

Review of Zlata's Diary
By Ryan A. Holt, Jr.

I remember in the sixth grade we were studying the war in Sarajevo, and my teacher, Ms. Ricciardi, based a whole lesson off of one quote from the book, Zlata's Diary, an autobiography written by Zlata Filipovic. I remember being really interested. Since that class I've wanted to read this book, but I never had the chance. One day two summers ago, my mom had coincidentally bought me the book as a gift. But still, I put it on the shelf and it remained collecting dust for two years. Then I saw it on the list of my summer reading assignment. I thought it would be perfect to read.

I liked this book because it was a real story. The book was so detailed about the events that took place in her life, it was hard for me to believe. For example, Zlata went to bed almost every night hearing gunshots and explosions. After some time she almost gets used to the drama. "Mimmy, I've noticed that I don't write to you about the war anymore. That's because I've become used to it." At times it was so dangerous, Zlata couldn't even cross the bridge to see her grandparents.

The entire book was written by Zlata, and it's about her life as a child growing up in the war. In the beginning, Zlata was a normal "kid". She has friends, goes to school, and has fun. But as the book progresses, and as the war thickens, her life makes a total U-turn from smiles and fun to fear and anger. "And Nina is dead. A piece of shrapnel lodged into her brain and she died. She was such a sweet little girl, now, the victim of a stupid war." "Bojanna, Maja, and Nebosa have lost their daddy. A disgusting war has taken their daddy from them. Sad awfully sad." As you can see, Zlata expresses a lot of anger and sadness toward the war. It has a big impact on her life.

I can't make any personal connections with Zlata's story because I've never been through a war, but I have been through sad time and heartache. Like Zlata I have witnessed death and it's not a pretty sight. It's a life changing experience. Sadness and heartache are both natural, and regular feelings and emotions, in which just about every day we experience.

What new understanding do I have about life as a result of reading this book? First, before reading this book, I had never imagined what life would be like living through a war. I had never realized that other people my age are going through things I can't imagine: war, poverty, family problems. Now after reading this book, I realize how good I actually have things. My new understanding about life as a result of reading this book, is to not take things for granted, and to try to give more to the world than taking from it. I have learned a lot from reading Zlata's diary, and she wrote it when she was younger than me!