

## The Red Word.

Henstra, Sarah (author).

Mar. 2018. 352p. Black Cat, paperback, \$16 ([9780802126559](#)).  
[REVIEW](#). First published [November 15, 2017 \(Booklist\)](#).

Set in the 1990s, *The Red Word* interrogates the prevailing political preoccupations of that time: gender politics, third-wave feminism, and consent. Henstra (*Mad Miss Mimic*, 2017) sets her first novel for adults at an East Coast college. Told from the perspective of a Canadian named Karen looking back on her time as a horny undergraduate, the book follows a group of incredibly earnest young women as enamored with feminist theory as they are with their own cleverness. Karen and her friends live in a shared house they call Raghurst, where they spend their time gossiping, dissecting the male gaze, and dabbling in Wicca. Raghurst abuts a frat house nicknamed Gang Bang Central, where Karen finds a reasonably witty boyfriend named Mike and where, rumor has it, the fraternity engages in some very unsavory extracurriculars. As it happens, Gang Bang Central lives up to its name. When the bros victimize a Raghurst associate, Karen must literally and figuratively confront her role in patriarchal oppression. A timely and nuanced dissection of rape culture ensues. — *Eugenia Williamson*

*This title has been recommended for young adult readers:*

**YA/General Interest:** Teens understand rape culture, and they'll understand the characters' confusion in the face of it. —*Eugenia Williamson*