

= The Hunger Games (novel) =

The Hunger Games is a 2008 dystopian novel by the American writer Suzanne Collins . It is written in the voice of 16 @-@ year @-@ old Katniss Everdeen , who lives in the future , post @-@ apocalyptic nation of Panem in North America . The Capitol , a highly advanced metropolis , exercises political control over the rest of the nation . The Hunger Games is an annual event in which one boy and one girl aged 12 ? 18 from each of the twelve districts surrounding the Capitol are selected by lottery to compete in a televised battle to the death .

The book received mostly positive responses from major reviewers and authors . It was praised for its plot and character development . In writing The Hunger Games , Collins drew upon Greek mythology , Roman gladiatorial games , and contemporary reality television for thematic content . The novel won many awards , including the California Young Reader Medal , and was named one of Publishers Weekly 's " Best Books of the Year " in 2008 .

The Hunger Games was first published in hardcover on September 14 , 2008 , by Scholastic , featuring a cover designed by Tim O 'Brien . It has since been released in paperback and also as an audiobook and ebook . After an initial print of 200 @,@ 000 , the book had sold 800 @,@ 000 copies by February 2010 . Since its release , The Hunger Games has been translated into 26 languages , and publishing rights have been sold in 38 territories . The novel is the first in The Hunger Games trilogy , followed by Catching Fire (2009) and Mockingjay (2010) . A film adaptation , directed by Gary Ross and co @-@ written and co @-@ produced by Collins herself , was released in 2012 .

= = Background = =

Collins has said that the inspiration for The Hunger Games came from channel surfing on television . On one channel she observed people competing on a reality show and on another she saw footage of the invasion of Iraq . The two " began to blur in this very unsettling way " and the idea for the book was formed . The Greek myth of Theseus served as a major basis for the story , with Collins describing Katniss as a futuristic Theseus , and Roman gladiatorial games provided the framework . The sense of loss that Collins developed through her father 's service in the Vietnam War was also an influence on the story , with Katniss having lost her father at age 11 , five years before the story begins . Collins stated that the deaths of young characters and other " dark passages " were the most difficult parts of the book to write , but that she had accepted that passages such as these were necessary to the story . She considered the moments where Katniss reflects on happier moments in her past to be more enjoyable .

= = Plot = =

The Hunger Games takes place in a nation known as Panem , established in North America after the destruction of the continent 's civilization by an unknown apocalyptic event . The nation consists of the wealthy Capitol and twelve surrounding , poorer districts united under the Capitol 's control . District 12 , where the book begins , is located in the coal @-@ rich region that was formerly known as Appalachia .

As punishment for a past rebellion against the Capitol , in which a 13th district was destroyed , one boy and one girl between the ages of 12 and 18 from each district are selected by an annual lottery to participate in the Hunger Games , an event in which the participants , the " tributes " , must fight to the death in an outdoor arena controlled by the Capitol , until only one individual remains . The story is narrated by 16 @-@ year @-@ old Katniss Everdeen , a girl from District 12 who volunteers for the 74th annual Hunger Games in place of her younger sister , Primrose . The male tribute chosen from District 12 is Peeta Mellark , a former schoolmate of Katniss who once gave her bread from his family 's bakery when her family was starving .

Katniss and Peeta are taken to the Capitol , where their drunken mentor , Haymitch Abernathy , victor of the 50th Hunger Games , instructs them to watch and determine the strengths and

weaknesses of the other tributes . " Stylists " are employed to make each tribute look his or her best ; Katniss 's stylist , Cinna , is the only person at the Capitol with whom she feels a degree of understanding . The tributes are publicly displayed to the Capitol audience in an interview with television host Caesar Flickerman , and have to attempt to appeal to the television audience in order to obtain " sponsors " . During this time , Peeta reveals on @-@ air his longtime unrequited love for Katniss . Katniss believes this to be a ploy to gain sponsors , who can be critical to survival because of their ability to send gifts such as food , medicine , and tools to favored tributes during the Games .

While nearly half the tributes are killed in the first day of the Games , Katniss relies on her well @-@ practiced hunting and survival skills to remain unharmed and concealed from the other tributes . A few days into the Games , Katniss develops an alliance with Rue , a 12 @-@ year @-@ old girl from the agricultural District 11 who reminds Katniss of her younger sister . In the meantime , Peeta appears to have joined forces with the tributes from the richer districts . However , when he has the opportunity to kill Katniss , he instead saves her from the others . Katniss 's alliance with Rue is brought to an abrupt end when Rue is killed by another tribute , whom Katniss then kills in self @-@ defence with an arrow . Katniss sings to Rue until she dies and spreads flowers over her body as a sign of respect for Rue and disgust towards the Capitol .

Apparently because of Katniss and Peeta 's image in the minds of the audience as " star @-@ crossed lovers " , a rule change is announced midway through the Games , allowing two tributes from the same district to win the Hunger Games as a couple . Upon hearing this , Katniss begins searching for Peeta . She eventually finds him , wounded and in hiding . As she nurses him back to health , she acts the part of a young girl falling in love to gain more favor with the audience and , consequently , gifts from her sponsors . When the couple remains as the last two surviving tributes , the Gamemakers reverse the rule change in an attempt to force them into a dramatic finale , in which one must kill the other to win . Katniss , in an act of defiance against the Capitol , retrieves highly poisonous berries known as " nightlock " from her pouch and offers some to Peeta . Realizing that Katniss and Peeta intend to commit suicide , the Gamemakers announce that both will be the victors of the 74th Hunger Games .

Although she survives the ordeal in the arena and is treated to a hero 's welcome in the Capitol , Katniss is warned by Haymitch that she has now become a political target after defying her society 's authoritarian leaders so publicly . Afterwards , Peeta is heartbroken when he learns that Katniss 's actions in the arena were part of a calculated ploy to earn sympathy from the audience . However , Katniss is unsure of her own feelings and realizes that she is dreading the moment when she and Peeta will go their separate ways .

= = Themes = =

In an interview with Collins , it was noted that the novel " tackles issues like severe poverty , starvation , oppression , and the effects of war among others . " The novel deals with the struggle for self @-@ preservation that the people of Panem face in their districts and the Hunger Games in which they must participate . The citizens ' starvation and their need for resources , both in and outside of the arena , create an atmosphere of helplessness that the main characters try to overcome in their fight for survival . Katniss needs to hunt to provide food for her family , resulting in the development of skills that are useful to her in the Games (such as her proficiency with the bow and arrow) , and represents her rejection of the Capitol 's rules in the face of life @-@ threatening situations . On the subject of the Games ' parallels with popular culture , Darren Franich of Entertainment Weekly writes that the book " is an incisive satire of reality television shows " , and that the character of Cinna " almost seems like a contestant on a fascist version of Project Runway , using Katniss ' outfits as a vehicle to express potentially dangerous ideas . "

The choices the characters make and the strategies they use are often morally complex . The tributes build a personality they want the audience to see throughout the Games . Library journal Voice of Youth Advocates names the major themes of The Hunger Games as " government control , ' big brother ' , and personal independence . " The trilogy 's theme of power and downfall , similar to

that of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, was pointed out by its publisher Scholastic. Laura Miller of *The New Yorker* finds the author's stated premise of the Games "an exercise in propaganda and a humiliating as well as torturous [...] punishment" for a failed uprising against the Capitol many years earlier "to be unconvincing." "You don't demoralize and dehumanize a subject people by turning them into celebrities and coaching them on how to craft an appealing persona for a mass audience." But the story works much better if the theme is vicissitudes of high school and "the adolescent social experience". Miller writes:

"The rules are arbitrary, unfathomable, and subject to sudden change. A brutal social hierarchy prevails, with the rich, the good-looking, and the athletic lording their advantages over everyone else. To survive you have to be totally fake. Adults don't seem to understand how high the stakes are; your whole life could be over, and they act like it's just some "phase"! Everyone's always watching you, scrutinizing your clothes or your friends and obsessing over whether you're having sex or taking drugs or getting good enough grades, but no one cares who you really are or how you really feel about anything."

Donald Brake from *The Washington Times* and pastor Andy Langford state that the story has Christian themes, such as that of self-sacrifice, which is found in Katniss's substitution for her younger sister, analogous to the sacrifice of Jesus as a substitute for the atonement of sins. Brake, as well as another reviewer, Amy Simpson, both find that the story also revolves around the theme of hope, which is exemplified in the "incorruptible goodness of Katniss's sister, Primrose." Simpson also points to events similar to the Passion of Jesus; in the Games, "Christ figure" Peeta Mellark is stabbed after warning Katniss to flee for her life, and is then buried in the ground and placed in a cave for three days before emerging with a new lease on life. Further, she finds that the Christian image of the Bread of Life is used throughout *The Hunger Games*; in the story, Peeta gives Katniss a loaf of bread, saving the girl and her family from starvation.

== Publication history ==

After writing the novel, Collins signed a six-figure deal for three books with Scholastic. First published as a hardcover in the United States on September 14, 2008, *The Hunger Games* had a first printing of 50,000 copies, which was bumped up twice to 200,000 copies. By February 2010, the book had sold 800,000 copies, and rights to the novel had been sold in 38 territories worldwide. A few months later, in July, the book was released in paperback. *The Hunger Games* entered the *New York Times* Best Seller list in November 2008, where it would feature for over 100 consecutive weeks. By the time the film adaptation of *The Hunger Games* was released in March 2012, the book had been on *USA Today*'s best-selling list for 135 consecutive weeks and has sold over 17.5 million copies.

The novel is the first in *The Hunger Games* trilogy; it is followed by sequels *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010). In March 2012, during the time of *The Hunger Games* film's release, Scholastic reported 26 million *Hunger Games* trilogy books in print, including movie tie-in books. *The Hunger Games* (and its sequels) have sold exceptionally well in ebook format. Suzanne Collins is the first children's or young adult author to sell over one million Amazon Kindle ebooks, making her the sixth author to join the "Kindle Million Club". In March 2012, Amazon announced that Collins had become the best-selling Kindle ebook author of all time.

An audiobook version of *The Hunger Games* was released in December 2008. Read by the actress Carolyn McCormick, it has a total running time of eleven hours and fourteen minutes. The magazine *AudioFile* said: "Carolyn McCormick gives a detailed and attentive narration. However, she may rely too much on the strength of the prose without providing the drama young adult listeners often enjoy." *School Library Journal* also praised the audiobook, stating that "McCormick ably voices the action-packed sequences and Katniss's every fear and strength shines through, along with her doomed growing attraction to one of her fellow Tributes."

The Tim O'Brien-designed cover features a gold "mockingjay"—a fictional bird in *The Hunger Games* born by crossbreeding female mockingbirds and genetically engineered male "jabberjays"—with an arrow engraved in a circle. This is a depiction of the pin worn by Katniss into

the arena , given to her by the District 12 mayor 's daughter , Madge Undersee . The image matches the description of the pin that is given in the novel , except for the arrow : " It 's as if someone fashioned a small golden bird and then attached a ring around it . The bird is connected to the ring only by its wing tips . "

= = Critical reception = =

The Hunger Games has received critical acclaim . In a review for The New York Times , John Green wrote that the novel was " brilliantly plotted and perfectly paced " , and that " the considerable strength of the novel comes in Collins 's convincingly detailed world @-@ building and her memorably complex and fascinating heroine . " However , he also noted that , while allegorically rich , the book sometimes does not realize the allegorical potential that the plot has to offer and that the writing " described the action and little else . " Time magazine 's review was also positive , stating that it " is a chilling , bloody and thoroughly horrifying book " and praising what it called the " hypnotic " quality of the violence . In Stephen King 's review for Entertainment Weekly , he compared it to " shoot @-@ it @-@ if @-@ it @-@ moves videogames in the lobby of the local eightplex ; you know it 's not real , but you keep plugging in quarters anyway . " However , he stated that there were " displays of authorial laziness that kids will accept more readily than adults " and that the love triangle was standard for the genre . He gave the book a B grade . Elizabeth Bird of School Library Journal praised the novel , saying it is " exciting , poignant , thoughtful , and breathtaking by turns " , and called it one of the best books of 2008 . Booklist also gave a positive review , praising the character violence and romance involved in the book . Kirkus Reviews gave a positive review , praising the action and world @-@ building , but pointed out that " poor copyediting in the first printing will distract careful readers ? a crying shame " . Rick Riordan , author of the Percy Jackson & the Olympians series , claims it is the " closest thing to a perfect adventure novel " he has ever read . Stephenie Meyer (author of the Twilight series) endorsed the book on her website , saying , " I was so obsessed with this book ... The Hunger Games is amazing . "

The Hunger Games received many awards and honors . It was named one of Publishers Weekly 's " Best Books of the Year " in 2008 and a The New York Times " Notable Children 's Book of 2008 " . It was the 2009 winner of the Golden Duck Award in the Young Adult Fiction Category . The Hunger Games was also a " 2008 Cybil Winner " for fantasy and science @-@ fiction books along with The Graveyard Book , one of School Library Journal 's " Best Books 2008 " , and a " Booklist Editors ' Choice " in 2008 . In 2011 , the book won the California Young Reader Medal . In the 2012 edition of Scholastic 's Parent and Child magazine , The Hunger Games was listed as the 33rd @-@ best book for children , with the award for " Most Exciting Ending " . The novel is one of the top 5 best selling Kindle books of all time . However , the novel has also been controversial with parents ; it ranked in fifth place on the American Library Association 's list of frequently challenged books for 2010 , with " unsuited to age group " and " violence " being among the reasons cited .

Similarities of The Hunger Games to Koushun Takami 's 1999 novel Battle Royale have been noted . Collins stated that she " had never heard of that book or that author until my book was turned in . At that point , it was mentioned to me , and I asked my editor if I should read it . He said : ' No , I don 't want that world in your head . Just continue with what you 're doing ' . " Susan Dominus of The New York Times reports that " the parallels are striking enough that Collins 's work has been savaged on the blogosphere as a baldfaced ripoff " of Battle Royale but argued that " there are enough possible sources for the plot line that the two authors might well have hit on the same basic setup independently . " Stephen King noted that the reality TV " badlands " were similar to Battle Royale , as well as his own novels The Running Man and The Long Walk . Eric Eisenberg wrote that The Hunger Games was " not a rip off of Battle Royale , but simply a different usage of a similar idea " , pointing out various differences in both story and themes .

= = Film adaptation = =

In March 2009 , Lions Gate Entertainment entered into a co @-@ production agreement for The

Hunger Games with Nina Jacobson 's production company Color Force , which had acquired worldwide distribution rights to the novel a few weeks earlier . The studio , which had not made a profit for five years , raided the budgets of other productions and sold assets to secure a budget of \$ 88 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 ? one of its largest ever ? for the film . Collins ' agent Jason Dravis remarked that " they [Lionsgate] had everyone but the valet call us " to help secure the franchise . Intending the film to have a PG @-@ 13 rating , Collins adapted the novel for film herself , in collaboration with screenwriter Billy Ray and director Gary Ross . The screenplay remains extremely faithful to the original novel , with Ross saying he " felt the only way to make the film really successful was to be totally subjective " in its presentation of events , echoing Collins ' use of first person present in the novel .

Twenty @-@ year @-@ old actress Jennifer Lawrence was chosen to play Katniss Everdeen . Though Lawrence was four years older than the character when filming began , Collins felt the role demanded " a certain maturity and power " and said she would rather the actress be older than younger . She added that Lawrence was the " only one who truly captured the character I wrote in the book " and that she had " every essential quality necessary to play Katniss . " Lawrence , a fan of the books , took three days to accept the role , initially intimidated by the size of the production . Josh Hutcherson and Liam Hemsworth were later added to the cast , in the roles of Peeta and Gale , respectively . Production began in late spring 2011 and the film was released on March 23 , 2012 . The film 's opening weekend brought in a non @-@ sequel record \$ 152 @. @ 5 million (USD) in North America . The Hunger Games : Catching Fire , based on the second novel in the series , was released the following year on November 22 , 2013 .