

## The Cellist of Sarajevo

### Themes and Questions

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**Reality and Memory:** The characters in *The Cellist of Sarajevo* are faced with the reality of their city being destroyed under siege. Each character is beset with memories of the city and their own identity before the war. This novel presents memory as the future of Sarajevo. Through exploring the importance and meaning of memory to each character throughout the novel you will be able to create insightful answers to the following questions:

- How do memory and reality shape identity?
- How does memory shape reality?
- How does memory fight against war?
- Memory presents different versions of Sarajevo to each character. How does memory shape each character's motivation?
- Thinking about areas affected by war, we often forget what that place was like before crisis. What contributes to this? Use current events and discuss.

**The Power of Art and Culture:** Galloway portrays art and culture as the core of civilization and an unbreakable extension of the human spirit. The loss of culture through war is a means of eradicating a group of people - destroying a city is destroying a culture. Through examining the powerful symbols of art within the novel, discuss the importance of art and the power art holds through the following questions:

- What does culture mean?
- How does art express the human spirit?
- How do civilians find hope through art within the novel?
- Can art immortalize culture? The artist? Reality? A group of people? Discuss.
- Discuss why you think the Cellist played for 22 days for each death, can art be an act of protest?

**War and Humanity:** The novel depicts the lives of civilians during the siege of Sarajevo. Galloway shows the effects of war on humanity through the perspectives of three characters. Through examining the ways in which war has changed the lives of the citizens in Sarajevo, answer and discuss the following questions:

- While the effects of war are often focused on physical danger, psychological and emotional damage also occurs. Discuss the ways in which war attacks a group of people mentally and psychologically.
- What are the effects of portraying the story through the lives of civilians rather than soldiers?
- Is war a moral problem?
- What are the effects of war on society?
- How does war shape identity?

**Hatred and Othering:** The Bosnian War and *The Cellist of Sarajevo* demonstrates that hatred can fuel war and divide people through hatred. To other an individual or group of people is to view and treat them as intrinsically different and alien to oneself. The process of othering is to dehumanize and alienate a people based on race, gender, class, ethnicity. Through examining the ways hatred and othering is presented in the novel provide insightful discussion and answer to the following questions:

- How does hatred harm humanity?
- How does the process of othering begin? What damages does othering bring?
- Is nationalism dangerous?
- How does hatred shape identity?
- Can hate be weaponized?