

The Type of Brave Society Craves

Review by Sydney S.

Divergent

Veronica Roth

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Sci-Fi/Fantasy

487 pages

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In the futuristic world of Chicago, Beatrice Prior finds herself conflicted as the aptitude tests approach and she must decide whether or not to remain with her family. The aptitude tests determine which of the five factions, divisions, of society she is most suitable for. They range from Abnegation, faction of selflessness, to Dauntless, faction of bravery. The factions were instituted by the government to efficiently organize citizens based on their mental strengths. The only problem is, Beatrice is cut out for three factions not just one. She is divergent. This is the foundation for Veronica Roth's thrilling eponymous science fiction series, a trilogy that adults will find just as incredible as adolescents like myself.

In Beatrice's world, divergence is hidden, so the only knowledge she has of her condition is that it is extremely dangerous. The government is hunting the Divergent because they are considered to "corrupt" the faction system. Beatrice finds herself immersed in a whole new world as a faction transfer from Abnegation to Dauntless, where she recreates herself as "Tris" and works to keep her secret safe.

One of Roth's writing strengths is her ability to wield her readers' feelings. When Four, Tris's instructor, and Tris go through Four's fear landscape, a simulation tailored to show a person's worst fears, Roth reveals that Four's real name is Tobias and his father, Marcus, abused him. Rather than portraying Tobias as the macho man the audience

knows him to be, a more sensitive side of him is revealed. Tris recounts, “I look at Four—Tobias—and he seems frozen...The first Marcus yanks his arm back, the belt sailing over his shoulder as he prepares to strike. Tobias shrinks back, throwing his arms up to protect his face.” By tailoring the mood of the plot, Roth gives her characters depth and individual personalities that are easy for her readers to relate to.

A weakness of Roth’s is her tendency to make all deaths incredibly tragic, and therefore predictable. Although the body count is not extremely high, each death that occurs in *Divergent* leaves the reader feeling just as grief-stricken as the characters themselves. Roth’s ability to relate to the emotions of the audience is a strength, but she uses this advantage over her readers so that they grow to love a character and then the character dies. For instance, when the government is hunting the Divergent, Tris’s mother comes to save her but does not survive a bullet wound. “She smiles. ‘Be brave, Beatrice. I love you.’...A patch of blood spreads over her shoulder...She is motionless and without breath.” After several deaths, the audience feels wary of growing to love a character when they know that this character will most likely die. Furthermore, all of the deaths of Tris’ friends come during dreadful points in the story, making it foreseeable that whichever character is involved in the situation will likely perish.

All of the great twists and turns of the plot make *Divergent* a great book for high school students. It is not high concept, however, some of the language is more challenging. It will appeal to students who enjoy sci-fi fantasy series, but it will also engage anyone who picks it up, as there is a bit of universality woven into each character.

Roth’s decision to make Chicago, her current hometown, the setting of *Divergent* also draws interest from the reader. Anyone who has travelled to or learned about

Chicago will have no problem recognizing Roth's references to Lake Michigan, the Sears Tower, the Hancock Building, and Millennium Park as they are incorporated into the diverse setting of the book.

Veronica Roth has achieved tremendous success with the publication of her trilogy, starting with the release of *Divergent*, its sequel *Insurgent*, and the final book, *Allegiant*. All three books are well deserving of the awards they have won. *Divergent* is one of the most enticing book series available. It is very clear that lots of thought went into the creation of the story. Without giving anything away, it is important to note that the plot of this series greatly diverges, no pun intended, from any book it is compared to because the archetypal ending to most sci-fi/fantasy books is not weaved into the story. Readers should hurry up and finish quickly because on March 21, *Divergent* will be released as a motion picture starring Shailene Woodley as Tris and Theo James as Four.