

ONE LAST SHOT

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK



One Last Shot tells the largely unknown story of Gerda (Pohorylle) Taro, a real-life rebel...WITH a cause. As a Jewish girl coming of age in post-WWI Germany at a time when nationalism, fascism, and anti-Jewish sentiment is sweeping the country, Gerda recognizes the threat of those ideologies and joins the left-wing youth movement, writing and distributing anti-nazi propaganda. When her activism leads to her arrest and imprisonment by the Gestapo, her parents convince her to flee to Paris. She will never see them or her brothers again.

As a young woman alone in Paris, Gerda is again drawn to the fight against fascism. She finds a soulmate in André Friedmann, a fellow Jewish refugee and photographer from Hungary, who shares her passion for making a difference in the world and who teaches her to take photographs. The two eventually become a freelance team, adopting the more American-sounding names of Gerda Taro and Robert Capa. When they travel to Spain to document the Spanish Civil War as photojournalists, they find themselves on the front lines, and Gerda becomes the first female photojournalist killed in action.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kip Wilson is the author of *White Rose*, which won the Malka Penn Award for Human Rights in Children's Literature, and *The Most Dazzling Girl in Berlin*, a YA finalist for the *LA Times* Book Prize. Kip holds a PhD in German literature and has been an associate editor at *Voyage YA* since 2020. She lives in Boston, Massachusetts. Find her online at kipwilsonwrites.com, on Twitter @kiperoo, and on Instagram @kipwilsonwrites.



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Spain holds a place in my heart like no other. It's a beautiful country that still bears the scars of its violent civil war, which went on from 1936 to 1939. I've been interested in this period of the country's history since I first started visiting Spain in the early 2000s, but it was only when I came across Gerda Taro that I found a way to tell this more personal story about the conflict. I first learned about Gerda when the 2018 Google Doodle honored her on her birthday. I've been an amateur black-and-white photographer myself since high school, and I knew who Robert Capa was, but I'd never heard of this impish-looking girl holding the camera in the Doodle. The more I learned about Gerda, the more I loved her: her profoundly anti-fascist views, her fierce dedication to sharing the right side of the story, her charm, her unrivaled confidence, and above all, her perfectly balanced combination of femininity and toughness. For all these reasons, Gerda grabbed hold of me as a YA protagonist, and I simply couldn't get enough of her.

Guide prepared by Daria Bliss, a past president of ALAN (the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE) and ELA teacher at Traverse City High School in Traverse City, Michigan



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- 1) A major theme that appears in the novel is Gerda's feeling of otherness, or *Anderssein*.
 - When and where does Gerda feel most like an outsider? When and where does she feel least like an outsider?
 - How does Gerda's feeling of otherness ultimately end up influencing her career choice and path in life?
 - How are Gerda's challenges with finding her identity either the same as or different from those of twenty-first century teens?
 - Is the feeling of being other or an outsider a universal experience? What is the danger of being other? Are there any benefits to being outside of the mainstream? Explain.
- 2) Gerda works against the Nazi Party despite the danger to herself and her family. Her younger brothers also join the fight. In "RUFFIANS IN UNIFORM" (pp. 87–88), we learn that her involvement with the left-wing youth movement leads to her arrest by the Gestapo. In "PLANS" (pp. 101–103), we learn that Gerda's family decides that she should leave Germany while they stay behind.
 - Knowing what you likely know about the fate of many European Jews, how do you feel about this plan? Why don't they all leave together?
 - What do the several letters they exchange, titled "Liebe Familie" and "Liebe Gerda," tell you about their relationship even when they are apart?
 - In the *DRAMATIS PERSONAE* (pp. 383–388), we learn the fate of Gerda's immediate family members. Are you surprised to learn what happened to each of them? Why or why not?
- 3) Gerda says in "And yet" (pp. 161), "the more time I spend with André the more I realize that I seem to have met the male version of myself and I like this male version of myself."
 - What is it that Gerda sees and recognizes in André?
 - What life experiences do they share?
 - How is this different from her relationships with Willi, Pieter, and Georg?
 - How would you describe Gerda's relationship with André?
 - The poems "SOLO" (pp. 281–282) and "BUSINESS AND PLEASURE" (pp. 308–309) suggest that Robert supports Gerda's career and her efforts to make sure her photos are published under her own name. Why is this important? Would this have been considered common during the 1930s? Why or why not?
- 4) In the poem "HEADLINE" (pp. 252–253), Gerda learns that the Spanish insurgents have assassinated the poet Federico García Lorca:

The insurgents
are assassinating
poets
now

which tells me
all I need to know
about the enemy
we're fighting.

 - Why is it important that a poet has been targeted for assassination? Who was Federico García Lorca?
 - What might this assassination tell us about the "enemy" referenced in the poem?
 - In what ways might art and artists pose a threat to a fascist system?
- 5) Besides the assassination of Federico García Lorca, what other events were occurring in Spain at this time? Though neither Gerda nor Robert are Spanish, they are compelled to show the world what is happening in Spain. Why are they driven to do this? What do you think they're hoping to achieve? Why is it important to bear witness to injustices?

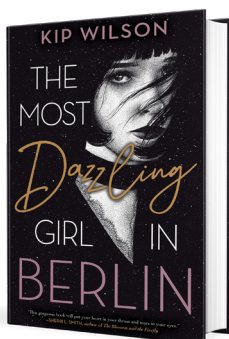


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- 6) View some of Taro's and Capa's photos of the refugees depicted in the poems "SANCTUARY," "JUXTAPOSITION," "HUMAN FLOOD," "SNAPSHOT," "I can't help thinking," and "DESTINATION" (pp. 285–290) here: www.icp.org/search-results/taro%20capa%20refugees/all/all/relevant/0.
- What do you see in these images?
 - What events from their own lives allow Gerda and Robert to relate to and/or empathize with the refugees who fled from Málaga to Almería? Re-read "REFUGEES" (pp. 136–137) and "WHO WE ARE" (pp. 181–182).
- 7) Re-read the 29 poems titled "SNAPSHOT" and consider the following questions:
- What purpose do these poems serve? What can a snapshot do that words cannot?
 - What types of images, experiences, moments do they capture? Is there a connection between these various moments?
 - The final poem in the book is a "SNAPSHOT" poem. Why do you think the author, Kip Wilson, chose to end with one of these poems?
- 8) There are multiple poems specifically titled "HEADLINE(S)" AND "MORE HEADLINES," while other poems also include news headlines of the day.
- What purpose do these poems serve? How do they help hold the narrative together?
 - How does including actual headlines lend credibility to this story, which straddles/blurs the line between fiction and nonfiction? Explain.
- 9) Names and nicknames also play an important role in this story.
- Read through "NAMES" (p. 7), "NICKNAME" (p. 36), "Suddenly" (pp. 207–208), and "BRAINSTORMING" (pp. 209–210). How is the name a person chooses for themselves different from a name that is given to/ chosen for them by someone else?
 - The poems "INSPIRED IDEA," "Suddenly," and "BRAINSTORMING" (pp. 206–210) mark a turning point in the story. What is significant about the "new" names that Gerda and André choose for themselves? What are they hoping to achieve by adopting these new identities?
- 10) What are the dangers of nationalism and fascism? Do you see any similarities between Germany's political divisions in the 1920s and 1930s and modern-day politics? Do you see any similarities between the events that led to the Spanish Civil War and modern-day politics? Explain.

MORE FROM KIP WILSON



"Book clubs will find a lot to discuss in Hilde's story, and educators won't need to work hard to generate conversations about equality, authoritarianism, and the role of minorities in democracy. The free-form verse is inviting and masterfully captures the mood and times in sparse poetry, making this work equally appealing for pleasure reading."

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)



"The verses pack an emotional punch.... This will be a highly accessible pathway into conversations about the role of women in war and resistance and... an insightful addition to any curriculum about resistance in World War II."

—The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books



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