

# STYLELIFE

## The Red Queen: Study Guide

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### 1 Context

One of the most well-known seduction teachers, David DeAngelo, teaches that attraction is not a choice. Initially, this proclamation seems counterintuitive to what we know about people exercising their free-will. Some women like athletic men, some women prefer tall men, some like rockers and some like professors.

However, DeAngelo is correct in his assertion that, as people, we aren't quite as free as we might think. Everyone is shaped by their environment, their experiences, and their expectations. And as The Red Queen: Sex and the Evolution of Human Nature by Matt Ridley asserts, we are also shaped by millions of years of evolution.

And these years of change have produced some universals in mankind. "Until very recently the life of a European was essentially the same as that of an African," Ridley writes. "Both hunted meat and gathered plants. Both lived in social groups. Both had children dependent on their parents until their late teens. Both used stone, bone, wood, and fiber to make tools. Both passed wisdom down with complex language. Such evolutionary novelties as agriculture, metal, and writing arrived less than three hundred generations ago, far too recently to have left much imprint... There is, therefore, such a thing as a universal human nature, common to all peoples" (10).

For the aspiring pickup artist, The Red Queen is an invaluable text that provides useful information on how our social interaction has evolved over thousands of years. And how it continues to evolve. The Red Queen not only tells you how we got here, but provides solid scientific evidence that you need to constantly improve your game.

### 2 About the Author

Formerly a scientist, journalist, and national newspaper columnist, Matt Ridley is a visiting professor at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York and the chairman of the International Centre for Life in Newcastle, England. In addition to The Red Queen, he is also the author of Francis Crick: Discoverer of the Genetic Code, Nature Via Nurture: Genes, Experience, What Makes us Human, The Agile Gene: How Nature Turns on Nurture, The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation, and the best-selling Genome: The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters.

More information about Ridley's work can be found at his website: [www.mattridley.co.uk](http://www.mattridley.co.uk).

### 3 About the Edition

This book has been examined using the trade-paperback edition published by Harper Perennial in 2003. Page numbers for quotations correspond to the pages in that Harper Perennial edition.

### 4 About the Title

The concept of the Red Queen is taken from Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass. In Carroll's story, Alice meets a chess piece that is destined to perpetually run but never manages to get very far because the landscape moves with her.

After a brisk run, Alice mentions to the Red Queen that "you'd generally get to somewhere else – if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing."

"A slow sort of country!" responds the Queen. "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"

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Ridley explains that Lewis Carroll's Red Queen idea has been applied to biology and evolutionary research. "It is an increasingly influential idea in evolutionary theory, and one that will recur throughout the book. The faster you run, the more the world moves with you and the less you make progress," he writes. "Life is a chess tournament in which if you win a game, you start the next game with the handicap of a missing pawn" (18).

The Red Queen principle is often compared to an arms race. Just as nations constantly strive to develop the most dangerous weaponry, animals evolve new behaviors and characteristics needed for survival. This evolutionary arms race can also be seen in the way viruses grow and mutate over time in order to defeat antibodies. And predatory animals and their prey are locked in their own form of escalation.

The evolution of polar bears and Arctic seals is a prime example of the Red Queen at work in the wild. In the Antarctic, seals are unconcerned about casually lounging on the ice because they have no predators. Scientists presume that Arctic seals were similarly fearless in the beginning. However, as proto-polar bears appeared in the Arctic region, the lackadaisical seals made for an easy dinner. Timid, nervous, hyper-vigilant seals enjoyed longer lives (and reproduced, therefore passing along certain gene structures and instincts) than the oblivious seals. Therefore, hunting became more challenging for the bears. "They had to creep up on the seals, stealthily, but the seals could easily see them coming—until one day (it may not have been so sudden, but the principle is the same) by chance mutation a bear had cubs that were white instead of brown," Ridley writes. "They thrived and multiplied because the seals did not see them coming. The seal's evolutionary effort was for nothing; they were back where they started" (18-19).

Don't be fooled into thinking the Red Queen is an artifact of university classrooms, biology labs, and *Wild Kingdom* episodes. Although the term is most-used by scientists to describe changes that occur over thousands of years, the Red Queen undoubtedly affects each of us in our every day lives. Consider this passage from *The Red Queen*: "The struggle for existence never gets easier. However well a species may adapt to its environment, it can never relax, because its competitors and its enemies are also adapting to their niches. Survival is a zero-sum game" (64).

If we re-write this passage slightly and apply it to the StyleLife Challenge, it reads like this: The struggle for seduction never gets easier. However well a pickup artist may adapt his game, he can never relax, because the hardbodies and alpha-males are also adapting their tactics. Seduction is a zero-sum game.

You must constantly refine your game. Seek to grow beyond just spitting out canned routines and pickup techniques you've memorized. Always be learning, and then challenge yourself to grow beyond what you've learned. Become your own guru. Because you can bet that whatever technique you're memorizing, someone else is working on the antidote.

"It is a bit like sport," Ridley writes. "In chess or in football, the tactic that proves most effective is soon the one that people learn to block easily. Every innovation in attack is soon countered by another in defense" (67).

## 5 Chapter Review

### 5.1 Chapters 1 through 4

The first four chapters of *The Red Queen* examine the nature of evolution at the most microscopic levels. Genes, DNA, viruses, hosts, parasites, and even bdelloid rotifers are discussed in great detail. Ridley also describes how evolutionary theory has changed over the years. The academic world is not immune to following fashionable theories as new discoveries and arguments are made. Ridley examines the various trends and provides their strengths and weaknesses.

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As educational (and well-written) as this material is, it's not immediately germane to learning the tools of seduction. Although you might be able to creatively work some of this material into one of your openers: "I'm debating this with a friend, maybe you can help solve the argument. Do you agree with the Vicar of Bray theory or the Red Queen concept?"

So we're going to skip over these first four chapters and focus on later sections that are directly related to our challenge.

### 5.2 Chapter 5: The Peacock's Tale

This chapter is worth examining in some detail because every aspiring pickup artist knows the importance of peacocking. Quite a few of the questions in the Style Critique forum focus on the peacocking technique.

Ridley explains that the instinctual goal for every female animal is to find a mate with the genetic makeup necessary to be a good husband, a good father, or a good sire. Male animals, on the other hand, have a goal of locating as many wives and mothers as possible. In 1972, Robert Trivers explained why the genders have such disparate goals. The gender that invests the most in children (such as the way women carry a fetus for nine months) is the one that has the *least* to gain from an extra mating. The gender that invests the least has extra time to spend searching for other mates. "Therefore, broadly speaking, males invest less and seek quantity of mates, while females invest more and seek quality of mates" (133).

Because of those different goals, scientists define a reality that every man who has ever entered a singles club immediately learns. "Males compete for the attention of females" (133).

Ridley examines the mating habits that revolve around peacocks and their tails, deer antlers, butterfly colors, swallows and artificially lengthened tail feathers, widow birds from Africa, colored guppies, and the scarlet-tufted malachite sunbird from Mount Kenya. And the bottom line is that "females choose; their choosiness is inherited; they prefer exaggerated ornaments; exaggerated ornaments are a burden to males. That much is now uncontroversial" (138).

When he writes these ornaments are a burden to males, Ridley is describing elaborate avian tail feathers that attract female attention but can actually be a hindrance to catching food. This phenomenon can provide us with a worthwhile pickup lesson. Think about that term: burden. The females prefer exaggerated ornaments that are a burden to males.

In the Style Critique forum, there has been a great deal of discussion about peacocking. "It's just not in my personality," some people said. "I can't get away with that kind of thing," others remarked. While it's important to use peacocking in a way that works best for you, you should remind yourself of that *burden* label. Inherently, peacocking, like all pickup techniques, isn't meant to be easy.

We tend to think it's the woman's place to be uncomfortable. High-heels, push-up bras, tight shirts, and waxed eyebrows (and other body parts!) are just part of being a fashionable, attractive woman. But to be a successful pickup artist, you have to be willing to carry some of that burden yourself.

It may feel uncomfortable or not cool sometimes, but it conveys confidence and leadership and individuality when you're wearing those clothes (as opposed to letting them wear you). And though we weren't born with antlers or colorful tail feathers, fortunately we can purchase and adorn the equivalent.

There are other points in this chapter that will sound familiar to those of you who study seduction techniques.

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Ridley points out that peacocks are among the few birds to gather together in groups for sexual selection. Scientists call this gathering a “lek.” “The characteristic of the lek is that one or a few males, usually those that display near its center, achieve the most matings,” Ridley writes. “But the central position of a successful male is not the cause of his success so much as the consequence: Other males gather around him” (141). Later in the chapter, Ridley writes, “In guppy fish, females that have been allowed to see two males, one of which is already courting a female, subsequently prefer that male to the other even if the female that was being courted is no longer present” (146). Obviously, social proof is effective, even in the animal kingdom.

Ridley also puts the trials of being a man into perspective. “The male’s goal is seduction: He is trying to manipulate the female into falling for his charms, to get inside her head and steer her mind his way,” Ridley writes. “The evolutionary pressure is on him to perfect displays that make her well disposed toward him and sexually aroused so that he can be certain of mating” (161).

You’ve got a lot on your plate as a man. With all that evolutionary pressure on your shoulders, it’s easy to get frustrated if a swimsuit model ignores you or makes fun of your opener. But be glad you’re not a scorpion. “Male scorpions lull females into the mood for sex at great risk to their lives. One false step in the seduction, and the female’s mood changes so that she looks upon the male as a meal” (161).

### 5.3 Polygamy and the Nature of Men

After an intriguing introduction that details how Atahualpa of the ancient Incan empire maintained fifteen hundred women, Ridley returns to Trivers’ point that the gender most invested in creating and rearing offspring is the one that has the least to gain from additional mating. “A peacock grants a peahen one tiny favor: a batch of sperm and nothing else,” Ridley writes. “He will not guard her from other peacocks, feed her, protect a food supply for her, help her incubate her eggs, or help her bring up the chicks. She will do all the work. Therefore, when she mates with him, it is an unequal bargain. She brings him the promise of a gigantic single-handed effort to make his sperm into new peacocks; he brings just the tiniest—though seminal—contribution” (178-179). We have to assume that Ridley intended for that well-placed pun to be noticed.

Another interesting point of this chapter comes in a discussion of polygamy versus monogamy. It would seem, given the male tendency towards quantity and the female desire for quality, that our laws prohibiting polygamy benefit the woman. After all, wouldn’t everyone like to be that Incan ruler with a harem of fifteen hundred women scattered around the country?

But the reality is that in polygamous societies, the wealthy and powerful tend to attract all the women. Leaving the average male with absolutely nothing. Think about our own current society. If a woman could become a second, third, or fourth wife of Bill Gates, isn’t that life preferable to marrying a bus driver from Poughkeepsie? “As a Mormon lawyer put it recently, there are ‘compelling social reasons’ that make polygamy ‘attractive to the modern career woman.’ But think of the effect on men,” Ridley writes. “If many women chose to be second wives of rich men rather than first wives of poor men, there would be a shortage of unmarried woman, and many men would be forced to remain unhappily celibate. Far from being laws to protect women, antipolygamy statutes may really do more to protect men” (186). But for the wealthy and powerful, having multiple partners is a long-standing historical fact.

“The Babylonian king Hammurabi had thousands of slave ‘wives’ at his command,” Ridley writes. “The Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten procured 317 concubines and ‘droves’ of consorts. The Aztec ruler Montezuma enjoyed 4,000 concubines. The Indian emperor Udayama preserved sixteen thousand consorts in apartments ringed by fire and guard by eunuchs. The Chinese emperor Fei-ti had ten thousand women in his harem,” (199). These weren’t the only examples of such prodigious appetite.

Researcher Laura Bitzig examined 104 politically autonomous societies and found that “in almost every case, power predicts the size of a man’s harem” (199). The discussion of a medieval count provides a

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vivid counterpoint to the nature of male life in these situations. The count had an elaborate system established to protect his women and preserve his reproductive efficiency. “Meanwhile, many medieval peasant men were lucky to marry before middle age and had few opportunities for fornication” (202).

What does this mean for emerging pickup artists? That it sucks to be an insurance adjuster in a bar full of CEO’s. But although history may not be on our side, the technologies of seduction have been developed to help even the playing field. Take heart and be encouraged with what your skills can do. Sure, you might ultimately lose out to that tycoon with the yacht. But you’ll score more than the average frustrated chump in the same contest. As Ridley said, medieval peasants had few opportunities for fornication, but they didn’t know how to demonstrate higher value, did they?

### 5.4 Monogamy and the Nature of Women

Scientists examining animals have learned one disturbing fact: males of the species often murder the young. Not coincidentally, females in these groups are promiscuous. Although they may “mate” with one single male, they are more than willing to share their attention with any other males that come down the jungle path. Far from being sluts of the animal world, these females are just trying to protect their children. “Female promiscuity in monkeys and apes can be explained by the need to share paternity among many males to prevent infanticide” (215). But that doesn’t apply to humans. So why do women prefer monogamy and yet also cheat? Once again, the animal kingdom provides some clues.

“The reason adultery is so common in colonial birds is that it enables a male bird to have more young and enables a female bird to have better young,” (224). If birds had cabana boys, this is surely where they would come into play. “When a female mates with an attractive male, he works less hard and she works harder at bringing up the young,” Ridley writes. “It is as if he feels that he has done her a favor by providing superior genes and therefore expects her to repay him with harder work around the next. This, of course, increases her incentive to find a mediocre but hardworking husband and cuckold him by having an affair with a superstud next door. In any case, the principle—marry a nice guy but have an affair with your boss or marry a rich but ugly man and take a handsome lover—is not unknown among female human beings” (224).

Ridley closes this chapter with a passage that is worth quoting at length, although it will surely disturb more romantic, sentimental readers. “There has been no genetic change since we were hunter-gatherers, but deep in the mind of the modern man is a simple male hunter-gatherer rule: Strive to acquire power and use it to lure women who will bear heirs; strive to acquire wealth and use it to buy other men’s wives who will bear bastards. It began with a man who shared a piece of prized fish or honey with an attractive neighbor’s wife in exchange for a brief affair and continues with a pop star ushering a model into his Mercedes. From fish to Mercedes, the history is unbroken: via skins and beads, plows and cattle, swords and castles. Wealth and power are means to women; women are means to genetic eternity.

Likewise, deep in the mind of a modern woman is the same basic hunter-gatherer calculator, too recently evolved to have changed much: Strive to acquire a provider husband who will invest food and care in your children; strive to find a lover who can give those children first-class genes. Only if she is very lucky will they be the same man. It began with a woman who married the best unmarried hunter in the tribe and had an affair with the best married hunter, thus ensuring her children a rich supply of meat. It continues with a rich tycoon’s wife bearing a baby that grows up to resemble her beefy bodyguard. Men are to be exploited as providers of parental care, wealth, and genes” (244).

### 5.5 Chapter 8: Sexing the Mind

Although this chapter title sounds like R. Kelly trying to become an intellectual, in fact, Ridley spends most of the time debating the politically correct police and un-realistic feminists that clog academic halls. He begins with a passage that argues a man’s body is different from a woman’s body. He then includes a passage that argues a man’s mind is different than a woman’s mind. “The first paragraph is banal; the

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second inflammatory,” Ridley writes. “The proposition that men and women have evolved different minds is anathema to every social scientist and politically correct individual” (248). He then spends the rest of the chapter showing just why and how our minds differ. Most of these differences are well-known and don’t need to be discussed here.

Ridley returns to how evolutionary price determined our different attitudes towards sex. Historically speaking, casual sex for a man was a fairly low-risk activity. Maybe an infection here and there, maybe getting yelled at by the wife. But the potential payoff (genetically speaking) was huge: “a cheap addition of an extra child to his genetic legacy,” he writes. “Men who seized such opportunities certainly left behind more descendants than men who did not. Therefore, since we are by definition descended from prolific ancestors rather than barren ones, it is a fair bet that modern men possess a streak of sexual opportunism” (266).

Conversely, women faced massive risks when it came to casual sex. In the generations before reliable birth-control, the female could be left with a pregnancy and potential revenge from her husband. If she was unmarried, then she was doomed to a life of spinsterhood. “These enormous risks were offset by no great reward. Her chances of conceiving were just as great if she remained faithful to one partner, and her chances of losing the child without a husband’s help were greater. Therefore, women who accepted casual sex left fewer rather than more descendants, and modern women are likely to be equipped with suspicion of casual sex” (266). And, as we all know, modern women are also frequently equipped with anti-slut defense weaponry.

Ridley also examines how our attractions have evolved. A study in thirty-seven different samples from thirty-three countries interviewing more than one thousand subjects yielded statistical evidence to something most of already know. “Men pay more attention to youth and beauty, women to wealth and status” (268).

The point here is that these aren’t cultural trends but universals of human nature. In spite of how some critics allege that our culture pushes us to desire this model or that actress, there are common themes found throughout the world. “When asked what women they prefer, Yanomamö men [indigenous people of the Amazonian rainforest] do not hesitate to say *moko dude* women, meaning those between puberty and first child. Other things being equal, that is also the Western man’s ideal” (274).

### 5.6 Chapter 9: The Uses of Beauty

As stated earlier, there are universal male preferences when it comes to women. Fashions do change, but the basics remain the same. Men prefer young, beautiful women. None of this is news to you. But enterprising pickup artists will benefit from Ridley’s discussion of what draws women to certain men.

Study after study has shown that women are attracted to personality and status. “Bruce Ellis has summarized the evidence that personality is critical in men,” Ridley writes. “In a monogamous society a woman often chooses a mate long before he has had a chance to become a ‘chief,’ and she must look for clues to his future potential rather than rely only on past achievements. Poise, self assurance, optimism, efficiency, perseverance, courage, decisiveness, intelligence, ambition—these are the things that cause men to rise to the top of their professions. And not coincidentally, these are the things women find attractive” (298).

The crucial part of that passage is that women have to make a choice *before* the man becomes a chief, or a rock star, or a CEO. This early choice helps you level the playing field with that tycoon we talked about earlier. If you exhibit the right traits, then women will take a bet on you. They’ll give you the benefit of the doubt, even though you may not have the corner office just yet. They’re guessing that, based on your personality, you will some day.

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Poise. Self assurance. Optimism. Decisiveness. These are all qualities that you'll learn during the StyleLife Challenge. So even if you work in a video store, or bag groceries in a supermarket, you don't have to be defined by that job. You can learn to exhibit the same qualities that CEO's display. And this will help your game immensely.

If you're not convinced, here's some more proof. Ridley describes an experiment where "scientists videotaped an actor in two simulated interviews; in one he sat meekly in a chair near the door, with his head bowed, nodding at the interviewer, while in the other he was relaxed, leaning back and gesturing confidently. When shown the videos, women found the more dominant actor more desirable as a date and more sexually attractive... Body language matters for male sexiness" (298-299). We've already had exercises in posture and the mind shaping recording was designed to help improve your confidence, among other things. Regardless of your job or income, you *can* learn and exhibit these qualities that women desire.

### 5.7 Chapter 10 and the Epilogue

These chapters are largely wrap-up discussions and although interesting, not directly related to learning the skills of seduction, so we'll set them aside for now.

## 6 Conclusion

Matt Ridley's The Red Queen: Sex and the Evolution of Human Nature is an invaluable text for men looking to increase their seduction skills. While it's easy to think every human being is idiosyncratic and unique, the book explains how our mating choices are the result of evolutionary and biological pressures over thousands of years. This research proves that we aren't quite as individual as we might think when it comes to attraction and dating. The Red Queen should also encourage and inspire men participating in the StyleLife Challenge because it provides factual, scientific proof that pickup techniques work. Seduction techniques such as peacocking, social proof, and projecting confidence work in the animal kingdom as well as among humans.