

B **A** **R** **C** **E** **L** **O** **N** **A**

STUDY GUIDE

20 GEFKEN
PLAYHOUSE

BARCELONA

WEST COAST PREMIERE IN THE
GIL CATES THEATER AT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE
FEBRUARY 2 – MARCH 13, 2016

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Randall Arney, Amy Levinson, Brian Dunning, Danny Espinoza, Karim Bouzzit,
Scott Kriloff, Carolyn Marie Wright, Ellen Catania, Jessica Brusilow Rollins,
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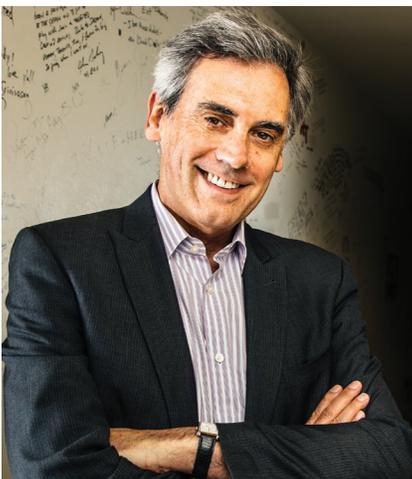
SECTION 1

ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

RANDALL ARNEY



AS WE CONTINUE CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF PRODUCING theater in Los Angeles, we are thrilled to welcome playwright Bess Wohl, and to welcome back director Trip Cullman, as they bring to life a provocative new play, *Barcelona*. While the journey of the play's two characters is primarily personal, it delves into our global cultural divides and shared fears. Bess has created two people sharing a relationship fraught with assumptions and developed with a fragility that echoes the uncertainty we all face. Her ability to draw us in to a small slice of life to tell a story that contains universal truths is incredibly powerful and further, makes for good drama.

A two-hander (a play with two actors) is always a tricky obstacle course for the actors and the director. Charged with carrying the entirety of a play, the volley is constant; Trip has helped to shape a back-and-forth between strangers yearning to make sense of a world outside of their control. As our allegiances shift between them, these two disparate and also desperate characters trade secrets that forever change each other's lives. Trip has assembled a team of brilliant designers who, along with compelling performances from Betty Gilpin and Carlos Leal, take us on a surprising, funny, sexy, and even a little tipsy, journey to *Barcelona*.

SYNOPSIS

Irene, a drunk 35-year-old American tourist visiting the city of Barcelona, enters a cluttered apartment accompanied by Manuel, a compelling Spaniard in his fifties. After being physically intimate, they engage in a nightlong encounter that is by turns tense and revealing. We learn what propelled Irene to leave the bachelorette party she was enjoying with her girlfriends and go off with Manuel; why he has brought her to this particular building; and how a terrorist attack in Spain has shaped Manuel's view of America, and, perhaps, his intentions towards his vulnerable guest.

SETTING Barcelona, Spain. The Present.

RUNNING TIME 90 minutes. *There will be no intermission.*

PERFORMANCE NOTE Sexual activity is depicted in one scene at the beginning of the play; some coarse language is used; there are two moments of cigarette smoking.

ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES

BESS WOHL (Playwright)

Bess Wohl's plays have been produced and developed at theaters in New York and around the country, including Second Stage, Ars Nova, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Most recently, her play, *Small Mouth Sounds*, had its world premiere at Ars Nova in New York, and was cited as one of the year's best plays of 2015 by *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Post*, *The Advocate* and *The Hollywood Reporter*. Her original musical about the adult entertainment industry, *Pretty Filthy*, was nominated for both the 2015 Lucille Lortel and Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding Musical. Bess herself won the Sam Norkin special Drama Desk Award for "establishing herself as an important voice in New York theater" in 2014/2015. She also has written features for Disney and Paramount, and has developed original television pilots for ABC, HBO, USA, FOX and the CW. Her work has been supported by a MacDowell Fellowship and she is the recent recipient of new play commissions from Manhattan Theatre Club, Hartford Stage and Lincoln Center.

TRIP CULLMAN (Director)

Also at the Geffen: Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Choir Boy*. Select NYC: Joshua Harmon's *Significant Other* (Roundabout), Halley Feiffer's *I'm Gonna Pray For You So Hard* (Atlantic), Simon Stephens's *Punk Rock* (MCC, Obie Award), Jon Robin Baitz's *The Substance of Fire* (Second Stage), McCraney's *Choir Boy* (Manhattan Theatre Club), Julia Jordan and Juliana Nash's *Murder Ballad* (Manhattan Theatre Club and Union Square Theater), Paul Weitz's *Lonely, I'm Not* (Second Stage), Leslye Headland's *Assistance* (Playwrights Horizons), Adam Bock's *A Small Fire* (Playwrights Horizons, Drama Desk nomination), Adam Rapp's *The Hallway Trilogy: Nursing* (Rattlestick), Headland's *Bachelorette* (Second Stage), Terrence McNally's *Some Men* (Second Stage), Bert V. Royal's *Dog Sees God* (Century Center), Bock's *The Drunken City* (Playwrights Horizons), Weitz's *Roulette* (EST), Jonathan Tolins's *The Last Sunday In June* (Rattlestick and Century Center), Bock's *Swimming In The Shallows* (Second Stage), Gina Gionfriddo's *U.S. Drag* (stageFARM), and several productions with The Play Company. London: Bock's *The Colby Sisters of Pittsburgh, PA* (Tricycle). Select regional: Williamstown Theatre Festival, Alliance, Old Globe, South Coast Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, Bay Street. Upcoming: Feiffer's *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Gynecologic Oncology Unit At Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center Of New York City* (MCC), Headland's *Layover* (Second Stage).

SECTION 2

THEMES & TOPICS

SPAIN'S IMPRINT ON THE WORLD – AND THE PLAY



PHOTO CREDITS

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SOURCES

tinyurl.com/BrittanicaSpain
tinyurl.com/BrittanicaBarce
tinyurl.com/WikiSpainColonies
tinyurl.com/WikiHispanic
www.sagradafamilia.org/en/

Geffen Playhouse Program:
Levinson, Amy “Location,
Location, Location”

Spain provides a distinctive backdrop for the story that unfolds between the two characters in *Barcelona*.

GEOGRAPHY

One of the largest countries in Europe, with a population of over 46 million people, Spain borders France to the north; to the west is the nation of Portugal, with which it shares the peninsula on which it is located. Across the Straits of Gibraltar to the south, is the North African nation of Morocco.

EARLY CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Like many European countries, Spain is a fusion of cultural influences contributed by the people who have occupied it over the course of centuries. Major settlers included Iberians, who are believed to have come from the eastern Mediterranean; Phoenicians, from present-day Tunisia; Greeks; Romans; Germanic Visigoths; and Moors from North Africa. The Romans, who stayed for seven centuries, gave rise to the country’s predominant language of Spanish – a Romance language based on Latin, of which there are different dialects in Spain and throughout the world, and Roman Catholicism, which until the late 1970s was Spain’s national religion and is practiced throughout Latin American countries. The Moors, Muslim Arabs from North Africa who “ruled over Spain for nearly 800 years,” had a strong impact on its architecture and the sciences.



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GLOBAL REACH

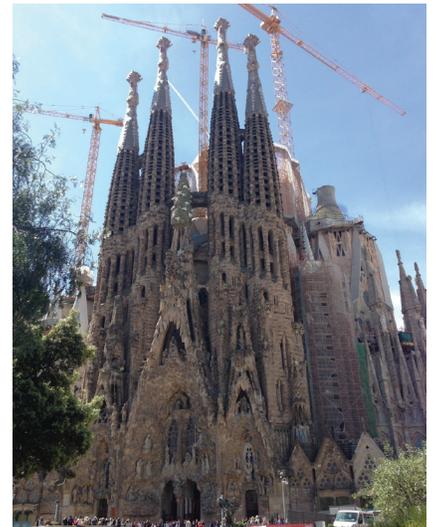
Spain was the world's first global power, and as such it shaped the language, religion and traditions of many parts of the world. After the monarchs in two key regions married in the late 1400s, they financed Christopher Columbus's exploration of the "New World." By the 1600s, Spain's empire reached "...across half of South America, most of Central America and the Caribbean islands and much of North America (including present-day Mexico, Florida, and the Southwestern and Pacific Coastal regions of the United States)." Like Britain and France – colonial powers that appropriated land and dominated trade and culture throughout the world when their empires were ascendant – the Spanish also brought disease that decimated the indigenous peoples, and enslaved them to build and establish outposts, such as missions. Many Spaniards immigrated to these new lands through the late 1800s, also bringing with them their Spanish language and customs. While some prefer these days to reference their family's country of origin, such as Mexico, Guatemala or Cuba, to capture the distinctive richness of their ethnicity, the term Hispanic is generally used to describe those who trace their cultural heritage back to Spain.

BARCELONA

The city of Barcelona, located on Spain's northeastern coast on the Mediterranean Sea, is the capital of a section known as Catalonia. It is the nation's second largest city (after Madrid); Spain's primary port; a major industrial, economic, cultural, and transportation center; and a popular tourist destination.

ANTONIO GAUDÍ

Barcelona was also home to celebrated architect, Antonio Gaudí (1852-1926), whose unique buildings can be found throughout the city. He designed the famous La Sagrada Família (The Sacred Family) cathedral, which can be seen from the apartment in which Manuel and Irene spend the night. As Geffen Playhouse Literary Director Amy Levinson states in her article on the setting for the play, Gaudí's unique style "brought together traditions of Gothic and Byzantine cathedrals with the almost whimsical Art Nouveau style flourishing in Barcelona at the time." After taking over the design of the cathedral in 1883, he became so devoted to constructing a church that would express Christianity, symbolically and on a huge scale, he lived on the building site. After working on this project for 43 years, he was killed in a streetcar accident in 1926, which left the cathedral unfinished. While sections have been built since – in the early days, by the artisans who had worked with him – its projected completion date is 2026.

**DISCUSSION
POINT**

Think about your travels to other neighborhoods, regions, states or countries. What did you learn about other ways of life? What were you surprised to realize about yourself?

TERRORISM – AIMS & CONSEQUENCES

TERRORISM (noun)

The systematic use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective. Terrorism has been practiced by political organizations with both rightist and leftist objectives, by nationalistic and religious groups, by revolutionaries, and even by state institutions such as armies, intelligence services, and police. (britannica.com)

PHOTO CREDIT

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SOURCES

tinyurl.com/BrittanicaTerror
tinyurl.com/AQGlobalSecur
tinyurl.com/Sept11Wiki
tinyurl.com/BrittanicalraqWar
tinyurl.com/M-11Wiki
tinyurl.com/GuardM-11



Barcelona illuminates how a terrorist attack that rocked Madrid in 2004 had strong repercussions on citizens' lives.

Terrorist acts have been committed throughout history to assert power or cause change. While often used by governments to manipulate populations, they are also deployed by small extremist groups of all political persuasions to foment revolutions, force mainstream institutions to change their ways or push occupants out of disputed territories. In present day, both domestic and international terrorists have caused death and injuries through shootings and explosions that take place in public places that citizens frequent and consider safe. While some seek to publicize and advance their causes by wreaking havoc, many kill the innocent to force the powers-that-be to grant their demands.

ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

(noun)

Islam is the religion of 1.6 billion Muslims throughout the world; most are peaceful and law-abiding. Extremists, such as those involved with Al-Qaeda and, more recently, ISIS, subscribe "...to a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, potentially including the promotion of violence to achieve political goals."

(Wikipedia)

A chain of events that apparently led to the bombings in Spain began on the morning of September 11, 2001, when a group of Islamic extremists from the Middle East, who were part of the terrorist network known as Al-Qaeda, commandeered three airplanes to bring down the World Trade Center towers in New York City and severely damage the Pentagon in Washington D.C.; a fourth plane bound for the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. crashed into a field in Pennsylvania, when, it is believed, its passengers attempted to thwart the attack. Nearly 3,000 people were killed. While the fundamentalist followers of the Islamic religion who ordered the attacks were expressing their virulent opposition to America's influence on global culture and its support of Israel, they also sought to drive the American military presence from Saudi Arabia.

In response to the September 11th attacks, the U.S. government at the time, led by President George W. Bush and Vice-President Richard Cheney, immediately sent its military to the Middle Eastern country of Afghanistan, which had been a haven for Al-Qaeda, to bring the perpetrators to justice. (Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, who masterminded the attacks, was not apprehended until 2011.) In 2003, the Bush Administration chose to invade Iraq, claiming that its leader Saddam Hussein supported Al-Qaeda and was harboring weapons of mass destruction, which endangered the world.

As the British newspaper *The Guardian* reported, a devastating attack occurred in Spain on March 11, 2004, "...on four packed commuter trains heading into Madrid from working-class neighbourhoods during the morning rush hour. The blasts, from 10 backpacks filled with dynamite and nails, killed 191 people and wounded more than 1,800..." At first, separatists, who had set off explosions in the past in their pursuit of full autonomy for the Basque region of Spain, were blamed. It was soon revealed that those responsible were members of a small terrorist cell, thought to be loosely associated with Al-Qaeda, who claimed the attack was retribution for Spain's participation in the military coalition arranged by America to occupy Iraq. (Another report has suggested the train bombings were revenge for the arrest of cell members.) The government that was elected shortly after the attacks, which had not been expected to win, proceeded to remove Spanish soldiers from Iraq.

While terrorism can have enormous societal consequences, such as the curtailment of civil liberties and rights to privacy that took place in the U.S. after 9/11, which the government has claimed is necessary for preventing terrorist activities, the personal impact can be equally far-reaching. Family members and friends are deeply affected forever, not just by the sudden, brutal and random death of loved ones, but also, in the case of explosions, by their actual disappearance. This incomprehensible and ravaging kind of loss is explored with grit and grace in *Barcelona*.

**DISCUSSION
POINT**

U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945) famously said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." How does this statement have relevance in today's world?

CULTURE CLASH

STEREOTYPE (verb)

To believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same.

(merriam-webster.com)

UGLY AMERICAN

A perjorative term used to refer to perceptions of loud, arrogant, demeaning, thoughtless, ignorant, and ethnocentric behavior of American citizens, mainly abroad but also at home. (wikipedia)

PHOTO CREDIT

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SOURCES

tinyurl.com/AmerTypeWiki

tinyurl.com/PewAmerImage

After hooking up with Manuel, the outgoing, somewhat crass American, Irene, finds herself struggling to connect to the introverted and refined Spaniard, Manuel. Fueling their clash of personalities are cultural and political differences. Irene seems to be visiting Spain encased in a bubble, unaffected by her stimulating surroundings. Manuel admits to disliking America, and in this he is not alone. The antipathy that a considerable number of Europeans feel for the United States can be traced, in part, to stereotyping based on insensitive tourists and strong disagreements about political policies and military actions.

In Irene, playwright Bess Wohl has created a character that borders on the stereotype of “the ugly American.” For a good part of the play, she comes across as materialistic, self-centered, condescending and not very cultured. By persisting in calling Manuel “Manolo,” she displays both an unwillingness to learn his name and her familiarity with famous shoe designers for the affluent, such as Manolo Blahnik (who is Spanish). She, on the other hand, taunts Manuel about Europeans not being hard workers – a commonly held perception in the United States because European countries are known for providing generous vacation time and pensions to its citizens. She also shows how uninformed she is, since many European countries, including Spain, have enacted austerity measures following the impact of the global recession in 2008.

Politically speaking, the 10-year conflict in Iraq harmed the United States’ standing in the world, especially in Europe. While Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was a brutal and oppressive dictator, it turned out he had nothing to do with Al-Qaeda and the attacks of September 11th, nor did he possess weapons of mass destruction. Many countries that had been supportive of the United States immediately after the attacks, disapproved strongly of the invasion and mismanagement of the occupation of Iraq. According to a Pew Research poll in 2006, Spanish citizens’ approval of Americans plummeted from 57% to 36%. Many blamed the U.S. for causing the attacks in Madrid by inviting Spain to join it in Iraq. Though a good number of American citizens were against the invasion of Iraq, and a majority now believe it was a terrible calamity, due to the loss of Iraqi and American lives and traumatic injuries to thousands of U.S. soldiers, the impact on the U.S. economy, and the dire political consequences that continue to plague the region and threaten the world, Manuel sees “America” as one destructive entity.

Whether stereotyping those of a particular cultural heritage or objecting to a government’s politics, treating any group of people as if it has one character or one mindset, comes from judging the people within the group according to long-held images of exaggerated traits, instead of perceiving them in terms of nuanced, sometimes conflicting realities – in the present.

DISCUSSION POINT

Why is stereotyping others harmful? What actions can we take to dismantle stereotypes of groups of people – especially those who are different from us culturally or politically?

CONSEQUENTIAL STRANGERS

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/WikiConsStranger

tinyurl.com/TimeConsStranger

tinyurl.com/PsychTodayCS

One of the most exciting aspects of *Barcelona* is how the two characters dive into a sexual encounter, only to realize how far apart they are from each other, and end up drawing the truth out of each other about their lives.

What is it about being in the presence of strangers that compels us to reveal our innermost selves? When on a bus or plane for a lengthy trip, it is not unusual for two travelers to share about difficult life experiences or choices. Perhaps it's knowing that they and we live in completely different worlds and are unlikely to cross paths again that frees us up to risk disclosure.

People who pass quickly in and out of lives, or those we see regularly but don't know very well, can affect us through what they allow us to do, or what they say and do themselves. Authors Melinda Blau and Karen L. Fingerman have suggested that these kinds of people are "consequential strangers." Though not part of our inner circle, they can still play important roles in our lives. Some are caregivers or colleagues with whom we connect strongly during a family health crisis or time-bound work project, and then never see again. Such "strangers" can provide helpful new information or allow us to express different facets of ourselves, in ways we do not experience with those close to us. Those whom we see somewhat regularly, such as a fellow student or a hair stylist or waiter in a restaurant, have no investment in our behaving a certain way and no cause to worry about a course of action we might follow. If we ordinarily do not have much opportunity to speak our truth, it can be liberating and clarifying to do so in the presence of someone who will simply listen and not judge us.

Write about a meaningful encounter with a stranger, or a pivotal moment with someone at the periphery of your life, whose presence has made a difference.

Describe this person's appearance and internal traits. Where were you? What did you both say and/or do? Write up what was said as dialogue. What was freeing, eye-opening, reassuring or inspiring about being with this person? Why?

How might you extend this encounter to write a full-length play?

SECTION 3

PERSONNEL PROFILE

AN INTERVIEW WITH KARIM BOUZZIT

What is your title and how long have you worked at the Geffen Playhouse?

I am the theater's internet technology (IT) specialist. My official title is Network System Administrator, and I have worked at the Geffen Playhouse for over six years.

What are your primary responsibilities?

As a systems network administrator I install and maintain all the network hardware and software that enable staff members to communicate through e-mail and use computers to perform their work. The equipment and programs allow the Geffen to conduct its business as a theater venue as efficiently and securely as possible. My position also requires remaining aware of the rapidly changing needs of our customers and employees, as well as the latest available technology.

How does technology support the work of the various departments at the theater?

All employees require network connectivity, network maintenance, software deployment and security dispatches so they can do their job, such as write, design, post online and collect and analyze information. Technology also benefits our audiences. Currently we have software in place that provides an easy and secure way for audience members to purchase tickets online.

What pathway led to your work at the Geffen?

My curiosity in computer science started from a young age. In high school, I started taking classes and gained some qualifications in networking. I have found the theatrical arts fascinating after seeing many compelling plays. Working at the Geffen has given me the ability to use my skill sets while vicariously enjoying the artistic aspects of theater. Before joining the Geffen, I was employed in the public business sector in Belgium, where I learned much about network and operating systems.

How has your role at the Geffen grown?

I started as a first-level IT support. I've assumed leadership by engaging in creative problem solving to meet our ongoing



needs. Now a senior System Administrator, I look forward to growth opportunities that will lead to becoming a Certified Cisco Network Administrator (CCNA).

What is most challenging about your work?

Since the entertainment and technology industries are evolving at a higher rate than ever before, the biggest challenge is making sure that I am up-to-date with new technological options and implementing changes that create long-term value. Recently, I oversaw the rewiring and installation of connectivity centers in every area of our building, over the course of 45 days. I must constantly learn about new methodologies so that I can identify issues before they arise and act quickly when they appear.

What is most satisfying about your work?

I get to implement strategic changes to our network system that enable my fellow employees to play their roles – pun intended! – as effectively as possible. The most satisfying aspect is knowing how technology helps orchestrate our audience's experience – from when they bustle into the lobby, to the standing ovation at the end of a performance. Without a solid network up and running, the show would not go on: the computers with which our production crew run the lights and move the scenery and play sound would not function; audience members wouldn't even be able to buy tickets – online or at the box office. I am glad to be a technological hand in creating a palpable theatrical experience. ■

SECTION 4

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Going to the theater is a unique experience, and we all need to be mindful of “audience etiquette,” or how to behave at the theater.

The audience plays an essential role in the performance of a play. Without an audience, the actors are only rehearsing. Audience members’ concentrated silence and responses, such as laughing and applauding, provide energy to the actors as they bring the performance to life.

Since the actors can hear and see the audience, it is important not to engage in behaviors that might disturb or distract them – and fellow audience members. These actions include:

- Talking
- Texting
- Allowing cell phones to ring
- Taking photographs or video
- Getting up to leave before intermission or the end of the show (unless it is a true emergency)
- Eating or drinking
- Unwrapping candy or cough drops
- Touching or leaning on the stage.

Audience Awareness Activity: Before going to the Geffen Playhouse for the first time, compare and contrast the experience of seeing a live play with:

- going to the movies
- attending a live sporting event
- watching television.

DISCUSSION POINT

If you were onstage performing a play, how would you want the audience to behave?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Depending on the time available and your group members' interests, guide them to respond to questions selected from those suggested below. Encourage everyone to participate, while having respect for differing opinions. Individuals can share their thoughts with a partner or in a small group. Ask for several volunteers to share their groups' answers with the larger group.

- Overall, how did you feel while watching the play? Engaged? Distanced? Entertained? Bored? Confused? Inspired? What made you feel this way?
- What did you enjoy most about the play? What made it hard to connect to the play?
- What did you learn about the cultural and political differences between the two characters?
- Have you ever been to Barcelona or other parts of Spain? If so, how did your prior knowledge of that culture inform your experience of the play?
- What did you find most appealing about each character? Off-putting? Did these attitudes change over the course of the play? If so, how, and why?
- What was the most compelling part of the characters' nightlong interaction? Why?
- Have you ever had an unexpectedly life-changing encounter with a stranger? If so, how was it similar to or different from the characters' experience in *Barcelona*?
- What did you appreciate most about the performances by the actors?
- How did the set, props, lighting and visuals contribute to the impact of the ending of the play?
- Would you recommend *Barcelona* to other theatergoers? Why, or why not?

SECTION 5

RESOURCES

WATCH an aerial journey through Barcelona at tinyurl.com/YTBarcAerial.

LEARN about the Gaudí Cathedral in Barcelona at www.sagradafamilia.org/en/.

WATCH how the completion of the Gaudí Cathedral has been envisioned at tinyurl.com/YTSagFamFinish.

LEARN about the history of Hispanic Americans in California at tinyurl.com/HispAmerCa.

VISIT the LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes to explore Mexican-American history in Los Angeles. (Consult lapca.org for information.)

VISIT the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach, CA to view the work of contemporary artists from the Americas. (Consult molaa.org for information.)

LEARN about the 9/11 attacks in the U.S., the invasion of Iraq, and the United States' War on Terror through video reports at tinyurl.com/PBS9-11.

LEARN about the 2004 attacks in Madrid at tinyurl.com/M-11Attacks.

LEARN how strangers can make a difference in our lives, by reading *Consequential Strangers: The Power of People Who Don't Seem to Matter ... but Really Do* by Melinda Blau and Karen L. Fingerma. (Available at [wnorton.com](https://www.norton.com).)

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And many more!



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