

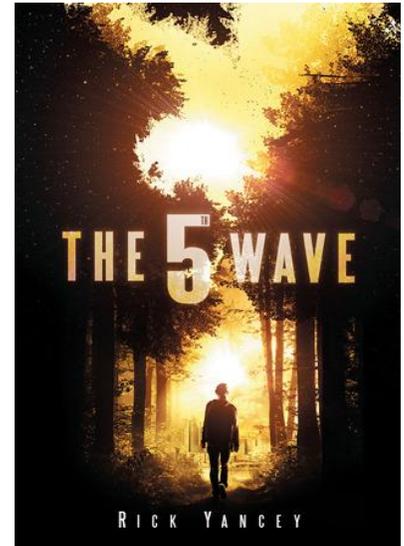
READING RESPONSE

Rick Yancey, the author of dystopian novel **The Fifth Wave**, uses symbolism to try and teach readers that in dire circumstances, we forget our true selves and loose morals and insight on who the real enemy is. **The Fifth Wave** is centered around a girl named Cassie. When aliens, known as the Others, inhabit Earth, the Waves break out. Each one is less merciful than the last, and by the end of the Fourth Wave, only around twenty-thousand people remain around the world. This leaves Cassie alone to fend for herself. She's lost everyone she cares about-from her family, to innocent memories of her childhood crush. The Others' stole everything from her.

But the one thing they didn't steal was her humanity.

One day, as she's going to get water, she comes across a boy. After all that she's been through, she knows not to trust anyone. "The first rule of surviving the 4th Wave is don't trust anyone. It doesn't matter what they look like." (pg. 8). The boy is lying on the floor, covered in blood. It's common knowledge that the average Joe would help someone who's bleeding out on the floor. The odd thing is, she doesn't even try to, and he didn't ask for help either. "Drop your weapon," he sputtered at me."(pg. 14) They could be the last two humans on Earth, and they know this, yet the first and last conversation they have is about making sure they don't get shot. The Others have caused both Cassie and the boy to completely change. It's as if everything that makes them "human" is gone.

After the boy doesn't drop his weapon, Cassie shoots him, with barely any hesitation. Afterwards, though, she does show a sliver of humanity, showing that she hasn't truly lost it. "I knew he was dead. I wanted to see what he was still holding in his bloody hand. It was a crucifix." (pg. 14). Even in the past, crucifix' are very symbolic in the Christian religion. A crucifix is a sculpture of Jesus on the Cross. If you're a Christian, the words in the bible help guide you and lead you to become a better person. By having the boy Cassie killed be holding a crucifix, it symbolises she's lost her path, her morals, and the person she used to be. She is lost in a desert with the difference between right and wrong changes from day to day. It is sad but almost understandable that her grip on humanity fails as she slips further into a 'kill or be killed' mindset. Her true self is almost lost in a fading summer memory, there but forgotten. Her present reality is like an endless winter where the only moral code is "if you are not the hunter, you are the prey." Little by little, Cassie is morphing into a **morality-less** person. At times, it may seem to the reader that there are no longer traces of the **Wave-preceding** Cassie. It is then that Yancey saves the day with moments of realization. Cassie often has flashbacks of her old life; she's often comparing the present version of herself to the past one. Starting already at pages four and five, she's **second-guessing** who she is: "*Am I crazy? Have I lost my mind? You can only call someone crazy if there's someone else who's normal. And: When I cry-when I let myself cry-that's who I cry for. I don't cry for myself. I cry for the Cassie that's gone. And I wonder what that Cassie would think of me. The Cassie who kills.*" It's a mini **red-flag** moment when Cassie refers to herself as "the one who kills". She could very easily had said something along the lines of, "The Cassie who doesn't even trust her own human race". Or she could have said, "The Cassie who will snap at anyone for no apparent reason." It is in that **strategically-worded** line that the reader knows who she's thinking about. She's still thinking about the time she killed the boy bleeding on the floor of a gas station.



Even though it happened way in the beginning of the book, Cassie **sporadically** thinks back to the soldier-shooting incident. In the first couple pages, when the incident hasn't even been introduced yet, she hints at the seemingly inconsiderable episode (the "Cassie who kills" sentence). She spends a small but significant part of her free time contemplating the choice she had made. From an analyzer's point of view, this is a craft move that Robert Yancey purposefully used to convey the hope that maybe there still *is* some **human-like** sense in Cassie. These lines are thoughts that Cassie had in one of her **thinking** moments (pg. 99): *I can't stop thinking about the soldier behind the coolers and the crucifix in his hand...maybe that's why I pulled the trigger. Not because I thought the crucifix was another gun. I pulled the trigger because he was a soldier, or at least he was dressed like a soldier.*

What's crazier, though, is how Cassie isn't aware of all of her loses in Yancy's dystopian novel, yet other characters are aware of their lack of morality even before they lose it. This is exactly what Peeta Mellark from **The Hunger Games** by Suzanne Collins feels like. **The Hunger Games** is another dystopian novel that is set in the future after the United States of America has fallen, and the country is divided into thirteen districts. After District Thirteen tries [and fails] to rebel against the Capitol, the President decides to start the Hunger Games to remind people who the real leaders are. Every year for seventy-three years one boy and one girl were randomly picked from each district to go into 'the Arena' and fight to the death. The winner would get riches and a guarantee that they won't have to go back again. Peeta and his crush Katniss are chosen to go to the Hunger Games from District Twelve. The night before they're shipped off to the Arena, Peeta, who can't sleep, is sitting by a window when he's found by Katniss.

"I just wanna die myself. Does that even make sense?... I don't want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I'm not." (pg. 141) In modern society, we often don't foreshadow dismal events because we like to think that the outcome will be favorable, whether it's for a college application or for a sports team. If we didn't, then we wouldn't be trying in the first place. What's different in The Hunger Games is that these people aren't given a choice. They are forced to fight or die and that's why Peeta isn't thinking like he would if he chose to join the Hunger Games. And he has a right reason not to. Those tributes in the Arena fought against each other like it was another tribute who put them in there, rather than the Capitol itself. If they had teamed up together and fought against the Capitol seventy-three years ago, then they would've been able to save many, many deaths.

In this way, the tributes are very much like Cassie, and everyone else after the Other's arrived. Once stuck in a life or death situation, both Cassie and the tributes changed completely. For Cassie, it was not being able to give people the benefit of the doubt, and being able to trust people, and for the tributes, it was the idea that everyone is the enemy. The thing is, for both the tributes and Cassie, if they had simply joined together, whether it was with the random boy in the convenient store or with the other tributes, there's a possibility that the circumstance could have been avoided completely. Yet because they lost their morals and the ability to trust and detect the enemy, they were stuck in a sticky situation.

In conclusion not only did Rick Yancey, like Suzanne Collins, teach readers that in dire circumstances, we lose our morals and ability to tell who the true enemy is, but dystopian novels in general taught us that too. Therefore, we as humans in the present world, need to know this information so that we can control our actions. If we merely chose to ignore our upcoming challenges, then we won't have the chance to prepare ourselves from becoming a monster in the Arena.