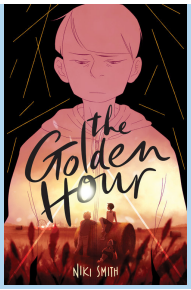
Discussion Guide



The Golden Hour
Niki Smith

Little Brown and Company
2021
256 pages
ISBN: 978-0316540377

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Summary

Struggling with anxiety after witnessing a harrowing instance of gun violence, Manuel Soto copes through photography, using his cell-phone camera to find anchors that keep him grounded. His days are a lonely, latchkey monotony until he's teamed with his classmates, Sebastian and Caysha, for a group project.

Questions

1. What were your overall impressions of *The Golden Hour*? Did you like it? Did you hate it? Did anything stand out strongly to you? Did you find yourself making notes or looking things up as you read? Did you seek out additional reads?
2. Did you find that the art style - the choices of how to depict those harsh breaks in the moment - helped you understand or empathize with the characters? Why or why not?
3. Visual clues to how characters are feeling are a vital part of the comics language. What clues stood out most to you in this book? Did you find them effective?
4. Do you have any experience working with people, particularly young people, during or after traumatic events? How does that experience compare to the story here?
5. There are several visual metaphors throughout the comic, all designed to offer different ways of understanding the trauma experiences Manuel is coping with. Did any of them resonate strongly with you?
6. We see the story primarily through the eyes of its young protagonists, but we do often get insights into what the adults in their lives are up to or thinking about. Do you think this was effective at highlighting the numerous, deep ways gun violence impacts a community?
7. Can we trust our narrator(s)? Does that matter?
8. Books about gun violence, PTSD, or other hard topics meant for younger readers are frequently the subject of challenges or debates about age appropriateness. Do you think *The Golden Hour* is appropriate for the age range intended?
9. Would you share this book with people in your life? Why or why not?
10. Graphic Medicine International Collective selected this title as one of its shortlisted books for the 2022 GMIC Awards, noting its attention to "post-traumatic stress disorder, peer support, anxiety, photography, and daily life." What do you think of the notable subjects they indicated and how do those all weave together to present a cohesive story?

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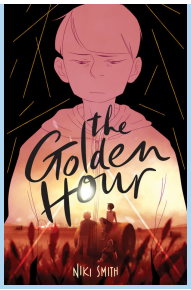

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11. Peer support and acceptance are key to Manuel's recovery throughout the book. What resources are available in your area to help make this kind of community health possible? What is missing? What role might the library play?
12. *The Golden Hour* concludes with some resources for those who need them, as well as a selection of creative process examples. Do you think these two additions add to the value of this book?

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