

Educator Discussion Guide

Red Queen

By Victoria Aveyard

Louisiana Teen Readers' Choice Nominee 2018

Grades 9-12

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ABOUT THE BOOK

In our own world of haves and have nots, we at least know that deep down we are all the same, that if—in the immortal observation of Shakespeare—when we are cut, we will all bleed red. In the world of Mare Barrow, however, everyone bleeds, but those who bleed red are considered slave labor, ordinary and powerless. Mare and her family are Reds, humans who have been made secondary citizens to the ruling Silvers, gods whose metallic-hued blood provides them with an assortment of phenomenal powers. From controlling the flow of water to the magnetic force of metal and even the direction of individual thoughts, the Silvers' abilities have been a way for them to exercise control over Reds like Mare. While the Silvers rule in luxury, Reds work like “ants burning in the light of a Silver sun.” If they don't work, they are forced to fight, dying on the front lines of a war waged by Silvers against Silvers.

Yet, when Mare unexpectedly begins to display a power of her own, she is thrust into a world quite different to the one she has always known, a world where she is cut off from everyone she knows and trusts. She must learn to trust herself and her heart. Along the way, she discovers that despite living in a society which depends on the preservation of the separate categories of Reds and Silvers, they have far more in common than the different colors of their blood might suggest. *Red Queen*, the first of a series by Victoria Aveyard, explores themes of power and justice, freedom and control, love and betrayal.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The daughter of two educators, Aveyard was raised in a family of readers who were fans of fantasy and adventure. According to her website, she “grew up on a steady diet of *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, *Harry Potter*, and *LOST*.” Aveyard graduated in 2012 from

University of Southern California where she studied screenwriting and wrote her first novel, *Red Queen*, upon her graduation from USC.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<https://www.victoriaaveyard.com/>

Accessed June 11, 2017

BOOK AWARDS

2016 Top Ten Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Reader (Young Adult Library Services Association)

2016 Children's Choice Awards Teen Book of the Year Finalist (Children's Book Council)

2016 Buxtehude Bull (Germany)

OTHER TITLES IN THE SERIES

Cruel Crown (contains two novella prequels in the *Red Queen* Series) (2016)

Glass Sword (Book 2 in the *Red Queen* Series) (2016)

King's Cage (Book 3 in the *Red Queen* Series) (2017)

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Think-Pair-Share on Encounters of Difference

Ask students to think of a time when they had an encounter with a person or people who initially seemed to be very different from themselves, but they ultimately discovered that they were more alike than they had expected. You might give them time to do some individual brainstorming and support them by listing ways people may seem to be different from us: interests, beliefs, backgrounds, behaviors, and even basic appearances. Give students the opportunity to reflect on these encounters and ask them to write down their initial perceptions and how these perceptions changed over the course of their interactions. After students individually reflect, ask them to pair up with a classmate sitting near them to share with each other. Then, bring the class together and ask for groups to share ways that people might be more alike than different. Record the ideas presented by students and keep this list accessible for discussions of the novel. If you happen to have students who seem unable to think of a time when they encountered someone very different from them (or if you are limited on time), you might simply ask them to just brainstorm on the ways people are similar to one another.

The Question of Inferiority

Ask students to think about times in history when groups of people have been subjected to prejudice and even enslaved due to perceived inferiorities and differences. Have them read over the background readings on "[Africans, Slavery, and Race](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-02-03.htm)" from the resource *Race: The Power of Illusion* available through PBS.org (http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-02-03.htm). Provide time to discuss whether students believe concepts of race emerge due to

systems of slavery or vice versa. If time permits, group students together to research moments in history where “science” was used to support the marginalization of specific groups of people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do Silvers require Reds to attend the First Friday Feats? How is the Queenstrial Feat that Mare witnesses (and ultimately participates in) different from and yet similar to the event which takes place in the novel’s opening chapter?
2. Do you consider the Scarlet Guard justified in their actions? Or do you believe they are terrorists? Why?
3. What initially makes Mare’s sister Gisa the predicted savior of the Barrow family? In other words, why does she have an apprenticeship and not Mare?
4. Why do you believe Mare tells Cal her story when they first meet?
5. Did you feel sorry for Maven during the story? Why? Provide two or three specific examples of how you found yourself realizing the younger Silver prince did not live a perfect life.
6. Mare’s tutor, Julian, identifies a difference between the Silvers’ definition of “power” and of “ability.” What is this difference? Why is it important?
7. What is Mare’s ability? How is the way she wields her ability different from the way Silvers wield theirs?
8. According to Maven, what keeps a Silver strong? Is this the source of Maven’s strength?
9. What is the significance of Gray Town? What does it demonstrate for Mare?
10. How are Cal’s and Maven’s mothers different? Why are these differences important?
11. Over the course of the story, what do we learn about the kingdom of Nortia and the conflict between Nortia and Lakeland?
12. Is jealousy the only reason for Maven’s actions at the end of the novel? Do you believe he truly had feelings for Mare? Why or why not?
13. What are Cal’s feelings for Mare? List two or three specific pieces of evidence from the text to support your opinion.
14. What does Farley mean when she tells Mare that “No matter what he did for you, the prince is not on our side”? Whose side do you believe Cal is on? Do you agree with Mare’s conclusion that “*He is broken. And he doesn’t want to fight anymore*”? Why or why not?
15. The novel ends with contrasting emotions of love and hate and the wish to kill a shared enemy. How does this contrast impact the meaning of the story?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Science

- Students will undoubtedly be curious about the question of different colored blood. Have them read an article from *National Geographic* about other animals who do, in fact, have differently hued blood -- <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/03/150312-blood->

[antarctica-octopus-animals-science-colors/](#) -- and have them look at different scientific explanations provided by the University of California Santa Barbara and the National Science Foundation about color of human blood –

<http://scienceline.ucsb.edu/getkey.php?key=2927>.

- Mare, who is a Red, unexpectedly finds herself able to manipulate electricity. Students can explore a simulation of electricity charges and how the placement of these charges can affect what is detected by sensors-- <https://phet.colorado.edu/en/simulation/charges-and-fields>.
- The war between Nortia and the Lakelands comes down to a fight over resources, the use of fertile ground and lakes with fish as well as mills and the use of electricity. Students might benefit from a lesson which has them explore different types of renewable and nonrenewal resources. Have students investigate buildings or homes in their area that are "off the grid." Do any local utilities or power companies offer incentive programs to encourage renewable energy efforts by homeowners to be tied back into the grid? https://www.teachengineering.org/lessons/view/cub_housing_lesson04

Language/Literature

- Ask students to write a letter to Maven at the end of the novel from either the perspective of Mare or Cal. Letters can reference specific events within the overall story and can imagine what is happening within the realm of the story at the conclusion of *Red Queen*.

History

- Have students explore the Roman Colosseum and the gladiator games which are similar to the Golds' arenas and Feats. Show students part one of "The History of the Roman Colosseum" from PBS *Time Scanners* available at <https://lpb.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/c064a150-90cc-4b91-bc9e-dfeb7dd9e965/history-of-the-roman-colosseum-time-scanners-colosseum-chapter-1/#.WXZe34jys2w>. Students who are still wish to explore the engineering of the colosseum can see the second part of the episode at <https://lpb.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/4b26428e-7fbe-4735-ad81-ca15525b5717/designing-and-engineering-the-colosseum-time-scanners-colosseum-chapter-2/#.WXZiVIjys2w>.
- Give students the opportunity to search library databases for articles about the Roman Colosseum and gladiators. Discuss what purpose these types of entertainment events would have had in the Roman empire and if there are connections to the arenas and Feats found within *Red Queen*.

Art

- Students can create a visual representation of their favorite scene from the book, perhaps the Queenstrial or Mare outside her home in The Stilts.
- Have students create a multi-media portrait of one of the Golds where the Gold's ability is somehow incorporated literally or figuratively into the piece. For instance, if depicting a Greeny, the student might use actual plants as part of their collage; however, a student depicting a Whisper may have to find a more symbolic way of representing this Gold's ability to read and control another's mind.
- Gisa, Mare's sister, initially has an apprenticeship embroidering the elaborate fabrics of the Golds. Have students experiment with the art form of embroidery.

VOCABULARY

audacity

barracks

benevolent

conscription

dissent

gait

impregnable

legionnaire

menagerie

menial

meticulous

morose

preening

surreptitiously

voracity

RELATED WEBSITES

Writing Things

<http://victoriaaveyard.blogspot.com/>

The author's blog which reflects on choices made in the process of writing and publishing

An Indies Introduce New Voices Q&A with Victoria Aveyard

<http://www.bookweb.org/news/indies-introduce-new-voices-qa-victoria-aveyard>

Interview in which Aveyard provides detailed responses about her work and favorite books

Q & A with Victoria Aveyard

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/65625-q-a-with-victoria-aveyard.html>

Interview in which Aveyard extensively discusses her writing process, her characters, and her inspirations