

Study Guide: De Troya

Synopsis:

A mysteriously wounded girl washes on shore and meets young Mara on the riverbank. Worried sisters Lupe and Lena wonder if tonight is the night that their niece will disappear without a trace. Nostalgic Horacio drives his restless grandson away with another rambling story from his childhood. Boiling under the surface of a violent city, two families wrestle with rebellion, regret, and loss of faith. De Troya is a beautifully mythical story about how the weight of our memories can create an insatiable longing for salvation.

De Troya is a play, written by Caridad Svich, that dramatizes an expressionistic allegory of the uncertainty of post-modern times: displaced human beings reconfigure the maps of home in a nonlinear fashion so that we can inhabit our imagined and imaginary communities.

The themes, styles and concerns that shape Svich's writing are: a critique of the American Dream and a constant search for home through the prism of diaspora and migration; the mixing of rituals and traditional cultural elements from the Americas with global pop culture; obtuse treatment of love and desire; and a poetic and nonrealistic use of language and musical elements. Svich's characters survive by becoming "professional" nomads who find themselves at the intersection of identities. As hybrids or transcultural beings, they live in a United States that is figured as the borderlands, a consumer society inhabited by nomads and the dispossessed.

De Troya's guiding principles are Solidarity. Peace. Art. Community. Being with.

De Troya uses strong language, and contains sexual references that may not be appropriate for children and pre-teens, therefore parental guidance is highly recommended.

Within the play, resilience to traumatic experiences, intergenerational connections, and powerful historical, environmental influences are ever present and personally manifested by each character. Their yearnings for self-determination, freedom and independence are contrasted with some very concrete limitations for being open and available to facing possible courses of actions. Discovery and recovery by the play's six 'nomads' is the driving force of the play. Each character within their own ways, strives for personal freedom and genuine expression, but is one trapped by fate, and ruled by external forces where will and determination are impotent.

Core themes involve the cyclic nature of family violence, the heavy, dependency or reliance on external forces for solutions, the relationship of personal responsibility and the true costs for freedom. The play takes us on a dramatic journey for considering the power (or the lack of power) for personal healing, and for overcoming traumatic life-episodes.

Questions and points for reflection:

To what extent does the current level of violence within your community contribute to the overall quality of life there?

Have you witnessed any noteworthy indications that a particular cycle of family or community violence has been interrupted or broken altogether? If so, what significantly contributed to that? If not, what seems to be the main sources that lead to the continuation or intensification of violence within that community?

Is the owning of a sense of empathy for others a God-given capacity? Is it something that can be taught/learned? Is it an inherited genetic trait, or some combination of those three factors or, in reality, a totally different unknowable, mysterious quality?

What does it take for an ordinary human being to break free of misery, sufferings and personal losses and damages? Is time and distance, the change of environment the cures one must rely?

Do any of the characters within the play pose a particular solution, a nagging hindrance, a real alternative or a hopeful route for those of today's world to consider? Describe and reflect on at least one character's experience.