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# Red Rising



## Synopsis

Darrow is a Red, a member of the lowest caste in the color-coded society of the future. Like his fellow Reds, he works all day, believing that he and his people are making the surface of Mars livable for future generations. Yet he spends his life willingly, knowing that his blood and sweat will one day result in a better world for his children. But Darrow and his kind have been betrayed. Soon he discovers that humanity reached the surface generations ago. Vast cities and sprawling parks spread across the planet. Darrow - and Reds like him - are nothing more than slaves to a decadent ruling class. Inspired by a longing for justice, and driven by the memory of lost love, Darrow sacrifices everything to infiltrate the legendary Institute, a proving ground for the dominant Gold caste, where the next generation of humanity's overlords struggle for power. He will be forced to compete for his life and the very future of civilization against the best and most brutal of Society's ruling class. There, he will stop at nothing to bring down his enemies...even if it means he has to become one of them to do so.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you took a little Lord of the Flies, a little Hunger Games, and a little Hogwarts Academy, then mixed it up with some Roman history and set it hundreds of years in the future you might come up with this book. With all the "borrowed" elements one might think it would feel a little "been there, read that" but that would be wrong. It took a little while at the beginning for me to get into the story, but once it kicked into gear, I could barely put it down. The story is set on the planet Mars in a

caste-driven society where your entire role in life is determined by the caste (denominated by color) into which you are born. Children are often genetically (or otherwise) modified to suit their caste status and be easily identifiable by color. The Reds are at the bottom, slaves forced to live and mine deep beneath the surface for a necessary substance. They live short lives of hardship and oppression (certain songs and dances carry a death sentence), but are unaware of the lies they've been told. Darrow is a young Red miner, married to Eo until she is killed by the government for a small act of rebellion. Then everything in his life changes and the story really starts when Darrow is recruited by a revolutionary group to infiltrate the ruling Gold society. The first step is to be accepted at the Institute where the elite Gold young people are trained for leadership. I don't want to give away any more of the story because it is so much better to read it without knowing what is going to happen next. I have to warn you that there is a lot of violence in the book. The level of brutality makes it often hard to remember that most of the characters are only teens/young adults. This book is not in the Young Adult category, but I could see teens wanting to read it, especially guys, because most of the characters are teens. Parents who monitor their teens reading, especially younger teens, need to be mindful of the violence, though it is likely no worse than they see in video games and television. Even so, I wouldn't recommend it for younger teens. The swear words are mostly made up for the book, being things like "bloodydamn," and "piss." There are some "off stage" rapes but no sex scenes. As I said above, once the book got moving, I could barely put it down. This is the first part of a trilogy and I cannot wait for the next book.

Just the other day, I was telling my daughter that I don't like trilogies, but they seem to find me. Red Rising found me. A debut novel and the first book in a trilogy, Red Rising by Pierce Brown is a science fiction dystopian novel set on terraformed Mars. Dystopian novels abound and some people are getting tired of them, but I love them. Brown's book has been compared to Hunger Games, The Lord of the Flies, and Ender's Game. I agree with the comparisons. As you might have guessed, the novel isn't wildly unique—it borrows from everywhere, including Roman mythology. However, I did enjoy the book and put aside another book I was having trouble finishing to read it. The borrowing doesn't bother me; after all, Shakespeare borrowed extensively. It's also been called dazzling, which I don't agree with. The book is violent, brutal, graphic, and needs a shot of feminist sensibility. It also reflects our world in disturbing ways while reflecting on the complexity of individuals within society. Brief Summary: Mars is divided into classes with color designations: Golds are the rich, powerful rulers, above everyone, and Reds are the lowest dregs in this cast system, lower than the Grays, Coppers, and

Pinks. Darrow, the sixteen-year-old protagonist, is a red "Helldiver," living underground. He discovers Reds have been lied to and that Mars is inhabitable and has been for generations. After his wife is killed by a Gold, he joins a group of revolutionaries and is transformed, like Pygmalion/My Fair Lady, into a Gold. He infiltrates a prestigious school for the elite. His goal is to take down the unequal society and overthrow the Golds.

**Review:** Okay for some honesty, I have a love/hate relationship with this book. I cannot recommend it without some caveats. Before I get to the negatives and positives. Here are some general observations:

It starts slow, which I didn't mind too much, but the story didn't grab me right away. Once Darrow leaves the underground, things get interesting fast and the pace never slows; it becomes a hard to put down book. Mars' society reflects our world so much that it's impossible not to make comparisons. There is a complexity in the novel that makes this an interesting aspect and invites introspection. The complexity begins to breakdown the pure good vs pure evil dichotomy in Darrow's mind and that might have dominated the novel.

**Things I Like:**

1. **Writing:** The writing is excellent. I expect good things from future books by Brown.
2. **Mars:** The world building and the plotting were shiny. It's a tightly woven, gritty story with an easy to understand world system.
3. **Vendetta:** There's lots of revenge. Since I feel rather powerless to right the wrongs of the world, I like stories with revenge and a hero who plunges forward to make things right.
4. **Multifaceted:** Once Darrow enters into the world of the Golds, things become more complicated. He likes and understands some of his fellow students, yet knows he may have to kill them.
5. **Point of View:** His first person narrative is honest and pulls me into his story and makes me care about him, but there are some problems with his character (see below).
6. **World:** Brown creates a brutal Machiavellian world that is detailed, from the variances in life, language, education, and power. By the end of the story, you know that one language slip on Darrow's part may be his future downfall because at least one person heard. Don't let the comparison to Hunger Games fool you. This is a fast paced, extraordinarily violent book, and makes Hunger Games seem like kindergarten violence. I liked the story and was caught up in the fast, tightly paced story, but . . . I have some concerns.

**Things I Didn't Like:**

1. **Less Than Complex:** Several reviews claim that the characterization in Red Rising is more complex and developed than the characterization in Hunger Games. I disagree. Katniss is a reluctant hero and the complexity of her character is at once subtle and nuanced. Other Hunger Games characters are well developed and multifaceted. Our hero Darrow is about revenge, with an occasional insight. He gives himself over to violence, revenge, and hatred with little subtlety and passing insights.
2. **Perfect Hero:** He is also maddeningly perfect. He, a Red the lowest of the low and not educated in Gold culture, has the top scores on his

test and bests all the Golds; he immediately becomes a leader; he steps into his role as a Gold with few slip ups; he's physically strong and out fights everyone; he outwits everyone; he's the only one who protects the helpless. He's the old fashion Dudley Do-Right turned Spartan-Rambo, a bigger than life, perfect hero, who rescues everyone. Really?

3. Supporting Roles: The other characters, with a few exceptions, are cardboard figures with little distinguishing features to set them apart. They are secondary to and play supporting roles to Darrow. Throughout the story these future leaders of society acquiesce to Darrow's leadership.

4. Sexual Violence and Rape: This is the area I find most revolting. My problem is not that there is sexual violence and rape in the story, but that everyone except Darrow accepts and ignores it. I find it unbelievable that female characters and male characters would stand for this. With all the violence and fighting, other students would fight back. After all, they are Golds and see themselves as above all others and privileged. Would they allow other Golds to be raped with impunity? Even the adult proctors don't do a damn thing and some of the students are their sons and daughters. Only our hero has the moral fiber to take action. Really?

5. Female characters: Even Mustang, who says she hates weak females who have to be rescued, willingly gives up being a leader to follow Darrow. In the beginning of the novel, his young wife sacrifices herself so he will become a hero. I found this particularly difficult to swallow "almost a deal breaker. Although there are female proctors, none of the student leaders are female. Yet they are supposedly given an equal place among the men, yet all the females are easily overcome.

6. Violence: The violence is sometimes excessive. As an adult, I shrugged this off; however, I would recommend this book to older young adult readers. Parents should read it first to see what they are handing their teenager. Although I have some major issues with the book, I liked it. I got caught up in the story and finished rather quickly, which probably reflects that I too am susceptible to and influenced by societal attitude that violence, sexual violence, rape, and second-class treatment of women is normal. I think that the love/hate problems I have with this book reflect the deep seeded influence of my culture. I want things to be better in fiction. I harbor a hope that future societies will be more advanced.

When it comes to plot, quality of the writing, world building, conflict and action, I'd give Red Rising a 4; however, when it come to character development, the portrayal of women, and sexual violence, I'd give the book a 2. So my 3 star rating reflects the love/hate relationship I have with the book.

What I first liked about this was the original Hell Diver world. It was a little difficult to keep up with who uncles and brothers and cousins were at first, but by the middle, you got the hang of it. The

anti-gravity notes were my favorite when it came to how to properly hang someone on Mars; I'm a sucker for brutality. Basically I broke this story up into quarters. The first quarter was Darrow's life, interesting and new. Liked a lot. The second quarter was where I became confused. I feel this was the first book that I wasn't entirely sure of the whole plot because there are subplots that push their way first that you wouldn't expect to have anything to do with the story. So none the less, the second quarter felt a little awkward for me because, though we know they have grav boots and all these great advances, it just kind of jumped out at you that you there was a cosmetology department in this world that could basically replace your bones and eyes. I still enjoyed it; it was brutal, but it just was a turn I wasn't expecting all the way up to the first couple months of the institute. It turned fantasy very quickly; but again. I liked it! And the third and fourth quarter- no spoilers- is what put one or two more stars onto this rating to make it a five, because, though I could put the first half of the book down and still eventually want to keep reading it, the second half was painful to put down because I was hooked. It turned great; the ending- though slightly fluffy- gave way for you to imagine the second book. I highly recommend (and I usually have quite a lot to complain about a book, no that you would know that) that you give this a full chance; read to the end- don't give up half way through.

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