

Empire Falls, by Richard Russo

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In the award-winning novel, *Empire Falls*, by Richard Russo, there is a glimpse into the lives of the people who live in a small mill town in Empire Falls, Maine. There are many different inhabitants of this small town, but the character who is easiest to feel connected to is Christina, or "Tick", Roby. Tick is very mature and grown-up for her age and she avoids trouble as much as possible. While she is in her junior year of high school, she seems to be experiencing many more burdens than the average teenager. One of the things she has to deal with is a menacing ex-boyfriend, Zack Minty. Another problem of Tick's is the fact that after her parents got divorced, Janine, Tick's mom, was given custody of Tick, even though Miles, her [father](#), was undoubtedly better fit to be a parent. Tick also had to deal with the sudden appearance of Walt Comeau, her future stepfather, in the home she and her mother live in. An issue Tick had at school was that she decided to take an art class, but her art teacher couldn't understand. Also, because Tick was given a special lunch hour to eat by herself, the principal decided she would be a good candidate to spend lunch with John Voss, who had no friends and needed someone to eat with. He would later prove to be dangerous and instable. All of the problems that Tick has encountered in her short life have been caused by the adults in [Empire Falls](#). Because of the way Zack's parents raised him, Zack treats Tick poorly. Tick has to undergo harassment every day. Zack was never taught by his parents how to treat other

people with kindness or how to live the “Golden Rule”. He never learned how to be a gentleman or even how to be kind. Zack’s parents, both adults, allowed him to become the selfish punk he became...

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... his rude and selfish ways. As a consequence of Tick’s parents getting a [divorce](#), Tick was put in a position where she had to live with her mother because her father wanted her to have a better life, even though Tick wasn’t as happy with her mom. Also, Tick’s mother began dating the owner of the town’s fitness club, Walt Comeau, and as a result of Walt being around so often, he began trying to become a fatherly figure to Tick, which Tick did not want. Tick’s art teacher was constantly criticizing her work. Finally, because Tick had to eat lunch with John Voss, she created a friendship with him that eventually turned her into one people who were supposed to be a victim of John’s shooting spree. The problems that Tick experience are a result of the actions of the adults that are around her.

Works Cited

Russo, Richard. *Empire Falls*. New York: Vintage, 2001. Print.

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