

The Champion of English Section

Junior Division

Name of Winner : Belle Leung
Name of School : St. Francis' Canossian College
Book Title : Divergent
Author : Veronica Roth
Publisher : Katherine Tegen Books

Are you interested in dystopian novels? Are you willing to explore a world completely different, a world full of challenges, a world in which you might hardly survive? If you are, the book I am about to introduce to you is exactly what you are looking for.

Divergent, one of my favourite novels, is a thrilling dystopian teen novel written by Veronica Roth, a New York Times bestselling author. It was published by Katherine Tegen Books in 2011. It is about a 16-year-old girl, Beatrice Prior, who chooses to live in the “brave” faction.

In Beatrice's dystopian world, the society is divided into five factions, each dedicated to the cultivation of a specific virtue: Abnegation values selflessness; Candor values honesty; Erudite values knowledge; Amity values peace and Dauntless values bravery. Beatrice is a member of Abnegation. However, in the aptitude test, results show that she is a Divergent. On the

Choosing Ceremony, all sixteen-year-olds must select the faction to which they will devote for the rest of their lives. Beatrice chooses Dauntless.

In Dauntless, she renames herself Tris. However, only the top ten initiates will be allowed to enter the faction; the rest will be dismissed and become factionless. Initiation into Dauntless consists of three stages. Stage one involves learning how to handle guns and knives as well as combating with the other initiates. Stage two involves simulations, which force them to face their fears. The final stage is a fear landscape, which gathers all of their fears in a single simulation. Meanwhile, Tris's romantic relationship with Four continues to grow. Unluckily, the leader of Erudite, Jeanine Matthews plans to use the Dauntless to attack Abnegation, and also hunt for Divergent.

You may think that it is just another dystopian novel like *The Hunger Games* and *The Maze Runner*. If you do think so, you are definitely wrong!

Although there may be excessive violence, the book sends positive messages and I have learnt a lot from it. The first lesson the book teaches me is “We believe in ordinary acts of bravery, in the courage that drives one person to stand up for another. — Will” Bravery is what this book emphasizes most. Many people may think that bravery only means doing risky and dangerous acts and putting yourself in danger like in fighting. However, this book stresses that ordinary, simple acts of bravery is the most important forms of bravery, such as the courage that drives one person to stand up for another. People always underestimate the courage it takes to do these simple things. In fact, many people do not perform these simple acts of bravery at all. Many people are afraid of standing up for others when

witnessing cases of bullying as they worry that they will be the next victim. Many people are afraid of telling the truth because it may put them at a disadvantage. Many people are afraid of speaking up for what they believe in because they fear that others may go against them. Indeed, engaging in risky and dangerous acts may be brave, but such kind of bravery does not mean anything and will lead the person to nowhere. Why not do some ordinary acts of bravery to help others, which may turn their lives around?

The second lesson the book teaches me is “It’s when you’re acting selflessly that you are at your bravest. — Four” In this book, Tris has done so many selfless acts to people around her. She even risks her life to protect her beloved ones and society. She teaches me that selflessness and bravery are closely linked because it takes bravery to be selfless. This book tells me the importance of selflessness. To think from another angle, our selfish motives lead to the worst actions. Selfishness does not only bring out our evil side, it may also hurt the people around us. It is important to put others before ourselves. Like in the book, taking the place of her friend, Tris did not flinch dodging flying knives in front of the target. Tris once points a gun to her head ready to pull the trigger in order to save her lover, Four. Tris risks her life exposing herself as Divergent to save the lives of Abnegation and society. From her, I have learnt that selflessness and sacrifice are both important in every relationship.

Last but not least, I think this book can truly strike a responsive chord in the hearts of its readers, especially teens. There are so many decisions to make during one’s teenage years, like the protagonist in the novel. While Tris makes decisions on which faction to join and whether she should save herself or if

she should kill her friend, we decide on whether we should offer help to others, how to act responsibly and even which job to take up. Veronica Roth wrote, “One Choice. One Choice, decided your friends. One Choice, defines your beliefs. One choice determines your loyalties –Forever. ONE CHOICE CAN TRANSFORM YOU.” Maybe people think the situations in the book are simply too unrealistic. If you think deeply, it reflects the problems in our society. For instance, betrayal of friends like Al, Tris’ “friend” portrayed in the book is just so common in real life. Jealousy which most people feel when they see others achieve causes betrayal. Only later will they realize it is nothing more than an act of cowardice. Also, people go to great lengths to gain benefit or power. Jeanine Matthews could kill anyone in order to locate the Divergent, the existence of which, she thinks, will threaten her reign. It’s cruel? Yes, surely it is. But in reality there are more of such people like those in the business and political fields, who aspire to achieve their goals harming whoever gets in their way.

Divergent, the dystopian thriller is filled with electrifying decisions, heartbreaking betrayals, stunning consequences and unexpected romance. Maybe it sounds like an ordinary adventure novel full of actions but do read between the lines and find out the underlying meaning. Above all, I sincerely recommend all of you to take time and read this exciting and inspiring novel.