

night OVER ERZINGA



STUDY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this Study Guide	3
Foreword	3
California Content Standards Addressed	3
About the Play	4
The Story	4
The People	4
The Time and Place	4
The Playwright's Perspective	5
From Two Countries	6-7
Comparative Facts: Armenia	6
Comparative Facts: Dominican Republic	7
About the Armenian Genocide	8
About US Policy on the Armenian Genocide	9
About Theatre Arts	10
About Traditional Armenian Culture	11-12
Music and Dance in <i>Night Over Erzinga</i>	13
Immigration to the US in 1913	14
About Golden Thread Productions	15
Resources for Teachers	16-19
Suggested reading, films, websites	

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 *Night Over Erzinga* 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, Latino studies, 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 the content with contributions of your own with the goal of challenging and inspiring your students.

If your high school students are attending a performance of *Night Over Erzinga* 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

This guide has been created and assembled by: Torange Yeghiazarian, Serge Bakalian and Lucinda Kidder

Please note:

Our performance of *Night Over Erzinga* will contain some stage violence. There are the briefest of moments of strong language and sexually suggestive language. These brief moments support the aesthetic integrity of the work and are in no way thematic.

ABOUT THE PLAY

The Story

The play opens in Alice and Ardavazt Oghidanian's Massachusetts apartment. Alice has been brought home by a policeman who has found her wandering barefoot and singing songs. Her mental breakdown results in her hospitalization and the necessity of her eight-year-old daughter Aghavni being placed in foster care while her father works. Flashback to Armenia in 1914 where we see young Alice happy with her family. Ardavazt's eighteenth birthday family celebration is interrupted by Turkish soldiers, and he is sent to live with his cousin in the US to escape conscription. Alice and Ardavazt meet and marry; she cannot contain her memories of the slaughter of her family and her narrow escape.

In Act II, Ava (formerly Aghavni) has become a dancer in Las Vegas where she meets Bienvenido Raymundo, a singer and refugee from the Dominican Republic. They marry and move to New York to pursue Benny's dreams of becoming an opera star. Ava has rejected her father and his culture, refusing to acknowledge that her mother is still alive. She is pregnant when at Benny's urging, she has finally invited her father to visit. Daughter Estrella is born in 1963. Relations between Ava and Benny become increasingly strained and finally break in 1970 when she discovers he has been unfaithful to her. Ava and Ardavazt reconcile their relationship, and he finds hope in becoming part of his granddaughter Estrella's life. Throughout this act we also see more of Alice who escapes the prison of her memories through fantasy and dreams.

The Time and Place

The play takes place over a span of years from 1914 to 1970. In the first act, the action switches between Armenia in 1914 and Worcester, Massachusetts, in the 1930s. In the second act, Las Vegas and New York become settings for the play between 1948 and 1970. Throughout, there are flashbacks to Worcester and Armenia.

The People

Ardavazt Oghidanian: Quiet sturdy Armenian man who is sent to US to escape the Genocide. Survives the loss of both of his families, without losing his heart, but is unwilling to talk about the past.

Alice Oghidanian: Ardavazt's wife. Scarred by her experiences during the Armenian Genocide, she cannot cope with her life in America as a wife, mother, and shopkeeper, and collapses into mental illness.

Ava: Alice and Ardavazt's daughter and only child. Originally named Aghavni, (nickname Aghig). Follows her dream to become a dancer against her father's will; changes her name and is determined to be 'American' in all things; deeply resents childhood separation from her mother.

Bienvenido Raymundo: Ava's husband; charismatic Dominican singer; affected by the turmoil of the Trujillo era in the Dominican Republic. Passionate about his music; unfaithful

Aram: Ardavazt's Father. A real Armenian gentleman, fascinated with astronomy.

Sarineh: Ardavazt's Mother. Manages her household with love, muscle, and good food.

Sahiba: Turkish woman who saves Alice from certain death.

Estrella: Ava and Benny's daughter

Questions for post-show discussion: Ardavazt says to Ava, "You will do what is the duty of every Armenian girl....to give us back all of the sons and daughters that were lost." How much does national identity seem to define various characters in *Night Over Erzinga*? How does nationality define your identity and what seems to be expected from you? When Benny tells Ardavazt that his mother's children have many fathers, Ava remarks that "this is very Dominican." This generalization could imply a negative national trait. Have you experienced or witnessed cultural or ethnic prejudice caused by such generalizations or preconceptions?

THE PLAYWRIGHT'S PERSPECTIVE



ADRIANA SEVAHN NICHOLS – the inaugural recipient of Middle East American Distinguished Playwright Award – is an award winning actress and playwright who has developed and performed her work at the Sundance Theater Lab, South Coast Repertory, Mark Taper Forum, The Goodman, LA Theatre Works, Stages Theatre, The Fountain, INTAR, and The Lark. Her plays have been published by Samuel French and Smith & Kraus. Ms. Sevahn Nichols' critically acclaimed solo show, **TAKING FLIGHT**, garnered her a San Diego Theatre Critics Circle Award, a Los Angeles Women's Theatre Festival Award, and the CD was a finalist for a 2008 Audie Award.

One of Adriana's biggest passions is bringing theatre and young people together to give them the opportunity to unleash and express their full creative potential. She has taught workshops nationally and internationally, most recently at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago; at the ORRAN Center for at-risk youth in Yerevan, Armenia; CalArts, and UCSB. She continues to lead transformational workshops for teenage girls, living in group homes, in Los Angeles.

An interview with the playwright:

1. How did you come to write this play? When did the idea come to you? I moved to California and was living in the Glendale area surrounded by Armenians. I wanted to converse with them, to let them know, I too was Armenian, but not knowing the language, or growing up within the culture, I felt outside of something my heart knew it belonged to. It began to bother me and forced me to think a lot about my family. I began asking questions of my mother and two aunts and stories and photographs I had never seen, or heard, began to surface. I started collecting my thoughts in a notebook. Then, in a playwriting class, through the incredible writing exercises of Maria Irene Fornes, the characters began to speak through me, and tell me this story of NIGHT OVER ERZINGA.

2. How was it for you dealing with your own family in your research for the play? What kinds of issues came up that were particularly difficult? My family has been very willing to tell me what they experienced and remember. I have been moved by their generosity to go into painful memories and share what has never been talked about in such detail. I think when there has been a trauma in a family it is very natural to try and forget it and go on with living your life. In truth, I think it has been a good thing that the stories have been asked for. That somehow through the tears and remembering there has been a restoring of a forgotten past that is painful, but it is still our past. What was difficult for me was, as the writer having to live each character's journeys, fully, to get it on the page. The process has taken three years, and believe me when I say I have shed a lot of tears. But at the end of the day, after going to Eastern Turkey and Armenia to visit my ancestral homelands, after collecting all of the family stories that have been remembered, and after writing this play, I now walk anywhere, knowing that I *am* Armenian, and that has been worth anything that has been difficult along the way.

3. How has your family received the finished play? With great pride and support of my work.

4. What was it like growing up in a mixed-culture family? It was difficult being Dominican, Armenian, and Basque. As I was growing up, no one knew any of these cultures and always treated me as "different." I felt like an outsider trying to fit in. It is only now, that I know my heritage, know my family stories, and my history, that I have really begun to be proud of my mixed blood, and see it as a priceless gift.

5. What is the next project you are working on? A comedy! The working title is RUNNING ON ROLLERSKATES. My first play, TAKING FLIGHT, deals with a friendship between two women, in the aftermath of 9/11, and NIGHT OVER ERZINGA deals with the consequences of a Genocide....so it is time for me to laugh and to bring that to my audiences!

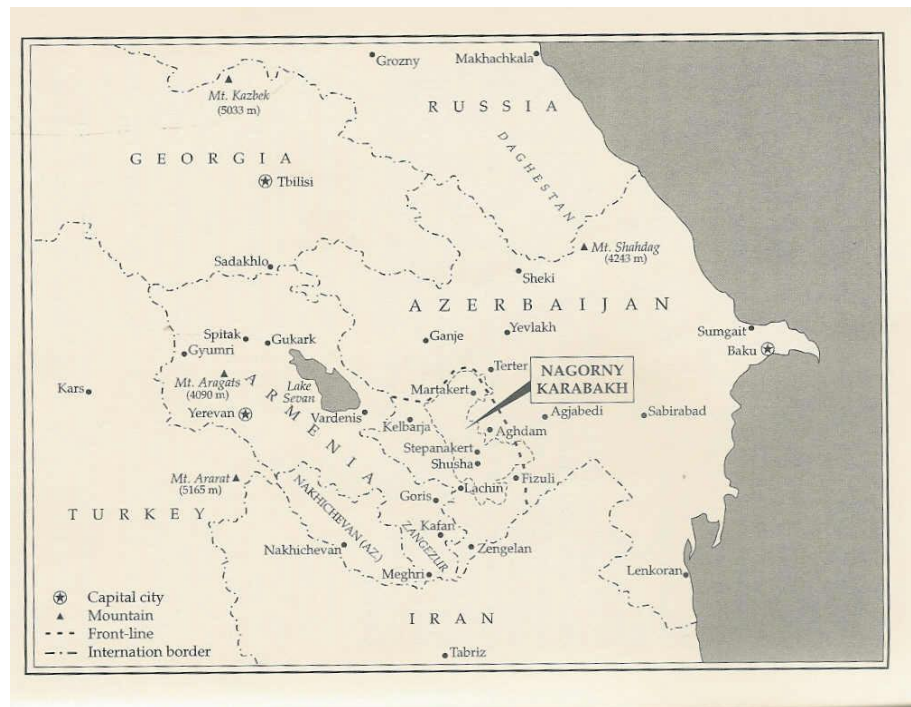
Questions for Post-show discussion: Ms Savahn Nichols says, "Although the play I have written is deeply personal and specific to the Armenians, it has been my intention that this play transcends that specificity and become universal in creating dialogues among those who see it." Has the play succeeded in becoming universal? The play illustrates the effects of what is now called 'post-traumatic stress.' How were the symptoms of PTS dealt with in the play? How are they treated now? What are the barriers to dealing with such stress and what are the outcomes from failure to do so?

FROM TWO COUNTRIES

ARMENIA



- **Geography:** a landlocked country of total area 29,743 km² (11,484 square miles), bordering on Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh, 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 Armenia 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. In World War I, forced resettlement by the Ottoman Turks led to one million Armenian deaths, a tragedy now known as the Armenian genocide; this is still a source of controversy. 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, then finally declared its independence in 1991—one of the first fracture points in the breakup of the USSR.
- **Immigration:** Armenians began to arrive in the United States in high numbers in the late nineteenth century, most notably after the Hamidian Massacres of 1894-1896. This first wave of immigration lasted until the mid-1920s, when the new immigration quotas decreased the number of Armenians who were allowed to immigrate into the US. The 2009 American Community Survey one-year estimates indicated 484,840 Americans with full or partial Armenian ancestry. California hosts the largest Armenian-American population.

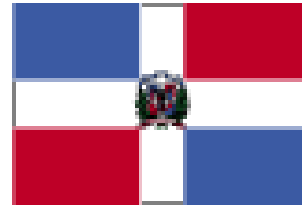


Sources

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

“Armenian American” - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_American

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



- **Geography:** Area: 48,442 sq. km. (18,704 sq. mi.), about the size of Vermont and New Hampshire combined. Occupies the eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola shared with Haiti
- **Population size:.** 9.65 million.(as of 2009)
- **Languages:** Spanish.
- **Ethnicities:** Mixed 73%, European 16%, African origin 11%.
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 95%.
- **Important history:** The island of Hispaniola was originally occupied by Tainos, an Arawak-speaking people. The Tainos welcomed Columbus in his first voyage in 1492, but subsequent colonizers were brutal, reducing the Taino population from about 1 million to about 500 in 50 years. To ensure adequate

labor for plantations, the Spanish brought African slaves to the island beginning in 1503. French settlers occupied the western end of the island, which became the Republic of Haiti. The Haitians conquered the whole island in 1822 and held it until 1844, when forces led by Juan Pablo Duarte, the hero of Dominican independence, drove them out and established the Dominican Republic as an independent state. Economic difficulties, the threat of European intervention, and ongoing internal disorders led to a U.S. occupation in 1916 and the establishment of a military government in the Dominican Republic.

In 1930, Rafael Trujillo, a prominent army commander, established absolute political control. Trujillo promoted economic development--from which he and his supporters benefited--and severe repression of domestic human rights. It has been estimated that Trujillo's rule was responsible for the death of more than 50,000 people. Following Trujillo's death by assassination in May 1961, the Trujillo family was forced into exile. An elected president, Joaquin Balaguer, held office until 1978 when he was defeated in a peaceful transfer of power. Since that time, the government has generally functioned democratically, though remnants of fraud and corruption remained.

- **Immigration:** International migration affects the Dominican Republic greatly, as it receives and sends large flows of migrants. Haitian immigration and the integration of Dominicans of Haitian descent are major issues; the total population of Haitian origin is estimated to be 800,000. A large Dominican diaspora exists, most of it in the United States, where it numbers 1.3 million.

From <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35639.htm>

Questions for Post-show Discussion: On the face of it, the two countries have very different histories. The Armenian Genocide was carried out by soldiers from another ethnicity; the Trujillo regime massacred its political enemies by the thousands. Are there differences between genocide (eradication of a particular ethnic population) and political repression? What influence might this have on people's decisions to emigrate to the US rather than stay in their native country? And how does this decision impact immigrants' relationships to their home country?

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.

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 *Night Over Erzinga*? 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.

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 in Armenia 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 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).

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?

Sources

<http://www.umd.umich.edu/dept/armenian/facts/genocide.html>; <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=18385>;
<http://articles.latimes.com/2007/oct/11/nation/na-genocide11>;
http://www.barackobama.com/2008/01/19/barack_obama_on_the_importance.php; <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/October/20081030165751idybeekcm0.6905634.html>; <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/106019.htm>;
<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;
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<http://georgia.usembassy.gov/pr-06182008.html>

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: Dreams and fantasies figure prominently in *Night Over Erzinga*. What role or purpose do they play? Can you think of other plays or literary works in which dreams are featured and did they serve similar or different purposes?

This production has been staged in fairly large theater on a proscenium stage. How did this atmosphere shape your perceptions and experience? If thrust stage or theater in the round 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.

One of the central character, Ava, is torn between herself as Armenian (Aghavni) and her desire to be ‘American’ (Ava). Have one student stand at one side of the room representing her Armenian heritage and another student stand at the opposite side representing her life as an American with all other students standing between. Have the characters alternate arguments and depending on their persuasiveness, have the students standing between move from one side to the other depending on the power of the words delivered.

NIGHT OVER ERZINGA – TRADITIONAL ARMENIAN CULTURE

FOOD

Traditional foods play a major role in any Armenian household. In *Night Over Erzinga*, Ardavazt tries to maintain the culture by bringing such food to Ava and Benny when he first visits them after their marriage. Because Armenians scattered to many parts of the Middle East, many traditional dishes took on the characteristics of their host country's cuisine.



Basturma is a highly seasoned, air-dried cured beef in the cuisines of the former Ottoman countries. Wind-dried beef has been made in this region for centuries. It is usually considered Armenian, though it is produced and consumed in a wide area of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The word is from the Turkish word meaning something that is pressed ("basmak" means "to press" in Turkish). It is also believed that ancient Turkish horseman of Central Asia used to keep dried and spiced meat pressed between horse and the saddle and consume it when needed.

Though beef is the most common meat today, various meats are also used, including camel, lamb, goat, and water buffalo, with camel being the most prized especially in Syria, another big basturma producer. Basturma is prepared by salting the meat, then washing it with water and letting it dry for 10-15 days. The blood and salt is squeezed out of the meat which is then covered with a cumin paste prepared with crushed cumin, fenugreek, garlic, and hot paprika, followed by thorough air-drying. Depending on the variety of the paprika, it can be very spicy but not quite as hot as, for example, hot chili.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Past%C4%B1rma>

Paklava (also spelled *baklava*) is a rich, sweet pastry made of layers of filo pastry filled with chopped nuts and sweetened with syrup or honey. It is very time-consuming to make, and the fact that Ardavazt makes this delicious treat to bring to his daughter is evidence of his love for her.



WEDDINGS

Armenian families have long celebrated marriage with a traditional Armenian Orthodox church service and many cherished customs. Decorations play a large part, as do such 'tricks' as stealing the bride's show before the ceremony. During the ceremony, crowns are held above the bride's and groom's heads by the best man as the priest blesses the couple. The service includes readings from the Bible and many other elements familiar to American Christians. Weddings are often very elaborate and bring together large numbers of extended family members



Early in the play, we see young Alice talking to her mother about her dreams for a handsome husband on her wedding day. Later, Ardavazt interprets Alice's unhappiness with life in America as being a result of her not having had a traditional wedding. He has an ornate Armenian wedding dress of red velvet with gold brocade made for her, after they have been married for seven years and already have a daughter. He says, "I have not given you a proper wedding. This is

not right. Bad luck. You know how superstitious I am. We should be married in the church.” We find out that his own desire for a traditional wedding has less to do with what Alice wants, which is more time with him, and more as part of his ambitions for the family in the future.

POETRY

The thirteenth-century Muslim mystic Jalal ad Din Rumi wrote verses and lyrical poems that are still a major literary influence throughout the Middle East today. That young Alice has absorbed Rumi's romanticism becomes clear in her declaration of her determination to have a marriage based on love. She quotes the poet: “This is love: to fly toward a secret sky, to cause a hundred veils to fall each moment. First to let go of life. Finally, to take a step without feet.”

Rumi's *Masnavi* is widely recognized as the greatest Sufi poem ever written, and has been called "the Koran in Persian." He composed his work for the benefit of his disciples in the Sufi order named after him, better known as the whirling dervishes. In order to convey his message of divine love and unity he threaded together entertaining stories and penetrating homilies. Drawing from folk tales as well as sacred history, Rumi's poem is often funny as well as spiritually profound.

The *Masnavi* was begun during the final years of Rumi's life. He began dictating the first book around the age of 54 around the year 1258 and continued composing verses until his death in 1273. The sixth and final book would remain incomplete.



Golden Thread's Fairytale Players will collaborate with guest artist, Hafiz Karmali to create a new play,

Rumi X 7

– seven lyrical vignettes inspired by the poetry of Rumi. It will feature original live music and dance. This play is the first in a new series, ISLAM 101, designed to educate the public about Islam through theatre. It will be available as a touring production beginning November, 2011. For booking information, contact Lucinda@goldenthread.org, or call 415-626-4061.

MUSIC AND DANCE IN *NIGHT OVER ERZINGA*

Music and dance, both ethnic and classical, are important elements of *Night Over Erzinga*. At the beginning of the play, we hear Armenian folk songs in the distance as Alice and her mother talk, and later, Alice's sister Anoushik calls her to come join in the **tamzara**, an Armenian line dance.

(Tamzara <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRqstpVghMM>) . Ardavazt meets Alice for the first time at an Armenian club with traditional music playing in the background. That night they dance together in the snow as he hums an Armenian song.



Music often embodies the soul of a country, especially during times of oppression and hardship. Ardavazt and his son-in-law Bienvenido (Benny) share their love for the expressive power of music which reflects their common experience of loss. Melancholy themes haunt much of Armenian music, exemplified by the **duduk**, a double reed woodwind instrument related to the orchestral oboe. **Djivan Gasparyan** born 1928 is known as the **Master of the duduk**. (<http://jivanduduk.com/wp/?cat=4>) Commentary about Gasparyan: "As if heard in a dream – all dreams are to be found, resting inside his duduk – the music of Djivan Gasparyan seems to stand still in the deepest level of our essential being and from there it tells us, in the sweetest, deepest yet most simple way, the story of what has always been and always will be... Slowly, very slowly... we visualize pain, night, hope and anguish, the life of Armenian people so used to being split up over the centuries and to being a meeting point between East and West." <http://jivanduduk.com/jivan-gasparyan-sr-biography.html>

The **oud** is another instrument characteristic of Armenian music. The oud is a pear-shaped stringed instrument commonly used in North African and Middle Eastern music.

Its deeply resonant tones imply sadness and loss, playing music based on a system of tetrachords which introduces more accidentals than standard European music. Ava tells Benny that her father used to play the oud at the Armenian club. The modern oud and the European lute both descend from a common ancestor via diverging paths. The oud is readily distinguished by its lack of frets and smaller neck. **Richard Hagopian**, living in Fresno is considered one of the foremost Armenian Oud Masters (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b53p0e5KksQ>)



Bienvenido's Dominican roots would traditionally be in **Bachata**, a genre of music that originated in the Dominican Republic in the early parts of the 20th Century and spread to other parts of Latin America and Mediterranean Europe. It became popular in the countryside and the rural neighborhoods of the Dominican Republic. Its subjects are often romantic; especially prevalent are tales of heartbreak and sadness. In fact, the original term used to name the genre was *amargue* ("bitterness," or "bitter music"), until the rather ambiguous (and mood-neutral) term *bachata* became popular. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bachata_%28music%29) Later, the more sophisticated sounds of the **Merengue** became more popular in the Dominican Republic and all over Latin America

Benny's real passion is classical opera, though, and he is a good enough singer to make it to the professional stage. He and Ardavazt are both transported by the exquisite beauty of the aria *Nessun dorma* (English: *None shall sleep*) from the final act of Giacomo Puccini's opera *Turandot*. It is sung by Calaf, the unknown prince, who falls in love at first sight with the beautiful but cold Princess Turandot. However, any man who wishes to wed Turandot must first answer her three riddles; if he fails, he will be beheaded. As the aria plays, a vision of the older Alice is conjured in a kind of surreal dance.

Questions for Post-Show Discussion: What music helps you get through difficult moments of your life? How does music help shape a national cultural identity? How is this reflected in American culture?

IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES IN 1913

The first real wave of immigration from Armenia to the United States was in the 1890s. Before then, there were only about 70 Armenians in the country, and most of these immigrants planned to return to Armenia after they finished their education. From 1890-1914, about 64,000 Turkish Armenians came to the United States before WWI. As the Ottoman Empire began to fall apart in the 1890s, rich Christian minorities were targeted and violently persecuted. Turkish nationalism was on the rise and Christians were treated like 'non-Muslim infidels'. Many of these people were Armenian, and this encouraged immigration to the United States.

Unlike earlier waves of immigration from Northern Europe, where many came seeking new economic opportunities, the 'pull' to the United States was far weaker than the 'push' for Armenians, as most came to escape violence in their home countries. Immigrants often came to join the few relatives or friends who had come to the United States earlier. They had greater freedom and safety in the United States, especially because of their Christian heritage. Most of the Armenian immigrants in the early 1900s settled in the New York and New England cities where they were able to find work as semi-skilled laborers in the factories and mills.

Ardavazt Oghidanian, the central character of *Night Over Erzinga*, traveled to the US on the SS France, and would likely have arrived at Ellis Island in New York harbor, the main East Coast receiving and processing center, because he planned to go to live with his cousin in Worcester, Massachusetts. At right is a copy of the manifest, the list of passengers sailing on the ship. Ardavazt is number thirteen on the page. We can see that he sailed from Le Havre, France, on October 18, 1913. We do not have information about his actual arrival date, but a ship like the SS France (*below at Le Havre*) could have made the crossing in eight to ten days.



The numbers of immigrants recorded as having passed through its buildings do not tell the story of the experiences that many underwent in

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES									
S.S. FRANCE									
sailing from LE HAVRE, OCT 18 1913									
No.	Name	Age	Sex	Nat.	Prof.	Rel.	Mar.	Place of Birth	Remarks
1	Gaspar	38	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
2	Hoff	40	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
3	Armenian	35	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
4	Armenian	30	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
5	Armenian	25	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
6	Armenian	20	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
7	Armenian	15	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
8	Armenian	10	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
9	Armenian	5	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
10	Armenian	3	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
11	Armenian	2	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
12	Armenian	1	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
13	Ardavazt Oghidanian	18	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
14	Armenian	15	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
15	Armenian	12	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
16	Armenian	10	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
17	Armenian	8	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
18	Armenian	6	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
19	Armenian	4	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
20	Armenian	3	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
21	Armenian	2	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
22	Armenian	1	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
23	Armenian	0	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
24	Armenian	0	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
25	Armenian	0	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
26	Armenian	0	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
27	Armenian	0	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
28	Armenian	0	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
29	Armenian	0	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	
30	Armenian	0	M	Armenian	Farmer			Le Havre	

their search for a new homeland. People seeking a new home in the US during the early 1900s were often from Eastern Europe, and met with significant discrimination when they settled in American cities. In the play, Alice complains about the negative attitude of some of her Worcester neighbors because she is Armenian. The following excerpts from an article by Dr. Alfred C. Reed, of the US Public Health Service, published in January 1913 in *Popular Science Monthly*, demonstrates clearly the attitude of governmental officials – and many times the general public – to these groups of immigrants.

IMMIGRANTS GOING THROUGH ELLIS ISLAND IN 1913

"[Ellis Island] is a busy island. Yet in all the rushing hurry and seeming confusion of a full day, in all the babel of language, the excitement and fright and wonder of the thousands of newly-landed, and in all the manifold and endless details that make up the immigration plant, there is system, silent, watchful, swift, efficient. Five thousand immigrants in a day is no uncommon figure. Five thousand six hundred passed through last Easter Sunday. Five hundred and twenty-five persons are employed on the island exclusive of the score of medical officers and the hundred or more attendants of the Public Health Service...

“America is the land of the alien, and even now his mark is plain on all our institutions. But while the principal increase in population has been by immigration, the character of that immigration has changed markedly in the past thirty years. Previous to 1883, western and northern Europe sent a stalwart stock, 95 per cent. of all who came. They sought new homes and were settlers...

“But for three decades the immigrant tide has flowed more and more from eastern and southern Europe. The others still come, but they are far outnumbered by the Jews, Slavs, the Balkan and Austrian races, and those from the Mediterranean countries...

“In contrast with the earlier immigration, these peoples are less inclined to transplant their homes and affections. They come to make what they can in a few years of arduous unremitting labor, and then return to their homes to spend it in comparative comfort and ease. .. As a class, they contribute little of lasting value but the work of their hands for which they are well paid. And from what they earn they send home no small pact. In 1907 they sent \$275,000,000 out of the country. True, this money was earned, but its greater value in investment and development was lost.

“The average citizen does not realize the enormous numbers of mentally disordered and morally delinquent persons in the United States nor to how great an extent these classes are recruited from aliens, and their children. Restriction is vitally necessary if our truly American ideals and institutions are to persist, and if our inherited stock of good American manhood is not to be depreciated.

“But the observer at Ellis Island sees only the immigrant stream flowing in. He does not see what results when it has been distributed over the country. No graver questions are before the American nation to-day than those associated with immigration, and none whose correct solution demands more imperative attention.

“One of these vital questions which is in special prominence just now, is the relation of immigration to mental disorders. This question concerns New York state more acutely than other states only because New York has the largest number of alien defectives. In February, 1912, there were 33,311 committed insane cases in New York state institutions. It is estimated that more than 8,000 of these or, roughly, 25 per cent., are aliens, and this is exclusive of those conditions of mental defectiveness listed under idiocy, imbecility and feeble-mindedness.”

<http://www.gjenvick.com/Immigration/EllisIsland/1913-01-ImmigrantsGoingThroughEllisIsland.html>

Questions for discussion: What evidence of discrimination against Armenian immigrants did you note in the play? Was the discrimination blatant or subtle? Why did Aghavni change her name to Ava?

In the article above, written in 1913 by a governmental official, what evidence do you find of ethnic stereotyping? Look for specific examples of assumptions made: eg. that there were large numbers of “alien defectives”, many suffering from “idiocy, imbecility and feeble-mindedness.”

What might have led a doctor to diagnose such mental illness in immigrants? Are the same assumptions sometimes applied to modern-day immigrants? What other biases can you find in the language of the article that may still be held today?

Do you know anyone who is a recent immigrant to the US? What has their experience been like? How do you feel about people emigrating to this country?

Sources

<http://www.energyofanation.org/cc66309-019b-49ea-b404-8c653781b674.html?NodeId>

<http://www.gjenvick.com/Immigration/EllisIsland/1913-01-ImmigrantsGoingThroughEllisIsland.html>

<http://www.gjenvick.com/VintagePostcards/Steamships-OceanLiners/index.html>

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 residencies at schools and community centers in the Bay Area; 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

The following are suggestions for further research and for materials that can augment lessons built around the subject matter of *Night Over Erzinga*. The list is by no means exhaustive.

ARMENIA

Online sites

<http://www.armeniaemb.org/> The web site of the Embassy of Armenia includes information on current diplomatic relations between Armenia and the United States.

<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.

<http://www.mirrorspectator.com> The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is an Armenian weekly newspaper published in the United States in English.

<http://www.teachgenocide.org/files/The%20New%20York%20Times%20and%20the%20Armenian%20Genocide.pdf> Comprehensive sit about teaching genocide to high school students.

Film

Vodka Lemon (2003)

In a remote, isolated village in post-Soviet Armenia, Hamo, a widower with a pitiful pension and three worthless sons, travels daily to his wife's grave. There he meets the lovely Nina, who is communing with her late husband. The two are penniless--she works in a local bar that is about to close down, while he has been forced to start selling his meager possessions. All seems hopelessly bleak, yet as Hamo begins to court Nina, their unexpected union revitalizes them. Directed by the Kurdish director Hiner Saleem.

The Color of Pomegranates (1968)

or *Sayat Nova* is a biography of the Armenian poet Sayat Nova (King of Song) that attempts to reveal the poet's life visually and poetically rather than literally. The film depicts the poet's coming of age, discovery of the female form, falling in love, entering a monastery and dying, all framed through both Sergei Parajanov's imagination and Sayat Nova's poems. Actress Sofiko Chiaureli notably plays six roles in the film, both male and female.

Ararat (2002)

A film based loosely on the Siege of Van during the Armenian Genocide. In addition to exploring the human impact of that specific historical event, the film also examines the nature of truth and its representation through art. *Ararat* stars Charles Aznavour, Christopher Plummer, and David Alpay.

Fiction

Ahnert, Margaret Ajemian *A Knock at the Door (2007)*

In 1915, Armenian Christians in Turkey were forced to convert to Islam, barred from speaking their language, and often driven out of their homes as the Turkish army embarked on a widespread campaign of intimidation and murder. In this riveting book, Margaret Ajemian Ahnert relates her mother Ester's terrifying experiences as a young woman during this period of hatred and brutality. At age 15, Ester was

separated from her family during a forced march away from her birth town of Amasia. Though she faced unspeakable horrors at the hands of many she met, and was forced into an abusive marriage against her will, she never lost her faith, quick wit, or ability to see the good in people. Eventually she escaped and emigrated to America. Ahnert's compelling account of her mother's suffering is framed by an intimate portrait of her relationship with her 98-year-old mother. Ester's inspiring stories, told lovingly by her daughter, will give you a window into the harrowing struggle of Armenians during a terrible period in human history.

Saroyan, William. *My Name is Aram* (1940)

A book of short stories which detail the exploits of Aram Garoghlanian, a boy of Armenian descent growing up in Fresno, California, and the various members of his large family.

Shafat, Elif. *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2007)

Turkish author Elif Shafak confronts her country's violent past in a vivid and colorful tale set in both Turkey and the United States. At its center is the bastard of the title, Asya, a nineteen-year-old woman who loves Johnny Cash and the French Existentialists, and the four sisters of the Kazanci family who all live together in an extended household in Istanbul. Their one estranged brother lives in Arizona with his wife and her Armenian daughter, Armanoush. A secret is uncovered that links the two families and ties them to the 1915 Armenian deportations and massacres.

Plays

Parlakian, Nishan. *Contemporary Armenian American Drama: An Anthology of Ancestral Voices* (2004).

A collection of plays by notable Armenian Americans. Written in English largely by artists of Armenian extraction during the latter part of the twentieth century, the plays reflect the outrage of the Armenian Genocide, the forced transplantation that created the Armenian Diaspora, and the desire to maintain the newly established democratic homeland.

Soroyan, William. *An Armenian Trilogy* (1986)

These plays, previously unpublished, all center on what it means to be an Armenian in the 20th century. Only *Armenians* has been produced. In 1921 Fresno, Saroyan's hometown, characters discuss the Armenian issue, then of immediate concern. In *Bitlis* Saroyan and his traveling companions re-examine the issue on his first trip back to the Saroyan family home in 1964. *Haratch* is set in the offices of an Armenian newspaper in 1979 Paris.

Non-fiction

Hovannisian, Garin. *Family of Shadows* (2010)

As a world war rages through Europe in 1915, Ottoman authorities commence the systematic slaughter of 1.5 million Armenians - the first genocide of modern history. A teenage boy named Kaspar Hovannisian is among the surviving generation of Armenians who escape the ruins of their ancestral homeland and build communities around the world. Kaspar follows the American dream to the San Joaquin Valley of California, where he cultivates a small farm and begins investing in real estate. Kaspar's son Richard helps pioneer the field of Armenian studies in the United States and becomes a worldwide authority on genocide. Richard's son Raffi is also inspired by the past. In 1989 he leaves his law firm in Los Angeles to stage the original act of repatriation to Soviet Armenia, where he goes on to play a historic role in the creation of a new and independent republic. Raffi's son, Garin Hovannisian, tells his family's story of tragedy, memory, and redemption that illuminates the long shadows that history casts on the lives of men.

Kiernan, Ben. *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (2007)

Kiernan examines outbreaks of mass violence from the classical era to the present, focusing on worldwide colonial exterminations and twentieth-century case studies including the Armenian genocide, the Nazi Holocaust, Stalin's mass murders, and the Cambodian and Rwandan genocides. He identifies connections, patterns, and features that in nearly every case gave early warning of the catastrophe to come: racism or

religious prejudice, territorial expansionism, and cults of antiquity and agrarianism. The ideologies that have motivated perpetrators of mass killings in the past persist in our new century, says Kiernan. He urges that we heed the rich historical evidence with its telltale signs for predicting and preventing future genocides.

Middle East, Western Asia, and Northern Africa. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007. Vol. number 6, *World and Its Peoples*, 11 vols., 2007.

Poetry

Balakian, Peter *June-Tree* (2001)

For three decades, Peter Balakian's poetry has been praised widely in the United States and abroad. In sensuous, elliptical language, Balakian offers a textured poetry that is beautiful and haunting as it envelops an American grain, the reverberations of the Armenian Genocide, and the wired, discordant realities of contemporary life. In his explorations of history, Balakian often deals with the transmission of trauma across generations in ways that bring daily American life into play with the dark frequencies of the past.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Online sites/ media

Dominican history and basic facts

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35639.htm>

http://www.hispaniola.com/dominican_republic/info/history.php

Trujillo

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/JFKtrujillo.htm>

<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/rafael-leonidas-trujillo-molina/>

Women's role in Dominican history – the Mirabal sisters

http://www.colonialzone-dr.com/people_history-mirabal_sisters.html

<http://www.enotes.com/time-butterflies>

Film

***In the Time of the Butterflies* (2000)** PG13. Running time 1 hour 32 minutes. Starring Salma Hayek and Edward James Olmos. Movie version of novel based on real-life heroines in the fight against the Trujillo regime.

Fiction

Alvarez, Julia, *Before We Were Free* (2004)

In the early 1960s in the Dominican Republic, twelve-year-old Anita learns that her family is involved in the underground movement to end the bloody rule of the dictator, General Trujillo. The style of the novel is reminiscent of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, particularly when Anita and her mother are forced to hide in a neighbor's bedroom closet to avoid capture by the SIM secret police who arrested her father and uncle.

----- *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1995)

Set during the waning days of the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic in 1960, this is the story of the Mirabal sisters, three young wives and mothers who are assassinated after visiting their jailed husbands. On a deserted mountain road in the Dominican Republic in 1960, three young women from a pious Catholic family were assassinated after visiting their husbands who had been jailed as suspected rebel leaders. The Mirabal sisters, thus martyred, became mythical figures in their country, where they are known as Las Mariposas (the butterflies). In this novel, each of the sisters speaks in her own voice; beginning as young girls in the 1940s, their stories vary from hair ribbons to gun-running to prison torture. Their story is framed by their surviving sister who tells her own tale of suffering and dedication to the memory of Las Mariposas.

----- ***How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents (1991)***

Captures the vivid lives of the García sisters, four privileged and rebellious Dominican girls adapting to their new lives in America.

Diaz, Junot *The Brief Wonderful Life of Oscar Wao (2007)*

This is the long-awaited first novel from one of the most original and memorable writers working today. Things have never been easy for Oscar, a sweet but disastrously overweight, lovesick Dominican ghetto nerd. From his home in New Jersey, where he lives with his old-world mother and rebellious sister, Oscar dreams of becoming the Dominican J. R. R. Tolkien and, most of all, of finding love. But he may never get what he wants, thanks to the curse that has haunted the Oscar's family for generations, dooming them to prison, torture, tragic accidents, and, above all, ill-starred love.

Pérez, Loida Maritza, *Geographies of Home (1999)*

Iliana believed that by attending a college more than five hours from New York City, she could gain independence and escape the watchful eyes of her overprotective, religiously conservative parents. A disembodied voice that Iliana believes is her mother's haunts her nights with disturbing news about her sisters: Marina is careening toward a mental breakdown; Beatriz has disappeared; Rebecca continues in an abusive and dysfunctional marriage. Iliana reluctantly returns to New York City. In this dislocating urban environment, she confronts all the contradictions, superstitions, joys, and pains of someone caught between two cultures but who is intent on finding a home.

Non-fiction

Austerlitz, Paul *Merengue: Dominican Music and Dominican Identity (1997)*, “documents the impressions of Dominicans as to what it was like to live under one of the thoroughgoing despotisms of this century.” An in-depth study of the intertwining of music and national identity.

Fischkin, Barbara. *Muddy Cup: a Dominican Family Comes of Age in a New America (1997)*. The story of a Dominican family that emigrated to the US in the 1980s, carefully documenting the immigrant experience in an exceptionally readable account.

Vargas Llosa, Mario. *The Feast of the Goat (2002)*

It is 1961. The Dominican Republic languishes under economic sanctions, the Catholic church spurs its clergy against the government from its highest ranks down, the country is arrested in bone-chilling fear. Vargas Llosa unflinchingly tells the story of a regime's final days and the unsteady efforts of the men who would replace it. His narrative skates between the rituals of the hated dictator, Rafael Trujillo, in his daily routine, and the laying-in-wait of the assassins who will kill him their initial triumph and the shock of fear's release--and replacements.