

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

### *Two Girls of Gettysburg*

by Lisa Klein

#### ABOUT THE BOOK

Lizzie and Rosanna are cousins and best friends, but when the Civil War explodes around them their loyalties and friendship are tested by the extraordinary times. Fascinating details about life as a civilian are woven into this epic story of friendship, war, and hope.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Klein is a former English professor who lives in Columbus, Ohio, with her family. Her first novel, which *Publishers Weekly* called “powerful and impressive,” was *Ophelia*, a retelling of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

#### AUTHOR INTERVIEW

**Your first novel was a retelling of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Can you compare your process between the two?**

Well, I discovered it isn’t any easier or quicker to write a second novel than a first one. For both books, the writing process was similar. *Ophelia* had a pretext in *Hamlet*, and the Civil War, especially the battle of Gettysburg, was the pretext for this book. I set my story of Lizzie and Rosanna around existing historical events—or rather, their story sprang from the events, just as *Ophelia* sprang from *Hamlet*. However, I rewrote both books again and again to be sure the characters and their dreams, dilemmas, and relationships stood out from any background story and became the real focus.

**After reading your author's note it is obvious that you spent a great deal of time on research to so convincingly bring this story to life. How did you deal with so many details? How long did it take you to research?**

I love doing research for any topic that grabs my interest. Writing stories has become a good excuse for me to study all sorts of things that fascinate me, in this case, the Civil War. Then to write a convincing story, I have to feel like I am there next to my characters. That meant studying the battle of Gettysburg hour by hour, and making timelines that matched the historical events to incidents in my characters' lives. It meant going to Gettysburg and walking the battlefield and the streets in order to imagine the suffering and terror that unfolded there, I do research before I start writing and continue even as I write—if I need to know more about Civil War medicine, for example—so the two processes are not separate. It probably took me about two years to research and write the first complete draft.

**Why did you decide to tell the story through two viewpoints? Did you struggle with one side more than another?**

At first it was primarily Lizzie's story, but Rosanna started to demand more face time. Her voice grew more distinctive and, being the more adventuresome character, her story became more interesting. In the end I had to go back and work on Lizzie to make her steadiness appealing and to show how the events of the war change her in a more subtle way than they do Rosanna. I hoped that using two viewpoints would give readers two very different characters to react to and identify with.

**Are you more like Lizzie (plain spoken and practical) or Rosanna (complicated and romantic)?**

That's easy. I am more like Lizzie. But I've had friends like Rosanna (my locker partner, freshman year of high school) and they leave me shaking my head!

**Many young people are seeking publication these days. Do you have any advice for them? What was the best piece of writing advice you ever received?**

I think you should write whatever you want when you are young. Write poetry, journals, articles for the school newspaper. Try to write like your favorite writers. It's a good exercise. Don't feel like you have to be a prodigy and publish by a certain age. I didn't start writing fiction until I was in my forties! Maybe I should have started earlier, but I was too busy, and I don't think I had sorted through my life experiences yet. The writing advice I live by was given to me in a poetry class, but it is just as true for fiction: *Make every word count.*

**What can your fans look forward to next?**

My fans! Oh, that's funny. My teenage sons can't believe that girls think their mom is cool. I'm working on another Shakespeare-themed novel, tentatively called *Lady Macbeth's Daughter*. Set in the eleventh century, it has provided me an excellent excuse to visit ancient ruins in Scotland!

## **PRE-READING**

Brainstorm everything you know about the Civil War. Then sort the information into the following categories: people, events, life during the war, causes and effects. Circle the things you think will be most important to the story. Discuss how reading historical fiction can give readers a well-rounded understanding of important events.

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

Compare and contrast Lizzie and Rosanna. How are they similar? How are they different? What do they both want and need? Who would you most like to be friends with? Why? How would you describe how they both changed from the beginning of the novel to the end? Who do you think changed more fundamentally?

Papa and Luke both volunteer to serve the Union cause. What were their motivations? What are the effects of their decision? Is it a sacrifice for those left at home too? How? Would you have been willing to serve?

How has Margaret had a difficult life? How does she try to make her way in the world? What influence does she try to have over her sister's life? Why? What further tragedy does she face in the novel? Do you think she will be able to keep her positive outlook or not? How does her sister's story mirror her own?

Rosanna says, "This war is only a gentlemen's disagreement. The rallies, bands, and armies—they're all for show. Each side is trying to get the other to back down from the duel". Was this a common opinion of the time? What did most people expect about the duration and casualties of the war? How did that contrast with the reality of the Civil War?

The Allbauer butcher shop suffers some financial setbacks when Papa goes off to war. Why are things so difficult for the family? How does Lizzie help turn it around? How is racism a part of the problem? Do you think racism can still affect profits of small businesses today? How does the Allbauer family decide to deal with other people's opinions? Would you be able to suffer the strong opinions of others?

Rosanna's loyalties seem to be divided. She makes a Union flag but feels for the rebel cause. She claimed to love John Wilcox but twitters over Henry Phelps. Can someone be taught loyalty or is it a natural trait? Does Rosanna learn to be loyal? How?

Describe the histories of both Amos and Grace. How do they represent the cruelties of the institution of slavery? What do you think is the most tragic part of both of their stories? Imagine the contradictions of living in a free country where slavery is a part of the legal system. How can we overcome this dark past in our history?

Why do you think the author decided to include the journal of Rosanna as she travels through the Confederacy and becomes a wife and nurse? Did you have any sympathy for the Southern cause by seeing the world through her eyes? Would you be willing to be a combat nurse or soldier?

Compare the romance between John Wilcox and Rosanna to that of Lizzie and Martin Weigel. Which one would you prefer? Why? What was the secret Rosanna kept about John? Would you trust anyone, even your best friend, with the information that Rosanna trusted Lizzie with? Would you be able to resist the urge to read personal letters left in your care or not? Did John Wilcox become an honorable gentleman? Rosanna thought, “marriage would make our love firm and enduring, like baking sets a cake”. Do you think this is a realistic view? Would you take a vow to obey? How do both romances end?

Explain what happened in the town of Gettysburg on those fateful days. How did Lizzie contribute to the outcome of the battle? Why was this a strategic location for both armies? In your opinion, who showed the most bravery—Rosanna or Lizzie? How did they both serve their families and their country? How was the battle witnessed by so many characters but from different vantage points?

How did the war affect everyone’s relationships with friends and family? How did Mama, for instance, change under the pressures of the war? Did the war steal the rest of Luke’s and Lizzie’s childhood? Do you think the Allbauers and the McGreevey families became closer because of the events or not?

In the end, what dreams and hopes do both Lizzie and Rosanna have for their future? Why do you think Rosanna decides to leave Gettysburg? Predict what you think their lives will be like five years after the close of the novel.

## PROJECTS

### *History*

As you read, make a list of facts you learned about the Civil War and life during this tumultuous time period in American history.

Research one of the topics from the time period and create a poster, Powerpoint or Web page about what you learned:

- Battle of Gettysburg and other pivotal battles of the war
- Emancipation Proclamation
- Abraham Lincoln
- Prisoners of war in the Civil War
- General of the Union Army
- Generals of the Confederate Army
- Dorothea Dix and women nurses
- Medical treatments and battlefield triage of the time period
- Clothing of the period
- Food and entertainment of the period

Memorize or read aloud the Gettysburg address. Discuss the speech after reading the novel. How has Lizzie and Rosanna's story enlightened the meaning of the speech for you?

### *Language Arts*

Create a newspaper with articles that represent major events from the novel. Be sure to interview eyewitnesses and create sketches to go with your articles.

### *Math*

Lizzie learns the mathematical and analytical skills to be a terrific shopkeeper. Design, plan, and explore opening a store of your own. Create a business plan that figures out your product and expenses (rent, capitol necessary to start, staff, etc.). Estimate how long and how much product you would have to sell to become profitable.

## *Science and Technology*

Investigate Civil War weapons and how they worked: cannons, mortars, rifles. What advances in technology occurred in this area? How were hot air balloons used? What kind of ammunition was used and how was it produced? How much raw material was used by the North and South to produce weapons and ammunition between 1861 and 1865?

*This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and author of Reaching for Sun (a Schneider Family Book Award winner) and The Floating Circus. Visit her Web site to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.*

NOTE: This teacher's guide will not be included in the final book but will be available at [www.bloomsburyusa.com](http://www.bloomsburyusa.com).



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