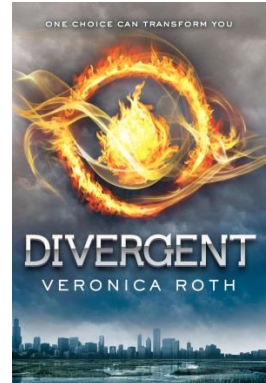




## Discussion Questions for Divergent by Veronica Roth

These discussion questions were prepared by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) for the *Reader with a Cause* book club on Goodreads.

If you like our questions please feel free to use them – and don't forget to join the conversation online at [https://www.goodreads.com/topic/group\\_folder/221831](https://www.goodreads.com/topic/group_folder/221831)



### 1. Tris:

*“My will is mine...I shall not make it soft for you.”* -Aeschylus, [Agamemnon](#)

Roth describes this quote as “integral to my discovery of Tris’s voice. I wanted to create a character who could and would deliver that line...Her voice is clipped, direct, and strong, just like these lines.”

After being told she was Divergent, and ultimately choosing Dauntless, Tris struggled with her identity and sense of belonging. In the end, she finds her strength and direction by defining herself as more than just her faction.

*“I have no home, no path, and no certainty. I am no longer Tris the selfless, or Tris the brave. I suppose that now, I must become more than either.”* (Chapter 39)

What do you think of our slight, yet strong heroine?

Did you like her or identify with her? Are there any passages from the book that really made you understand or empathize with Tris?

How do you think she compares to heroines in other contemporary Young Adult series – like Bella Swan ([Twilight](#)), Katniss Everdeen ([The Hunger Games](#)), Hermione Granger ([Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone](#)), or Clary Fray ([City of Bones](#))?

### 2. Book vs. Movie:

A movie adaptation premiered in theaters March 21, 2014 and pulled in a cool \$56 million in its opening weekend alone (the sequel is already in the works).

For those of us who have read the book and seen the movie - how did the two compare for you?

What scenes do you think translated especially well? Which scenes were you waiting for, but were ultimately left out of the movie version?



### 3. Factions:

Post-apocalyptic Chicago is divided into five factions in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*: Amity - the kind, Abnegation - the selfless, Candor - the honest, Dauntless - the brave, and Erudite - the smart.

What did you think about the faction structure that Roth created for this book? These five factions attempt to include the totality of approaches and important roles people play in societies – do you think the five factions include everyone? If not, what faction(s) would you add?

And now, the obligatory question...which faction are you??

P.S. Here's a BuzzFeed quiz in case you need help choosing:

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/ariellecalderon/which-divergent-faction-do-you-actually-belong-in>

### 4. Fear

Fear plays a large part in this book, as the faction that Tris opts to join, Dauntless, is based on conquering fear or becoming fearless -- depending on who you talk to.

Four learns about Tris's status as Divergent and offers to help her pass as Dauntless by sharing his "Fear Landscape" with her. In this simulation, Four must face his deepest, darkest fears and conquer them.

In the movie, Four describes your final fear as the deepest and darkest you have. Four, who famously earned his nickname by having only four fears, is revealed to most deeply fear the violence and brutality of his father. Four, arguably one of the best in Dauntless (aka the most fearless), continues to grapple with the consequences and fear years after the fact.

*"I look from Marcus, who walks slowly toward us, to Four, who inches slowly back, and everything comes together."* (Chapter 25)

As a culture, we often expect victims – particularly men & boys – to get past their fears or "over" the abuse (and quickly!) in order to succeed or "move on" in life. Four is an excellent example, for both men and women, that abuse isn't something that can easily be forgotten, but it also needn't define us.

What did you think about the depiction of fear and family violence in *Divergent*?

Do you think these scenes would have played differently if Four had been a woman and Tris had been a man? Culturally, do you think we have different expectations for women and men, girls and boys, when it comes to addressing and moving on from any form of abuse?



## 5. Faction Before Blood

In [Veronica Roth's \*Divergent\*](#), your faction (Amity - the kind, Abnegation - the selfless, Candor - the honest, Dauntless - the brave, and Erudite - the smart) essentially replaces your family, even though most people choose to stay in the faction in which they were born.

For all, the mantra “faction before blood” defines life, blurring the lines between family, community, and vocation.

For initiates like Tris and Christina – those who choose a faction different from the one into which they were born – “faction before blood” has a clear meaning that helps them move through the initiation process: forget your old family and faction and dedicate your life to your new faction, which replaces your family and also provides you with a purpose in life.

For initiates like Uriah and Marlene – those who remain in the faction in which they were born – what kind of meaning do you think they derive from this mantra?

What does it mean to you?

## 6. Sexual Assault in *Divergent* (book & movie)

In the book, after Tris moves up in the challenges and ranking, she is sexually assaulted and nearly murdered by three of her fellow initiates - including someone she looked at as a friend - before Four swoops in and saves her life by beating up her assailants. After the attack, Four advises Tris that *“the others won't be as jealous if you show some vulnerability. Even if it isn't real...you should let that bruise on your cheek show and keep your head down.”* (285-6)

Four was trying to be helpful -- he believed that *“it is more important for you to be safe than right, for the time being”* (286) -- yet, his actions smacked a little of blaming the victim. If only Tris hadn't been so good at the second part of initiation, maybe she wouldn't have been targeted.

In the movie adaptation, Tris is physically attacked by the same three assailants and is again saved by Four, but the sexual assault is removed. Instead, one of her fears in her “Fear Landscape” is rape -- another major change. In the book, Tris fears intimacy:

*“You're afraid of me?”*

*“Not you,” I say. I bite my lip to keep it still. “Being with you...with anyone. I've never been involved with someone before, and...you're older, and I don't know what your expectations are...”*(402)

By making this change in the movie, Tris is given more agency. As [this article](#) (“The *Divergent* Rape Scene: Why It's Important”) rightly points out, “*Divergent* marks the first time I have ever seen a teenage girl articulate, in no uncertain terms, that her body belongs to her. That she gets to decide who touches it, and how, and when. That her yes and her no are final, and unambiguous, and worthy of respect.”



If you saw the movie, did you also notice this change? What did you think about Divergent's (the book or the movie) treatment of sexual assault?

## 7. Divergent Playlist

At the end of the paperback version of the book, Veronica Roth provides her playlist for Divergent. Music has the power to transform the mood of a story, or your feelings toward a character, or even how you react to a given scene.

Did you have any ideas about what music would play during a given scene or chapter while you read the book?

Here's Roth's full playlist:

1. **"Starts With One" by Shiny Toy Guns:** "This song gets me in touch with the good aspects of Beatrice's chosen faction."
2. **"Chasm" by Flyleaf:** "And this song gets me in touch with the *bad* aspects of Beatrice's chosen faction."
3. **"Come Alive" by Foo Fighters:** "This is the love interest's song for Beatrice."
4. **"Again" by Flyleaf:** "And this is Beatrice's song for her love interest."
5. **"Help I'm Alive" by Metric:** "This is Beatrice's initiation song."
6. **"We Die Young" by The Showdown:** "This might as well be the theme song for Beatrice's chosen faction -- it's what they would choose for themselves."
7. **"Canvas" by Imogen Heap:** "This is the "riding on trains" song."
8. **"Running Up That Hill" by Placebo:** "The tone of this song matches the tone of much of the book, for me."
9. **"Sweet Sacrifice" by Evanescence:** "I was listening to this song when the first scene I wrote (in chapter 6) popped into my head. That scene led me to the world of the book and its basic plot."
10. **"Arise" by Flyleaf:** "A powerful song that's perfect for chapters 38 & 39."

Is this different from what you expected? What songs would you add?

## 8. The End

As book one in a series, the ending of [Divergent](#) seemed more like a pause before an intermission than an ending. Even so, what did you think??

Did you like the book overall?