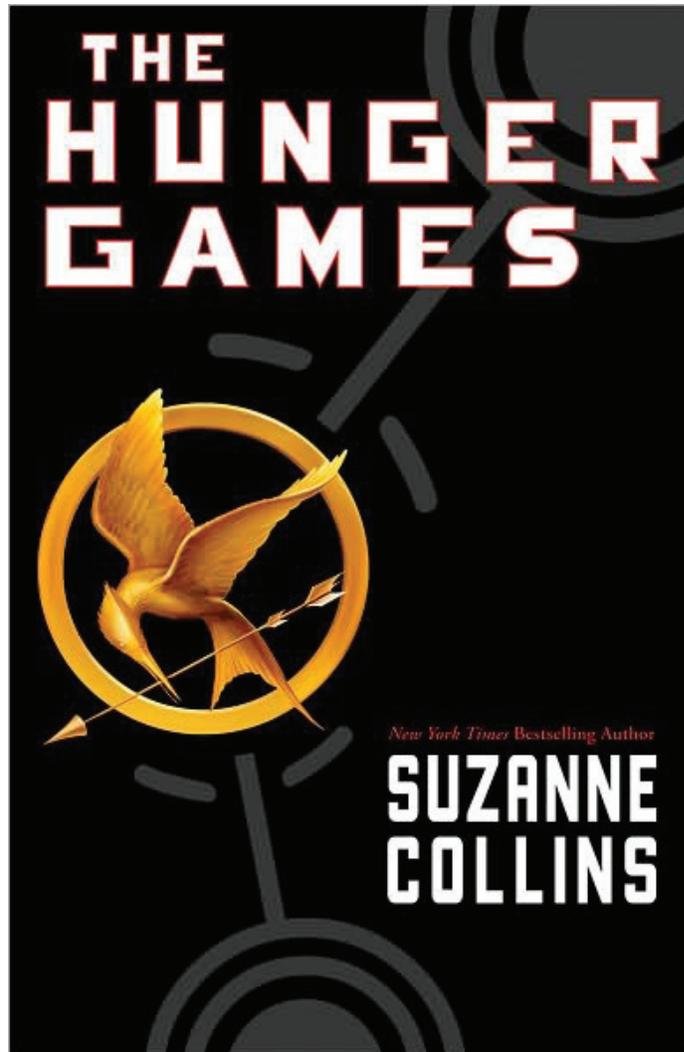

A Reader's Guide



by Mary McManus and Amy McMahon
Reading Specialists, Newton North High School

The Hunger Games – A Reader’s Guide

Introduction

The purpose of the Reader’s Guide is to aid students in reading *The Hunger Games*. The guide is intended to assist with comprehension: understanding the essential questions and big ideas behind the story, providing a list of terms and key characters, and to help students think critically and make connections to both history and current events.

The guide can be used independently with students, or can be used as a classroom tool for discussion and analysis of the text.

The Greek Influence on Hunger Games:

Watch the video of Suzanne Collins discussing her love of Greek myths and their influence on the Hunger Games

<http://www.scholastic.com/thehungergames/videos/classical-inspiration.htm>

Read the interview with Suzanne Collins

<http://www.scholastic.com/thehungergames/media/qanda.pdf>



Table of Contents

Summary of The Hunger Games

Essential Questions and Big Ideas

Characters and Terms

Chapter Summaries and Questions

Essay Questions

The Hunger Games – *Synopsis and Essential Questions*

Story Summary:

The Hunger Games is written in the voice of 16-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives in poverty in the post-apocalyptic nation of Panem, where the countries of North America once existed. Panem's seat of power is the Capitol, which is located near the Rocky Mountains. Originally, 13 districts surrounded the Capitol but a brutal war and uprising by the districts prior to the start of the novel caused the Capitol to destroy District 13 and defeat the remaining 12. Katniss lives in District 12 (an area formerly known as Appalachia), a coal rich region of Panem. Her best friend is Gale, whom she hunts with in the woods surrounding her home, in order to feed her family.

To punish the districts for the past uprising, every year the Capitol forces each district to send one boy and one girl to compete in the Hunger Games, a competition in which the competitors fight to the death on live TV. The story begins on the day of the reaping – the day that the children are selected. At the reaping, Primrose Everdeen, Katniss' sister is chosen as District 12's tribute and Katniss volunteers to take her place. Peeta Mellark, the baker's son, who once saved Katniss' family from starvation, is selected as the male tribute. The mayor's daughter gives Katniss a mockingjay pin as a token of her District. The mockingjay will later become the symbol of rebellion against the Capitol.

Peeta and Katniss travel to the Capitol with Haymitch, their mentor. The pair is pampered and prepared for the competition by their stylists. Haymitch's strategy is to present them as a team. After Peeta declares his secret love for Katniss on live TV, the "star-crossed lovers" strategy wins over the sponsors. Katniss survives horrific conditions and survives the other better-trained tributes in the Hunger Games. During the games the rules are changed to allow two winners from the same district. As the game ends, the Capitol changes the rules again, requiring only one winner. Rather than trying to kill each other, Katniss and Peeta attempt a double suicide, forcing the Capitol to end the game and allow them both to win. This makes the Capitol furious. Afraid that the Capitol will take revenge on her family, Katniss says the suicide attempt was due to her love of Peeta. As Peeta and Katniss travel home to District 12, Katniss discovers Peeta's love for her was real – not a game strategy. In the end, Katniss struggles with her feelings for Gale and Peeta and her actions during the Games.

Essential Questions

1. In *The Hunger Games*, the government asserts its power over the people through a variety of oppressive measures: making teenagers from each district fight one another to the death; keeping food supplies scarce, so that citizens are always hungry and scared; having “Peacekeepers” enforce the law.

What is an example of an oppressive government from the 20th or 21st Century?

Is it essential for people to trust their government and believe that their leaders have their best interests at heart in order for a government to be effective?

For a connection to a modern-day view of an oppressive government, you can view the PBS *Frontline* documentary on Syria: *Syria Undercover* and *The Regime* www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/syria-undercover/#a

2. In many ways, Katniss is a product of a class system in which poorer districts in Panem have an unfair disadvantage in playing the Hunger Games.

What disadvantages does Katniss face by being poor?

What real disadvantages do poorer classes in America face? Does being poor in America affect one’s future?

3. *The Hunger Games* presents us with many moral dilemmas (i.e., a conflict about what is right or wrong that does not have an easy solution). One of those moral dilemmas for Katniss is the question, who or what is worth dying for?

What does Katniss believe is worth dying for? Give an example from the book that shows she is willing to sacrifice her life for something or someone. Why?

4. Much like the Roman gladiator games, *The Hunger Games* showcases some horrible scenes of young people suffering and fighting to the death on television. Reality TV today also shows horrible accidents, brutality, hostility and some of the worst sides of human life.

How is The Hunger Games like a reality TV show?

Have we already lost our boundaries for human decency on reality TV shows?

Big Ideas (themes)

1. **Dystopia** – an imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives. *The Hunger Games* is set in the future in a kind of dystopia.

2. **Survival** – the continuation of life or existence. Many of the conflicts in *The Hunger Games* revolve around the central theme of survival.

3. **Rebellion** – the armed, open and usually unsuccessful resistance to an established government. Katniss' involvement in the Hunger Games helps to spark a rebellion.

4. **Power** – possession of control, influence or authority over others. Few people actually have any power in *The Hunger Games*, other than their personal skills to fight.

5. **Class** – a group sharing the same economic or social status. *The Hunger Games* seems to present only two types of classes: rich and poor.



Characters

Katniss: protagonist – her dad died when she was 11. Now 16, she supports her family by hunting with a bow and arrow and by setting traps.

Primrose (or Prim): Katniss' younger sister; 12 years old and attending her first reaping; like her mother, she is a healer.

Mrs. Everdeen: mother of Katniss and Prim; becomes almost catatonic and ignores her children when her husband dies in a coal-mining accident. She is a skilled healer from a wealthy family.

Gale: Katniss' best friend and hunting companion; handsome; he also supports his family because his father was killed in the same mine explosion as Katniss' father.

Peeta Mellark: baker's son; saved Katniss' family from starvation when her father first died; District 12 tribute; secretly loves Katniss.

Effie Trinket: Escort and chaperone for District 12 tributes; lives in the Capitol

Haymitch Abernathy: Katniss and Peeta's mentor; responsible for getting them sponsors and advising them; the only District 12 Hunger Games winner;

Madge: Daughter of the Mayor; gives Katniss the mockingjay pin as a token of her district; the mockingjay is later a symbol of rebellion – does Madge know this when she gives it to Katniss?

Greasy Sae: An old woman who buys from Katniss and Gale in the “Hob” in District 12.

Cinna: Katniss' stylist

Portia: Peeta's stylist

Caesar Flickerman: Host of the Hunger Games

President Snow: president of Panem

Claudius Templesmith: legendary announcer of the games

Important Tributes:

District 1, 2, and 4: Referred to as “The “Careers” – These children are “career” tributes – although technically illegal, they were trained their whole lives by their districts to compete in the Hunger Games. The “Careers” come from wealthier districts and are generally better fed and are often the winners of the games. They often volunteer to be the tributes in their districts because being a tribute is such an honor. They are Clove, Cato, Glimmer, and “the girl from district 4” – she isn’t given a name in the book.

Fox-face – a sly and elusive girl

Rue – scored a 7 in training; has dark skin and is described as a “wisp” (meaning thin and delicate) because she is so small; she is also very young and reminds Katniss of Prim

Thresh – scored a 10 in training; also has dark skin, but is described as a giant. He is “six and half feet tall and build like an ox.” Rejected the Careers offer to join them, keeps to himself; says little during the interview.



Terms

Panem: The nation formed from the former countries of North America. Comprised of the Capitol, the seat of power in Panem and 12 other districts. District 13 was “destroyed” during a brutal uprising.

The name Panem is derived from the Latin *panem et circenses* which means “bread and circuses.” The phrase describes entertainment that is used to distract public attention from more political matters.

Capitol: Panem’s seat of power is the Capitol. This city is located near the former Rocky Mountains. The twelve districts of Panem are ruled by this city. The government is also called “the Capitol” just like American’s say “the government.”

District 12: The district where Katniss and Peeta live. Consists of the Hob and the Seam.

The Seam: The poorer part of District 12 where the coal miners live

The Hob: The “Black Market” trading area; the area in District 12 where illegal trading and bartering takes place.

Tribute: Two teenagers who are picked to compete in the Hunger Games; an act, statement, or gift that is intended to show gratitude, respect, or admiration; homage

Tesserae: a token worth a one-year supply of grain for one person given in exchange for adding a child’s name again for the reaping.

Reaping: the an annual event held in Panem where two tributes are chosen from each district to fight in the Hunger Games; (also means to cut or gather)

Cornucopia: also referred to as a horn of plenty, symbolizes plenty or prosperity; in Greek mythology – the horn of the goat that suckled Zeus.

Chapters 1–4 Summary and Questions

Summary

The Hunger Games starts on the day of the reaping, a day when two teenagers from each district are chosen to participate in the games. Katniss awakens to find her sister and mother still sleeping. She heads to the woods to go hunting with Gale, her best friend. This first chapter provides a lot of background regarding the games, Katniss' family and her life in District 12.

After the reaping and good-byes to family and friends, Katniss is thrust into the fast-paced world of becoming a Tribute for the games. She and Peeta Mellark head to the Capitol, where Tributes are trained in survival techniques. They become closer to their team, which includes Effie Trinkett, Haymitch, their mentor, and a group of stylists who groom them for the opening ceremonies. The Capitol is rich with resources, food, and elaborate clothes. It is a sharp contrast to the life that Katniss and Peeta led in District 12, where people are poor and hungry most of the time.

Questions

1. The main character in *The Hunger Games* is a girl named Katniss Everdeen. Please list 4–5 qualities that make Katniss uniquely suited to fight in the games.
2. The setting of the Hunger Games is in the future—in a world where the government is corrupt and oppressive. What does it mean to have an oppressive form of government? Why does the government organize the Hunger Games each year?
3. Katniss does not originally get chosen for the Hunger Games on “reaping day.” Who does? Why does Katniss decide to put herself into the Games?
4. Who are the members of Katniss' family? Why is Katniss not very close to her mom?
5. What did Peeta Mellark do to help Katniss after her father died and the family was starving to death? Why did he do this?
6. How do you think Katniss feels about having Peeta as the other Tribute from District 12?
7. Do people from District 12 really starve to death? Find the page in this section (pp 28–32) where it says so—and write down the sentence that explains this.

Chapters 5–8 Summary and Questions

Summary

Katniss and Peeta participate in the opening ceremonies for the Hunger Games. Their matching, flaming outfits that reflect District 12 make a big impression on the crowd and the Gamemakers. Their goal is to attract sponsors who will believe in them and provide support if needed during the Hunger Games. Katniss and Peeta start to share more with each other and Katniss is not sure if she can trust him. They both realize all of their conversations are being observed and that they have no privacy.

Haymitch starts to be more strategic with his advice. He tells Peeta and Katniss not to reveal too much about their skills in front of the other tributes. When Katniss has to show the Gamemakers her skills in archery, she gets angry because no one is paying attention to her. Her anger gets the better of her and she shoots an arrow that also causes a stir. Katniss and Peeta are both evaluated by the Gamemakers and receive better scores than they expected.

Questions

1. Katniss recognizes an Avox, or criminal, who serves them dinner in the Capitol. Where did she see her before? Why does Peeta help her cover up the fact that Katniss has seen her?
2. Katniss goes back and forth on whether she should trust Peeta as an ally. Why?
3. Haymitch wants Katniss and Peeta to pretend that they are a team and that they like one another. Why?
4. Katniss is rated very highly at the end of the training session for Tributes. Why?
5. Katniss and Peeta could be considered unusual Tributes by the Gamemakers. Why?

Chapters 9–12 Summary and Questions

Summary

Katniss and Peeta prepare for the games and their interviews with Ceasar Flickerman. Haymitch worries that Katniss is not likeable. At the interview, Katniss is beautiful, but Peeta surprises the crowd by admitting that he is in love with her.

As the games begin, Katniss does not know what to believe—whether to trust Peeta or not, whether he loves her, or whether it is a ploy to get more sponsors. Haymitch’s advice is to find a source of water and to stay alive. He also warns them both not to run into the Cornucopia (which is full of weapons and food), since it will be a blood bath. Katniss does not totally go along with this advice—and runs for a backpack and bread before taking off. Katniss is shocked to find out that Peeta decides to join forces with the Careers at the beginning of the games.

Questions

1. Why is Katniss angry that Peeta confesses to being in love with her?
2. Katniss’ interview with Caesar goes well and the crowd likes her. Why does Katniss find this surprising?
3. Peeta is very likeable to the crowd. Why?
4. What does Katniss find in the backpack that she snatches from in front of the Cornucopia? What else does she have to survive with?
5. After two days, Katniss has no water. She asks for help from Haymitch, but when he doesn’t send any water—she realizes it must be because she is close to finding it. She does. The next day, however, she is awakened with fire all around her. What is happening? How does Katniss escape from the fire?
6. What is Katniss’ strategy for staying alive?

Chapters 13–15 Summary and Questions

Summary

The action is really heating up. Katniss' leg is badly burned by the fire set by the Gamemakers. She climbs a tree for shelter and straps herself to it with her belt while the Careers and Peeta sleep at the base of the tree. Hiding in a tree nearby, Rue alerts Katniss of the tracker jacker bee's nest in the tree above her. Although in pain, the next morning Katniss climbs further up the tree and cuts the nest off a branch, dropping it on the Careers below. Katniss is able to grab a bow and arrows from Glimmer who is killed by the tracker jacker bees. Peeta saves Katniss, who has been stung by the bees and is hallucinating. Katniss and Rue team up against the Careers.

Questions

1. During these chapters, the sponsors reward Katniss with a gift. Why? What does this say about her and the competition?
2. Does Katniss change once she has the bow and arrows?



Chapters 16–18 Summary and Questions

Summary

Katniss and Rue have teamed up and have decided to destroy the Career's food supply. The food and supplies has been stockpiled and booby-trapped by a hidden minefield. While attempting to destroy the supplies, Katniss loses her hearing after causing a mine to explode. When Rue fails to show up at their agreed upon rendezvous (meeting) spot, Katniss sets out to find her. Katniss races through the forest to find Rue after hearing her scream. Just as Katniss finds Rue caught in a net, the boy from District 1 kills Rue with a spear. Reflexively, Katniss kills the boy. Katniss sings to Rue as she lies dying and promises to win the games for her. She gathers wild flowers and "buries" Rue with them. Katniss is now more determined to win the Games. A change in the rules is announced. Now there can be two victors if the tributes are from the same district.

Questions

1. Why do you think the Capitol changed the rules? What might have influenced this change?
2. Why do you suppose Katniss took the time to "bury" Rue?
3. What is the significance of Katniss receiving a gift from District 11 and thanking them for it?
4. What do you think has happened to Peeta since we last saw him in chapter 14?

Chapters 19–21 Summary and Questions

Summary

Peeta has been severely injured by Cato and is camouflaged in mud near a stream. Katniss tracks him and is shocked by the severity of his wounds. She knows that he may not survive without medication. She manages to hide Peeta in a cave. They share their first kiss. There is an announcement that there will be a feast at the Cornucopia and that each team will receive something they need. Peeta does not want Katniss to go to the feast because he fears that it will be a trap and another possible bloodbath. Katniss secretly drugs Peeta with a gift from Haymitch and goes to the Cornucopia. Clove attacks Katniss at the Cornucopia, but is killed by Thresh. Thresh spares Katniss when he hears of her alliance with and compassion for Rue. Katniss returns to the cave with the much-needed medication for Peeta. Katniss is conflicted by her feelings for Peeta and for Gale.

Questions

1. How is Katniss playing to the television audience in these chapters? Why is she doing this? Do you think Peeta would do the same if the situation were reversed?
2. Why do you think the Gamemakers have the feast?
3. Why is it important that Peeta and Katniss continue to appear as the “star-crossed” lovers to the television audience?
4. There have been moments of humanity during the Games. Can you find two examples? What do you think the author is trying to say to the reader?

Chapters 22-24 Summary and Questions

Summary

Peeta and Katniss remain in the cave while Peeta regains some strength. Peeta tells Katniss that he has loved her since he first saw her in school when she was five. Katniss starts to realize that Peeta may be telling the truth. They leave the cave and go hunting. Katniss feels that Peeta is a detriment to her hunting and so she sends him off to gather berries. Foxface dies because she steals and eats the berries that Peeta has gathered. Unbeknownst to her, the berries are poisonous. Katniss and Peeta are forced to find water at the lake when the Gamemakers dry up the other water sources. Cato now has body armor (his gift at the feast). Peeta, Katniss, and Cato are chased by “muttations” formed from dead tributes.

Questions

1. Are Katniss’ feelings changing towards Peeta? How do you know?
2. How have Katniss’ feelings toward Haymitch changed?
3. If Katniss wins the Games she will live in relative luxury in District 12. How would this change her life?



Chapters 25–27 Summary and Questions

Summary

Only Katniss, Peeta, and Cato remain in the Games. They have climbed atop the Cornucopia to escape the “muttations”. Katniss is horrified by the fact that the “mutts” look like they have been manufactured from dead tributes. Cato ends up going off the Cornucopia and is attacked by the “mutts”. Peeta is bleeding badly and Katniss uses her last arrow as a tourniquet on his leg. The “muttation” attack on Cato lasts all night and Katniss is conflicted by her desire to end his pain and thus end the game and the need to control Peeta’s bleeding. Finally she takes the arrow from Peeta’s leg and ends Cato’s torment.

Just when you think that the Games are over the rules are changed again. Templesmith announces that there can again only be one winner. Unwilling to kill each other, Katniss devises a plan to have them kill themselves with the poisonous berries in a final act of defiance.

Since the Gamemakers must have a winner they quickly declare Katniss and Peeta the winners to prevent them from killing themselves. The Capitol is furious with Katniss for her show of defiance. Haymitch warns Katniss that she must convince everyone that she is so in love with Peeta that the thought of losing him was what drove her to think of suicide. Peeta and Katniss are interviewed on TV again and Cinna does his best to tone down Katniss’ image to make her look less like the “girl on fire” and more like a girl in love. Once the pair is back on the train home, Peeta realizes that Katniss doesn’t love him like he loves her.

Questions

1. Identify examples of Katniss’ survival instincts during the Games.
2. Although both Katniss and Peeta were willing to eat the poisonous berries, why does the Capitol only blame Katniss?
3. How do you think the “star-crossed” lovers strategy will affect Katniss and Peeta’s future?

Essay Questions – The Hunger Games

1. Katniss is a unique character with many special qualities. What makes Katniss uniquely qualified to win the Hunger Games? Please list and give examples from the book that demonstrate what makes her special.
2. The government of Panem is corrupt and controlling. Do you think other governments are like the government of Panem? Why is it bad to have a government that you cannot trust to take care of its people?
3. What made *The Hunger Games* an exciting book to read? Please list at least three aspects of the book that you enjoyed and why you might recommend it to other readers.
4. What did you learn about power from reading *The Hunger Games*? What determines a government's power? What determines an individual's power? Please explain and cite examples from the book that support your ideas.

