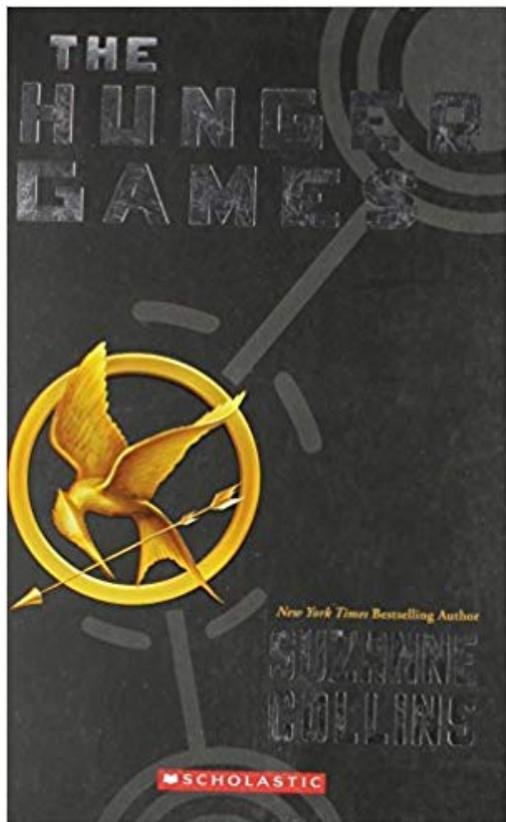


## Hunger Games, The *by* Suzanne collins



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In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capital surrounded by twelve outlying districts. The Capital is harsh and cruel and keeps the districts in line by forcing them all to send one boy and one girl between the ages of twelve and eighteen to participate in the annual Hunger Games, a fight to the death on live TV. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives alone with her mother and younger sister, regards it as a death sentence when she steps forward to take her sister's place in the Games. But Katniss has been close to dead before and survival, for her, is second nature to win, she will have to start making choices that weigh survival against humanity and life against love.



## Reviews of the **Hunger Games, The** *by* Suzanne collins

Umrdana

Before reading The Hunger Games trilogy, I had more than a few people tell me the first two books were good, but the last one was lacking. I couldn't disagree more. The story is harsh, gruesome, and bleak. It had to be. It's a first person account of an individual who has survived two Hunger Games and plays a major role in a revolution. Of course it's going to be brutal. Had the story drawn to a close with Katniss standing majestically with trumpets blaring and flags waving, it would have been completely unrealistic.

I also heard a few people express disappointment in the conclusion of the Katniss/Peeta storyline. I've read people's reviews taking issue with how Katniss and Peeta are represented at the end of Mockingjay, asking "Where's the passion?" Passion? Are they insane? First of all, the story is told in first person by a character who is admittedly not at all comfortable being demonstrative and doesn't respond well to those who are. There was never going to be a hearts/candy/flowers declaration happening here. Peeta has a borderline obsessive love for Katniss throughout most of the trilogy. The way I read the story, by the end of the first Hunger Games, she returns the feeling. Though hesitant to think why she does the things she does, or to state it aloud, she expresses it in so many different ways throughout the remainder of the trilogy, there really is no doubt. Despite the fact that she is suffering major PTSD, she agrees to take on the stress of being the symbol of revolution and take a front line role to bring him back. Regardless of the amount of trauma they both endure, they still eventually turn back to each other. Gale was a strong character, but he had not gone through what Katniss did in the arena and would never have been able to understand that part of her. The time she spends clinging to him and avoiding Peeta is essentially an attempt to return to the person she was before the games (which was never going to happen). Peeta was the walking, living, breathing reminder of the trauma endured. I thought it telling that Peeta returned to Region 12. Like Gale, he could have gone anywhere when it was all over, yet he went where Katniss was. Really, Katniss, Peeta and Haymitch needed each other to become human again (or as human as they were ever going to be). Katniss reminded me of uncles I had who, when they returned from war, sat in a darkened room, staring at a wall day after day for over a year before they could handle being amongst the living again.

I'll admit part of me would have liked President Snow's demise to be more than it was. Considering the amount of suffering he caused, part of me is bloodthirsty enough to have wanted him to suffer a great deal more. There are also characters I would have liked to survive (Finnick, Cinna, and Prim to name a few), but their deaths helped to illustrate the randomness and unfairness of death in wartime.

There are parts of this story we'll never get to see because it is told from Katniss' point of view. We see only what she sees and know only what she thinks is going on. I, for one, would be interested in knowing more about events of the story from Peeta and/or Haymitch's point of view. Peeta's fight back from his memory hijacking would be an intriguing read.

Ultimately, I found this book engaging, infuriating, exhausting, and funny all at the same time. To have had Katniss serene and sweetly declaring life to be sunshine, lollipops, and rainbows would have been absurd. She is with a husband (partner?) whom she loves and is utterly devoted to. She has two children she loves, but is worried what they will think when they know the role their parents played in the past. She and Peeta are happy, but remain somewhat haunted which is perfectly realistic for what the characters have gone through.

## Shakanos

You know a book is good when it crawls inside your head and snuggles there. When you are thinking through it as you read it, and thinking about it long after you've read the last word on the last page.

I had little to no expectations when I first started reading the Hunger Games Trilogy. If a book is trending and seems interesting, I will add it to my "to read" list. This is how I first started reading Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*. After finishing *Mockingjay*, I was blown away. All I could think was, how many of the YA readers will understand the nuances of Collins' message?

She hooked you in with the "will she or won't she" scenario. "Will she or won't she" pick Peeta or Gale? "Will she or won't she" survive a game that does not allow for love to shine through? Those questions get you through the first book, and possibly half way through the second book, but those same questions are a moot point with *Mockingjay*.

*Mockingjay* stripped you of your hopeless romantic naiveté. There is no room for romance when the world is collapsing around you. There is barely room to breathe. There are no good guys or bad guys, only survivors. *Mockingjay* asks difficult moral questions: can man ever hold seats of power without corruption? Can war ever actually solve a dispute? At what price is man willing to pay for absolute power?

I won't even go into Collins' varied symbolisms. Part of the pleasure of reading is finding them yourselves and asking yourself what the author is telling you, the reader. It becomes a communication between the author and the reader. It makes the novel *Mockingjay* even more important because it is written for younger readers, our future, those that will decide the world events of tomorrow. Collins does all this without a lecture, without losing her characters or her plot, she has crafted an incredibly well written story that I would gladly recommend to anyone who asks.

After I finished reading *Mockingjay* I had the same feeling as I had when I finished reading *The Lord of the Flies* so many years ago. Yes, I am comparing *Mockingjay* to a classic. There is no way around it. *Mockingjay*, like *Lord of the Flies*, asks you deep moralistic questions through the point of view of young characters. This is simply another great novel that makes you go hmmm.

My favorite quotes from *Mockingjay*:

"Frankly, our ancestors don't seem much to brag about. I mean, look at the state they left us in, with the wars and the broken planet. Clearly, they didn't care about what would happen to the people who came after them."

"It's a saying from thousands of years ago, written in a language called Latin about a place called Rome," he explains. "Panem et Circuses translates into 'Bread and Circuses'. The writer was saying in return for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore their power."

"Something is significantly wrong with a creature that sacrifices its children's lives to settle its differences."

skriper

Imagine a lottery. It's sort of like a draft lottery they had during the Viet Nam War. It's sort of like the lottery in Shirley Jackson's short story where the winner is stoned to death.

There are two "winners" in this Hunger Games lottery, a girl and a boy. Actually they are selected - drafted. Their names are pulled out at random. They get to compete with eleven other boys and eleven other girls in a war-games-type arena. There can only be one winner in the Hunger Games - the person still alive at the end of the games.

We follow Katniss, a girl from District Twelve, the poorest district, and Peeta, the baker's son, from the same district. Peeta has had a crush on Katniss since she was five years old. She owes him for giving her bread when her family was starving. She feels she should repay this debt. Now they might be forced to kill each other.

The pageantry leading up to the games at times resembles a beauty contest, at times resembles training for participation in a less-lethal sport and at times it resembles preparation for a bullfight.

This is a terrifying story, but it's also a life enhancing a story as the 24 children (ages 12 to 18) in the games sometimes form alliances based on friendship or need. It's hard to trust anyone knowing that person might soon become your killer.

There's are lessons in survival here. There's also romance as Katniss isn't sure if she loves Peeta, but she cares for him enough to fight for his survival as well as her own.

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