

EGMONT

USA

Drought

by Pam Bachorz

Age: 12 Up

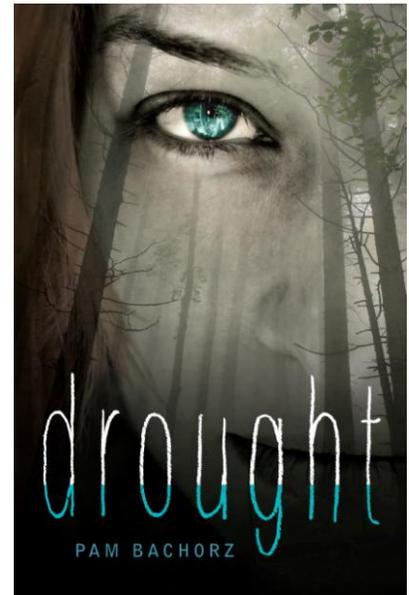
Summary:

Ruby dreams of escaping the Congregation. Escape from slaver Darwin West and his cruel Overseers. Escape from struggling to gather the life-prolonging Water that keeps the Congregants alive—and Darwin rich. Escape from her certain, dreary existence, living as if it's still the early 1800s, when the Congregation was first enslaved. But if Ruby leaves, the Congregation will die without the secret ingredient to the Water: her blood. So she stays, and prays to their savior Otto, who first gave Water to the Congregants . . . and fathered Ruby before he vanished.

When the Congregants discover Ruby's forbidden romance with Ford, an Overseer, they beat him to keep Ruby from running away with him. Ruby steals their store of Water to save Ford's life and is banished. Ruby has everything she's dreamed of: a modern life with Ford. But the modern world isn't what she thought it would be, and Ruby can't forsake the Congregation. Love and loyalty push Ruby to return and fight for her family's freedom . . . at a terrible price.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think the congregation is a cult? Why or why not? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
2. On page 200 Ruby thinks to herself, "There's no room for love in the Congregation." Consider this statement. Do you think that she is referring only to romantic love? Explain your answer.
3. "You're the last one," I whisper. "Nobody else is going to die a slave. I swear it." (pg.146) What do you think Ellie's response to this statement would be if she were alive?
4. We get a small glimpse at what Ford's life is like outside of the Congregation when he takes Ruby to the movies. Take what you know about Ford and expand on it. What do you think his life was like before he became an Overseer?



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5. Consider the names of the characters: Hope, Ruby, Darwin, etc. What meaning, if any, do you think they have? Discuss how name choice can enhance a story.
6. Why do you think that Ford is the only Overseer who shows compassion for the Congregants? Cite examples from the text where he has behaved differently than the others.
7. The Elders beat Ford to punish Ruby for leaving with him and to ensure that she doesn't try to leave again. Are you surprised by their actions? Why or why not?
8. Based on what you have read, make an educated guess about who you think the Visitor is. How do you think he knows about Ruby and her secret? Give reasons to support your answer.
9. Sula has endured 200 years of abuse from Darwin West and turned down his many attempts of courtship. After all this, why do you think she asks Ruby to help Darwin when the Visitor stabs him and cradles his body as he dies?
10. "It's a gift I can choose to withhold." (pg. 367) Explain how this statement represents a transformation in Ruby. Cite other examples from the text that demonstrate how she has changed.
11. On page 372 Ruby asks the Congregants, "What about freedom?" Why do you think the members of the Congregation don't stand and fight with Ruby? Why don't they choose freedom when they have the chance? If you were a Congregant, what would you have done? Explain.

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978-1-60684-016-0 * \$17.99



About the author:

Pam Bachorz spent her childhood in the upstate New York woods that inspired *Drought*. After living in Boston and Florida, she has settled in the Washington, D.C. area, where she lives with her husband and son.

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