



Shades of Grey: A Novel

By Jasper Fforde

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The *New York Times* bestseller and "a rich brew of dystopic fantasy and deadpan goofiness" (*The Washington Post*)

Welcome to Chromatacia, where the societal hierarchy is strictly regulated by one's limited color perception. And Eddie Russet wants to move up. But his plans to leverage his better-than-average red perception and marry into a powerful family are quickly upended. Juggling inviolable rules, sneaky Yellows, and a risky friendship with an intriguing Grey named Jane who shows Eddie that the apparent peace of his world is as much an illusion as color itself, Eddie finds he must reckon with the cruel regime behind this gaily painted façade.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This inventive fantasy from bestseller Fforde (*The Eyre Affair*) imagines a screwball future in which social castes and protocols are rigidly defined by acuteness of personal color perception. Centuries after the cryptically cataclysmic *Something That Happened*, a Colortocracy, founded on the inflexible absolutes of the chromatic scale, rules the world. Amiable Eddie Russett, a young Red, is looking forward to marrying a notch up on the palette and settling down to a complacent bourgeois life. But after meeting Jane G-23, a rebellious working-class Grey, and a discredited, invisible historian known as the Apocryphal man, Eddie finds himself questioning the hitherto sacred foundations of the status quo. En route to finding out what turned things topsy-turvy, Eddie navigates a vividly imagined landscape whose every facet is steeped in the author's remarkably detailed color scheme. Sometimes, though, it's hard to see the story for the chromotechnics. *10-city author tour. (Jan.)*

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review In Eddie Russett's world, color is destiny. People's perceptions of color, once tested, determine their rank in the Colortocracy, with primes ruling "bastard" colors and everyone lording it over the prole-like grays. No one can see more than their own color, and no one knows why—but there are many unknowns ever since *Something Happened*, followed by the deFacting and successive Great Leaps Backward. Due to an infraction against the Collective's rule-bound bureaucracy, Eddie is sent to East Carmine, in the Outer Fringes, where manners are shockingly poor, to conduct a monthlong chair census. In short order, he falls in love, runs afoul of the local prefects, learns a terrible secret, and is eaten by a carnivorous tree. This series starter combines the dire warnings of *Brave New World* and *1984* with the deevolutionary visions of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and *Riddley Walker*, but, Fforde being Fforde, his dystopia includes an abundance of tea shops and a severe shortage of jam varieties. It's all brilliantly original. If his complex world building sometimes slows the plot and the balance of silly and serious is uneasy, we're still completely won over. In our own willful myopia, we sorely need the laughs. --Keir Graff

Review

The world of the near future is anything but an ashen wasteland in the impish British author's refreshingly daft first volume of a new fantasy series.

Already cult-worshipped for his popular *Thursday Next* and *Nursery Crimes* novels (*First Among Sequels*, 2007, etc.) Fforde is something like a contemporary Lewis Carroll or Edward Lear. He's a shameless punster with a demonic flair for groan-worthy parodies and lampoons, and it's just too much bother to try to resist his greased-pig narratives. In this one, which does take place in a possibly post-apocalyptic world, a repressive Colortocracy ranks and separates citizens according to their ability to perceive particular colors. For example, haughty Greens and dictatorial Yellows ("Gamboges") deem Red-ness hopelessly lower class. It's as if 1984 were ruled by Coco Chanel. Our hero, Eddie Russett (a Red, naturally), is an affable youngman who hangs out with his father Holden (a healer known as a watchman), killing time until his arranged marriage to fellow Red Constance Oxblood. But when son and father resettle in the odd little hamlet of East Carmine, the lad's eyes are opened to a confusion of standards and mores, and the realities of sociopolitical unrest. While serving his punishment for a school prank by compiling a "chair census," Eddie visits fascinating new places, enjoys the wonders of the UnLibrary and the organized worship of Oz, and decides that conscientious resistance to entrenched authority probably won't bring about the ultimate ecological catastrophe—Mildew. He's a little less sure about his wavering infatuation with Jane, a militant, pissed-off Grey (they're the proles)

who rather enjoys abusing him. Eventually, the best and brightest prosper, while characters of another color end up in the relational red (so to speak).

All this is serenely silly, but to dispel a black mood and chase away the blues, this witty novel offers an eye-popping spectrum of remedies. A grateful hue and cry (as well as sequels) may be anticipated.—**STARRED Kirkus**

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Users Review

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