

# **Born to Fight Study Guide**

**Born to Fight by Tara Brown**

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# Plot Summary

*Born to Fight* is the second installment in the *Born Trilogy* by author Tara Brown. The novel follows the story of Emma, a nineteen-year-old young woman who, along with a group of friends she has gathered and turned into a makeshift family, faces grave dangers in a world that has essentially been destroyed by government forces. Led by Emma, the group is fighting to tear down breeding farms and other institutions and return the world to a civilized place.

The book opens with Emma trapped in a medical facility in the crumbling city of Spokane, where a doctor has kept her sedated as experiments are performed on her, including a pregnancy and abortion. A very weak Emma manages to escape and reunites with Anna, the sixteen-year-old girl who has become something of a sister to her, and with the help of an older man who was a friend of Emma's late father, they escape from Spokane and return to one of the remote camps where their other friends greet them.

However, Emma learns some disturbing facts. Lenny, the man she knew as her father, was actually her uncle. Her biological father, Michael, secretly impregnated Emma's mother through artificial insemination, using his own sperm, in the beginning of his continuing experimentation with human engineering. When Lenny learned what had happened, he and his parents took Emma and kept her away from Michael, living off the grid in a remote farmhouse and a cabin stocked with supplies, as Lenny was a survivalist. This information is very disturbing for Emma, but learning that she is a Gen baby explains why she heals so quickly and has superior strength and speed.

At the retreat, Emma is reunited with her pet wolf Leo, along with Will, the man with whom she is in love, and his brother Jake, with whom she also shares an attraction. Other members of her makeshift family include a young girl named Sarah and a teenager named Meg. Emma soon learns that the other members of the retreat no longer trust her because Marshall, one of the camp's leaders, learned she was a Gen baby and sold her out to the people who had held her captive. He told others that she was not trustworthy.

Emma and her "family" leave the retreat and go to her cabin, then Will, Emma, Jake and Anna leave the others there and go to the home of Bernie, a former CIA agent with contacts in one of the new cities that has been built. Their plan to destroy the city and kill Michael is delayed when Anna becomes infected with a plague that leads to madness, so they shift gears and sneak into Michael's lab to steal a cure for her. They administer the cure, but it is not completely effective, so they take her to the lab, where Bernie tries to protect her as Michael attempts to perform experiments on her.

Eventually, Bernie, Will, and Emma get Anna out of the facility and back to their group. When the book ends, Anna still appears to be sick while Emma and the others prepare to stage a raid on the city, leading the reader into the final book of the trilogy.



# Chapters 1 through 4

## Summary

### Chapter 1

Born to Fight is the second book in a trilogy by author Tara Brown. Nineteen-year-old Emma joins with the ragtag “family” she has created to take on the sinister forces that have turned the world upside down and are now attempting to create a perfect race of people. At the same time, she struggles with her confusing emotions as she is torn between two brothers who care about her.

Chapter 1 opens with a girl named Emma trying to awaken from a dream. She is strapped to a metal table and has been there for an undetermined period of time while a doctor injects her with drugs and perhaps performs medical experiments on her. However, she feels that today is the day she will die because she plans to escape but is too weak to survive. She longs for Leo, her wolf companion, and senses that he is near. As if in a dream, a young woman wearing a medical mask comes in and encourages her to wake up so they can go, but she leaves when the doctor comes back. When she gets her chance, Emma attacks the doctor and kills him, then dresses in his clothes, takes a scalpel and some other items, and painfully goes into the hall but she sees no one. In unbearable pain, she leans on a door and it opens. As she falls inside, she sees Jesus looking down on her with wide-open arms.

### Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, Emma recalls being with her father and his friend Brian, both survivalists, at the time the world was destroyed. The three of them holed up in Brian’s bunker for a while, watching TV news reports about the Dengue fever, huge tidal waves, earthquakes and other disasters. Eventually they left to go to a farmhouse where they expected to find supplies, then to a nearby cabin. Emma is angry with her father, who continually tells her, “It’s us and them,” but as they drive she sees terrible things. On the way, their Jeep crashes and Brian apparently is killed. Her father is badly hurt and stuck in the car, so he yells at her to run and gives her instructions on how to get to the farm house and the cabin. As she begins to run, she hears a gunshot and knows her father has been killed. When she arrived at the farm house, she was very hungry and the feeling told her she was alive. Now in the room with the statue of Jesus, her pain reminds her she is still alive.

### Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, Emma awakens to find that she is still in terrible pain and has wet herself. She has a panic attack and turns to the statue of Jesus for comfort, then hears voices outside and finds that men are looking for her. They also mention a wolf so she knows Leo is alive. Eventually she exits the room and makes her way up a concrete stairway



with great difficulty. When she gets outside, she realizes she is in a city with crumbling buildings and garbage all around her. She is afraid the infected will find her because they live in cities, but she is too tired to run. Suddenly a man appears and tells her to get into his old shopping cart. She does so and he tells her to relax because they are almost home.

#### Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, the man, who reveals that his name is Vincent Fitzgerald, takes Emma to a shack inside an old parking garage, where her friend Anna is waiting. Vincent says he is a friend of her father and reveals that Lenny, the man she believed was her father was really her uncle and was married to her mother. Her real father, Michael, was involved in experiments and he impregnated her mother with the first of the Gen babies using his own sperm, then Lenny and his parents took her and ran. This is why she has special skills like speed, strength and rapid healing powers. Vincent expresses regret about experimenting with DNA because the Gen babies have turned out horribly. He also reveals that Emma was impregnated as part of another experiment and the fetus was aborted at the facility she just escaped from. As Emma is processing this, they hear men nearby and Emma kills one and attracts the infected, who feed on human flesh, as a distraction so they can get out of the garage. In the process, Emma is afraid she has become infected and will infect Anna, but Vincent says she is immune. Outside, Vincent tells the girls were to find Leo, but he leaves them because he wants to go back and try to undo some of the harm that he has helped cause.

## Analysis

The book's early chapters introduce some of the main characters, including central character Emma. She is a strong young woman with exceptional survival skills, which the reader later learns have been taught by her late father and honed during ten years of living alone in the forest with her pet wolf, Leo. In recent times, however, Emma has been forced to invite other people into her life, including Anna, a sixteen-year-old girl who now is instrumental in helping her escape from the facility in which he has been held and the crumbling city around them.

This section also introduces the concept of human engineering that is one of the book's central themes. Emma wakes up in some sort of medical facility and it is clear from her vague memories and her physical condition that experiments have been conducted on her, but it is not until she meets Vincent that she learns the truth about her past. The situation is complicated, but essentially she is the first among a number of children her biological father created with his own sperm, transmitted through artificial insemination, in an effort to create a race of perfect humans, free of disease and possessing exceptional powers. This concept is important for the reader to understand because it is a recurring theme throughout the novel.

Vincent's revelation is very significant for Emma on several levels. It explains why she has always felt somewhat different from others and the fact that she has certain traits



such as exceptional strength and speed, but it also clarifies issues from her childhood. It also explains why she has never gotten sick despite numerous encounters with “the infected” – horribly sick people who have contracted a type of plague and now feed on human flesh. As the book progresses, this knowledge helps Emma understand her family dynamic better and is responsible for her vow to seek vengeance on her biological father.

The plot of *Born to Fight* is confusing for anyone who has not read the first book in the trilogy, entitled *Born*, because the author seems to make the assumption that the reader is already familiar with the background and the characters. Eventually much of the background is revealed, but in many cases this does not occur until much later in this novel, so patience is required in order to follow the story.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is Emma so ill when she escapes from the medical facility? Why is this particular situation so devastating when she learns the extent of it?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Vincent Fitzgerald help Emma? What is his relationship to her? Why does he not leave Spokane with Emma and Anna?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss Emma's feelings about seeing the statue of Jesus. How does it make her feel? What does the feeling remind her of? Why is this significant?

## Vocabulary

Realization, bunker, momentarily, impending, investigate, intention, outcome, constellation, exhaustion, inconstant, hallucination, confirmation, flail, apparatus, commotion, formulate, muted, immaculate, pandemonium, devout, reinstate, saunter, mutant, eke.



# Chapters 5 through 7

## Summary

### Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, Emma and Anna walk through an area that is crowded with the infected and Emma again worries that she will get sick. She also thinks about her father's admonition that "it's us and them" and realizes that Anna is her "us" now because they have become family. They come upon a couple of female guards and kill them, taking their clothing, which enables them to escape the military patrols and enter an office building, where they free Leo and the other animals being held there for experimentation. As they leave and head into the woods, a golden retriever follows them, running along playfully. Emma feels increasingly sick and eventually passes out. When she awakens, only Leo is there but soon she hears a familiar voice and Anna's brother Jake arrives and wraps her into a warm embrace. Behind him comes their brother Will, with whom Emma is in love, and she feels that she is in the safest place in the world.

### Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, Emma, Anna, Will and Jake finally make it back to their retreat and Emma is seen by the camp doctor. Her pregnancy and abortion are revealed and Will appears angry, and Emma feels ashamed even though it took place against her will through artificial insemination at a breeding farm. Emma blacks out and awakens several days later, learning that she almost died from blood loss. Emma is furious when she learns that Will nearly killed Marshall, the man who sold her out to the medical experimenters, because she needed answers from him. She is happy to be reunited with Leo, but wonders what happened to him while he was at the facility because he is more fearful than before. Anna keeps a close eye on her, saying they are sisters, and Emma falls asleep with no bad dreams.

### Chapter 7

In Chapter 7, Emma whispers to a comatose Marshall that she should have killed him when she had the chance, then Will, Emma, Jake, Anna and Leo set out for another retreat that Will runs. When they arrive, they find that as soon as Will left, the guards stopped working and things fell apart, but Emma is thrilled to see the other members of her "family," fifteen-year-old Meg and a young girl named Sarah. She thanks Mary, the mother of a small boy named Andy, for looking after Sarah for her. Emma is shocked at the cold reception she receives and learns that Marshall told everyone at the camp that she was evil, making her feel betrayed since she has saved all of them previously. The group plans to leave the following morning, but Jake tells Emma he no longer trust Will because he has been acting so strangely lately. Jake, Emma, Anna, Sarah and Meg



sneak out of the camp early, with Meg bringing her boyfriend Ron, but they are soon joined by Will, Mary and Andy.

## Analysis

This section begins to clarify the “us and them” mentality that Lenny, the uncle Emma believed was her father, instilled in her. She has lived her entire life under that mantra but in recent months the “us” has changed. After Lenny’s death, “us” consisted of only Emma and Leo, but now it has expanded to include Anna, Will, Jake, Sarah and Meg, toward whom Emma feels not only a sense of responsibility but also a sense of family. While her original concept of family – Lenny and her grandparents – has now been torn apart by the revelation of her real parentage, she has revised her definition to include the family she has created rather the one into which she was born. This will become increasingly important as she learns what a vile man her biological father actually is.

This section also introduces the characters of Will and Jake, brothers who could not be more different from each other. While Will is headstrong and a little dangerous, Jake is sweet, funny, and a little goofy. The love triangle among Will, Jake and Emma is a central part of the book’s plot. Emma is attracted to both, but for different reasons. She has determined that she is in love with Will even though the two clash often, but she is also attracted to Jake’s capacity for joy, which is rare in a world where there is little pleasure to be found. Jake reminds her of the past, when life was simpler and no one could conceive of how vastly things would change.

Marshall is a somewhat peripheral yet important character in this novel. While he never appears in a scene, his presence is often felt since he is responsible for Emma’s capture and for turning the people in the camp against her. Seeking revenge on him – through death – becomes one of Emma’s primary goals.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss Emma's feelings upon being reunited with Will and Jake. How does she feel about each of them? Why is she conflicted?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Emma receive such a cold reception when she arrives at the camp? Why is she so surprised and angry about it?

## Discussion Question 3

One of the book’s primary themes is Armageddon, or the end of the world. In what ways has this theme played out so far? Discuss at least three examples.





## Vocabulary

Horde, abyss, maul, detached, immaculate, demise, canopy, makeshift, hemorrhage, isolation, impasse, feisty, traumatize, rustle, scowl, encompass, democracy, dictatorship, postpartum, stoic, nonchalant.



# Chapters 8 through 11

## Summary

### Chapter 8

In Chapter 8, the group arrives at Emma's cabin and everyone is impressed with the luxury it affords compared to the lives they are used to. They enjoy some delicious tomato soup, which is among the many vegetables Emma canned over the summer. As everyone prepares for bed, Emma and Will go outside to draw well water for washing up and he asks why she left him behind. When she replies that he chose the retreat over her, he argues that he came for her when Marshall sold her out and tries to convince her that he really loves her. Although she is enormously attracted to him, she also has feelings for Jake and she tells him that because she is a Gen baby, she can never love normally. Returning to the cabin, she talks with Mary, who tells her she should cherish any and all love she can find. Going back to the well, she tells Will that all she wants is his respect and if he can give her that, they can be friends. They talk about the time before the world ended when people got to know each other on line before meeting in person and wonder if that was a better system. Before they go inside, Will says he wishes he could show her the person he once was, and she muses that Leo does not like it when she is alone with Will.

### Chapter 9

In Chapter 9, as Will, Emma, Jake and Anna start down the mountain, Emma and Anna feel happy because they now have people to come home to when they return. They come across a group of military men, kill them and take their bandanas and their truck, which they drive until they run out of gas. They walk the rest of the way to a large house that belongs to Bernie, Star's stepbrother and an ex-CIA agent. Bernie now works in the city and knows Emma's biological father, Michael. Emma feels betrayed by Will and is about to leave when Star appears and says her brother can help. The house is wonderful, filled with amenities like hot showers, comfortable beds and a great deal of food that Bernie brings from the city. At first Emma is very rude to Star because she is jealous of her relationship with Will, but finds that she is a good person and Will does not have feelings for her. Star says she stayed at the retreat to help out, but left after Marshall betrayed Emma. She also says that Marshall knew Emma was a Gen baby and sold her out so he could get a free pass to the city because he could not live there under ordinary circumstances because he has diabetes. Emma tells Bernie the story of her childhood and the death of Lenny, the man she thought was her father, as they tried to reach the cabin as the world fell apart. Bernie says that her real father has turned into a monster who is obsessed with perfecting the children he breeds, and that the only way to stop him is to kill him. Michael's brother Lenny, who was married to Emma's mother, was sterile so when she became pregnant he assumed she had had an affair with his brother. Bernie also reveals that Michael impregnated several other women with his own sperm so Emma realizes she has brothers and sisters somewhere.



## Chapter 10

Chapter 10 takes place the following day. Will and Emma banter and when she asks why he is so insistent on helping her deal with her father, he says it is because he wants her and is willing to do whatever it takes to get her. After finishing another large meal, Emma feels exhausted and climbs into bed. Later she awakens to screams and finds that the infected have entered the property. After the group kills some and drives the rest away, Emma learns that Star is one of Michael's Gen babies also, making them half sisters, so she immediately changes her feelings toward Star. In the confusion, they learn that Anna has a cut on her arm and likely has been infected. Everyone is scared and as Emma does her best to clean her up, Anna makes her promise to kill her if she gets sick because she does not want to become like the infected, feeding on other people.

## Chapter 11

In Chapter 11, Bernie, Emma and Will leave for the city and Bernie talks about Michael's desire to build an army of perfect people and the philosophy behind everything that is happening in the world. As they approach the city, Will and Bernie warn Emma to behave in a civilized manner to avoid drawing attention. At first Emma is fascinated by the city but when she sees how creepy the children and the breeder buildings are, she realizes she will have no trouble going through with their plan to blow it up. They go to Bernie's city house, where they decide to sleep until evening. Will and Emma share a guest room and after sleeping for a few hours, they wake up and finally make love.

## Analysis

The concept of family is important in this section. Emma has been alone for a decade and Jake and Anna have had only each other, so suddenly being part of a large group of people is a novel concept for them. While Emma sometimes still longs for her former solitary life, when she was responsible for only herself, she cannot help but feel happiness when she reflects on the pleasures of having others in her life.

The theme of survival continues in these chapters. Emma and the others have no hesitation or remorse about killing multiple people, even those who have not yet harmed or even threatened them. As Emma's father taught her, the world has become a place of "us and them" and "they" can be identified by something as simple as a bandana. As the book progresses, Emma reflects on the ease with which she kills others but she is able to justify her actions by thinking that people have chosen sides. In her view, anyone who has sided with "them," including military and any others who are not part of the rebellion to which she now belongs, are an automatic threat and therefore deserve to be killed in order for her and her friends to survive. While the author makes no pretense about Emma's propensity for extreme violence, she portrays her simply as someone who has lasted this long only because she is not afraid to take a life – or many lives – if she perceives that they are a threat.



This section also sets up a series of contrasts in the way people live. Emma and the others in her group have spent the past few years in the borderlands, living off the land and barely scraping by. Emma's cabin is seen as somewhat luxurious compared to the accommodations the others have come to know, but Bernie's house is actually a mansion and is filled with luxuries that were commonplace before the world was destroyed but are now unheard of, including comfortable beds and hot running water.

The character of Star evolves a great deal in this section. Previously she has been portrayed as a somewhat silly young girl with a big crush on Will and Emma has treated her with open contempt. Now she emerges as a kind person who goes out of her way to help others. As Emma's feelings for her slowly begin to soften, she learns that Star is actually her half-sister and immediately begins to consider her part of the family she has created, demonstrating how far Emma has come from the loner she was just a short time ago. Her love for her family is highlighted again when Anna becomes infected and Emma realizes that as much as she loves her – and BECAUSE she loves her – she will kill her if necessary rather than let her live the life of the infected.

In other developments, Emma learns more about her biological father, Michael, and realizes what a monster he really is. Even though he is technically her family, she does not consider him as such and knows she will have no problem killing him in order to help others and stop his evil activities.

The love story between Will and Emma is also featured in this section as the two of them, after many ups and downs, finally make love. However, Emma is still confused by her feelings for Jake and her belief that as a Gen baby, she will never be able to love normally or have a normal relationship with a man.

## Discussion Question 1

The characters visit three homes in this section. Where is each one and to whom does each belong? Compare and contrast all three, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each and how the characters feel about them.

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss Emma's feelings for Will as expressed in Chapter 8. Why is she so torn about her feelings? What issues make their relationship so difficult?

## Discussion Question 3

Analyze Emma's attitude toward Star. Why does she dislike her so much? How and why do her feelings change?



## Vocabulary

Detour, flinch, loom (verb), instability, plunk, exasperated, hover, manhandle, philosophical, contemplate, sneer, compromise, unruly, taut, interact, meltdown, convert, propaganda, obsessed, guise, rant, reincarnated, hermit, monitor (verb), emaciated, contraption, liability, inevitable, contaminated, excursion, magnificence, hyperventilate, fret, menacing, taint, peripheral.



# Chapters 12 through 13

## Summary

### Chapter 12

Chapter 12 finds Emma feeling awkward after having sex with Will, but he cannot stop smiling. They leave with Bernie and as they walk to the medical building, they notice that the people they meet on the street all seem dead inside. Will tells Emma how, after their parents died, he allowed himself to be captured so Jake and Anna could escape. Just as Emma is feeling tenderly toward him, she gets the impression that he also had sex with Star. Bernie tells her privately that Will was like a savage when he left the work farm and saved Star's life. They enter a lab where they get a vaccine for Will and a cure for Star, but Emma is uncomfortable because everything seems too easy. Will begins to get sick from the vaccine, which Bernie says is normal but will last a couple of days. After a close call with some guards, they get out of the city and leave Will in the woods on the edge of it with Leo guarding him while Bernie and Emma leave to take the cure to Anna.

### Chapter 13

In Chapter 13, Emma and Bernie return to his house to find that Anna has become very sick. They give her the cure and she improves only a little. Emma learns that Star and Jake are now a couple and she feels happy for them. Bernie and Emma leave Star and Jake at the house and take Anna back to the city for medical attention, picking up Will, who is still sick and weak, along the way. When they arrive, Bernie takes Anna to Michael's lab to get his help while Emma and Will return to his condo.

## Analysis

This section provides further description of the city, which is not named. The people who live there clearly as part of "them" and their cold, soulless demeanor marks them as such. Even people on the street seem vaguely threatening and the children who have come from the breeder farms, many of whom are now teenagers, emerge as hostile and dangerous, making it clear that Michael's human engineering has backfired although he continues to work on it.

The author includes a few red herrings in these chapters. Emma continues to get the sense that getting the vaccine and the cure for Anna is too easy, implying that they are being set up somehow, but that scenario does not materialize and they come and go with relative ease.



## Discussion Question 1

Discuss Emma and Will's feelings the morning after they have sex for the first time. How and why do their attitudes and reactions differ?

## Discussion Question 2

Why do Bernie and Emma leave Will behind when they take the cure to Anna?

## Discussion Question 3

Even though she is still attracted to Jake, why is Emma happy about his new relationship with Star?

## Vocabulary

Interrupt, emphasize, animated, swagger, retrace, exasperate, replica, biohazard, intensity, canister, skeptic, flippant, writhe, grimace.



# Chapters 14 through 18

## Summary

### Chapter 14

In Chapter 14, Emma and Will have been hiding in Bernie's condo for six days when they decide to leave. They sneak into the medical building, where they find a man named Allan who used to work at the same farm with Will. He appears to be on their side and leads them to Michael's private lab, where they find Bernie. They overhear a conversation in which Michael talks with Bernie about Anna and after Bernie says he will kill and bury her, Michael leaves. They find Anna unconscious because Bernie has been secretly drugging her to make it appear she is brain damaged. Although Emma is unsure they can trust Bernie, she gets into his truck with Will, Anna and Allan and they head out of the city.

### Chapter 15

In Chapter 15, the group arrives at Bernie's house to find that it has been ransacked by Marshall and a group of his men, but Star and Jake are safely hidden in a secret bunker. Bernie is clearly upset that his home has been destroyed and Emma feels guilty. She is also worried about her cabin since she is the one Marshall is looking for, but they decide to go to the camp first and check on the people there. Anna is recovering a little but still shows signs of being infected, which makes Emma savagely angry and determined to seek vengeance.

### Chapter 16

In Chapter 16, they arrive at the farmhouse, which is still intact. Emma keeps watch overnight while the others sleep. Then, she and Will go to bed and fall asleep in the other one's arms.

### Chapter 17

In Chapter 17, they arrive at the cabin to find everything there is fine, and Emma finds peace snuggling in bed with Sarah. The next day, Emma takes Allan into the forest and tells him she will kill him if he does not stay away from Anna. Returning to the cabin, she tells Will that although she has come to trust Bernie, she is wary of Allan but Will says he will kill him himself if he pursues Anna. Sarah and Meg reveal that they do not like Mary or her little boy. Later, Anna says she wants to come when Emma, Will and Bernie leave again because she wants to see Marshall die, and Emma says she must get stronger first. She also plans to take Star, because the people at Marshall's camp like her but do not like Emma, and Allan must also come because she does not trust him enough to leave him at the cabin.

### Chapter 18





In the book's final chapter, the group arrives at the camp and although everyone is wary of Emma, Star and Will seem to be making headway in pleading her case to them. Jake and Emma go for a swim and are playfully wrestling around in the lake when Will appears and Emma is afraid he will get the wrong idea. During an angry exchange, Will confesses that he did sleep with Star when Emma was being held at the breeder farm because he thought he would never see her again. He begs for forgiveness but she says they are finished and tells Anna she wishes he was more like the heroes in her grandmother's romance novels. Will tells Emma that they have a group ready to leave the following day to go after Marshall and Michael, leading the reader into the final novel in the Born trilogy.

## Analysis

The story becomes more confusing with the introduction of Allan, who seems to have little purpose and is not clearly defined except for the fact that Emma is suspicious of him. In addition, numerous hints have been dropped to indicate that Bernie is not who he appears to be or who Will believes he is, but no real evidence is ever presented to indicate the true nature of his character. This might be an omission or part of a strategy to lead readers into the next installment of the trilogy.

The author also builds suspense and interest in the final book by vaguely introducing the character of Michael, but not having Emma interact with him or even see him. She merely hears a conversation between him and Bernie, and she notes that he sounds remarkably like her uncle Lenny, whom she believed to be her father.

The character of Bernie is oddly drawn in this section. Previously it has been noted that he is a former CIA agent and clearly is trusted by Michael and others in high places, but in this section he is portrayed as a whiner and someone who visibly shows extreme fear, which does not seem to be in character.

The novel ends with nothing resolved in an attempt to build interest in the final installment of the trilogy. Emma breaks up with Will but there seems to be room to resume the relationship in the future. Marshall has awakened from his coma and once again is a target for Emma, and another attempt to right the world's wrongs appears to be on the horizon. As such, it is difficult to see *Born to Fight* as a novel in its own right but rather as one part of a longer piece.

## Discussion Question 1

What role does Allan play in the story? Why is Emma suspicious of him? Do you think her suspicions are warranted?



## Discussion Question 2

How does Star help Emma when they arrive at camp? Why do the other people at the retreat trust her more than they do Emma?

## Discussion Question 3

Lenny taught Emma to consider the world "us and them." Whom does Emma consider part of her "us" and why is each of them important to her?

## Vocabulary

Injustice, tormentor, jaded, survey (verb), ransacked, smirk, vengeance, irrational, torso, glisten, consumption, defiant, magnanimous.



# Characters

## Emma

Emma is a nineteen-year-old girl who has lived on her own since her father died a decade ago at the same time the world was essentially destroyed by evil government forces. She is fiercely independent, having been taught by her father to survive and take care of herself, but in recent months she has gathered a small collection of friends who have become like family to her.

As Emma has learned to trust others, she has also begun to open her heart to Will, a headstrong but very attractive young man who is much like Emma herself, a characteristic she resents. She is also drawn to his brother Jake, a more easygoing, joyful guy.

Recently, Emma has taken it upon herself to destroy the government facilities that are capturing young women and using them to breed a perfect, disease free race of people. This task takes on new importance when Emma learns that her real father is the creative mastermind behind the horrific program and that she herself is among the first of the Gen babies. As such, she has special characteristics such as the ability to heal fast along with superior strength and speed, but these come along with a bad temper and little control over her emotions.

## Will

Will is a young man in his early twenties, older brother of Jake and Anna. Several years before the story began, he and his siblings had lost their parents and Will allowed himself to be captured and taken to a work farm in order to divert attention and enable Jake and Anna to escape. He is fiercely loyal to his siblings and professes to be in love with Emma, but he also has a violent temper and a volatile personality.

There are two distinct sides to Will's personality. On several occasions, he grabs Emma in anger and shakes her hard enough to leave marks on her arms. On the other hand, he rescued Star from a violent rape and has earned her eternal devotion. He has formed several rebellion camps for people who want to fight the government forces that have taken over the world, but his temper and somewhat secretive nature continually get in his way.

## Jake

Jake is about 21 years old and the brother of Will and Anna. Unlike his brother, Jake is sweet and goofy, traits that attract Emma despite her love for Will. He is tall and good looking, but completely lacking in the basic survival skills necessary to navigate in the



new world. However, he has a charming personality and unlike most people who have lived through the past decade, Jake still has the capacity to feel and express joy.

## **Anna**

Anna is a sixteen-year-old girl and the sister of Jake and Will. She is highly intelligent with excellent survival skills, including the ability to shoot a gun, and she is a quick learner. Although she never learned to read well, she educates herself by reading the books Emma's grandmother left to her, including romance novels.

Anna is determined and brave, characteristics that she needs when she becomes infected with a type of plague that eventually causes madness. By the end of the novel, it is unclear whether she will be cured.

## **Star**

Star is a girl in her late teens or early 20's and the step-sister of Bernie. A few years earlier, she was captured, brutally raped and rescued by Will, so she feels a strong attraction to him. Her revealing clothing and relationship with Will make her a target of Emma's disdain until it is revealed that she, too, is a Gen baby and therefore Emma's half-sister. She also proves to be a kind, caring person with a strong commitment to do what she can to help others.

## **Meg**

Meg is a young teenager who becomes a member of Emma's self-created family. She is rough but endearing.

## **Sarah**

Sarah is an eleven-year-old girl who has attached herself to Emma and come under her protection and love.

## **Bernie**

Bernie is Star's half brother and an ex-CIA agent. He has strong connections in the city and with government officials. He is secretly working against them now.

## **Vincent Fitzgerald**

Vincent Fitzgerald is a friend of Emma's late uncle. He helps her escape from a medical experimentation facility.



## **Marshall**

Marshall is a leader of the rebellion camps who has become a traitor by turning Emma in to the breeder facilities in the hope of living in the city even though he does not qualify because he has diabetes.

## **Mary**

Mary is a woman who lives at the rebellion camp. She becomes a friend of Emma's.

## **Allan**

Allan is a middle-aged man who works at the medical facility in the city and becomes part of Emma's group even though everyone is wary of him.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Twilight

Twilight is a novel that was popular in 2012, at the time the world was destroyed. It is a symbol of Emma's past and the life that was destroyed.

## Statue of Jesus

As a very sick Emma escapes from the medical lab, she sees a statue of Jesus with His arms open to her. She views this as a symbol of her admission into heaven since she is convinced that she is dying, and she is comforted by it.

## Emma's Cabin

Emma has spent most of the past ten years in a remote cabin her father built. For her, it symbolizes both her previous life with her family as well as a sanctuary where she feels safe.

## The City

The city, which is unnamed, has been built from the ground up by the government force that now control the country. Shiny and modern, it contains luxuries that have disappeared from the borderlands, but is also a symbol of the evil that has taken over the world.

## The Borderlands

The borderlands are rural areas that lie outside the remaining towns and cities. Although the people who live there lack even the most basic amenities, they are in many ways safer than the towns and cities.

## Tomato Soup

Tomato soup is the first meal Emma shares when her enlarging "family" when they go to her cabin. It is made from vegetables she grew and canned when she was on her own and is a gesture of comfort and friendship.



## **Emma's Bow and Arrow**

Emma's bow and arrow give her the means to kill both game for meals and any human who threatens her or those she cares about. She feels safe with them and thinks of them as almost an extension of herself as they give her protection and a sense of independence.

## **Bleach**

Bleach is used to clean the wounds of anyone who has been exposed to the infected. It is a painful but necessary means of trying to keep the infection at bay.

## **Granny's Books**

In Emma's cabin, she keeps a collection of books once owned by her grandmother, including a number of romance novels. They provide a link to the love and warmth her grandmother provided as well as a reminder of the past and a means of mental and emotional stimulation.

## **Bernie's House**

Bernie owns two houses -- a condo in the city and a mansion outside it. Both are modern with many amenities, but while both are examples of the luxuries such as hot running water that are enjoyed by only a few, the mansion also includes a secret bunker that demonstrates the dangers that still exist even for those with privilege.



# Settings

## Spokane

Spokane, Washington is a once-thriving city that is now in ruins. It is the site of secret medical experiments conducted on captured people, including Emma and other Gen babies who have been biologically engineered.

## Emma's Cabin

Emma's cabin is in a remote area of the borderlands in the middle of a forest. It was built by her father and contains the means for her to survive on her own, as well as books and other reminders of her more innocent childhood. It also becomes a haven for her "family" as her world begins to expand.

## Retreat/Camp

Sometimes called a retreat and sometimes a camp, this tent city is home to a group of people who are attempting to rebel against the forces that have taken over the country.

## Bernie's Mansion

Bernie's mansion is on the edge of the city and includes not only amenities like comfortable beds and hot running water, but also ample amounts of food and a secret, fully-stocked bunker that gives him and others the means to hide for several weeks without detection.

## Bernie's Condo

In addition to his mansion, Bernie maintains a condo in the city that includes all the amenities reserved for city dwellers.

## Laboratory

Michael, Emma's biological father, maintains a lab in the city where he conducts his experiments on humans, including Anna when she is taken there.





# Themes and Motifs

## Armageddon

Armageddon, or the end of the world, is one of *Born to Fight's* overarching themes. While the world does not technically cease to exist, life as we have always known it is over after worldwide government agencies, including the United Nations, have implemented a series of actions that have caused global upheaval.

Environmental disasters have changed the physical face of the world, resulting in parts of Asia being wiped out and events such as lethal tidal waves that have devastated many other areas, including the West Coast of the United States and Canada. A plague has been instigated in an effort to wipe out vast numbers of people and vaccines have been carefully controlled to enable those in control to decide who lives and who dies. This is part of an effort to wipe out disease and other weaknesses, and the program also includes a massive human engineering project that has created large numbers of young people who are violent and soulless.

Even though much of her world has been destroyed, ten years after the devastation started, Emma is beginning to see signs of life again as wheat fields have started to sprout and crickets have begun to return. Although the book ends with nothing resolved, the author holds out hope that the final book in the trilogy will bring present a better future.

## The Dangers of Human Engineering

Human engineering and the dangers it brings is one of the book's primary themes. Ten years before the story opens, Emma's biological father became part of a major project designed to breed a superior race that would be free of disease and possess higher powers than ordinary humans. In the course of this novel, Emma learns about her father's involvement, including the fact that she herself is one of the first Gen babies, created by her father through secretly inseminating her mother with his sperm.

While this knowledge is devastating, it explains a great deal, including Emma's superior powers of healing and her extraordinary strength and speed. But with the good comes the bad, including the revelation that she is emotionally backward in some ways and might never be able to sustain a normal, loving relationship with a man because of her hot temper and inability to control her emotions.

Still, Emma and her half-sister Star are far more normal than the children who have been born more recently. They roam the streets of the city in small packs, often inflicting violence on innocent people for no reason at all. They also appear to have no feelings and empty souls.



The book makes the point that tampering with biology is a dangerous, slippery slope. Even though he realizes that his experiments have had devastating results so far, Michael continues because he believes he is capable of creating a better race of people despite all evidence to the contrary.

## The Meaning of Family

The meaning of family is a theme that is woven throughout *Born to Fight*. Emma has been alone in the world since her father – or the man she believed to be her father – and her grandparents died some years earlier. That was fine with her – in fact she preferred it – because her father taught her that the world is “us or them” and she has never had anyone else to make up an “us.”

However, in recent months, often through no desire of her own, Emma has begun to collect a group of friends for whom she has taken responsibility. While she considered this a burden at first, she has now come to care for many of them – Anna, Will, Jake, Sarah and Meg – and considers them her family. Her evolution continues when she learns that Star is her half-sister and immediately changes her opinion of her and feels the need to protect her.

At the same time, she learns that her biological father is an evil doctor who has caused incalculable harm to the world. Through all of this, Emma learns that real family is something you create with people you love rather than people who are biologically related to you.

# Styles

## Point of View

Born to Fight is told in the first person with Emma, the main character, serving as narrator. This technique works well because the reader is able to experience the entire story from her point of view, which is critical to understanding this very complex character. It also enables the reader to see the other characters through Emma's eyes, but it prevents us from getting their thoughts, feelings and perspectives except through Emma's observations and perceptions.

## Language and Meaning

Born to Fight is written in contemporary English using language that would be expected from the lead character and narrator. It reflects her young age, but also her extensive life experiences after having lived on her own in a dangerous world for the past decade.

The plot moves along at a steady pace, but the story is sometimes difficult to follow, particularly if the reader is not familiar with the first book in the trilogy. The story is complicated and much information that explains the background is not provided until later in the book.

## Structure

The novel is divided into eighteen chapters of varying length. The chapters are numbered but not titled.

Born to Fight contains a good balance of exposition and dialogue, but since it is told from the first person point of view, everything is filtered through the perspective of Emma, the lead character.



## Quotes

Em, I told you, it's us and them. I told you not to trust anyone.  
-- Emma's father (Chapter 1 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** This is Emma's hallucination about her father's words while she is semi-conscious. It establishes her father's admonition that "it's us and them," which has been her mantra throughout her life and one of the main themes of the novel.

I think about Leo, Anna, Meg, Sarah, Jake and Will, only not in that order. I force them into that order. I think about Will and Jake constantly, but I know Meg and Sarah are my responsibility. Anna is the closest thing, I will ever have to a best friend. I feel warmth in my heart thinking about them. I want to go home and they are the home that my heart recognizes. I don't need a cabin to hide in. I need my friends. My family.  
-- Narrator/Emma (Chapter 3 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** This passage establishes the family that Emma has created, how she feels about them and the reasons they are important to her.

His dark eyes glisten. He shakes his head. 'Lenny wasn't your father, Emma. He was your uncle in a way, I suppose.  
-- Vincent Fitzgerald (Chapter 4 paragraph 9)

**Importance:** This information changes Emma's life and her perception of who she is.

We had no right to mess with DNA to that extent. The Gen babies overrun the new cities. They're horrid. They can't help themselves. We screwed with something that was already perfect. Darwin and God were both right. Natural selection was a necessity and man was already made the way he should have been.  
-- Vincent Fitzgerald (Chapter 4 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** This establishes the harm that has been done by human engineering, one of the book's major themes.

The memories flash in my mind when I let my mind wander. My doubts still think I made the wrong choice. Looking at her, I know I made the right one. I hold my knives and walk, pushing the memories away. She came for me. She is my "us."  
-- Narrator/Emma (Chapter 5 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** This establishes the way Emma feels about Anna and the people she has turned into "us."

She swallows and shakes her head. 'They said you was bad. You was one of them bad ones and you was being sent to the city to live with the others like you They said Marshall was protecting us all from you.  
-- Meg (Chapter 7 paragraph 3)



**Importance:** This explains why the members of the retreat have turned against Emma and the role Marshall played in those developments.

I can't be with either of you, Will. No matter what I want in the world. I have a separate goal. It's gotta get met. If I don't stop him, no one will and shit will never change. I gotta be the hero of my own story and my story doesn't have anything to do with a boy and girl -- just a man and the monster he made.

-- Emma (Chapter 8 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This explains Emma's reluctance to commit to Will, her determination to end Michael's experiments, and her feelings about herself.

I look where her hand is pointing. 'I don't feel bad either We probably should though.

-- Emma (Chapter 9 paragraph 2)

**Importance:** This sentence gives the reader a sense of how much the world has changed. It truly is "us and them" and Emma, Anna and the others have become so hardened that they feel no remorse about killing anyone who might possibly threaten them, but they are still human enough to realize that they probably should feel badly about it.

It feels like the dirt coming off of me has been there since the breeder farms. I haven't felt clean since. Not real clean, like I used to before I opened the door to the cabin and let them in my life.

-- Narrator/Emma (Chapter 9 paragraph 2)

**Importance:** This describes both the physical and emotional cleanliness Emma seeks.

But I open my eyes, and the world where everything I did for one is over. In its place, is a world where I can't see all the faces of the people who need me. They've become a sea of faces, and in the dream that starts to form in my exhausted mind, they all look like me.

-- Narrator/Emma (Chapter 9 paragraph 2)

**Importance:** This establishes the growing sense of responsibility Emma feels not only toward those she loves, but also toward a wider group of people who need to be saved.

He shrugs, 'Well, imagine it's the beginning for you all over again. These people have lived a cushy life for a while. Most of them never leave the cities, except to work in the breeder farms. They believe that they're trying to make a difference. They believe that the only way to save humanity is to breed out the sickness and disease, by breeding people of superior quality. They believe they are the best of the best quality people. Most of them see the sickness of greed, disease, and war mongering as the evils that existed.

-- Bernie (Chapter 11 paragraph 6)



**Importance:** In this passage, Bernie tries to help Emma understand the viewpoint of the people who live in the cities and take part in the new world order.

My heartbeat picks up. I feel panic. His words are threats in my brain, but his gentle smile and blazing eyes don't scare me. He doesn't scare me. I realize it now. It's been a game in my mind to keep him at bay, I scare me.

-- Narrator/Emma (Chapter 11 paragraph 11)

**Importance:** In this passage, Emma finally comes to terms with the reasons she has been avoiding making a commitment to Will.

I'm scared that we'll get to Bernie's and Jake and Star will be dead or gone, taken. I'm scared a lot now. My 'us' is too big and I can't keep them all safe. I lean on Leo and remember how easy it was when he was my 'us'.

-- Narrator/Emma (Chapter 15 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** This establishes how much Emma has come to care for others and how conflicted it continues to make her feel.

It starts to feel normal as the sun sets and I hear the crickets. There are more this summer than last. Everything is healing. It's taken the decade he said it would. The lack of rain and the dead zones changed the way nature worked.

-- Narrator/Emma (Chapter 16 paragraph 9)

**Importance:** This passage establishes the fact that hope is beginning to appear as the earth itself begins to heal from the devastation of the past decade.