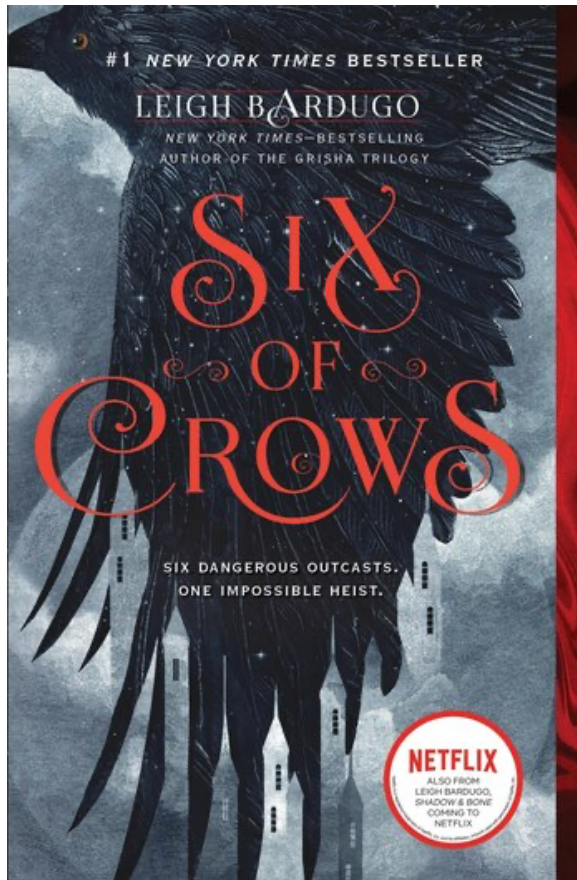


*Diversity in YA Fantasy Book Review:
Six of Crows by Leigh Bardugo (2015)*

By Erin Hatcher



[Book Cover of *Six of Crows* by Leigh Bardugo] Retrieved March 17, 2019, from <https://www.chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/six-of-crows/9781250076960-item.html>

Six of Crows is a Young Adult Fantasy heist narrative about a crew of people who must break into a highly secured fortress in order to destroy or kidnap the inventor of a drug that can enhance magical powers to a terrifying degree, while also eating away at the user's life.

This is a YA fantasy novel that manages to encompass many of the things that make society uses to make people into outsiders, and how those outsiders have to fight to gain any sense of mobility in a hierarchical society. The story shifts perspectives between the perspectives of five different characters

involved in a heist. There are huge stakes and implications for the fantasy world at large within this heist, but in the eyes of the narrative, far more importantly, they are trying to gain something for themselves as a way to move forward from their pasts and places in society.

The book does take some time to get started, easing the viewer into the setting and world perhaps at too leisurely a pace for the first few chapters. However, once the story starts in earnest and the characters begin to play off of each other they develop in very interesting ways. Many of them become quite morally grey while still remaining likeable and engaging. The heist itself is action packed and gripping as the author takes time to establish stakes, relationships, and character reasoning thoroughly making all of them fit into the world that she has constructed very well.

Perhaps due to its nature as a story about people who are forced to live on the margins, this book is also a good example of representation in terms of gender, sexuality, disability, and race. Though there are only a few characters of colour that make a large impact on the plot, one of them is one of the point of view (POV) characters, Inej, whose race and how society views her as a woman of colour do have an effect on her story and how she moves through the world, but without fully defining her as a character. Two of the five main characters of the story are women and they are both developed in interesting ways with their own wants, goals, and skills within the narrative. One of the POV characters is gay and another is bisexual. One of these characters is described as being dark skinned, adding to the diversity of the cast and giving an example of intersectional representation with an LGBTQ+ person of colour. With the representation of disability there is another case of intersectional representation as a character who identifies as gay also has a learning disability involving his ability to read. Kaz, one of the main characters, also walks with a pronounced limp and experiences chronic pain, due to an old injury. This is something that he considers as a point of pride within the story, a point which the author herself explicitly stated within her afterword of the book was based on her own experiences with Osteonecrosis, or bone-death (Bardugo, 2015)

Six of Crows presents an engaging fantasy heist narrative that benefits from a diverse cast of sympathetic but sometimes morally ambiguous cast of characters. The tone can go from banter and flirting one moment to tense fight and robbery scenes the next. **Content warning:** for discussions of horrifying trauma and PTSD, sexual slavery and exploitation, crimes of religious zealotry, and graphic torture.

References

Bardugo, L. (2015) *Six of Crows*. New York, New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC