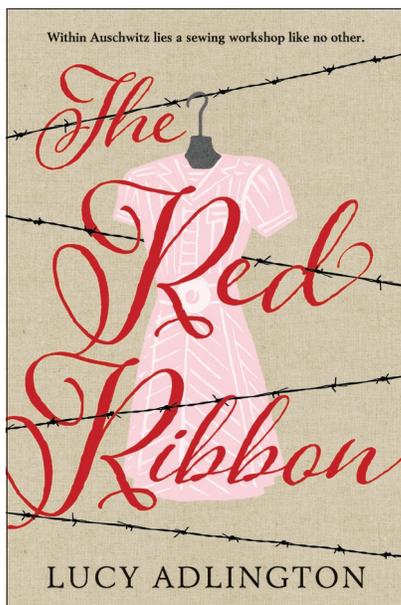


The Red Ribbon

BY LUCY ADLINGTON

Discussion Questions

1. ***“It’s just clothes.”*** Ella says that some people dismiss clothes as superficial—just fashion—but she knows they are far more significant. Think of times in the book when clothes represent status, survival, humanity, or identity. Examples might include prisoner dresses, Carla’s uniform, Rose’s headscarf, and the Liberation Dress.
2. ***“I never knew Your Sort were so gifted.”*** There’s a disturbing contrast between the horrors of the concentration camp system and the sensual beauty of fashion in *The Red Ribbon*. Did it surprise you to learn that there truly was a tailoring studio in the Auschwitz complex, and that the “customers” didn’t see a problem with using slave labor to provide fashionable outfits? Are there any parallels with modern clothing production?
3. ***“Did I ever tell you about the time . . . ?”*** Rose tells stories to escape from reality. Is she too much of a dreamer, or can imagination help us survive?
4. ***“A sea of snapshots.”*** Even without physical mementos or photographs, characters in *The Red Ribbon* gain comfort from happy memories of home and loved ones. How do Ella and Rose draw on their family memories to stay strong? How did you react during the scene in the Department Store when they see piles of family photos discarded as worthless?
5. ***“You should be crushed. You’re disgusting!”*** Carla the camp guard is vain, violent, and selfish—and also young, ignorant, and lonely. As readers, we can get comfortable with the idea of heroes and villains, good guys and bad guys. Is this a helpful way to label characters in *The Red Ribbon*? Think of times when characters are bystanders to bullying, as well as perpetrators. Are we all guilty of bad behavior at times?
6. ***“What would Marta do?”*** The choices for survival in an extreme environment such as a concentration camp are sometimes called choiceless choices because prisoners have so little power. Can you think of examples where characters make different choices in their quest for survival? Whose behavior do you most or least admire?
7. ***“More of a hero to me than any general.”*** Ella eventually comes to recognize the heroism of Rose’s quiet generosity. From armed revolt to subtle resistance and small gestures of solidarity, can you think of different examples of heroism in the book?
8. ***“Tie this little ribbon to the branch of a tree I know.”*** Rose gives Ella a length of red silk ribbon as a daring, loving gift and a symbol of hope. *The Red Ribbon* has a hopeful ending. Would it have been more realistic to have all dreams unfulfilled and all lives lost? Is hope important?
9. ***“Once you were on a List you weren’t a person.”*** Ella and her friends are sent to a concentration camp simply because of their religion or ethnicity. Acts of discrimination, even when they seem innocent, inevitably create a world of Us versus Them. How does this issue still manifest today?
10. ***“This isn’t a game or a story.”*** Ella sometimes gets upset with Rose for refusing to see reality. Think about truth and make-believe. Can historical fiction bring history to new generations, new readers?



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