

# TWICE A STRANGER

Forced Displacement and Population Exchange in the 20th Century



## LESSON PLAN

English - intermediate to advanced level

CHRISTINA KOULOURI

professor in Modern and Contemporary History, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences

KATERINA VLACHOU

teacher, professor in speech formation and oral narrative studies

# The promise

*A story on the exchange of populations  
between Greece and Turkey (1922-23)*

- **THE STORY**

“The promise” is a story written by Anna Conomos and inspired by the historical events that happened during the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, as a result of the Greek Catastrophe in the Asia Minor expedition (1922-23).

- **THE VIDEO**

The video is an oral narration of “The promise”, performed in English (by Anna Conomos), in Turkish (by Ayça Damgacı) and in Greek (by Efi Vlahoyianni). Greek musician Nikos Angelopoulos performs the background music on a 'politiko laouto' (a lute or lavta).

It can be screened on DVD or on the internet [www.twiceastranger.gr](http://www.twiceastranger.gr)

*Duration: 16 mins*

- **SUMMARY OF THE STORY**

Evgenia was a 7 year old girl living with her parents in a small village outside Smyrna. Her best friend was Fatma, a Turkish girl of her age. Evgenia’s father was rich and owned many acres of fertile land.

One day war broke out between Greeks and Turks and Evgenia’s family was forced to leave the place. The two girls promised to meet again at the same spot- outside Fatma’s house and planted a rose in the ground to seal this promise.

Evgenia arrives with her parents in Athens where the conditions are harsh. There is no work for them and besides poverty they have to face arrogance from the local people who call them “refugees”. Eventually Evgenia’s parents establish a new home in Athens and as time goes by Evgenia grows up and makes a family of her own. Her first grandchild is a girl and is named after her. Grandmother and granddaughter are close to each other and the child grows up with stories about grandmother’s homeland, her friendship with Fatma and the mutual promise they had given. When grandmother Evgenia reaches her death, she asks her granddaughter to fulfill the promise she had given long before.

When little Evgenia grows up, takes the trip to Smyrna and visits her grandmother’s village. She recognizes everything as if she, herself, had lived there. She finds a house covered by a huge rose bush and she meets there a young woman of her age called Fatma. Under the huge rose bush the two young women give life to the promise given years ago, by their grandmothers.

## > LESSON PLAN

### English – intermediate to advanced level

#### **Estimated time needed**

2 lesson periods

#### **Level**

Intermediate to Advanced

#### **Theme**

Oral and Written Narration

#### **Lesson Objectives**

Students should be able:

- to comprehend an oral narration and be able to reproduce it
- to find the “bare bones” of a story
- to create a new story of their own (oral and written form)
- to become familiar with the differences between telling and writing a story
- to develop skills in team work

#### **Material / equipment**

DVD player and TV screen

or PC with access to the internet

#### **Suggestions for Lesson Activities**

##### 1<sup>st</sup> period

- Projection of the DVD in class
- Students take notes while watching the film
- Students make use of their notes to reproduce the story in class

##### 2<sup>nd</sup> period

- Students watch the film again and choose key words in the story.
- Students get in groups of 4. Each student in the group writes down the story in 3 sentences, then in 3 words and finally gives the story in 1 word (story theme).
- In the group of 4, they share a brief personal story using the final chosen word before, as a theme of their story.
- Each group writes down a short paragraph using one of the theme-words chosen before.
- Students share the different group works in class

# The promise

a story by Anna Conomos

Once upon a time there was a beautiful girl called Evgenia, she was seven years old and she had a best friend with jet black hair, starry eyes and a voice like an angel. Her name was Fatma.

The two girls lived in a cheerful little village, propped high up on a hillside, which overlooked the great and glittering sea-side city of Smyrna in Asia Minor.

The girls loved each other dearly and wanted to do everything together, so they would wake up to the peal of the church bells and they would make their way out to the orange groves where they would watch the sunrise. In the afternoons they would play in the square, while the muezzin would call everyone to the mosque for prayer and in the evenings they would sit with Barba-Yiannis, the old town crier, and they would ask him to *please* play his 'oud'... And he would bring out his instrument, he would pluck the strings and he would sing their favourite songs...

*'Kai ti se meli esenane, apo pou eimai ego  
Apo to Bournova, g'iap'to Kourdelio'*

It was so much fun! But the best fun was always in Evgenia's own home because she lived in a grand two storey mansion, with great big bay windows that let in the sunlight, a balcony wrapped around the second floor and palm trees on either side.

Her father owned acres and acres of land, full of fruit trees: plums, figs, apricots [and] He would dry the fruit and take it in great big cart loads all the way down to the port of Smyrna. And sometimes, the girls would ride in the carts and pick on the juicy fruits and watch it being shipped across to Greece, Italy, Spain and the rest of Europe.

Evgenia had heard a lot of wonderful things about mother Greece, but she had never been there. There was no place like home.

But, one day, war came and *everything* changed: the bells stopped ringing, the muezzin stopped his melodious calling and even Barba Yiannis could no longer be heard playing his oud.... Evgenia didn't know who or what war was, but she didn't like it because nobody was being normal anymore... and the worst of it was that Fatma no longer came around to play!

-Mama, I want play with Fatma.

-I know my dear, but you can't...

-But Mama, you like Fatma don't you?

-Yes, of course I do, my dear, but things have changed now.

So now Evgenia had to play on her own, it was so annoying. And one day, she heard her parents arguing in the kitchen. Her father was shouting which was very strange because he never raised his voice. She went downstairs and pressed her ear against the door to hear what was happening....

-The Turkish soldiers are coming, the Greek army has left, we're not safe here...

-But we can't leave. This is our home. It's *our home!*

Leave? Who said anything about leaving? And without saying goodbye to Fatma? No way! She was going to see her even if it meant disobeying her parents!

So Evgenia crept out of the house. She went past the church and through the village square, everywhere was strangely still and quiet. She ran past the orange groves and she noticed that the sun was setting in a different place today, further back and it was radiant and more fiery than she had ever seen it before, but there was no time to stop and look at it. She ran on towards the Turkish quarter, past the mosque and then turned the corner, there was Fatma's home and there was Fatma on the terrace, 'Fatma! Fatma!' Fatma ran down and the two girls embraced...

-I've missed you!

-Oh I've missed you too!

-Oh Evgenia, mother won't let me play with you anymore, it's because you're a Christian and not a Muslim like us and...I heard that war is coming. Oh Evgenia, I don't know who he is but he sounds horrible!

-Shh, Fatma, listen to me, there's no time, we have to make an promise. It's like a secret vow which you have to keep forever, even after you are dead, ok?

-Ok.

-We have to promise that even if this war comes and takes us away from one another, that we will come back here and meet again here under the terrace at sunset. Do you promise?

-I promise!

To seal their vow Evgenia plucked a rose from a nearby bush and they dug a hole in the ground, and they planted the rose and then they hugged and they cried.

All of a sudden the bells rang out, the whistles blasted, and the town crier was shouting for 'all Christians to leave their homes!' Crowds filled the streets and Evgenia felt herself being scooped up and carried away until Fatma became a tiny speck in the distance 'Fatma, Fatma!' Then she recognised her father's voice... 'How dare you run off! What were you thinking? What were you thinking?' She could feel his heart beating hard against her chest.

When they reached the outskirts of the village, there was mother her hands were full of clothes and food, 'Oh Evgenia, thank God you're alright! Now, take my hand and hold on tight!' Then they began to run at top speed towards Smyrna and that's when Evgenia noticed for the first time that she could smell smoke in the air, and when she turned to look she saw fire, fire everywhere. And then she remembered the sunset, or what she thought had been the sunset.

And now the people were running so fast they were tripping over themselves but nobody was stopping to pick them up, babies were screaming and Evgenia's legs' were aching. 'Oh Mama, Mama! I'm tired, I'm tired...' 'Don't stop, don't let go or I'll lose you forever.'

Finally they reached the quay-side, before them, the vast ocean, behind them the furnace of flames. Evgenia felt herself being pushed and pulled closer to the water's edge. She was so thirsty, she could hardly breathe. 'Oh mama, mama, mama...'

And then everything went black.

When Evgenia opened her eyes she was in a little fishing boat in the middle of the ocean, her mother and father were there, and Barba-Yiannis was there too with his oud tucked into his jacket.

-‘Mama, where are we going?’

-‘My dear, we’re going to Greece, to Athens, it will be alright, you’ll see.’

But when they did finally reach Athens, it was not alright, they weren’t wanted there, the people called them ‘*prosfiges!*’ ‘refugees!’ and they weren’t given a grand two storey home to live in but a dirty half made tent that stank of death and disease! And they were starving so Evgenia's father went out to find work and he was handed a broom and made to sweep the dirty streets of Athens. And when he would come home, he would be dripping with sweat, he would be so tired and frustrated. ‘Over there we lived like Kings and look at us here! Look how low we have sunk. I’m not even making enough money to feed my family a loaf of bread!’

But one day the word spread that the war had ended and that there was now peace! Peace! They could go home! They packed their bags and they made their way to the port and there were the big ships, but they weren’t waiting for them. The ships were being piled with other refugees that were being taken to Turkey... Evgenia noticed among them young girls her age that looked just like Fatma! So they had to return to the campsite.

But in time, the refugees were given a neighbourhood in Athens where they were able to build little huts for themselves to live in and they called this neighbourhood ‘*Nea Smyrni*’, ‘New Smyrna’ to remember the homeland. Of course it was nothing like home, but sometimes in the evenings, they would ask Barba-Yiannis to play his oud and he would bring out his instrument, he would pluck the strings and he would sing songs from the homeland.

*‘Kai ti se meli esenane, apo pou eimai ego  
Gia’po to Bournova, g’iap’to Kourdelio’*

The years passed and Evgenia grew up and she married and had children of her own, and then one day, her first grandchild was born, a little girl, and they gave her *her* name, Evgenia. Now little Evgenia loved granny Evgenia very dearly and she especially loved listening to her stories that were always about a wonderful paradise, full of orange groves and songs in the square. Granny would always cry when she spoke of a beautiful girl, called Fatma, and a promise they had made to meet again.

But granny was never able to keep her promise, she got very old and very sick... and one day, when she was on her death bed, she called her granddaughter over to her and said:

-Dear child, would you do something for me? Would you keep my promise for me?

-Yes, granny, I will.

And then Evgenia closed her eyes and she died.

And little Evgenia never forgot granny’s stories and one day when she was old enough she decided that she would take that boat and go to Turkey and visit her grandmother’s paradise. And when she reached the port of Smyrna, she was amazed at the splendour of this city and she followed a pathway that led up to a hill. And there, perched on the hill, was a village and it all seemed so familiar to her.

The grandest home was a beautiful two-storey house with great big bay windows that let in the sunlight, a balcony wrapped around the bottom floor and palm trees... it was just as granny had described it, she really *had* lived like a queen! And there was the church and the village square and the orange groves... and Evgenia noticed that now the sun was sinking into the distant sea, and her heart began to beat fast and she began to run. She ran past a

mosque, turned the corner and saw a sight that made her gasp in amazement... it was a house with a terrace and climbing up the terrace was a bush full of roses: dozens of them in full bloom. So this was real, it wasn't just a story. She went to the roses, she buried her face in the fragrant flowers.

And then she heard a gentle voice behind her and she turned. There was a girl with jet-black hair and starry eyes...

-Do you like them? Those were my grandmother's roses; they were very special to her.

-What was her name?

-Fatma... like mine. Fatma.

-Fatma? I am Evgenia... those roses were special to my grandmother too.

The two girls looked at one another and hesitated for just one moment before holding out their arms and embracing.

-Take this to your grandmother from mine, it was her dying wish.

-That's very kind Fatma, but my grandmother died some time ago

-Then you must place it on her grave.

So Evgenia took the rose and held it close. And then the two girls put their arms around another other and made their way into the house and it was as if they had known each other their whole lives.

## > ABOUT «THE PROMISE»

“The promise” was created by award winning UK storyteller, Anna Conomos, in collaboration with Anemon, in the context of the cross-media project ‘**Twice a Stranger**’ which is presented at the Benaki Museum in Athens from 19/9 to 25/11/2012.

The narrative was developed in collaboration with Eric Loren and *Storyspinner*, a creative storytelling team based in London, with the support of the European Commission (*Culture Programme*). It was also supported by the British Council under its *Our Shared Europe* programme, which seeks to find common ground and build shared values that are based on mutual respect, understanding and trust. In particular, it looks at how we can acknowledge the contribution of diverse communities and cultures - both in the past but also in the present - to the shaping of contemporary European civilisation and society.

“The promise” is also available as a children’s book (in Greek, published by Potamos) with illustrations created by Daniela Stamatadi, based on rare archive photos.

For more information: [www.twiceastranger.net](http://www.twiceastranger.net)

**Written by** Anna Conomos

**Historical advisor:** Christina Koulouri, professor in Modern and Contemporary History, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences

**Educational programme advisor:** Katerina Vlachou, teacher, professor in speech formation and oral narrative studies

**Produced by** Rea Apostolides & Yuri Averof (Anemon Productions)

### **Video-DVD**

Performed by: Anna Conomos, Efi Vlahoyianni, Ayça Damgacı

In consultation with Eric Loren Hershenson (*Day Two Productions*) and *The Storyspinner UK*

Musician / Lutinist: Nikos Angelopoulos

Camera: Stelios Apostolopoulou & Christos Douros, Sound: Aris Kafentzis

Translations: Adamandia Pana, Ayça Damgacı

Production coordination: Leonidas Liambeys, Elektra Peppa

DVD production: Vermantia Productions, [www.vermantia.com](http://www.vermantia.com)

Special thanks to Bruce Clark, Giles Milton, Irini Vouzelakou, Anastasia Andritsou, Vangelis Averof, Centre for Asia Minor Studies, Iakovos Michailidis, Gina Roubakou

### **Children’s Book**

Published by POTAMOS and ANEMON, 2012

Illustrated by Daniela Stamatadi

Designed by Dimitra Chrona (Schema Design)

ISBN 978-960-545-010-6

ANEMON Productions

5 Stisihorou st., 106 74 Athens, Greece, tel. 210 7211073, fax 210 7228023

[info@anemon.gr](mailto:info@anemon.gr), [www.anemon.gr](http://www.anemon.gr)

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. It reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

# TWICE A STRANGER

Forced Displacement and Population Exchange in the 20th Century

Created by



with the support of  
the European Commission



## Co-organisers



## Partners



## Exhibition Sponsors



## Media Sponsors



## Benaki Museum Media Sponsors

