

# youthESource Book Talk

## *Divergent* by Veronica Roth

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### Summary

*Divergent*, the debut novel from Veronica Roth, peaked at #31 on USA TODAY'S Best Selling Books list. A young adult dystopian piece of fiction, it was first published in 2011. It is the first of a trilogy telling the story of the factions of dystopian Chicago and its narrator, Beatrice "Tris" Prior. The second book, *Insurgent* (2011), and the final book, *Allegiant* (2013), are available now.

From Ms. Roth's website:

"In Beatrice Prior's dystopian Chicago, society is divided into five factions, each dedicated to the cultivation of a particular virtue—Candor (the honest), Abnegation (the selfless), Dauntless (the brave), Amity (the peaceful), and Erudite (the intelligent). On an appointed day of every year, all sixteen-year-olds must select the faction to which they will devote the rest of their lives. For Beatrice, the decision is between staying with her family and being who she really is—she can't have both. So she makes a choice that surprises everyone, including herself.

"During the highly competitive initiation that follows, Beatrice renames herself Tris and struggles to determine who her friends really are. But Tris also has a secret, one she's kept hidden from everyone because she's been warned it can mean death. And as she discovers a growing conflict that threatens to unravel her seemingly perfect society, she also learns that her secret might help her save those she loves... or it might destroy her" ([veronicarothbooks.blogspot.com](http://veronicarothbooks.blogspot.com)).

The film adaptation of this book will be released March 21, 2014.

Length: 487 pages

Location: dystopian Chicago

Recommended Reading Age: 13 & up (due to some violence)

### Characters

Beatrice "Tris" Prior: 16 years old. The main character and narrator of the story. Blonde hair, blue eyes, slight build. She describes her own physique as "childish" or "willowy." Born and raised as Abnegation, at her Choosing Ceremony she chooses to leave her faction for Dauntless.

Tobias "Four" Easton: 18 years old. Dauntless. One of the leaders of the Initiate's training. Becomes Tris' love interest. Transferred from Abnegation. Son of Marcus Easton.

Dauntless Initiates:

Christina: Candor transfer. Immediately befriends Tris. Dates Will.

Will: Erudite transfer. Dates Christina.

Al: Candor Transfer. Struggles during initiation.

Edward: Erudite transfer. Dating Myra. Leaves Dauntless after being attacked in his sleep.

Myra: Erudite transfer. Dating Edward. Leaves Dauntless after Edward is attacked.

Molly: Candor transfer. Tall, broad shouldered. Friends with Peter & Drew.

Peter: Candor transfer. Tall, broad shouldered. Attacks Edward, kidnaps Tris. Friends with Molly & Drew. "Pure evil" (p 92).

Drew: Candor transfer. Friends with Peter & Molly.

Uriah: Dauntless-born initiate. Has snake tattoo on neck. Older brother is Zeke.

Marlene: Dauntless-born initiate.

Lynn: Dauntless-born initiate. Shaved-head.

Other Important Characters:

Andrew Prior: Beatrice & Caleb's dad. Council member with Marcus Easton.

Natalie Prior: Beatrice & Caleb's mother. Dauntless-born.

Caleb Prior: Beatrice's older brother, transfers from Abnegation to Erudite.

Tori: Dauntless. Administers Beatrice's exam. Becomes confidant/friend for Tris.

Max: Leader of the Dauntless faction.

Eric: 18 years old. Dauntless Leader (one of five) and leader of the Initiate's training.

Marcus Easton: Leader of the Abnegation faction. Sits on the governing board for all factions.

Jeanine Matthews: Erudite Leader and scientist. Extremely intelligent. Mastermind behind the serums created to control the Dauntless army.

### **Factions**

Abnegation: Value selflessness. Dress in simple grey clothing.

Candor: Value truthfulness. Dress in black and white, usually suits.

Erudite: Value knowledge. Dress in blue clothing.

Amity: Value kindness/peace. Dress in yellow or red clothing.

Dauntless: Value courage. Dress in fitted black clothing. Have visible tattoos and piercings.

### **Synopsis (contains spoilers)**

The story opens with our protagonist, Beatrice Prior, on the day before her "Choosing Ceremony." Beatrice is a member of one of five factions that live in what was Chicago (but is now mostly deserted and left to ruin). Today, Beatrice and her brother, Caleb, will take an aptitude test that will help them determine which faction they are best suited for. The five factions are based on attributes that each models and on which their members base their life and career choices. They are Abnegation (selflessness), Candor (truthfulness), Erudite (knowledge), Amity (kindness/peace) and Dauntless (courage). Each faction plays a special role in upholding their society; Abnegation—the selfless—are the political leaders, doctors and servants; Dauntless provide the city with security; Amity provides food for all of the factions; Erudite are doctors and scientists and researchers; Candor are lawyers and bankers. During her aptitude test, Beatrice, raised Abnegation, finds out that she has an equal aptitude for three factions and that she must choose between them. The test proctor tells her that she is something known as "Divergent," and that she must never share this information with anyone.

The next day, choosing day, Beatrice chooses to join the Dauntless faction and her brother chooses Erudite. Beatrice joins her new faction for her training period, a series of tests that are designed to show her courage, the first of which is jumping on and off a moving train on the way to the Dauntless headquarters. Beatrice also meets Four, one of the leaders of Dauntless. When she does, she gives herself the name of Tris.

During the weeks of training, Tris and the other initiates fight and compete with each other in a number of ways in order to retain a spot in Dauntless. These tests vary from hand to hand combat, to target practice, to simulated events that are created by a serum that is injected into the skin. Dauntless initiates must do well in all areas or risk being cast out of Dauntless and becoming factionless.

Following the weeks of testing, Tris emerges as the leader. The night of the Dauntless initiation, all Dauntless are injected with a chip that was created by Erudite. Tris realizes that the chips are used for controlling her faction, but is unable to warn anyone. She awakes that evening to her faction marching through the city to eliminate her old faction, Abnegation. Because Tris is Divergent, she is immune to the effects and tries to figure out ways to stop Dauntless from killing her former faction. During the attack, she realizes that Four is also Divergent and they make their escape, but are captured.

Four is given a new serum that causes him to turn against Tris. They use Four to continue controlling those under the simulation. Tris is rescued by her mother, who is killed shortly thereafter while trying to help Tris escape. Tris meets up with her brother and father and they decide to go to the Dauntless compound and stop the simulation.

While in Dauntless, Tris' father is killed as well. Tris finds Four and is able to counteract the effects of the serum. Together they shut down the simulation program and escape the compound with Caleb. Tris, Four and Caleb are now considered traitors as well as factionless.

## Discussion Questions

1. This dystopian world has divided its members into factions: Abnegation (selflessness), Candor (truthfulness), Erudite (knowledge), Amity (kindness/peace) and Dauntless (courage). What does it mean to be brave/selfless/kind/intelligent/honest? How do the initiates display these attributes? How don't they display them? What faction do you think you would have been born into based on your family and values? If you had to join one of the factions in this book, which would you choose and why? (Philippians 2:14, John 8:32, Proverbs 1:5, Ephesians 4:32, Deuteronomy 31:6)
2. The tagline for this book is "One choice can transform you." What was the choice that transformed your favorite character? What is a choice you've made that has transformed you? How are we transformed by Christ? (Romans 12:1-21, Philippians 1:6)
3. Why doesn't Tris talk to her parents about wanting to transfer to Dauntless prior to the Choosing Ceremony? Are there decisions about your future (college, career, etc.) that you are reluctant to discuss with your parents? Why? (Proverbs 1:5, Proverbs 11:15, Matthew 7:7-8)
4. Members of the Dauntless faction express themselves not just with terrifying stunts but also through tattoos, something that has become very popular in our society today. Why do you think the Dauntless do this? What do you think about tattoos/piercings in general? (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Romans 12:13-14, Revelation 19:16)
5. Will quotes one of the lines from the Dauntless manifesto that says, "We believe in ordinary acts of bravery, in the courage that drives one person to stand up for another" (p 206). Do you agree/disagree with this statement? Why? In what, if any, situations have you experienced that kind of "ordinary act of bravery"? What does the Bible say about standing up for one another? (Proverbs 31:8, Isaiah 1:17)
6. During initiation, Tris learns about the original intent of Dauntless' founders. How is this different than the faction presented in Divergent? How is the difference displayed in the two leaders we encounter (Eric and Four)? Are there situations or leaders in your life that cause you to choose between what you know is right and wrong? How does your faith help you make those decisions? (Proverbs 11:14, Psalm 1:1-6, James 1:5)
7. After her kidnapping and attempted drowning, Tris refuses to forgive Al for helping Peter and Drew. Have you ever refused to forgive someone? What does the Bible say about forgiveness, and why is it necessary? (Galatians 6:1-2, Matthew 6:14, Ephesians 4:31-32)
8. Dauntless believes that "faction over blood" is one of the most important credos to follow. How is this displayed in the book? How important is family? How important are friends? How important is faction? Do you agree or disagree with this? Who or what are we loyal to in our society? To whom or to what SHOULD we be loyal? (Ruth 1:16-17)
9. What does it mean to be factionless? How are the factionless treated? What does this tell us about the society in which Tris lives? Who are the "factionless" in our society? Do you see injustice or mistreatment of others in your world? What is our response, as Christians, to dealing with injustice? (James 1:27, Psalm 68:5)
10. How does each faction view right and wrong? Are they the same? If not, how are they different? Is Tris's society a good one? Why? Tris's mom says, "Human beings as a whole cannot be good for long before the bad creeps back in and poisons us again" (p. 441). Do you agree or disagree? Why? What does the Lutheran Christian faith say about Tris' mother's position? (Romans 5:8)

Other Info:

Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divergent\\_\(novel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divergent_(novel))