

CHRISTINA DIAZ GONZALEZ

Author of *The Red Umbrella*

Includes  
Common Core  
State Standards  
Correlations

A  
THUNDEROUS  
WHISPER

EDUCATOR GUIDE



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

Ani and her family are torn apart during the Spanish Civil War when Nazi airplanes bomb their small town of Guernica; as a result of the tragedy, Ani loses her old “life” and finds her true self.

Living in the small town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War, Ani is convinced

she is insignificant; she does her best to fade into the background, so she doesn’t draw any attention to herself. Then she meets Mathias whose father is a spy for the underground resistance movement. When Ani and Mathias are caught eavesdropping on a meeting, the members decide to allow Ani and Mathias to participate in the movement by delivering messages for the underground resistance. For the first time in her life, Ani has a friend, and she is doing something that will truly make a difference. When Nazi airplanes destroy Guernica, killing her mother and destroying the town, Ani’s father returns from the battlefield long enough to make arrangements for Ani to live in London with thousands of other Basque children. Sadly, both of Mathias’s parents are also killed in the attack, and he decides to return to Germany to help his Jewish family.



Grades 5 up  
HC: 9780-0375-86929-7  
GLB: 978-0-375-96929-4  
EL: 978-0-375-98274-3

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

As background information, have students read the following factual account of Hitler’s attack on Guernica: [www.historylearningsite.co.uk/guernica.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/guernica.htm)

Ask students to imagine how the people who lived in

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Guernica might have reacted to the unexpected attack. Have students assume the identity of a citizen of Guernica and write a letter to a family member explaining what happened and the writer’s reaction to the events. Post the letters in the classroom. **CCSS RH.6-8.8, RI.6.7**

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## Family Relationships

Discuss Ani's relationship with her parents. How is her relationship with her father different than her relationship with her mother? How are the two relationships similar? What role do Ani's parents play in Ani's feelings of self-worth? How does Ani's mother's past affect how she treats Ani? What does Ani learn about family from the Garzas? What impact does Lupe have on Ani's feelings toward her mother? What does Ani learn from Lupe and her daughter?

CCSS: SL.6.1, L.6.3

## Friendship

Ani and Mathias are each other's first friend. How does this impact their relationship? Why does Ani feel safe with Mathias? Ani and Mathias both have a disability: Mathias, a physical one, and Ani, an emotional one. How do their disabilities contribute to Ani and Mathias becoming friends? How are Ani and Mathias similar? How are they different? On pages 71–72, Ani hurts Mathias's feelings and immediately feels remorse. How does this verbal exchange affect their relationship? What happens that allows Ani to finally believe Mathias is her true friend? After the bombing and the losses they both suffer, why is it best for each of them to go their separate ways? CCSS: SL.6.1, L.6.3

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Using specific details from the book, ask students to examine the personal challenges the major characters must

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Ask students to discuss the characteristic behaviors of a bully. What are the characteristics of a person who is bullied? Who are the bullies in the novel? How could Ani's mother be considered a bully? Why is Ani bullied? How does she cope with her tormentors? In what ways does Ani attempt to avoid the bullies? What, if anything, could Ani have done to stop the bullying? What other characters in the novel are bullied? CCSS: SL.6.1, L.6.3

## Connecting to the Curriculum English /Language Arts

On page 275, Ani says, "Mama had been wrong. People don't always abandon you . . . even if they have to leave." Ask students to write a personal narrative or short story about someone leaving them or a character, explaining the situation and the outcome. Have students include either a stated or implied theme regarding abandonment and being left. Ask students to share their writing with the class. Then have students respond in writing to their peers. Students should include new insights and understandings of the concepts of abandonment and being left. CCSS: SL.6.1, L.6.3, W.6.3, W.6.4

## History

In 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, over 4,000 Basque children were sent to live in England. In three groups, ask students to investigate the evacuation and prepare a presentation for the class about the exodus. Have one group research the pre-evacuation history of the Basque, the second investigate the actual evacuation, and the third investigate the time spent in London. Have each group prepare a skit with characters to share their research information. Students can visit the websites below for a starting place.

[www.voiceseducation.org/content/evacuation-basque-children-during-spanish-civil-war](http://www.voiceseducation.org/content/evacuation-basque-children-during-spanish-civil-war)

[www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/mar/25/basque-children-civil-war-refugees-reunion](http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/mar/25/basque-children-civil-war-refugees-reunion)  
CCSS W.6.7, SL.6.4; RH.6-8.4

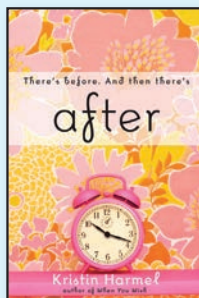
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While the Garzas' son, Julian, and Mathias both had polio, and the disease left them each permanently disabled, their disabilities differ greatly. In small groups, ask students to research polio. Assign groups specific topics, including causes, symptoms, treatment, vaccinations, mortality rates, and long term effects. Each group should prepare a learning station focused on their specific topic. To have students share their information, have groups rotate through the learning stations. CCSS: RST.6-8.8

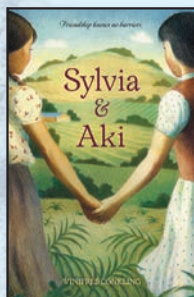
## RELATED TITLES



**The Red Umbrella**  
Cristina Diaz Gonzalez  
Grades 5 up  
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EL: 978-0-375-89628-6  
Family • Friendship • Immigration



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Shanna Nye Photography

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## INTERNET RESOURCES

### Time Line of Polio Vaccine

[www.historyofvaccines.org/content/timelines/polio](http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/timelines/polio)

### History of the Basque Children leaving Spain During the Spanish Civil War

[www.basquechildren.org/node/5](http://www.basquechildren.org/node/5)

### History of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War

<http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/guernica.htm>



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Christina Diaz Gonzalez

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Alfred A. Knopf

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## Pre-Reading Activity

Show students the following

Video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IqFxcwWv2Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IqFxcwWv2Q)

Then place students in three groups and assign each group a year

from 1959 to 1961. Each group will research and compile events to create a time line of the revolution. Display the time line in the classroom.

CCSS: RH.6-8.2

## Thematic Connections

**Family Relationships** In what ways does the Alvarez family show love and respect to each other? How do Lucia and Frankie react to leaving their parents? What sacrifices do their parents make so that Lucia and Frankie can live in the United States? How does the betrayal of Tío Antonio affect the Alvarez family? What do Lucia and Frankie miss most about their parents? Why aren't Lucia and Frankie completely honest about their feelings stemming from life in Nebraska? How do the Baxters become family to Lucia and Frankie? Why is Mr. Baxter so slow in showing any affection to Lucia and Frankie?

**CCSS: SL.6.1**

**Propaganda** As a class, discuss the meaning of propaganda using examples from history and today's society. Focusing on events in the novel, have students discuss how Castro uses propaganda to push the ideas of the revolution. What type of advertising is used to convey the idea that teens should join the revolution? What other ideas are used to help portray the revolution as a positive move for the Cuban people? After Lucia has lived in Nebraska, what helps her realize the truth about the revolution and Castro?

**CCSS: SL.6.1**

**Friendship** Discuss the characteristics of a friend. How does Ivette measure up as a best friend? Why is Lucia afraid to tell Ivette why she doesn't leave the house or join the Jóvenes Rebeldes? Compare Ivette and Lucia's relationship before and after the revolution. What does the change in their relationship say about them as individuals and their friendship? What makes Lucia a good friend? How does Jennifer prove her friendship to Lucia? **CCSS: SL.6.1**

**Overcoming Challenges** What challenges does the Alvarez family have to overcome in Cuba? How do Mr. and Mrs. Alvarez cope with the changes after Lucia and Frankie leave Cuba? Adopting the American way of life proves difficult for Lucia and Frankie, especially when they arrive and stay at the camp. What are the most difficult challenges to overcome? How does Mrs. Baxter help them adjust to life in Nebraska? What issues make being reunited with their parents a challenge? **CCSS: SL.6.1**

**Identity** Lucia has to reinvent herself when she begins high school in Nebraska. What does she do and how does she change in order to fit in to the American culture? How does being separated from her family affect who she becomes? What statement does Lucia make when she cuts her hair? Why does Lucia feel guilty when she attends the dance at the high school? What does Lucia ultimately learn about herself?

**CCSS: SL.6.1**

## Connecting to the Curriculum

**English /Language Arts** The frustration and embarrassment Lucia faced when she went to school might not have been so intense if the students had

known something about her. Ask students to assume the voice of a reporter for the high school paper and to write a story about Lucia using quotes and information from the novel.

Be sure students provide responses to who, what, when, where, why, and how questions about Lucia in their story. Students can share their stories in small groups or with the class. **CCSS: W.6.2**

**History** Ask students to investigate Operation Pedro Pan. Have students work in small groups to research and explain the following: (1) What was it and how long did it last? (2) What were the reasons behind the exodus of the children? (3) Where did the children live and who made those decisions? (4) What documents did Cuban parents need in order to send their children to America? (5) What was the cost to send the children? Have each group of students use the research to write and present interviews with individuals impacted by Operation Pedro Pan. Encourage students to focus on the personal circumstances of each in order to personalize the interviews. Each group should practice and present their interviews to the class.

**CCSS: W.6.7, SL.6.4; RH.6-8.4**

Lucia hears new terms and names of people she hasn't heard before: socialism communism, revolution, Che Guevara, and Karl Marx. Divide students into five groups and have each group thoroughly investigate one of the terms or persons. Have each group write three to five informative paragraphs about their term or person and two to three paragraphs of personal connections or reflections. Then have discussions switching members of the groups so that each term and person is represented in each new group.

**CCSS: SL.6.1, SL.6.2, W.6.2**

**Social Studies** Ask students to discuss the impact that 14,000 children coming into the United States would have on the nation, the states, and the cities in which they lived. Then, with a partner, have students create a T-chart listing potential issues that might arise on the left side of the chart and how Americans could have handled the influx of children on the right. Then have students make a second T-chart with a list of the issues the Cuban children faced on the left and how they coped with the changes in their lives on the right. Have each student select one issue off of either of the two charts and write a one-page personal reaction to the issue. Have students pair and share their papers.

**CCSS: SL.6.1, W.6.2**

**Fine Arts** Lucia enjoyed listening to American music, but she missed Cuban music. In small groups, ask students to find two songs that would have been popular with teenagers in Cuba in the early 1960s. Have each group revise the lyrics of one of the songs to convey the experiences of Lucia and Frankie before leaving Cuba or after arriving in Nebraska. Have students present their revised lyrics and music to the class. **CCSS: W.6.5**



## Vocabulary / Use of Language

Authors use symbolism to help portray a theme of their story. What ideas does the author convey with Lucia's mother's red umbrella? How do Lucia's feelings toward the red umbrella change from the beginning of the story to the conclusion? The heron is also a symbol for Lucia. What is it a symbol for? How does the author use the heron at both the beginning

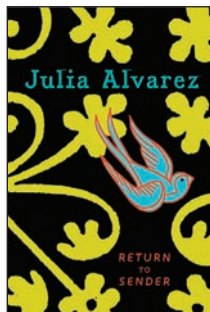
and conclusion of the story? Ask students to write a poem about the symbol of the heron or the red umbrella. Students should focus on the literal aspects of the symbol and also the meaning implied by the symbol. Have students share their poems with classmates.

CCSS: W.6.4, L.6.5

## Related Titles



**A Thunderous Whisper**  
Christina Diaz Gonzalez  
Grades 5 up  
HC: 978-0-375-86929-7  
Family • Friendship  
Overcoming Challenges



**Return to Sender**  
Julia Alvarez  
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**The Lily Pond**  
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PB: 978-0-375-83840-8  
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## About the Author

Shanna Nye Photography



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## Internet Resources

**Timeline of the Castro Revolution** [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/01/fidel-castro-raul-cuba](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/01/fidel-castro-raul-cuba)

**Biography of Fidel Castro** [www.biography.com/people/fidel-castro-9241487](http://www.biography.com/people/fidel-castro-9241487)

**Operation Pedro Pan** [www.pedropan.org/content/cuban-childrens-exodus](http://www.pedropan.org/content/cuban-childrens-exodus)

**Cuban music** [www.worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/country/content.country/cuba\\_11/en\\_US](http://www.worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/country/content.country/cuba_11/en_US)

**Cuban Dance** [www.cuba-culture.com/cuban-dance.html](http://www.cuba-culture.com/cuban-dance.html)  
[www.cubanet.org/CNews/y01/ago01/16e9.htm](http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y01/ago01/16e9.htm)

Prepared by Susan Geye, Director of Library Services, Everman ISD, Texas.

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# THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

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## History

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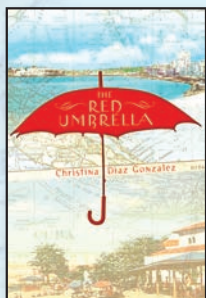
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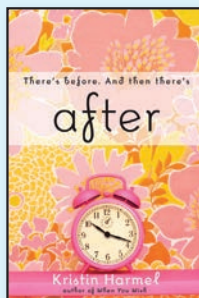
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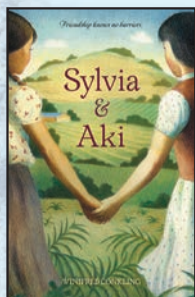
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### History of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War

<http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/guernica.htm>

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Then place students in three groups and assign each group a year

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CCSS: RH.6-8.2

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**Family Relationships** In what ways does the Alvarez family show love and respect to each other? How do Lucia and Frankie react to leaving their parents? What sacrifices do their parents make so that Lucia and Frankie can live in the United States? How does the betrayal of Tío Antonio affect the Alvarez family? What do Lucia and Frankie miss most about their parents? Why aren't Lucia and Frankie completely honest about their feelings stemming from life in Nebraska? How do the Baxters become family to Lucia and Frankie? Why is Mr. Baxter so slow in showing any affection to Lucia and Frankie?

**CCSS: SL.6.1**

**Propaganda** As a class, discuss the meaning of propaganda using examples from history and today's society. Focusing on events in the novel, have students discuss how Castro uses propaganda to push the ideas of the revolution. What type of advertising is used to convey the idea that teens should join the revolution? What other ideas are used to help portray the revolution as a positive move for the Cuban people? After Lucia has lived in Nebraska, what helps her realize the truth about the revolution and Castro?

**CCSS: SL.6.1**

**Friendship** Discuss the characteristics of a friend. How does Ivette measure up as a best friend? Why is Lucia afraid to tell Ivette why she doesn't leave the house or join the Jóvenes Rebeldes? Compare Ivette and Lucia's relationship before and after the revolution. What does the change in their relationship say about them as individuals and their friendship? What makes Lucia a good friend? How does Jennifer prove her friendship to Lucia? **CCSS: SL.6.1**

**Overcoming Challenges** What challenges does the Alvarez family have to overcome in Cuba? How do Mr. and Mrs. Alvarez cope with the changes after Lucia and Frankie leave Cuba? Adopting the American way of life proves difficult for Lucia and Frankie, especially when they arrive and stay at the camp. What are the most difficult challenges to overcome? How does Mrs. Baxter help them adjust to life in Nebraska? What issues make being reunited with their parents a challenge? **CCSS: SL.6.1**

**Identity** Lucia has to reinvent herself when she begins high school in Nebraska. What does she do and how does she change in order to fit in to the American culture? How does being separated from her family affect who she becomes? What statement does Lucia make when she cuts her hair? Why does Lucia feel guilty when she attends the dance at the high school? What does Lucia ultimately learn about herself?

**CCSS: SL.6.1**

## Connecting to the Curriculum

**English /Language Arts** The frustration and embarrassment Lucia faced when she went to school might not have been so intense if the students had

known something about her. Ask students to assume the voice of a reporter for the high school paper and to write a story about Lucia using quotes and information from the novel.

Be sure students provide responses to who, what, when, where, why, and how questions about Lucia in their story. Students can share their stories in small groups or with the class. **CCSS: W.6.2**

**History** Ask students to investigate Operation Pedro Pan. Have students work in small groups to research and explain the following: (1) What was it and how long did it last? (2) What were the reasons behind the exodus of the children? (3) Where did the children live and who made those decisions? (4) What documents did Cuban parents need in order to send their children to America? (5) What was the cost to send the children? Have each group of students use the research to write and present interviews with individuals impacted by Operation Pedro Pan. Encourage students to focus on the personal circumstances of each in order to personalize the interviews. Each group should practice and present their interviews to the class.

**CCSS: W.6.7, SL.6.4; RH.6-8.4**

Lucia hears new terms and names of people she hasn't heard before: socialism communism, revolution, Che Guevara, and Karl Marx. Divide students into five groups and have each group thoroughly investigate one of the terms or persons. Have each group write three to five informative paragraphs about their term or person and two to three paragraphs of personal connections or reflections. Then have discussions switching members of the groups so that each term and person is represented in each new group.

**CCSS: SL.6.1, SL.6.2, W.6.2**

**Social Studies** Ask students to discuss the impact that 14,000 children coming into the United States would have on the nation, the states, and the cities in which they lived. Then, with a partner, have students create a T-chart listing potential issues that might arise on the left side of the chart and how Americans could have handled the influx of children on the right. Then have students make a second T-chart with a list of the issues the Cuban children faced on the left and how they coped with the changes in their lives on the right. Have each student select one issue off of either of the two charts and write a one-page personal reaction to the issue. Have students pair and share their papers.

**CCSS: SL.6.1, W.6.2**

**Fine Arts** Lucia enjoyed listening to American music, but she missed Cuban music. In small groups, ask students to find two songs that would have been popular with teenagers in Cuba in the early 1960s. Have each group revise the lyrics of one of the songs to convey the experiences of Lucia and Frankie before leaving Cuba or after arriving in Nebraska. Have students present their revised lyrics and music to the class. **CCSS: W.6.5**

## Vocabulary / Use of Language

Authors use symbolism to help portray a theme of their story. What ideas does the author convey with Lucia's mother's red umbrella? How do Lucia's feelings toward the red umbrella change from the beginning of the story to the conclusion? The heron is also a symbol for Lucia. What is it a symbol for? How does the author use the heron at both the beginning

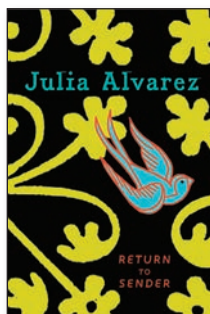
and conclusion of the story? Ask students to write a poem about the symbol of the heron or the red umbrella. Students should focus on the literal aspects of the symbol and also the meaning implied by the symbol. Have students share their poems with classmates.

CCSS: W.6.4, L.6.5

## Related Titles



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## About the Author

Shanna Nye Photography



**Christina Diaz Gonzalez** grew up in a Cuban household located in a small southern town. Both of her parents are Cuban, so Ms. Gonzalez loves the Cuban culture, speaks fluent Spanish, and enjoys black beans and rice — almost as much as chicken fried steak with mashed potatoes and

gravy. Ms. Gonzalez graduated from college with an accounting degree, but then she decided to attend law school. After practicing law for a few years, her two sons helped her realize her childhood dream of becoming a writer. Reading to them reawakened her love of books.

## Internet Resources

**Timeline of the Castro Revolution** [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/01/fidel-castro-raul-cuba](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/01/fidel-castro-raul-cuba)

**Biography of Fidel Castro** [www.biography.com/people/fidel-castro-9241487](http://www.biography.com/people/fidel-castro-9241487)

**Operation Pedro Pan** [www.pedropan.org/content/cuban-childrens-exodus](http://www.pedropan.org/content/cuban-childrens-exodus)

**Cuban music** [www.worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/country/content.country/cuba\\_11/en\\_US](http://www.worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/country/content.country/cuba_11/en_US)

**Cuban Dance** [www.cuba-culture.com/cuban-dance.html](http://www.cuba-culture.com/cuban-dance.html)  
[www.cubanet.org/CNews/y01/ago01/16e9.htm](http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y01/ago01/16e9.htm)

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