THE HUNGER GAMES

Introduction to the movie and the books

The Hunger Games is the first novel in a series of three books by American writer Suzanne Collins. The books depict the fictional dystopian nation of Panem, a territory divided into twelve districts and an advanced metropolis under the name of The Capitol, both located in what used to be North America. The story is told from the point of view of a sixteen-year-old girl named Katniss Everdeen who lives in District 12 and who becomes an unwilling volunteer for the annual pageant commonly known as “The Hunger Games” in order to take the place of her sister, who had been previously chosen as a tribute for the Games. These games are a televised show in which 12 girls and 12 boys from each of the districts are forced to participate. The premise is simple: the Games must have a sole winner who, in order to become the champion, must end with the lives of the rest of the tributes. Katniss, together with Peeta Mellark, the other tribute from District 12, travels to The Capitol and there meets their mentor Haymitch Abernathy, the rest of the tributes and other relevant characters. From her arrival onwards, Katniss describes how each of the tributes participating in the Games is killed or dies.

Though the idea of a bunch of kids being forced to kill each other in some sort of contest is not new (see Battle Royale), what is indeed new to The Hunger Games trilogy is the fact that Suzanne Collins never forgets that the readers she is targeting are teenagers. Thus, she doesn’t dwell on gruesome details on how the different killings are perpetrated but instead focuses on what her main character, Katniss, feels.

Dystopias

Dystopias are the opposite of utopias. The latter are ideal communities or societies while the first are undesirable communities or societies. Dystopias usually appear in works of fiction and most of the time, they are set in the future. Panem is a dystopian nation insofar as it depicts a society ruled by a government that exercises cruelty and dictatorial authority over the members of the different districts.

If you liked this movie or the book it is based upon, try reading these other books. The name of the book is in black and underlined, the author in italics and the publishing year in brackets.

- Brave New World, Aldous Huxley (1932)
- Nineteen Eighty-Four, George Orwell (1949)
- The Day of the Triffids, John Wyndham (1951)
- Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury (1953)
- Lord of the Flies, William Golding (1954)
- Minority Report, Philip K. Dick (1956)
- Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, Philip K. Dick (1968)
- The Handmaid’s Tale, Margaret Atwood (1985)
- Ender’s Game, Orson Scott Card (1985)
- V for Vendetta, Alan Moore (COMIC BOOK) (1988-89)
- The Children of Men, P.D. James (1992)
- Tomorrow, When the War Began, John Marsden (1993)
- Battle Royale, Koushun Takami (1999)
- Uglies, Scott Westerfeld (2005)
- Unwind, Neal Shusterman (2007)
- The Host, Stephanie Meyer (2008)
- Gone, Michael Grant (2008)
- The Maze Runner, James Dashner (2009)
- The Windup Girl, Paolo Bacigalupi (2009)
- Matched, Ally Condie (2010)
- Delirium, Lauren Oliver (2010)
- Divergent, Veronica Roth (2011)
- Ready Player One, Ernest Cline (2011)

VOCABULARY
• Penance - pena
• Uprising - revuelta
• A Public Reaping – una cosecha pública
• Henceforth – de ahora en adelante
• Forevermore – para siempre
• Pageant – concurso / espectáculo
• Be able to heal – ser capaz de curarse
• It knits us all together – nos une a todos
• GameMaker – creador del juego
• Your personal signature – tu sello personal
• Indistinctly – indistinto
• Meadow – prado
• Willow – sauce
• I gotta go – inf. para “I have to go” – me tengo que ir
• Cat meowing and hissing – gato maullando y siseando
• District boundary – límite del distrito
• Damn you – maldito seas
• A hundred pound – de cien libras (1 libra equivale a algo menos de medio kg)
• Crawling – arrastrándose
• Peacekeeper – guardián de paz
• Chuckle – reír entre dientes
• Chattering – parloteo
• Root for your favourites – apoyar a tus favoritos
• Five miles – cinco millas (1 milla equivale a algo más de 1.5 km)
• The woods – el bosque
• Kids – niños
• Better be – más vale que sea
• May the odds be ever in your favour – que la suerte esté siempre de vuestra lado
• Close to new – casi nuevos
• Mockingjay – sinsajo (pájaro ficticio)
• I wish – me gustaría / desearía
• Whistle blow – sonido de silbato
• Gasp – jadeo
• Sign in – apuntarse
• Prick your finger – pincharte el dedo
• Go ahead – adelante
• Widow – viuda
• The uprising that rocked over – la revuelta que hizo tambalear
• Nothing remained – no quedó nada
• Decreed – decretó (= Decree – decreto)
• Pageant of Honour – un concurso de honor
• Safeguard – proteger
• Clears throat – se aclara la garganta
• Come on up – sube
• I bet – apuesto
• Let’s have a big hand – dar un gran aplauso
• Pastries – pastas
• Gale will bring you game – Gale te traerá caza
• You can’t tune out again – no puedes evadirte otra vez
• Sigh – suspiro / suspirar
• Don’t let them starve – no dejes que mueran de hambre
• Doorknob – pomo de la puerta
• Eager – ansioso
• Embrace – abrazar
• REFRESHMENTS – tentempiés / piscolabis
• SPILL MY DRINK – derramar mi bebida
• BRAND NEW – completamente nuevos
• HE’S GONNA COME AROUND – entrará en razón
• FIT – en forma
• RUBBLE - escombro
• FREEZE TO DEATH – morir congelado
• OH, JOY – oh, qué bien
• SOME ADVICE – un consejo
• SHELTER – refugio
• COME IN HANDY – vendrá bien
• TAXING STUFF – aplicando impuestos a las cosas
• MAHOGANY – caoba
• PLACEMAT – mantelitos individuales / salvamanteles
• YOU’RE NOT OFF TO A REALLY GOOD START – no estás empezando muy bien
• CROWD CHEERING – gente aclamando / gritando hurra
• GRUNTS – gruñidos
• PANTS – jadeos
• HOSE YOU DOWN – matar
• THE TRIBUTE PARADE – el desfile de los tributos
• CHEERS – hurras
• CRANING TO GET A GLIMPSE – estirando el cuello para intentar ver algo
• OVERSTATED – exagerado
• CHARIOT – cuadriga
• ON MY COUNT – a mi señal
• GOOSEBUMPS – piel de gallina / carne de gallina
• POWER PLANT – central eléctrica
• ROARING – rugiendo
• OVERLOOKED – ignorado, pasado por alto
• YOU’RE LIVE – estás en directo
• PENTHOUSE – ático
• HUM – tararear
• BIRDS CHIRPING – pájaros trinando
• REMOTE CONTROL CLATTERS – el control remoto retumba
• COMPULSORY - obligatorio
• EXPOSURE – exposición
• A CAREER – “un carrera” (aquí se refiere a los tributos que hacen carrera de los juegos)
• I’M DONE – he terminado
• LIKE YOU’RE MEAL – como si fueras comida
• RATINGS – puntuaciones
• HOW TO PUT THIS – cómo decirlo
• SHOOT STRAIGHT – literal: dispara / metafórico: se honesta
• CHATTERING RESUMES – el parloteo continúa
• THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION – gracias por su consideración (muy formal)
• BAD MANNERS – malos modos / mala educación
• STARTLED – sorprendido
• TAKE IT OUT ON SOMEONE – tomarla con alguien
• ACKNOWLEDGE – admitir / reconocer
• OUTSTANDING – sobresaliente
• THEY LIKED YOUR GUTS – les gustó tu arrojo
• SHE EARNED IT – se lo ha ganado
• A SPARK – una chispa
- FIGURE IT OUT -
- GATHERER - recolector
- FOLKS – gente / amigos
- STEADY - tranquila
- THAT WAS SOMETHING – eso ha sido impresionante
- WE WERE ALL VERY MOVED – nos conmovió mucho
- TAKE A WHIFF – huele esto
- A CRUSH – enamoramiento
- ACTUALLY – de hecho
- STAR-CROSSED LOVERS – los amantes desafortunados
- CHANTING - cantando
- COMPLIMENT - cumplido
- TURN ME INTO SOMETHING DIFFERENT – convertirme en algo distinto
- I CAN'T AFFORD TO – no me puedo permitir
- HORN BLARES – un claxon suena con estridencia
- BLOODBATH – baño de sangre
- BLOW YOU SKY HIGH – te hará volar por los aires
- DEVICE BUZZES – un artefacto emite un zumbido
- TRACKER - rastreador
- HERE – en este contexto: toma
- I'M NOT ALLOWED TO BET – no me está permitido apostar
- WHIRRING - zumbando
- SNIFFS – huele
- AN ALLIANCE – una alianza
- SNARE – trampa / cebo
- EDGE – borde / filo
- RUMBLING – estrépito
- CUEING – poniendo en cola
- HEADING TOWARDS – dirigiéndose hacia
- WHOOPING – gritando hurras
- WAY TO GO – buen trabajo
- WAIT HER OUT – espera a ver qué hace
- CHIMING – dando campanadas
- APPLY – aplicar
- TRACKER JACKERS – nombre ficticio para abejas rastreadoras
- STING – picar (un bicho)
- WHILE I WAS OUT – mientras estaba inconsciente
- SUPPLIES – suministros / provisiones
- LIGHT THIS ONE LAST – enciende este el último
- CHASING US – persiguiéndonos
- HELD UP – retenido / atacado
- MIMIC TUNE – imitando la melodía
- SUPPER – cena
- STAY GUARD – quédate vigilando
- FIGURE OUT - averiguar
- BOOBY TRAP – trampa
- GOODIES – informal: golosinas
- MUFFLED - amortiguado
- WHAT THE HELL – qué demonios
- TWIG SNAPS – una rama se parte en dos
- BLOW UP – hacer estallar
- SOBBING – sollozando
- HANDLE A MOB – manejar un motín / lidiar con una rebelión
- UNDERDOG – perdedor / el que lleva las de perder
- ROW CROPS – hileras de campos de cultivo
• SUSPENDED - suspendidas
• ORIGINATE FROM – provienen de
• WE’LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT – ya se nos ocurrirá algo
• TOSSED – arrojé
• BRAIDS - trenzas
• HAND SHOT STRAIGHT UP – levantó la mano rápidamente
• IF I DON’T MAKE IT – si no lo consigo
• FEAST – festín / banquete
• HOST – anfitrión
• RISK YOUR LIFE – arriesgar tu vida
• THUDDING – golpeando secamente
• I’M KIDDING – estoy bromeando
• NIGHTLOCK – planta ficticia
• NOON – mediodía (las 12.00)
• PRIDE - orgullo
• NOT THAT IT MATTERS – no es que importe
• SLIGHT - ligero
• REVOKED - anuladas
• TRUST ME – confía en mí
• HOVERCRAFT - aerodeslizador
• YOU SHOWED THEM UP – les has delatado
• TAKE THINGS LIGHTLY – tomarse las cosas a la ligera
• YOU’D RATHER DIE THAN – antes morirías que…

Things you should watch out for while viewing the movie (these are my own interpretations. Feel free not to agree with me)

1. Panem, cornucopias, arenas and chariots. Hey Romans, where are you? - Throughout The Hunger Games (both movie and books) there are many different references to Roman culture. You may have spotted a few of them if you have already seen the film or read the book, but it might be a good idea to see how many more you can find. I’m just going to touch on the most obvious ones.

Panem = Bread (Panem et Circenses)

Cornucopia = Horn of Plenty. A horn-shaped container with an infinite amount of food and wealth

Arena = The arena was the place where gladiators fought. In the Colosseum or Coliseum, the arena is the central, circular part.

Chariot – Chariot racing was a very popular sport in Rome. These races took part in the circus. The circus wasn’t circular, but rather had a rectangular shape.

The sentence “Panem et Circenses” perfectly describes the way in which the people governing Panem from The Capitol keep their citizens happy. They offer them bread (the resources and food coming from the districts) and entertainment (the annual games that are held in The Capitol). In this way, they have a better chance of keeping their citizens content and avoiding uprisings.

2. How a simple gesture can shake crowds - Katniss’ respect hand sign (when she puts her hand up and shows three fingers) leads to a mob in District number 11. This owes to the fact that the sign is one of respect in District 12 and, in showing it as a sign of respect for District 11 as well, she is valuing Rue’s life as something as precious and important as her own life. The people back in District 11, who are watching the show and following Katniss’ actions on screen,
see this and interpret the sign for what it is. It is the spark that stirs them, what makes them ask themselves, “hey, how is it that none of us here did anything at all for these little kids and, even more, how come that the person that should be their enemy is the one to help them?”

3. **Fire** - Fire represents Katniss throughout the film and it represents her both literally and figuratively. She comes from a district where fire is a part of the coal miners’ everyday life, but fire also stands for courage, bravery and passion, three features perfectly embodied by Katniss. Fire is also a motif played upon by the gamemakers at some points in the movie, particularly when Katniss is beginning to get close to the boundaries of the arena and they decide to make the forest around her burn by throwing fireballs at trees. One of those fireballs hits Katniss, ironically turning her into “a girl on fire”, the name for which she is known by the show followers.

5. **The Mockingjay** (jabberjay + mockingbird = sinsonte) - Though it is not explained in the movie, the Mockingjay is the result of a failed genetic engineering project carried out by the Capitol. The Capitol created jabberjays, which are fictitious birds, to spy on the districts, but this didn't work out. Instead, the jabberjays started to mate with mockingbirds (birds that do exist in real life) producing a new type of bird called mockingjay. In the movie (and in the book too), mockingjays are shown as able to reproduce any sound – spoken, sang or whistled – they hear. But they are so much more than that. They represent one of the biggest Capitol failures and, therefore, they are a symbol of defiance and rebellion. Katniss carries a mockingjay pin on the lap of her shirt and that makes her, to Snow’s eyes and to the eyes of the Capitol, an enemy and a danger to the status quo (the accepted social order). Further in the series, the Mockingjay will come to represent the very symbol of rebellion, uprising and hope for the people in the districts.

6. **Cato’s Last Words** - Cato’s last words in the movie are, if nothing else, disturbing. For once, that last speech is completely out of character (and, interestingly enough, is not in the book). Cato is a career, a tribute trained to kill, a boy theoretically incapable of feeling remorse or compassion. However, the speech makes sense insofar as it reflects what Cato might be feeling at this precise moment. He has been training his whole life to be the winner of the Games, he has left everything else aside just to live that final moment. And then… then the rules change. And there can be two winners if both come from the same district. He has no chances whatsoever. He feels he has been a victim to foul play. The organisers of the Games can suspend rules or revoke them whenever they feel like it, and that means that Cato has been fighting for something which, in the end, doesn’t really matter, because it doesn’t matter to anyone that he lives or he dies. It only matters that he provides entertainment for all those people watching the show, rooting and betting for their favourite contestants. Other interpretations could arise from his words, though. You should check the speech out and see what you figure out from it.

“Go on. I’m dead anyway! I always was, right? I didn't know that until now. Isn't that what they want, huh? […] No! I can still do this. I can still do this. One more kill. It's the only thing I know how to do. Bring pride to my district. Not that it matters.”
EXERCISES

Essay topics – You must choose ONE of the topics and write about 250 to 300 words on it
1. Is Haymitch a good mentor to Katniss and Peeta? Explain.
2. In what ways does Katniss’s hunting experience prepare her for the Games, and in what ways does it fail to prepare her?
3. How does Katniss’s role in her family affect her behaviour in the Games?
4. What is Katniss’s greatest strength in the Games, and what is her greatest weakness? Discuss.
5. Science fiction often uses a futuristic setting to comment on the present day. What does The Hunger Games suggest about the present-day United States?

Questions – Answer these questions after watching the movie
1. Gale thinks he could escape the control exercised by the Capitol. How? Where would he go?
2. How many tributes are selected for the Games and how is this process carried out?
3. Why are tributes selected every year for the Games?
4. Where does Katniss find the mockingjay pin (in the movie)?
5. The tribute parade is a part of the show in which tributes are dressed to reflect what?
6. In what ways do the Gamemakers control the environment in the arena? Indicate the reasons why they do this.
7. How many times do the Gamemakers change the rules while the Games are on? What are those changes?
8. What is the thing that Peeta desperately need from the cornucopia when the hosts offer a feast?
9. What is what Peeta and Katniss plan to eat if things go wrong?

Discussion questions – Discuss these with your partner
1. What do you think about the Reaping? Is it fair? Do you imagine anything like that happening today in a society like ours? What about tesserae (putting your name in more times - and so having more possibilities of being chosen as a tribute – so you can be given food)? Do you think putting your name in more times really makes a difference when it comes to the outcome of the Reaping? Would you use tesserae?
2. Were you surprised when Prim’s name was the one drawn during the Reaping? Why did Katniss volunteer to take Prim’s place? Would you also volunteer if the chosen tribute were your brother or sister?
3. Why don’t the citizens of Panem speak out against the Games? Do you think any of the citizens enjoy watching the games? Would you watch?
4. Describe Katniss’ relationship with Gale and with Peeta. Is she in love with any of them at this point in the trilogy?
5. The day of the Reaping, Katniss tells Gale that she never wants to have children. Is it just the Games that make her feel this way? Why do you think the citizens of Panem continue to have children knowing that those kids will one day face the Reaping?
6. What does Haymitch mean when he says, “It’s all a big show. It’s all how you’re perceived.” Why do the tributes need to impress potential sponsors? What are those sponsors looking for when the watch the Games?
7. Why does Katniss ignore Haymitch’s advice to head directly away from the Cornucopia? Did she do the right thing? Which of her skills proves to be the most valuable in the arena?
8. What do you think is the cruellest part of the Games? What was the most touching moment in the movie?