Do you think this picture was staged in any way by Capa? How?

Do you agree with Capa’s aim of always getting as close to the action as possible?

What has the most impact in this picture? Is it the man’s expression, his stance or something else? Why?

What is the difference between being a fighter and a photographer? How difficult is it to know this difference?

Contextual information

This is one of Robert Capa’s best known pictures, portraying a soldier as he was shot in the Spanish Civil War. Although this picture has been questioned in terms of how genuine it is, this and other similarly iconic shots cement Capa as one of the greatest war photographers of all time.

In the book ‘Robert Capa: Images of War’, his remembrances of the D-Day landings showed an incredible bravery in Capa’s work. He was on one of the first boats to land on the Normandy beaches and, alongside his soldier colleagues, faced the full might of the German army as he jumped onto the sand. It was more through luck than anything else that he survived that day, but it is not a coincidence that the longest reflections within this book are reserved for that day – 6 June 1944. It was clearly a day that was etched on his memory for the rest of his life, and no doubt on the memories of all those men who were there.

A line toward the end showed the difficulty he felt in being a photographer rather than a fighter: “The empty camera trembled in my hands. It was a new kind of fear shaking my body from toe to hair, and twisting my face…I did not think and I didn’t decide it. I just stood up and ran toward the boat. I held my cameras far above my head and suddenly I knew that I was running away.”

Capa sadly died doing the job he loved in 1954, in the Far East, when he stepped on a land mine.