

VERONICA ROTH

Author of the
DIVERGENT TRILOGY

by Lori Mortensen



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Marshmallow Madness	4
-------------------------------	---

CHAPTER 2

"Boredom Is Not Allowed"	6
------------------------------------	---

CHAPTER 3

Writing <i>Divergent</i>	10
------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER 4

From Pitched to Published	16
-------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER 5

Life as a Best Seller	22
---------------------------------	----

CHAPTER 6

What's Next?	26
------------------------	----

Glossary	30
--------------------	----

Read More	31
---------------------	----

Internet Sites	31
--------------------------	----

Critical Thinking Using the Common Core	32
--	----

Index	32
-----------------	----

Marshmallow Madness

For eight months Veronica Roth had been filling her blog with the ups and downs of her life as a writer. On March 31, 2010, she made a promise to her readers. She wrote that if she ever **published** a book, she'd fill a pool with marshmallows and jump in. It was a silly idea, but her goal was lofty. Veronica **knew** how difficult it is to get a book published. Only a fraction of manuscripts ever written are turned into books. But Veronica was hopeful. She never let herself think that her writing might not be good enough.

A few days later, Veronica's phone rang. It was her **agent**, Joanna Volpe. She had news. Big news. HarperCollins, a major publisher in New York, was interested in Veronica's book. This is the call all writers dream about.

Veronica **knew** what she had to do—jump into a pool of puffy white marshmallows.

The book, *Divergent*, would be the first in a **trilogy** of **dystopian** young adult (YA) novels. The series would go on to be one of the best-selling in YA history.

publish—to produce and distribute a book, magazine, newspaper, or any other printed material so that people can buy it

agent—someone who helps a writer find a publisher

trilogy—a series of three literary works that are related and follow the same story or theme

dystopian—a dangerous and bleak world likely created by a catastrophic event such as a virus outbreak or nuclear war



THE RISE OF YA

YA literature is a popular type of fiction today. A few decades ago, it didn't even exist. The first novel written for teens came out in 1942. It was a romance called *Seventeenth Summer* by Maureen Daly. Stories for 12 to 18 year olds weren't called "young adult" until the 1960s. By the early 2000s, YA authors such as Stephenie Meyer (*Twilight*), and Suzanne Collins (*The Hunger Games*) exploded onto bookshelves. Many adults read YA as well. Adults purchase nearly 55 percent of YA novels.



Veronica Roth

"Boredom Is Not Allowed"

The young woman who went from wannabe author to YA superstar had come a long way. Veronica Roth was born on August 19, 1988. She grew up in a suburb of Chicago. Veronica had two older siblings.

When she was 5, Veronica's parents divorced. Her father worked far away. Veronica and her siblings had to rely on their mother, Barbara, for most things. Barbara's motto was "Boredom is not allowed." This helped Veronica develop her imagination. Instead of whining about having nothing to do, Veronica created pretend worlds in her backyard. Her mother did something else too. She read to Veronica every night. Surrounded by words, Veronica fell in love with books.

BOOK LOVER

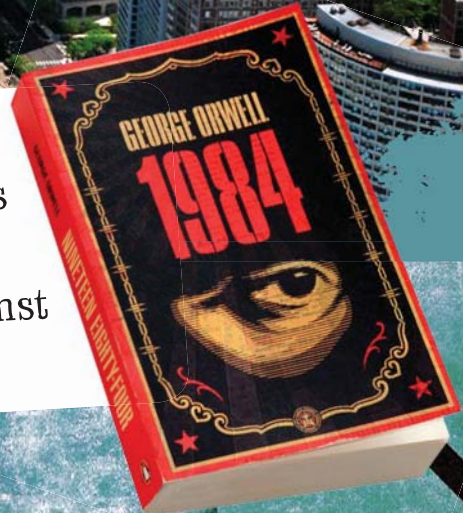
Veronica didn't just read books. She devoured them. Some of them she read over and over. She read the entire *Animorph* and *Ender's Game* series multiple times. She had other favorites too. Veronica read **speculative fiction** such as *1984* by George Orwell and *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L'Engle. In speculative fiction writers create worlds that are unlike the real world. These books would inspire Veronica's own writing.



Chicago, Illinois

✓ FACT

George Orwell's *1984* is one of the most famous dystopian novels ever written. It tells the story of Winston Smith as he rebels against a **totalitarian** government.



speculative fiction—a story with elements created out of imagination rather than real life

totalitarian—relating to a system in which the government has total control over the people

AN EARLY WRITER

When Veronica was in sixth grade, she began writing her own stories. According to her mother, Veronica "spent all of her free time writing." Veronica's stories contained many of the same elements as the books she loved reading—worlds with their own rules and brave main characters. Instead of creating adult **protagonists**, however, Veronica let younger characters take the lead.

"DRIVEN TO WRITE"

Veronica loved high school. She was a hard worker. She took advanced English, joined the government debate team, and sang in the choir. When she was a senior, Veronica won the National Council of Teachers of English Award in Writing, a prestigious honor. This was no surprise to her high school English teacher. Veronica stood out among other students. She not only worked hard, but she also noticed little details about people and things that she used to bring her stories to life. "There are a lot of kids who have talent," said her teacher, "but not the desire, and she has both. She's driven to write."



protagonist—the main character in a play or book

Veronica's early writing was similar to Divergent in some ways.

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