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Mrs. Thomasen

English 12

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Red Rising

*Red Rising* is a dystopian best-seller written by Pierce Brown. Published in 2014, the novel was written to share Pierce Brown’s high school experience of having to change himself to fit in with others. Darrow is *Red Rising’s* main protagonist, a Red of Lykos the lowest class in their world. He is a slave; however, after his wife is executed, he knows he must become much more. In *Red Rising*, Darrow’s mental transformation illustrates how conflict can lead to change by making him question whether the cause his wife died for is a result of all the Golds or the select few with true power and, whether or not the Golds are monsters or also pawns in an oppressive society.

Darrow begins his story as a Red. The Reds in the novel are the lowest class and are slaves to society, mining helium-3 to support the Golds living above them. Darrow believes this is his place, he does not care that the life he lives is one in chains. His wife wants him to live for more and see the injustice; however, he lives for her: **“I live for the dream that my children will be born free.” / “I live for you.”** (Brown, p. 43). Darrow could only see the life he lives with his wife and nothing more. He was blind. Nevertheless, Eo has bigger plans. She sacrifices herself by singing the forbidden song to, **“Break the chains!”** (p.45). Darrow lost his entire world that day, he felt empty and, as a result, was reborn to seek revenge. Darrow used to believe that his life as a Red would be enough so long as Eo was by his side; however, with Eo gone he becomes something new: **“I am anger. I am hatred”** (Brown, p. 44). Nothing would stop him from completing Eo’s mission.

Entering the Institute, he expected all the students to be like how he imagined the Golds: cold, calculating and powerful; however, he is surprised when not all the Golds have control. To have access to “The Institute” the Golds must complete “The Passage”. To complete "The Passage", the Golds must kill the other Gold in the room. Darrow is partnered with Julian, a Gold of a powerful family “The Bellona”. Darrow realizes Julian is no exception to the brutal society they live in. While he may be a Gold, he too is a victim, and when Darrow kills him, he notices they are not too different: **“His blood trickles from my knee down to my hairless shin. It’s red. Not golden.”** (p.141). Darrow sees how the society they co-exist in plays games with everyone and the Reds are not the only ones in chains: **“I thought the Society only played games with its slaves. Wrong… [Julian] was a sacrificial lamb.”** (p. 141). After “The Passage” Darrow feels conflicted completing Eo’s mission: **“Freedom costs too much. But Eo disagreed. Damn her.”** (p.142). Not all Golds are evil. They too are victims. Darrow has a shift in his belief.

While Darrow still loves Eo, he knows that she did not see the complete picture. She could not have known that the Reds are not the only victims of oppression, while they may get the brunt of it, the society is manipulating every class. Darrow’s, internal conflict leads him to understand that while Eo had the proper intentions she did not have the whole story and the Reds are not the only class being abused by the oppressive society they live in. While the Golds are the face of power and control, they too are pawns being used to keep the power in the hands of a select few.

Brown, Pierce. *Red Rising*. Del Rey Trade Paperbacks, 2014.