

RUINED
by Lynn Nottage
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STUDY GUIDE

Pre Show

- 1.) What are your expectations of this play, given what you might have heard or read about it?
- 2.) What is your experience as you enter the space?
- 3.) What do you already know about the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

Post Show

- 1.) Given the widespread conflict and violence in the play, is there anybody who escapes damage (physical, psychological, or what have you)?
- 2.) How might the women of the play symbolize Africa? Defend your answer.
- 3.) Does this play embody the idea of "the personal is political and the political is personal?"
- 4.) What role does Mama Nadi play in this story? Is she a protagonist? An antagonist? Why?

5.) Exercise: Playing with Status

Aim: To explore hierarchy in the everyday lives of people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo DRC – particularly the women.

You will need: Multiple copies of Script Extract #1

Practical Work: To warm into this exercise, have students silently order themselves in a line by age, height, colour of hair, birth date etc. What gives a person status? Is it positions of authority or are their other factors? Have students act out a scenario each taking a step forwards or backwards as each person speaks, depending on their status. This is a very visual way of seeing how status shifts.

Evaluate: Ask the group how they felt playing the scene on a line? Was it clear who gained status and when? Was it always obvious who had the higher status? What does this exercise say about the role of women in the DRC? Using this analysis, it might be worth replaying the scene using the original text.

Synopsis

Ruined takes place in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo - a very dangerous place. Rebels and the government fight for control of the nation, its people, and the vast mineral resources it boasts. Caught in the middle of rival factions, the women of Mama Nadi's bar try to hold on as best they can in the face of unthinkable brutality and chaos. Two women, Sophie and Salima, are sold into prostitution and safety at Mama Nadi's for \$20. Both have been brutally raped and then discarded by their families, who find them abhorrent. Salima was abandoned by her husband, while Sophie has been "ruined." Though Mama Nadi is upset at having a ruined girl (who can not be prostituted and is another mouth to feed) she does take the girl in. Mama Nadi, in order to protect herself, her business, and the girls who work for her, carefully plays one side against the other.

From Lynn Nottage, the Pulitzer Prize winning author comes this haunting, probing work about the resilience of the human spirit during time of war. Set in a small mining town in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this powerful play follows Mama Nadi, a shrewd businesswoman in a land torn apart by civil war. But is she protecting or profiting by the women she shelters. How far will she go to survive? Can a price be placed on human life?