

INFINITY RING

Q&A with Carrie Ryan, author of INFINITY RING BOOK 2: DIVIDE AND CONQUER



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Carrie Ryan is the *New York Times* bestselling author of The Forest of Hands and Teeth series and editor of the anthology *Foretold*. She lives with her family in North Carolina. Visit her online at carrieryan.com

1. With *Infinity Ring*, you had pretty much all of history as your playground. How did you decide to focus on the Vikings?

I went straight to the best source I could find: my eight- and nine-year-old nephews. I asked them what they most wanted to read about and they said knights or Vikings. Soon after, I came across an article about the Viking siege of Paris and I was absolutely fascinated. The more research I did, the more I realized just how pivotal that event was in history and I knew I had to write about it!

2. How much research did you have to do as you worked on *Divide and Conquer*? Did you already know a lot about the historical events of the book before you started writing?

Before I began working on *Divide and Conquer*, I didn't know anything about the Viking siege of Paris and I knew next to nothing about the Vikings themselves. This meant I ended up doing a ton of research, which was both fascinating and daunting. I loved learning more about the Vikings and I kept coming across historical details that I couldn't wait to write about. (Some of the craziest scenes in *Divide and Conquer*—like the king being tipped over at the end—are actually true!) At times, however, the research could get a little frustrating because it turns out that we know very little about the Vikings, which made tracking down some of the details difficult!

3. Did anything you learned in your research particularly surprise you?

Yes! I had no idea just what an impact the Viking siege of Paris had on history—especially since I'd never learned about it in school. One of the Vikings chieftains at the siege was named Rollo and later in life he was given the land around the mouth

of the river Seine in exchange for his promise to protect France against further Viking attacks. That land was named after him: Normandy (Norman meaning Northman, a term often applied to Vikings). Rollo was the first Duke of Normandy and the great-great-great grandfather of William the Conqueror. That means that every current European monarch is a descendant of this one Viking! Even more surprising—my husband is a descendant of Rollo as well!

4. Did working with a team of authors provide any new and unique challenges? Any benefits that you don't experience as the single writer of a series?

This was my first time working with a team of authors and I didn't know what to expect, but I loved the entire experience. The main challenge was writing the second book in a way that wasn't so different from the first that readers would find it jarring, but that also reflected my own voice and style. The benefit was having the characters and the world already developed enough that I could just take them and run.

5. What do you think will be the biggest challenges for the other writers of the *Infinity Ring* series?

With each new book in the series there are more story threads and complications being added that will have to be resolved. I think that's probably one of the biggest challenges for the authors of the later books—figuring out how to tie everything together in a satisfying way. For me it's more fun to be one of the earlier authors where we just get to cause all sorts of trouble and then leave it for someone else to pull back together.

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6. What was your first impression when reading the first book, *A Mutiny in Time* by James Dashner? Did it give you any immediate ideas for how to tackle the characters in book two?

I laughed out loud so many times reading the first book! I didn't know what to expect from the characters and I kept coming across these little quirks that I immediately knew I couldn't wait to incorporate into my own book. James Dashner did a great job setting up the characters and laying the groundwork of their relationships. I knew right away that I wanted to play with that—to change the dynamics of their friendship by separating the characters and creating new alliances.

7. Aspiring writers are often told to write what they know. Since your story infuses adventure, history, and mystery, how have you followed that advice?

In order to be as accurate as possible regarding the facts in *Divide and Conquer*, I did a ton of research and even visited Paris so I could walk along the river Seine and explore the Île de la Cité, where most of the book's action takes place. But for me, writing what you know deals more with emotional aspects of the story. There's no way an author can experience everything their characters go through, so all they can really do is try to find parallels to situations in their own lives that they can draw from. For example, to write what it was like for Dak, Sera, and Riq to feel lost in this new world, I thought back to how scared I was when I woke up my first morning as an exchange student in Spain as a teen. And while I've never faced a Viking horde, I did play field hockey in college and sometimes that was just as scary!

8. Can you describe your writing process? Do you have any quirky writing rituals to carry out as you work? What advice can you give to aspiring writers?

On the best days, the story plays like a movie in my head and I just write down what I see and hear. On the hardest days, I spend a lot of time staring at a blank page! Before I can start any scene I need to know what the first line is and for some reason I can never figure that out sitting up. I always have to go lie down somewhere and daydream—it might look a lot like napping

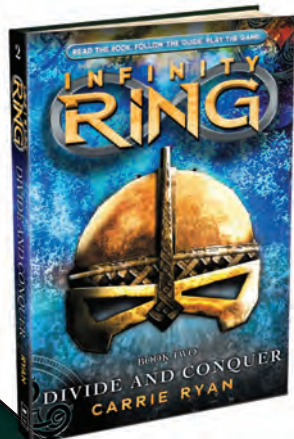
but I promise it's work! My advice to aspiring writers sounds very basic, but it's true: read and write as much as you can. By reading you'll learn to internalize story structure and figure out what works and doesn't work for you (which is why I always recommend reading in a variety of genres). By writing, you'll hopefully find your voice. Don't be afraid to take risks and try something new with your writing—you never know where it will take you!

9. The importance of sacrifice is a deeply rooted part of *Divide and Conquer*. Did you always see this particular theme at the core of your novel? Do you feel sacrifice is an important aspect of heroism?

I don't think that sacrifice is necessarily a part of heroism—to me, heroism is standing up and taking action to do what's right even when it's scary. At the same time, I think that in order to grow and learn we have to be willing to step outside of what we know and what's comfortable. To me, that's a lot of what the characters in *Divide and Conquer* face—they have to step outside of what's comfortable and easy in order to do what's right. By doing so, they learn about their inner strength which hopefully helps them face future challenges.

10. What do you believe are the underlying themes or universal truths to be found in the Infinity Ring series? Or is it difficult to say when each book is written by a different author?

I definitely think there are underlying themes in the series and that each author brings a different focus to those themes. For me, I wanted to focus on the characters' relationships—and on how their friendships were impacted by how they saw themselves. At the start of the series, each character tends to define himself or herself pretty narrowly: Sera is the science geek, Dak is the history nerd, and Riq is the languages genius. In *Divide and Conquer* I wanted to push everyone out of their comfort zone so they could realize how much more they have to offer!



Hundreds of ships carrying thousands of Viking warriors are attacking medieval Paris. The Parisians are fighting back, but they can only hold out for so long. And that's bad news—especially since Dak has been captured and forced to work with the invading army while Sera and Riq defend Paris from within. No matter which side wins, the kids will lose...unless Dak can find an ally among some of history's fiercest warriors.

Infinity Ring Book 2: Divide and Conquer

By Carrie Ryan

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