De Waal's *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, New York: New York University Press, 2003.

Comparative Facts: Azerbaijan

- **Geography:** a country of total area 86,600 km² (53,811 square miles), bordering on Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia, Iran, Russia, Turkey, and the Caspian Sea. Also officially includes Nagorno-Karabakh and the exclave of Naxcivan Autonomous Republic.
- **Population size:** 8,177,717 (as of July 2008 CIA estimate).
- **Languages:** Azerbaijani 90.3%, Lezgi 2.2%, Russian 1.8%, Armenian 1.5%, other 3.3%, unspecified 1% (as of 1999 census). Azerbaijani is an Altaic language in the Turkic family, and is related to Turkish.
- **Ethnicities:** Azerbaijani (Turkic) 90.6%, Dagestani 2.2%, Russian 1.8%, Armenian 1.5% (almost all in Nagorno-Karabakh), other 3.9% (as of 1999 census).
- **Religions:** Muslim 93.4%, Russian Orthodox 2.5%, Armenian Orthodox 2.3%, other 1.8% (as of 1995 CIA estimate).



From "Azerbaijan," *CIA – The World Factbook*, 18 Dec. 2008, 8 Jan. 2009
<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/aj.html>>.

- **Important history:** like Armenia, Azerbaijan spent many centuries under foreign rule, including that of the Arabs, Mongols, Ottomans, and Persians. In 1828, Russia and Persia split Azerbaijan territory between them. After the Russian Revolution and the failure of the Transcaucasian Republic with Georgia and Armenia, Azerbaijan also briefly became an independent republic in 1918 before being conquered by the Soviet Red Army in 1920. Like Armenia, Azerbaijan became a Soviet Socialist Republic during the Stalinist era. Resistance to and violence against Soviet occupiers increased in the 1980s, until Azerbaijan declared its independence in 1991.



From Thomas De Waal's *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, New York: New York University Press, 2003.

Comparative Facts: Nagorno-Karabakh

- **Geography:** a landlocked region of 4,400 km² (2,734 square miles), completely within the borders of Azerbaijan.
- **Population size:** 145,000 (as of 2002 estimate).
- **Languages:** no census available; main languages are Armenian, Russian.
- **Ethnicities:** no census available; 95% Armenian and 5% Assyrian, Greek, Kurdish, and other minorities.
- **Religions:** no census available; primarily Armenian Apostolic Christian.
- **Important history:** the ancient history of the region is disputed, but there is some consensus that the Turkish-Persian name "Nagorno-Karabakh" emerged in the fourteenth century, replacing the Armenian "Artsakh." Russia acquired the area in the early nineteenth century, and in the early 1920s it became an autonomous oblast of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1988, Nagorno-Karabakh's legislature passed a resolution to secede from Azerbaijan and join with Armenia; in the ensuing conflict, Azeris fled Nagorno-Karabakh and ethnic Armenians fled the rest of Azerbaijan, creating hundreds of thousands of refugees. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, Nagorno-Karabakh declared itself an independent republic in 1991, but it has not yet gained international recognition. (For a detailed look at the events and timeline of the conflict, see the Chronology section on page 12.) Ethnic Armenians now living in Nagorno-Karabakh have returned to using the name "Artsakh," hearkening back to the ancient Armenian kingdom.



From "Flag of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic," *Government of Nagorno Karabakh Republic*, 9 Jan. 2009 <<http://www.karabakh.net/engl/gov?id=54>>.

Questions for Discussion:

- Despite similar histories, Armenia and Azerbaijan are divided by religion, language, and ethnicity. To what extent do you think the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is "simply" territorial, and to what extent do you think these cultural factors caused or inflamed the dispute?
- **Follow-up:** Can you think of any parallels—"frozen" conflicts, religious/ethnic civil war among neighboring countries—elsewhere in twentieth-century history? In what ways is Nagorno-Karabakh unique, and in what ways is it a variation on a common theme?

Sources:

De Waal, Thomas. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/3658938.stm; <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nagorno-karabakh.htm>;
<http://www.cfr.org/publication/9148/>; <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/401669/Nagorno-Karabakh>;
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html>; <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5275.htm>;
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2909.htm>; <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/aj.html>;
<http://www.bartleby.com/61/indoeuro.html>; <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/linguistics/pie2.html>;
<http://www.nvtc.gov/lotw/months/march/AltaicLanguageFamily.html>; <http://www.ancsf.org/basicfacts.htm>;
http://www.nkrusa.org/country_profile/overview.shtml

About Nagorno-Karabakh... (This article was reprinted from the BBC News web site.)

Situated in south-western Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh is a richly fertile area of striking beauty scarred by its violent history.

The word Karabakh has Turkic and Persian roots and means "black garden."
The word Nagorno is Russian and means mountainous.

Overview

The ongoing bitter rivalry for control between ethnic Armenians and Azeris has roots dating back well over a century into competition between Christian Armenian and Muslim Turkic and Persian influences.

Populated for hundreds of years by Armenian and Turkic farmers, herdsmen and traders, Karabakh became part of the Russian empire in the 19th century.

Armenia insists that it was part of an early Christian kingdom, citing the presence of ancient churches as evidence. Azeri historians argue that the churches were built by the Caucasian Albanians, a Christian nation whom they regard as among the forebears of the Azeri people.

Islam arrived in the region more than a millennium ago.

For long periods Christian Armenians and Turkic Azeris lived in peace but they were both guilty of acts of brutality in the early 20th century. These live on in the popular memory and fuel mutual antagonism.

The end of World War I and the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia brought carving up of borders. As part of their divide-and-rule policy in the area, the Soviets established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, of which the population was predominantly ethnic Armenian, within Azerbaijan in the early 1920s.

Armenian discontent at this situation smouldered throughout the Soviet period. Ethnic Armenian-Azeri frictions exploded into furious violence in the late 1980s in the twilight years of the USSR.

As the violence escalated, the ethnic Azeri population fled Karabakh and Armenia while ethnic Armenians fled the rest of Azerbaijan. With the break-up of the Soviet Union, in late 1991, Karabakh declared itself an independent republic. That de facto status remains unrecognised elsewhere.

Although there was no formal declaration of war, there was large-scale combat between Azerbaijani and ethnic Armenian forces. That fighting ultimately brought victory for the ethnic Armenians who then pushed on to occupy Azerbaijani territory outside Karabakh, creating a buffer zone linking Karabakh and Armenia.

AT A GLANCE



- Territory is inside Azerbaijan, but population is mainly ethnic Armenian.
- War followed 1991 declaration of independence: up to 30,000 killed, more than one million fled their homes.
- Ceasefire signed in 1994, but peace talks are bogged down and refugees remain stranded.



There have been many deaths to mourn.

Ceasefire

A Russian-brokered ceasefire was signed in 1994 leaving Karabakh de facto under ethnic Armenian control. The deal also left swathes of Azeri territory around the enclave in Armenian hands. No final settlement has ever been signed. Both sides have had soldiers killed in sporadic breaches of the ceasefire. The closure of borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan has caused landlocked Armenia severe economic problems for nearly 15 years.

It is estimated that between 20,000 and 30,000 people lost their lives during half a decade of conflict, and that more than one million fled their homes. The Azeris have yet to return to areas of Azerbaijan now under ethnic Armenian control and have little prospect of returning to Karabakh itself. Similarly, the Armenians who fled Azerbaijan during the conflict have not returned there.

The ethnic Armenians who now account for virtually the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh prefer to call it Artsakh, an ancient name dating back around 1,500 years.

The situation throughout over a decade since the ceasefire agreement has been one of simmering stalemate. Azeris bitterly resent the loss of the land which they regard as rightfully theirs. The Armenians show no sign of willingness to compromise or give one square centimetre of it back.

Russia, France and the US co-chair the OSCE's Minsk Group which has been attempting to broker an end to the dispute for over a decade.

In 1997 the group tabled settlement proposals seen as a starting point for negotiations by Azerbaijan and Armenia but not by the de facto authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh itself. When the then Armenian president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, tried to encourage Nagorno-Karabakh to enter into talks he was forced to resign amid cries of betrayal.

Hopes of a peace deal were raised in 2001, after a series of meetings between Armenian President Robert Kocharyan and Heydar Aliyev, the late president of Azerbaijan. However, ultimately the talks came to nothing.

There have since been signs of at least some life in the peace process with occasional meetings between the Armenian and Azeri presidents but these contacts have yet to show tangible results.

Azerbaijan declared illegitimate a referendum held in the region in December 2006. The vote approved a new constitution and referred to Karabakh as a sovereign state.

In March 2008 the OSCE said it was sending a mission to Nagorno-Karabakh following serious clashes which reportedly left several soldiers dead on both sides.



The territory's future is unresolved.

UPDATE

Since the writing of this BBC article, further progress has been made in negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh. In November 2008, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev hosted Moscow peace talks between Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan and Azeri president Ilham Aliyev. On November 2nd, both signed a declaration agreeing to "intensify efforts" to resolve the dispute. However, no specific plan for resolution has yet been proposed, and Nagorno-Karabakh's status remains unclear.

Facts

- **Territory:** Nagorno-Karabakh
- **Status:** de jure part of the Republic of Azerbaijan, unilaterally declared itself an independent republic in 1991
- **Capital:** Stepanakert/Xankandi
- **Area:** 4,400 sq km
- **Main religion:** Christianity
- **Languages spoken:** Armenian, Russian
- **Currency in use:** Dram

Leaders

President: Bako Sahakyan

Bako Sahakyan became president in October 2007, replacing Arkadiy Gukasyan, who was barred from seeking a third term.

The head of the unrecognized republic's security service from 2001 to 2007, Mr Sahakyan won 85% of the vote after campaigning as an independent backed by the governing Democratic Party.

The former security chief's landslide victory was widely viewed as a reflection of voters' fear that Azerbaijan may try to retake the territory by force.

Mr Sahakyan says his main priority will be to gain international recognition of its independence, and wants Nagorny Karabakh to be given full representation at any talks on the way forward.

Prime minister: Arayik Harutyunyan

(From "Regions and territories: Nagorno-Karabakh," *BBC News*, 23 Jul. 2008, 8 Jan. 2009 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/3658938.stm>.)

Questions for Discussion:

- Consider the importance of how we name countries. What is particularly interesting about the name "Nagorno-Karabakh"? Think about the fact that it's a compound, and also about its linguistic derivation and the translation given by the BBC article above. Consider also the way in which countries' names *evolve* (for example, the different ways we've referred to Russia throughout history). What is suggested by the fact that many Nagorno-Karabakh natives now call their region by the ancient Armenian name "Artsakh"?
- Hundreds of thousands of Azeris remain "internally displaced," forced to flee their homes but remaining within their own country's borders. They are discriminated against because of their Karabakhi roots, living in dire straits with little governmental assistance. How then do we define belonging – religion, language, culture? Can you think of other circumstances in which people have found themselves strangers in their own land?
- Note that in the recent November 2008 talks, Russia hosted Armenian and Azeri leaders for a discussion on the future of Nagorno-Karabakh... but not leaders from Nagorno-Karabakh itself. Can a region that is not officially recognized as a country have a presence in international diplomacy? And if not, how can it negotiate for itself? How does Nagorno-Karabakh's struggle for independence mirror or differ from the struggles of other nations throughout history?

A Chronology of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict...

- **1918:** after the Armenia-Azerbaijan-Georgia united federation dissolves into three separate independent republics, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over territory—including Nagorno-Karabakh—begins.
- **1920:** Bolsheviks take over in Nagorno-Karabakh, then give the territory to Azerbaijan.
- **1920-1921:** Bolshevik, Armenian, and Azeri leaders make conflicting claims about the ownership of Nagorno-Karabakh.
- **1923:** the newly established Soviet Union creates the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region.
- **1987:** ethnic Armenians begin agitation for the joining of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.
- **1988**
 - **February:** people demonstrate in Nagorno-Karabakh's capital of Stepanakert and in Armenia's capital of Yerevan for unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. Levon Ter-Petrosian is one of the leaders. Armenia supports the guerilla movement in Nagorno-Karabakh against the Azeris and Soviets. The regional Soviet in Stepanakert votes to join Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. Anti-Armenian pogroms in Sumgait in Azerbaijan.
 - **June-July:** the Armenian Supreme Soviet votes to accept Nagorno-Karabakh, while the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR reaffirm Azerbaijan's territorial claims.
 - **September:** Armenians are driven out of Shusha (an Azeri-held town in Nagorno-Karabakh), and Azeris are driven out of Stepanakert.
 - **November:** mass expulsion of Azeris from Armenia.
 - **December:** earthquake devastates northern Armenia leaving 25,000 dead, many more homeless. Islamic Republic of Iran serves as Armenia's main ally in the rebuilding process.
- **1989:** the Supreme Soviet of Armenia and the Karabakh Armenians' National Council declare unification.

COSTS OF THE 1988-1994 CONFLICT

CASUALTIES: approximately 36,000 deaths total.

- 6,000 ethnic Armenians (from Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh).
- 30,000 Azeris.

REFUGEES: estimates vary widely; easily over a million.

- Amnesty International estimates 400,000 ethnic Armenians were displaced during the war, of whom about half left Azerbaijan for Armenia or Nagorno-Karabakh. According to a 2007 report by the CIA, the majority have returned home since 1994, but 8,400 remain internally displaced within Armenia.
- The CIA calculates that over 800,000 ethnic Azeris were expelled from Armenia and occupied lands. In 2007, Amnesty International estimated that 400,000 Azeris remained displaced, while the CIA placed the number of internally displaced Azeris even higher at 580,000-690,000.

MILITARY SUPPORT:

- Fueling the conflict on both sides, weapons were inherited from the Soviet Union, stolen, sold by corrupt former Soviet officers and factories, obtained on the black market, and purchased outright. Russian troops and mercenaries also fought for both combatants.
- Financially, it is difficult to estimate the value of such support, but in a 1997 report made to the Russian parliament by General Lev Rokhlin, the total cost of weapons shipments to Armenia was estimated at one billion dollars, notable since Russia had publicly committed not to arm either side.

LAND OCCUPATION:

- Opinions vary, but the average estimate is that 10-20% of Azeri territory is controlled or occupied by Armenia. (The lower end of the estimate spectrum excludes Nagorno-Karabakh and the Naxcivan exclave.)



Nagorno-Karabakh refugees from Martakert in Balouja in 1992. (from Hrair Hawk Khatcherian's *Artsakh: A Photographic Journey*, Canada: The Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, 1997)

- 1991
 - **September:** Nagorno-Karabakh announces its secession from newly independent Azerbaijan.
 - **October:** Levon Ter-Petrosian is elected president of Armenia.
 - **November:** the Azeri parliament declares the abolition of Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomy.
 - **December:** ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh pass a referendum for independence; the Azeri minority is expelled.
 - The Soviet Union disintegrates.
- 1992
 - Armenian forces enter Nagorno-Karabakh, and over the next two years establish a land corridor between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh by taking several Azeri towns.
 - The last Soviet forces withdraw from Nagorno-Karabakh.
 - **January:** the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) admits Armenia and Azerbaijan, and begins mediating on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.
 - **February:** Armenians invade the town of Khojali and kill hundreds of Azerbaijanis.
 - **March:** the CSCE Minsk Conference for Nagorno-Karabakh is proposed and the Minsk Group is formed.
- 1994
 - **May:** the Russian-brokered Bishkek Protocol is drawn up, leading to a ceasefire. However, sporadic fighting continues, up until the present.
 - **December:** Robert Kocharian is elected president of Nagorno-Karabakh by parliament.
 - **December:** the CSCE becomes the OSCE.
- 1997: the Minsk Group—now co-chaired by the US, Russia, and France—presents a new peace plan, which Ter-Petrosian supports. Nagorno-Karabakh representatives won't agree to compromise.
- 1998
 - **February:** Ter-Petrosian is forced to resign as president of Armenia "amid cries of betrayal" over his support for the most recent peace plan.
 - **March:** Kocharian is elected president of Armenia on a program of ensuring the future of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- 1999: Kocharian and Azeri president Heidar Aliyev hold their first bilateral meeting in Washington.
- 2001: Kocharian and Aliyev continue holding meetings with no conclusive results.
- 2006: Nagorno-Karabakh passes a referendum declaring a new constitution and reiterating its sovereignty. Azerbaijan declares the referendum illegitimate.
- 2008
 - **October:** Russian president Dmitry Medvedev offers to host Moscow peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan about Nagorno-Karabakh.
 - **November:** in Moscow, the presidents of Armenia (Serzh Sarkysyan) and Azerbaijan (Ilham Aliyev) agree to "intensify efforts" to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Both sign a declaration to that effect.



Azeri refugees fleeing the Kalbajar area of Azerbaijan in 1993. (from "Expert Analysis: Recent Dissertations About Azerbaijan," *Azerbaijan International* 10.1 (2000): 36-39, 11 Jan. 2009 <http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai101_folder/101_articles/101_dissertations.html>)

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De Waal, Thomas. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/3658938.stm; <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/02/AR2008110201160.html>; <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/October/20081030165751idybeekcm0.6905634.html>; <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html>; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6247776.stm>; http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/82_folder/82_articles/82_holbrooke.html; <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/aj.html>; <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html>; [http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?__VIEWSTATE=dDwxMTA1OTA4MTYwOztsPENvdW50cnIERDpHb0J1dHRvbjs%2BPrImhOOqDI29eBMz8b04PTi8xjW2&cid=558&subm=&ssm=&map=&_ctl0%3ASearchInput=+KEYWORD+SEARCH&CountryDD%3ALocationList=;](http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?__VIEWSTATE=dDwxMTA1OTA4MTYwOztsPENvdW50cnIERDpHb0J1dHRvbjs%2BPrImhOOqDI29eBMz8b04PTi8xjW2&cid=558&subm=&ssm=&map=&_ctl0%3ASearchInput=+KEYWORD+SEARCH&CountryDD%3ALocationList=)

About US Policy...

On the Armenian Genocide

- **Then:**
 - Although neutral toward the Ottoman Empire at the time, the United States government joined all of the major World War One powers in condemning the Armenian Genocide. Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, cabled the State Department in 1915 to say that "it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress under a pretext of reprisal against rebellion" (<http://www.umd.umich.edu/dept/armenian/facts/genocide.html>).
 - Many American diplomats and missionaries were eyewitnesses to this campaign.
 - Major American newspapers, including the *New York Times*, gave frequent coverage to the killings.
 - At the Paris Peace Conference, the Allies requested that the United States assume guardianship of the new Republic of Armenia, but in 1920 Congress rejected President Wilson's move to make Armenia an official US protectorate.
- **Now:**
 - Turkey maintains that genocide was not committed, and that the Armenian deaths were simply the natural result of the war. Because Turkey is an important NATO ally, the US has been reluctant to directly contradict this position; indeed, Turkey recently threatened that if the US officially recognizes the Genocide, Turkish support in the Iraq war will come under question. Thus, until recently Ronald Reagan was the only US president to publicly call what happened to Armenians, a genocide.
 - In 1990, President Bush issued a statement calling for an American day of remembrance on April 24, recognized as the seventy-fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian Genocide.
 - On April 24, 1994, President Clinton also issued a news release commemorating the day.
 - **House Resolution 106:** In October 2007, a resolution was introduced to the US House of Representatives that would "accurately characterize the systematic and deliberate annihilation of 1,500,000 Armenians as genocide" (<http://articles.latimes.com/2007/oct/11/nation/na-genocide11>). Turkey warned that the resolution's passage would strain US-Turkey relations, and the Bush administration spoke against it, while the influential Armenian-American lobby campaigned for it. (Large numbers of Armenian-Americans are children or grandchildren of genocide survivors.) The resolution passed in the US House Foreign Affairs Committee by a bipartisan 27-21 vote. More than a year later, a vote on the resolution in the full House has still not been scheduled, due to the pressure of the Turkish lobby.
 - In a statement given on January 19, 2008, Barack Obama emphasized his support of House Resolution 106 and said that "as President I will recognize the Armenian Genocide" (http://www.barackobama.com/2008/01/19/barack_obama_on_the_importance.php).

On Armenian-Azeri-Turkish Relations and Nagorno-Karabakh

- Since 1992, the US, as a co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group, has helped to mediate between Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- In 1992, the Freedom Support Act, Section 907a, was passed by Congress with the help of an Armenian-American lobby which essentially punished Azerbaijan by restricting aid, "until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh." Ten years later, this act was lifted.
- Unlike other countries in the Caucasus, including Azerbaijan, Armenia has not sought membership in NATO.

- As in the case of the Genocide, because of its NATO alliance with Turkey, the US has been reluctant to press Turkey and Azerbaijan to lift their blockades against Armenia, notwithstanding the Freedom Support Act. In this economically crippled position, Armenia considers Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, its closest allies. However, the US has begun courting Armenia as it vies with Russia for influence over Caspian oil and gas routes.
- In his January 2008 statement, Obama not only spoke in favor of ending the Turkish and Azeri blockades against Armenia; he also vowed to work “for a lasting and durable settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict that is agreeable to all parties, and based upon America's founding commitment to the principles of democracy and self determination” (http://www.barackobama.com/2008/01/19/barack_obama_on_the_importance.php).
- “Caucasus: Frozen Conflicts and Closed Borders”: In a June 2008 congressional hearing, the House Foreign Affairs Committee questioned Dan Fried, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, on US policy toward Armenia. Special attention was given to recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the Turkish blockade, and Armenian-Azeri relations. During the hearing, several representatives expressed concern over the possibility of the renewal of large-scale fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan, due to increased Azeri military spending, but Fried downplayed this fear. Representative Brad Sherman compared the Nagorno-Karabakh situation to Kosovo and suggested that the US display a similar commitment here to the right to national self-determination, while Representative Frank Pallone called for de facto recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence and the lifting of restrictions on US engagement.

Questions for Discussion:

- Merriam-Webster defines genocide as “the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.” Why has this particular word been such a point of controversy among Armenia, Turkey, and the US? Many US officials have been comfortable with calling what happened in 1915 a crime, a massacre, or a tragedy (apparently with no fear of Turkish reprisal), so what makes “genocide” such a charged term that US presidents have historically shied away from using it?
- How have diaspora communities shaped US policy, and is this a positive or negative phenomenon?
- Rhetoric in favor of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence often invokes the right to national self-determination—a right upon which the US is founded, and one that we have historically supported for others. Do you think that the American ideological commitment to that right outweighs the threat it might pose to US-Turkish relations?
- **Follow-up:** If the US does decide to support Nagorno-Karabakh's claims, to what lengths do you think we should go? Diplomatic pressure? Financial support? Or even military engagement?

Sources:

De Waal, Thomas. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.
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<http://articles.latimes.com/2007/oct/11/nation/na-genocide11>;
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<http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-armenia/index.html>; <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/02/AR2008110201160.html>; http://www.anca.org/press_releases/press_releases.php?prid=1514;
<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/106019.htm>; <http://www.reporter.am/pdfs/A0621-W.pdf>, page 3; <http://georgia.usembassy.gov/pr-06182008.html>

About The Armenian Genocide...

The Armenians are an ancient people, having inhabited the highland region between the Black, Caspian, and Mediterranean seas for nearly 3,000 years. They are noted in Greek and Persian sources as early as the 6th century B.C. On a strategic crossroads between East and West, Armenia was at various times independent under a national dynasty, autonomous under native princes who paid tribute to foreign powers, or subject to direct foreign rule. The Armenians were the first people to adopt Christianity as a national religion, developing a distinct Indo-European language, alphabet, and national-religious culture.

On August 22, 1939, in preparation for the impending invasion of Poland, Hitler stated to Reichmarshal Hermann Goering and the commanding generals at Obersalzberg...
"Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

The Turkish invasion of Armenia began in the 11th century A.D., and the last Armenian kingdom fell three centuries later. Most of the territories that had once formed the ancient and medieval Armenian kingdoms were incorporated into the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. As a Christian minority, Armenians endured second-class citizenship, including restrictions on many aspects of their participation in society, special taxes, and a prohibition on bearing arms.

During WWI, The Young Turk political faction made a secret agreement with Berlin. In return for joining the war against Great Britain, France, and Russia, they sought the creation of a new Turkish state extending into Central Asia. The ideology called "Pan Turkism" (creating an homogenous Turkish state) now saw Armenians as an obstacle to the realization of that goal.

On April 24th, 1915, several hundred Armenian community leaders and intellectuals in Constantinople (Istanbul) were arrested, sent east, and put to death. In May, after mass deportations had already begun, Minister of the Interior Talaat Pasha, claiming that Armenians could offer aid and comfort to the enemy and were in a state of imminent rebellion, ordered their deportation (after the fact) to "relocation centers" - actually the barren Syrian desert.

Armenians in the Ottoman armies, serving separately in unarmed labor battalions, were removed and murdered. Of the remaining population, the adult and teenage males were separated from the deportation caravans and killed under the direction of Young Turk functionaries. Women and children were driven for months over mountains and desert, often raped, tortured, and mutilated. Deprived of food and water, they fell by the hundreds of thousands along the routes to the desert. Ultimately, more than half the Armenian population, 1,500,000 people, were annihilated. In this manner the Armenian people were eliminated from their homeland of several millennia. Thousands of refugees scattered throughout the Arab provinces and the Caucasus died of starvation, epidemic, and exposure. Churches and cultural monuments were destroyed and small surviving children were renamed and raised as non-Armenians.

Armenian Genocide Monument – Yerevan, Armenia

"The important point in understanding a tragedy such as this is not the exact and precise count of the number who died, that will never be known, but the fact that more than half the Armenian population perished." - excerpted from the *Model Curriculum for Human Rights and Genocide*, published for the California State Board of Education by the California State Department of Education.

From: <http://www.teachgenocide.org/background/history.htm>; http://www.teachgenocide.org/background/gen_monument.htm

Questions for Discussion:

- How have Hitler's words proven prophetic since 1939?
- How do you think the Armenian Genocide has influenced the characters in *A Girl's War*?
- An online petition in Turkey, apologizing for "the great catastrophe of 1915," is gaining thousands of signatures – do you think Turkey may eventually bow to the pressure and actually acknowledge this event as Genocide – to date the official policy has been that the deaths were as a result of war.



Torange Yeghiazarian (Director) writes, directs and acts for the theatre. A native of Iran and of Armenian heritage, Torange holds a Master's degree in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University where she collaborated with The San Francisco Mime Troupe in creating the melodrama *Torch!* Her plays (*Call Me Mehdi*, *Waves*, *Dawn at Midnight*, *Behind Glass Windows*, *Agaba*) reflect the perspective of the culturally displaced in tackling today's world of contradictory realities and values. As a teaching artist, Torange has taught playwriting to at-risk youth as part of the Each One Reach One program, incorporated theatre into social studies in Richmond's Washington Elementary School as part of East Bay Center for Performing Arts' Learning Without Borders program, and lead acting and play development workshops for Golden Thread Productions. She is the Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions, where she has devoted her professional life to

exploring Middle Eastern culture and identity through theatre arts.

An Interview with the Director...

What personally drew you to the *A Girl's War* and what has been Golden Thread's history with this play?

I'm an Armenian-Iranian born from a Moslem mother and a Christian father. From an early age, I found myself rejecting simplistic notions of religious and cultural divisions. *A Girl's War* is smartly written. It simultaneously questions nationalism and naive pacifism. Avoiding easy answers, the play leaves us with more profound questions.

What influenced your casting process for the play?

It is obviously not always possible or desirable to cast actors who share the ethnicity of the character. At the same time, casting actors who bring a level of inner cultural knowledge to the role enriches the production on many levels. This cast in particular is notable for being entirely made up of actors born outside of the US. They share with the characters of the play the struggle for identity, the nostalgia of home. The cast's diverse experiences very much have informed our choices in production.

What makes *A Girl's War* a love story in your opinion?

On a character level, Ilyas makes a decision to return to Anna despite the dangers it may pose to him. This is driven by a deep desire for connection, for acceptance. On a larger scale, these same needs for connection and acceptance drive decisions on national and international levels; the desire to belong to a Nation, the need to stay within a particular stretch of Land. It may seem like Anna and Ilyas are from opposing sides but they have more in common with each other than with anyone else in the play. Both are refugees, neither belongs anywhere.

Has there been any particular symbolism in the play that has informed your choices?

The image of the bucket full of blood, the ghost of Seryozha and "how he is" appears different depending on to whom he appears. But mainly I'm attracted to the way Fashion and Photography are used in the play to question our perceptions of War and Reality.

Conflict pervades *A Girl's War* on every level, whether it is between nations or between a mother and daughter who have chosen diametrically opposed directions in life. How has your personal experience as a successful artistic director of a theatre company specializing in presenting alternative perspectives of the Middle East, and someone with strong ties to the region affected your choices?

A Girl's War is a perfect example of the inadequacy of the Tolerance model. By this I am referring to the term often used to imply peaceful coexistence. But what is tolerance without understanding? Without respect? And how can we expect people to tolerate one another after atrocities have been committed? But the alternative, perpetual cycle of violence and killing while horrifyingly prevalent, is not a real option. The challenge is to begin the conversation, no matter how painful, and begin the process of understanding. The only way to do this is to begin from a place of respect and not to trivialize the other's experience. This is Anna's journey in *A Girl's War*.

The play has gone through many iterations – how does a director work with a playwright to facilitate changes in a script and as a result how has this play changed?

No one knows a play better than the playwright. As a director my goal is to get closer and closer to the vision of the playwright. In this process, questions come up and sometimes in answering the question the playwright makes new discoveries that lead to changes to the text. This process continues until opening night after which the actors take charge.

(Interview conducted by Betty Grandis, Golden Thread's Director of Education with Torange Yeghiazarian, January 16, 2009.)

About Theatre Arts...

Theatre Vocabulary

These terms may be used in discussions and exercises in conjunction with the performance.

Archetype – a prototype of a sort of person – the ideal upon which others are modeled.

Blocking – information given by the director to the actors regarding where to move onstage.

Character – an individual in the play whom an actor portrays.

Climax – high point of the action.

Conflict – complications in a play in which forces or people collide, leading to the high point.

Exposition – Information given through dialogue that reveals background/events leading up to the action.

House – where the audience sits in the theatre.

Motivation – the reason why a character performs a specific action.

Objective – what the character wishes to accomplish, his goal.

Props – objects that can be handled on stage.

Proscenium Stage – a more traditional type of stage, generally with a curtain, in which the audience views the play only from the front through a sort of “frame” effect.

Realism – accurate depiction of physical and emotional life onstage.

Resolution – conclusion of the drama or story following the falling action.

Set – the physical furnishings on the stage.

Setting – the time and place in which the story is played out.

Sightlines – line of sight between audience and stage.

Stage Areas – nine parts of the stage in which the actors move: upstage center, center stage, downstage center, up right, center right, down right, up left, center left, down left.

Staging – the movement patterns, processes or manners of presentation that the director chooses as a means of interpreting the play.

Stage Directions – instructions in a script that tell the actor where, how and when to move.

Subtext – the underlying unspoken thoughts of a character that an actor uses to interpret his role.

Theme – the central idea or message in a play or literary work.

Theatre in the Round – a stage that can be viewed from all sides.

Thrust Stage – a stage that projects into the audience so that the action can be viewed from three sides.

Post-Performance Discussion and Activities:

Ghosts figure prominently in *A Girl's War*. What role or purpose do they play? Can you think of other plays or literary works in which ghosts are featured and did they serve similar or different purposes?

This production has been staged in an intimate space, with a small house and modified thrust stage. How did this atmosphere shape your perceptions and experience? If a proscenium stage had been utilized how might the performance have changed?

Plays often go through a workshop process in which playwrights have the opportunity to make changes to their scripts after assessing how their work is performed and received. If you were taking on the role of playwright, how might you have altered the resolution of the play? Test out your ideas by rewriting the last scene of the play and having classmates read your new dialogue.

The central character, Anna, is torn between her heritage (Arshaluis) and her feelings (Ilyas). Have one student stand at one side of the room representing Arshaluis and another student stand at the opposite side representing Ilyas with all other students standing between. Have the characters alternate arguments and depending on their persuasiveness, have the students standing between and representing Anna, move from one side to the other depending on the power of the words delivered.

Tastes of the Region...

...dishes from *A Girl's War*

Madzoon (Armenian Yogurt)

INGREDIENTS:

½ gal. homogenized milk
½ cup yogurt (starter)*
½ pint heavy cream (Optional for more richness)

METHOD:

Pour the milk into a saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. When it comes to a boil, add ½ pint of heavy cream, and pour into an earthen bowl or Pyrex dish. When it is lukewarm (105 -110 degrees), stir the madzoon starter with a spoon until it is smooth and dilute it with some of the warm milk. Pour this mixture into warm milk and stir.

Wrap the warm milk (with yogurt starter), and leave it in a warm place, undisturbed, for at least 8 to 10 hours. Yogurt should be set by then. Place pot in refrigerator until cold, and ready to serve.
Serves 6-8.

* You can use up to one cup. (Make sure plain yogurt container states "live culture") You can buy starter as plain yogurt in the supermarket, or save a cup or two of your home-made yogurt to use as a starter each and every time you want to make it again.

Sarma (Armenian Meat Stuffed Grape Leaves)

INGREDIENTS:

FILLING:

1½ lbs. ground lamb or ¾ lb each lamb and lean ground top round
½ cup rice or bulghour, or a combination
¼ cup green bell pepper [chopped fine]
¼ cup Armenian or Italian parsley [chopped]
Cayenne pepper to taste
1 teaspoon basil
1 teaspoon black pepper or to taste
1 teaspoon salt or to taste
1 medium yellow onion [chopped]
Combine the above ingredients and knead into a dough. A little water may be added to ease the blending.

(ARSHALUIS spoons madzoon into ANNA'S mouth. With every statement comes a spoonful.)

ARSHALUIS: Very sweet, eh? That time, I was telling before, Armenia had empire – you remember? Long long ago. Before Jesus Christ. Empire that touched three seas.

(Spoonful.)

Last Armenia kingdom was 1375. After that time, Armenians ruled by many other peoples...Persians...Russians...but especially Ottoman Turks. Mohammedans. They like to do their Satan minds, persecuting Armenians in all their dominions.

(Spoonful.)

1895 – Turks massacre Armenians.

(Spoonful.)

1905 -- again they massacre.

(Spoonful.)

1915 – vy, Astvadz! 1915 we can never forget. Turks kill one and a half million Armenians.

(Spoonful.)

They kill. They rape.

(Spoonful.)

They torture.

(Spoonful, which Anna refuses.)

HOW TO FILL GRAPE LEAVES, CABBAGE AND OTHER VEGETABLE LEAVES.



LAY GRAPE LEAF FLAT WITH STEM SIDE UP. REMOVE THE STEM AND ADD ABOUT A TABLESPOON OF FILLING.



FOLD IN THE SIDES OF THE GRAPE LEAF TOWARD THE CENTER.



GENTLY ROLL THE FILLED GRAPELEAF AWAY FROM YOU.



ROLL UP TO COMPLETE THE CIGAR SHAPED CYLINDER. ROLL SNUGLY BUT NOT TOO TIGHT TO ALLOW FOR PUMPING OF THE RICE FILLING.

PREPARATION:

Grape leaves
1 cup water or 1 can chicken broth or beef broth
8 oz crushed tomatoes or tomato sauce
¼ cup lemon juice

Take a large teaspoonful of the filling and place on the grape leaf and roll up turning in the ends. Take a few of the large tougher leaves and line the bottom of a covered casserole. Place the rolled grape leaves side by side and layer upon layer. Pour over the crushed tomatoes or tomato sauce, lemon juice and broth or 1 cup of water. Cover and cook in a preheated 350 degree oven for about 1 hour. Try this dish with a large dollop of plain yogurt or sour cream on top.

Yalanchi (Rice Stuffed Grape Leaves)

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup oil
6 cups onion, chopped
2 cups rice
½ cup parsley, chopped
1 cup water
1 cup tomato sauce
1 cup lemon juice
1 tablespoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
Dash cayenne
1 tablespoon dill
1 quart grape leaves (80-100)
½ teaspoon allspice, optional
1 cup lemon juice



PREPARATION:

In a 4-quart stainless steel roasting pan, sauté onions in oil until clear. Stir often to prevent burning.

Add all ingredients except parsley and bring to a boil. Stir, turn heat low and cook, covered, about 15 minutes. Add parsley and stir. Let cool.

Rice mixture should be cooked the day before and allowed to cool

Rinse grape leaves and squeeze out water. Remove stem from leaf.

Lay each leaf flat dull side up. Place 1 teaspoon rice mixture on the leaf, fold sides over filling and roll leaf up. Makes 80.

Sources:

<http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/armenian.html>; <http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/yog.html>;
<http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/sarma.html>; http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/yala_1.html

Questions for Discussion:

- How does the expositional exchange, early in the play, between mother and daughter concerning the madzoon define their relationships to each other and to the different worlds in which they live?
- How do the stage directions, noted above, and the staging employed in the performance serve to heighten and punctuate this portion of the scene?
- Discuss the symbolism that underscores this dream sequence.

About Golden Thread Productions...

Golden Thread Productions is dedicated to theatre that explores Middle Eastern cultures and identities as represented throughout the globe. Our mission is to build an organization that consistently produces the highest quality theatre about Middle Eastern culture and to establish a dynamic artistic community and an expanding audience. We strive to make the Middle East a regular part of the American Theatre Experience and make theatre a regular part of the Middle Eastern community's cultural experience. Through the transformative power of theatre Golden Thread Productions aims to create a world where our common experience as human beings supersedes our cultural and political differences.

Our Guiding Principles are:

- Develop and produce innovative works that intrigue, inquire and influence.
- Discover, develop and support Middle Eastern artists.
- Promote the rich texts and diverse performance styles of the Middle East.
- Seek and include the many talents of our diverse community in the production of socially conscious works with a progressive political sensibility.

Golden Thread Productions launched its Education Program in 2008 in response to inadequate theatre programs designed for Middle Eastern-American youth and families, as well as for the student population at large. Golden Thread developed such an initiative in an effort to help elicit a deeper understanding of the Middle East and to encourage tolerance and respect for people of diverse backgrounds.

Our work is developed with a vision of multicultural inclusiveness and cooperation, with respect for human dignity, honoring the past as well as engaging with the present. Middle Eastern culture has so much more to offer our youth, with stories that are rich and stimulating. When such culture is married with live theatre we create an unmatched ability to make the "other" both human and accessible to the audience, inspiring both recognition and empathy in the viewer.

Golden Thread's Educational Programming currently offers: the Fairytale Players, a multicultural ensemble dedicated to performing educational theatre presentations for young audiences focusing on Middle Eastern legends and tales; After-School Theatre Arts Classes at the KZV Armenian School; and matinees of main-stage thought-provoking productions of particular relevance to school audiences.

In our vast imagination, the Middle East is defined not by geographical boundaries and political separations, but as the shared experience of the people, who throughout history have been touched by its tales, melodies and aromas. The Middle East lives inside us, as we redefine ourselves, we redefine the Middle East.

*Theatre transcends boundaries,
it facilitates the search,
encouraging conversation,
where silence once prevailed.*

*Theatre mirrors our spirit,
it moves and challenges,
transforms fear to hope,
illuminating dreams into life.*

For information on the rest of our main-stage season, including the ReOrient Festival of short plays, visit us at: www.goldenthread.org.

Resources for Teachers...

Suggested Reading:

De Waal, Thomas. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.

Khatcherian, Hrair Hawk. *Artsakh: A Photographic Journey*. Canada: Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, 1997.

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Parlakian, Nishan. *Contemporary Armenian American Drama: An Anthology of Ancestral Voices*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Websites:

<http://www.armeniaemb.org/>

The web site of the Embassy of Armenia includes information on current diplomatic relations between Armenia and the United States, including documents on the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process.

<http://azembassy.us/new>

The Embassy of Azerbaijan publishes its perspective on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its ramifications in the Foreign Policy section of its website. Azerbaijan's relations with the United States are addressed as well as political and cultural reflections of the conflict in regard to Azerbaijan's relationship with Armenia.

<http://www.genocideeducation.org>

The Genocide Education Project is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization designed for teachers to assist in the instruction of topics including human rights and genocide, most particularly the Armenian Genocide. They provide instructional materials, access to resources and offer educational workshops.

<http://www.groong.org>

The Armenian News Network/Groong is an online source for Armenian news from around the world and is generally presented from an Armenian perspective. There are numerous links to news, features, resource and government sites for Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

<http://www.mirrorspectator.com>

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is an Armenian weekly newspaper published in the United States in English.

<http://www.nkrusa.org/>

The web site of the Office of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic in Washington, DC includes a profile of the country, information on foreign policy, and a section on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

<http://www.thegutsygourmet.net/index.html>

The Gutsy Gourmet is an online recipe source of ethnic and international dishes created by Dr. Harold Baxter. His extensive collection of Armenian recipes is primarily drawn from his mother, Gladys Baxter, the daughter of Armenian immigrants from Turkey who settled in Fresno, California.