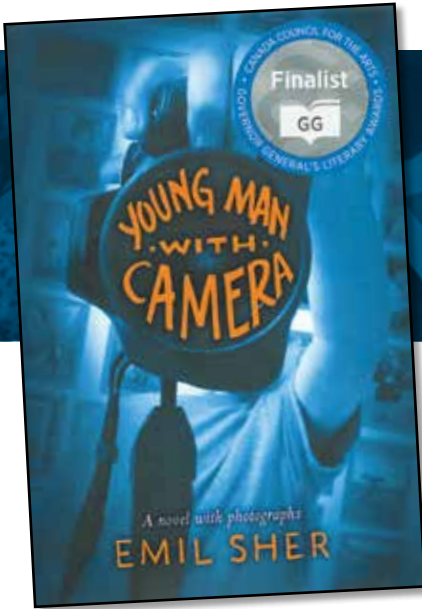


YOUNG MAN WITH CAMERA

BY EMIL SHER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID WYMAN

DISCUSSION GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK

Do pictures ever tell the whole truth? And what if the truth isn't always the whole answer? In *Young Man with Camera*, thirteen-year old T— stands at a crossroads, forced to choose between the cost of revealing what he knows to be true and the price to be paid for staying silent. This is a story about the bonds of friendship, a gifted photographer, his camera and a singular perspective that gives him an uncommon strength.

PART 1: THE WORDS

1. “Truth, like yellow, comes in a thousand different shades,” T— declares at the end of the first chapter. What does he mean? Give an example of a situation with different shades of truth.
2. At first it seems T— and Lucy would have very little in common. Yet it's not long before they forge a friendship. How do you explain their bond? What do they find in each other?
3. After T—'s accident, his parents bought him a telescope and a guitar but “the camera stuck and never let go.” Why do you think T— has such a passion for photography? What does he mean when he writes that you can wonder about a photograph “all you like and you won't get any paint-by-number answers”?
4. The Vault was T—'s secret hideaway, a sanctuary where he felt safe. Will he search for another one? Why do you think he chose the Vault? In what circumstances do you yearn for a space that is yours and yours alone?
5. What accounts for the pull and power Ryan had over his followers? What did he offer and what did he get in return?
6. T— makes a life-changing choice when he decides to stay silent and save Sean rather than implicate Joined at the Hip. Does Sean understand T—'s sacrifice? Would Sean have done the same for T—? Do you think Sean and T— will be friends for life or has their friendship changed forever?

PART 2: THE PHOTOGRAPHS

1. What is your favorite photograph in the novel? Why?
2. Ms. Karamath believes T— and Diane Arbus see the world in similar ways. Why does the work of this celebrated photographer have such an impact on T—?
3. We are never given a reason why Ryan stabbed Jared. What do you imagine was said between them? Is T— right in believing that *Swing*, the photograph of Lucy, could have caused Jared to change course and confront Ryan?
4. The last photograph in *Young Man with Camera* shows Sean holding an orange. Sean's mother believes the orange represents the importance of listening. What else could the orange symbolize?
5. Ms. Karamath introduces T— to iconic photographs, all of which can be found online. What factors explain the reach and impact of these photographs? Why do some photographs — most recently the image of three-year old Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi washed up on a beach — change how we see things on a worldwide scale?
6. As *Young Man with Camera* draws to a close, T— describes a photograph of a group of kids who had turned a tank into a playground. What is the effect of ending the novel this way?



“ The **camera** is an instrument that teaches people how to **see** without a camera. ”
— Dorothea Lange

“ There are always two people in every picture: the **photographer** and the **viewer**. ”
— Ansel Adams

PART 3: THE STORIES BEHIND THE PHOTOS

As T— would be the first to point out, the photographs in *Young Man with Camera* don't reveal the whole picture. A young girl holds a goldfish but we don't see her insensitive mother beyond the frame. A teen boy sits on a staircase holding a purse, and T— wonders: did he steal it or find it? “If a picture is worth a thousands words,” he writes, “those thousand words keep changing.”

1. The attached photographs from the book tell only part of a story. Choose one of the photographs and write a paragraph that describes what could be unfolding beyond the frame. What melody is Lucy playing on her harmonica, and why? What is on Claire's mind as she looks skyward, sidewalk chalk in hand?
2. Read aloud and discuss your paragraph with your classmates. Consider different contexts, the lenses we wear to filter the world around us, and whether we need to see the whole picture.
3. Bring in a copy of a photograph that you have taken or one that you admire:
 - (a) Invite classmates to discuss their thoughts on what might have happened just before or after or outside the frame that would change how we see in the image.
 - (b) Work in small groups to create and write two or three short scenarios that describe more than what we see in the captured moment of the photograph.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emil writes prose and plays for the young and the once-were-young. *Young Man with Camera*, his debut novel, was a 2015 Governor General's Literary Award finalist and is a 2016 Red Maple nominee. His stage plays include adaptations of *Hana's Suitcase* by Karen Levine and Ian Brown's *The Boy in the Moon*. Works-in-progress include two picture books to be published in 2016 and 2017 and the book and lyrics (with composer Jonathan Monro) for a stage musical of Roch Carrier's *The Hockey Sweater*.



Photographs from *Young Man with Camera*.