



Epic Historic Adventures: A Great Escape

By Felice Arena

- Before reading the book, consider the text on the back cover calling it a “story of true-life heroism.” In what ways do you think this will be a “true” story?
- What verb tense has the author used? How has that influenced your perception of the story?
- Describe Peter, Hubert, and Max in your own words. How do their relationships change over the course of the story?
- Were the actions of Sabine and Manfred silly or brave? Explain your answer.
- What do you think happened to the young man who attempted to flee East Berlin by swimming across the river?
- How does the author recreate the time and place of the story for the reader? Cite examples.
- Why did Otto lie to Peter? Was he justified? How do you think he felt? What do you imagine happened to him?
- Why do you think Elke and her family decided to invite Peter to escape with them?
- How do Peter's actions in the first chapter set the stage for the story?
- Describe Peter's dilemma about attempting escape. Do you agree or disagree with his final decision?
- In her note to him, Peter's mother writes *True love, the love of a family, can never really be divided*. What do you think she means by this?
- Write a short piece describing Peter's life after the events of the book.
- Choose an incident from the book and describe it from the perspective of a different character in the story.



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- In his note, the author explains he's "taken liberties with the timeline and the details – not all of them occurred within the two weeks covered in Peter's story." Research real stories about people who risked or lost their lives to escape East Berlin. Imagine you're one of them and write a diary entry about your experience.
- Look for photographs, films, and a map of 1961 Germany. Locate Peter's neighborhood and other places mentioned in the book. Imagine that a wall is suddenly put up dividing your town or neighborhood and separating you from some of your family. Write a diary entry describing your feelings and plans.
- Research and discuss what was happening in other parts of the world during the time the wall existed. What did the Berlin Wall come to symbolize? Imagine you're a journalist and write a report describing the "fall" of the Wall in 1989.
- Research one of the well-known historical figures mentioned in the story, then write a few paragraphs about their contribution to history.
- The expression "those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it" has been attributed to the British statesman Winston Churchill, but variations of it have been credited to others as well. How does this apply to this book?
- Peter describes Ralf as "prepared to risk his own life for freedom." Others, like Elke and Peter himself, wanted to rejoin their families. Today, in places all over the world, there are people making attempts to escape from where they are. Imagine being one of them. Write a diary entry describing your dilemma: why you want to leave, the options available to you, the course of action you plan to take, and your reasons for your choice.
- Find a recipe for Kalter Hund cake and with help from a grown-up, make one yourself or with a friend.