

Ionana Spiridonica (8th Grade: Brooklyn, Ohio)
Level II Semifinalist
Letter to Veronica Roth concerning her book, *Divergent*

Dear Veronica Roth:

Divergent really opened my eyes and made me change my perspective of the world. I used to watch each day pass by, always thinking that I wasn't good enough, that I would never really have an impact on the world. It was quite depressing, but that was the way I decided to "live" my life. Of course, it wasn't really living. I never took any risks or tried new things. Therefore, I didn't have a chance to make good memories. I was letting time fly by, and I missed out on various opportunities. I did not want to join school activities and clubs. I thought I wouldn't enjoy being a part of them. But this year, I had my mind set on starting fresh. I volunteered to help decorate the school hallways for Homecoming. The Eighth graders weren't even allowed to attend Homecoming with the older students, but I felt like I was being helpful and taking part in the school community. I also started participating more in my school's band, and I found that I enjoyed playing my alto saxophone.

From the very first few pages, I felt like I connected with Tris. When she was still a part of her old faction, she seemed timid and quiet, which is how I would describe myself. When Tris though she wasn't selfless enough to be in Abnegation, I could really relate to her. During Tris' aptitude test, I took time to imagine the different factions and what our world would be if we were separated. At first, I didn't think factions would help, but, as I continued reading, I realized that the factions could create a relatively peaceful community.

Tris surprised me when she chose to be Dauntless. I thought it was a drastic change that probably wouldn't be willing to make. Your book was rich in detail, and I felt like I was taking the journey along with Tris. As I continued reading, I grew attached to the Dauntless faction, almost as if I were a part of it.

In this way, Tris inspired me to face my fears. She left her family to join the Dauntless faction. During the initiation, Tris had to face many of her fears, such as drowning. She remained strong and never gave up throughout the whole process. Overall, Tris taught me to trust my gut instincts whenever I am forced to conquer tough decisions and try my hardest in all of life's situations.

Divergent showed me that bravery is important, but so is honesty, selflessness, and peace. The different factions showed me that you can't just be accustomed to one way of thinking. Instead, you should incorporate each of the factions' values into your own life. That is why the faction system failed, and many people rebelled against it. I am definitely looking forward to the last book in your trilogy, so that I can find out what happens to Tris and Tobias, and learn some more life lessons along the way.

Sincerely,

Ioana Spiridonica