



WEBLOG

[Q&A with Hannah Johnson](#)

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This month, [Wilkins Farago](#) is publishing the translation of an award-winning children's book, *One Red Shoe* by Karin Gruss with illustrations by Tobias Krejtschi, in the US (the book can be purchased both at the publisher's website, and at [Amazon.com](#)). The story is a look at the impact of conflict on children who live in war zones, specifically a child in the Gaza Strip. Hannah Johnson, deputy publisher of Publishing Perspectives, translated the book from German into English.

Q: Though you have worked in German with your work at the German Book Office in New York, the Frankfurt Book Fair, and as the Deputy Publisher of Publishing Perspectives, this is the first book you've translated. How did you come to translate this book?

Wilkins Farago publisher Andrew Wilkins and I have known each other for several years. Andrew is the managing editor of Publishing Perspectives' show dailies during the Frankfurt Book Fair, so we have the opportunity to work together and see each other every year. In 2013, he discovered *One Red Shoe* in Frankfurt. He brought the German version of the book to our office, and asked my opinion. It's unusual to see a children's book tackle tough subjects like war and violence without downplaying the gravity of these events or glossing over the trauma. We both thought the book was something special. After Andrew bought the English rights in 2014, he asked if I'd like to do the translation.

Q: Though you speak, read, and write in German often for your work, how did you find the role of translating for publication?

When speaking or writing, it isn't necessary to think about how another person might say something. You can use your own style. Translation requires you to stay loyal to the author's original tone, to use phrases and words that came from someone else. The tone of *One Red Shoe* is particularly important because it's how the author is able to portray a gruesome event without over-traumatizing younger readers. It was a challenge for me to make sure the mood that the text conveys was just right.



Q: How much collaboration did you have with the author?

None!

Q: Were there any challenges you hadn't anticipated in capturing the emotion and tension of the story?

Perhaps because this is a children's book and the text on each page is short, every word carries more weight. I got hung up on a couple phrases where my English translation wasn't doing justice to the original German. And given the balance this book strikes between conveying the impact of war on children yet not turning off potential readers because of this tough subject, I felt extra pressure to make each word count.

Q: Do you have plans to translate more books in the future?

I'd certainly consider translating shorter works again. It's rewarding to be a part of the process that makes a book like this available to many more readers.