

THE ULTIMATE READING GUIDE



THE HUNGER GAMES
SERIES BY
SUZANNE COLLINS



THE BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS AND SNAKES

#1 *USA Today* Bestseller

#1 *Wall Street Journal* Bestseller

#1 *New York Times* Bestseller

#1 *Publishers Weekly* Bestseller

★ “Both a tense, character-driven piece and a cautionary tale . . . The twists and heartbreaks captivate despite tragic inevitabilities.”—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

“Whipsaw plot twists and propulsive writing make this story’s complex issues—vulnerability and abuse, personal responsibility, and institutionalized power dynamics—vivid and personal.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“There hasn’t been a release quite this buzzy since, well, the last Hunger Games book.”
—*Booklist*

“Collins once again proves that she is a master of building a fascinating world around complex characters who must grapple with the complications of chaos and control and their effects on human nature.”—*The Associated Press*

“It is a steep challenge to write a book whose hero is, everyone knows, destined to become deeply evil. Do we want to hear—now, after we know the endgame—that the young Voldemort was unfairly saddled with a demerit in class or that the adolescent Sauron fretted because he had to wear hand-me-down clothes? Yes, please.”
—*The New York Times*

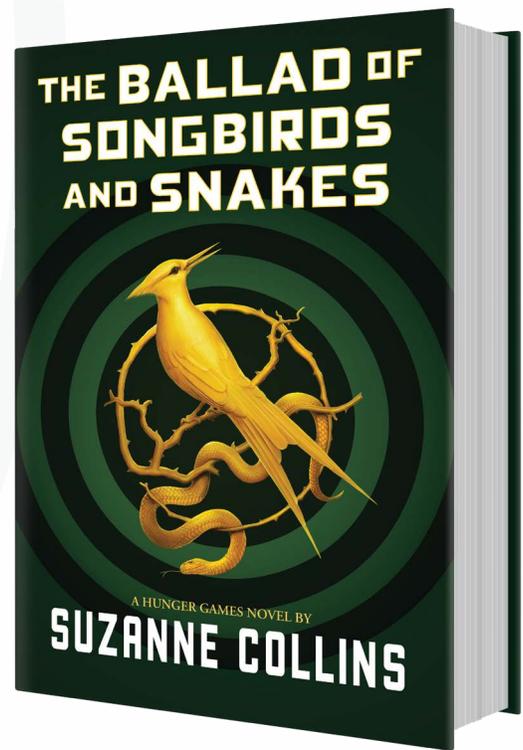
“*The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* builds on the original series’ overt critique of violence and those who perpetuate it . . . Collins shines most as she weaves in tantalizing details that lend depth to the gruesome world she created in the original series and Coriolanus’s place in its history.”—*TIME*

“By introducing a new cast of teenagers, Collins is able to raise questions about privilege, the uses of violence, and the futility of war.”—*PEOPLE*

ABOUT THE BOOK

It is the morning of the reaping that will kick off the tenth annual Hunger Games. In the Capitol, eighteen-year-old Coriolanus Snow is preparing for his one shot at glory as a mentor in the Games. The once-mighty house of Snow has fallen on hard times, its fate hanging on the slender chance that Coriolanus will be able to outcharm, outwit, and outmaneuver his fellow students to mentor the winning tribute.

The odds are against him. He's been given the humiliating assignment of mentoring the female tribute from District 12, the lowest of the low. Their fates are now completely intertwined—every choice Coriolanus makes could lead to favor or failure, triumph or ruin. Inside the arena, it will be a fight to the death. Outside the arena, Coriolanus starts to feel for his doomed tribute . . . and must weigh his need to follow the rules against his desire to survive no matter what it takes.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Hobbes vs. Locke

- Which character in this book most exemplifies the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes that all humans are essentially selfish and need a strong central government?
- Which characters develop that belief through the events of the story?
- Which characters believe, as John Locke did, that humans should all be treated equally for the common good? How do these characters act as a result of their beliefs?
- Do you think the decisions they make are evil or necessary? Do you think *they* believe their actions are evil or necessary?

“Monstrous” Origins

- Discuss how the Mary Shelley quote about the creature created by Dr. Frankenstein relates to the characters in this book. Which of them had the “promise of virtues” destroyed by “the loathing and scorn” that were “manifested toward” them?
- Do you believe that people can become “monsters” through the way they are treated by others?

Loyalty and Motivation

- Compare the family backgrounds of Coriolanus and Sejanus. How do their childhood experiences affect how each feels about the Capitol, the Hunger Games, and being mentors to the tributes?

A Natural Performer

- Describe Lucy Gray Baird’s appearance at the reaping and why it has the effect it does on the audience, in District 12 and the Capitol. In what ways does she represent the quotation from Wordsworth—“Sweet is the lore which Nature brings”?

Choices and Human Nature

- Why does Coriolanus decide to meet the train that brings the tributes to the Capitol, and why does he stay with the tributes? Describe the ways that he is influenced by Lucy Gray and how she responds to him. What makes Lucy Gray believe him to be trustworthy? Does he betray that trust?
- How do Coriolanus’s and Lucy’s views of human nature influence the way they see each other, their communities, and the decisions they make?

THE BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS AND SNAKES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

Choices and Human Nature (cont.)

- Which philosophers from the epigraph at the beginning of the book represent each of their viewpoints?
- Why do you think Sejanus went into the arena? Why does Dr. Gaul insist that Coriolanus go in after him? What does the time they spend in the arena tell us about the nature of both Sejanus and Coriolanus? What does this scene tell us about Dr. Gaul's motivation?

The Power of Song

- How do Lucy Gray's songs affect Coriolanus when she sings in the Capitol? Why is he disturbed by some of her ballads and not by others? How else does he respond to her songs in the Capitol? What is the difference when he hears her sing in District 12?

Beyond the Capitol

- How does Coriolanus feel about being forced to join the Peacekeepers? Why does he request to be sent to District 12? Why does Sejanus follow Coriolanus to District 12?
- How do Coriolanus's and Sejanus's personalities affect their behavior in the District?

REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Experiences and Actions

- In interviews, Suzanne Collins has mentioned philosopher John Locke's concept of *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, which states that we are all products of our experiences. Coriolanus, Sejanus, Tigris, Lucy Gray, and Lysistrata all experienced similar deprivations and trauma, but they each take different actions.
- Choose one or more of the characters listed above and explain how their experiences influence how they behave and the decisions they make.

Love vs. Power

- What effect does Lucy Gray have on Coriolanus in the beginning and at the end of the story?
- When does he begin to feel that she can actually win the Games?
- Do you think Coriolanus is ever truly in love with Lucy Gray?
- Discuss the influences on the personality of Coriolanus that would cause him to distrust Lucy Gray and abandon her in the end.

Protest Music

- What is the significance of the event that inspires the "Hanging Tree" song? What does Coriolanus learn from that experience?
- Why do you think Coriolanus instantly dislikes the mockingjays?
- Discuss Lucy's comment to him in the Capitol, "The show's not over until the mockingjay sings."

Morals vs. Self Preservation

- Why do you think Sejanus decides to help the rebels in District 12?
- Why does Coriolanus betray him by sending the jabberjay message to Dr. Gaul? Describe his feelings as Sejanus is executed.
- Relate the happenings in District 12 to the Rousseau quote: "Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains." What are the "chains" that hold each of these characters?

Chaos, Control, and Contract

- Consider the relationship of Coriolanus to Dr. Gaul. What are his feelings about her at the beginning of the story and at the end?

THE BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS AND SNAKES

REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

- What is the importance of the essay he writes for her on chaos, control, and contract? What do each of those concepts come to mean to Coriolanus?
- How do those concepts relate to the philosophies of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau in the quotes at the beginning of the book?
- What is called a “Ballad”?
- Who are the Songbirds and who are the Snakes, and what philosophies do they align with?
- How do birds and snakes play a part in the narrative?
- Why do you think the author added an epilogue, and why is Coriolanus referred to only as Snow in the epilogue?

What’s in a Name?

- Discuss the title of this book. Why do you think it

RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

Humanity and Government

- Read the quotations from Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau at the start of the book. Rewrite each quotation in modern language to help explain and make it more clear.
- Which of these quotations aligns the most closely with how Coriolanus sees the world?
- Which of them describes the views of Sejanus?
- How do the actions of Coriolanus and Sejanus reflect these different views of human nature?

Ancient Roman Influences

- Names of the characters in this book are carefully chosen. Many of the citizens in the Capitol are named after ancient Roman figures—choose one and do some research to see what similarities they might have.
- Other names are used too—Sejanus and Coriolanus have the last names of Plinth and Snow. What might be the reasons Suzanne chose those names?
- Look up the history of the ancient Roman named Coriolanus, whose life is part history and part legend. How does his story compare to the life of Coriolanus Snow? Why would Suzanne Collins use that name? Why might she have chosen the last name of Snow?

Musical Influences and Impact

- Music plays a part in all the Hunger Games books, but it is especially important in this volume. How many instances can you identify in which music reflects or influences events or characters, both in the Capitol and in District 12 and from the Panem anthem to the Hanging Tree song?
- What is the importance of the old folk ballads, especially in District 12?
- Research the growth and development of ballads and story songs in the Appalachian regions of the United States and their historical counterparts, in particular the ballads of “Tam Lin,” “Clerk Saunders,” and “Barbara Allen.”
- Can you identify other songs that have evolved from an historic incident to become symbolic to a group of people, either in American history or in another country?

Upon the Lonesome Wild

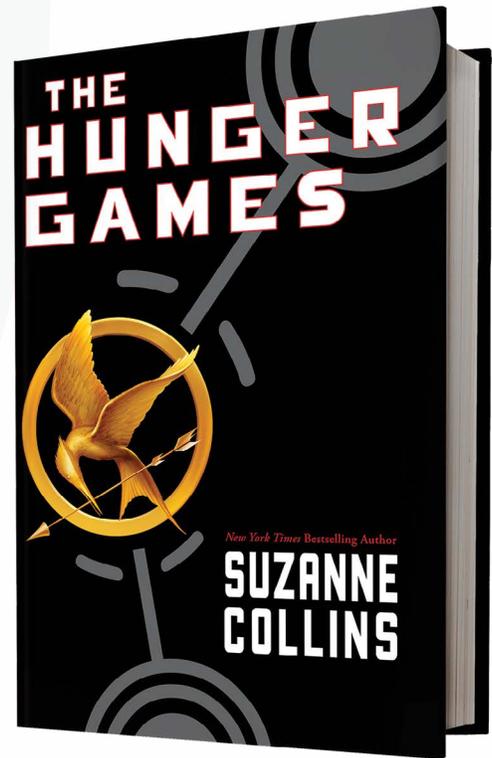
- Compare the life of Lucy Gray Baird to the poem “Lucy Gray” by William Wordsworth.
- The romanticism of Wordsworth’s poetry celebrates individualism, the natural world, and free expression of emotion. How are these values reflected in the lifestyle of The Covey?
- How does Lucy Gray’s fate in the poem presage the ambiguous ending of *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*?

THE HUNGER GAMES

ABOUT THE BOOK

In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. The Capitol 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 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. Without really meaning to, she becomes a contender. But if she is to win, she will have to start making choices that weigh survival against humanity and life against love.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Relationships and Identity

- What are the roles that Katniss plays with Gale, Prim, and her mother?
- How do those relationships define her personality?
- How does her early encounter with Peeta affect their relationship once they are tributes?

Know Your Audience

- When Peeta declares his love for Katniss in the interview, does he really mean it?
- Why do they need to impress sponsors and what are those sponsors looking for when they are watching the Games?

A Conflict of Interest

- Why does Peeta join with the Career Tributes in the beginning of the Games?
- Why do groups form when they know only one of them can survive?

Fight or Flight

- Why does Katniss ignore Haymitch's advice to head away from the Cornucopia?
- Did she do the right thing to fight for equipment?
- What are the most important skills she has for staying alive in the arena?

Fight or Flight

- What makes Katniss and Rue trust each other to become partners?
- What does Katniss gain from this friendship besides companionship?

THE HUNGER GAMES

REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS

An Elaborate Performance

- How does the fact that the tributes are always on camera affect their behavior from the time they are chosen?
- Does that make it easier or harder for them to accept their fate?
- Why are the tributes given stylists and dressed so elaborately for the opening ceremony?
- Does this ceremony remind you of events in our world, either past or present?

Performance vs. True Self

- Before the Games start, Peeta tells Katniss, “I want to die as myself . . . I don’t want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I’m not.” What does this tell you about Peeta’s character?
- Is he able to stay true to himself during the Games?

Rue and Symbolism

- Discuss the meaning of the mockingjay call and its significance for both Rue and Katniss.
- What is the effect on the audience and the Gamemakers of the way Katniss honors Rue after her death?
- What is the importance of symbolism as the story progresses?

A Controlled Environment

- How do the Gamemakers control what happens during the Games?
- Why does Katniss think, just before the final interview, after she and Peeta have won, that “the most dangerous part of the Hunger Games is about to begin”? (p. 359)

RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

Class Struggle and Social Control

- In 1848, Karl Marx wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” Discuss this statement as it applies to the society and government of Panem.
- Cite examples in history and in our world today.
- Do you believe that humanity has a chance to eradicate class struggles in the future? Why or why not?

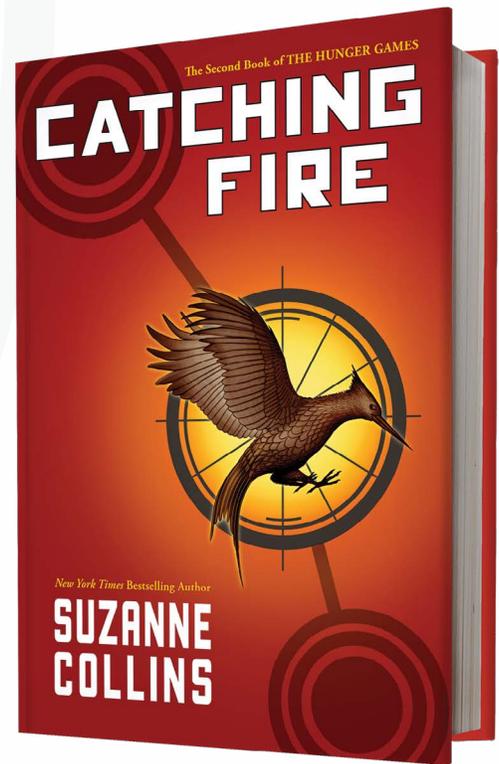
Social and Historical Parallels

- What parallels can you identify between the Hunger Games, the government that supports them, and actual cultures in the history of the world?
- Compare the concept of the Hunger Games to the ancient Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur.
- Compare the government of Panem to the ancient Roman world. <https://www.ancient.eu/Rome/>
- How is the ruling class in the Capitol similar to the patricians in Roman times?
- Are there other times in history that are reflected in the way this society is depicted?

CATCHING FIRE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Against all odds, Katniss Everdeen has won the annual Hunger Games with fellow district tribute Peeta Mellark. Katniss and Peeta should be happy. After all, they have just earned for themselves and their families a life of safety and plenty. But it was a victory won by defiance of the Capitol and their harsh rules, and now there are rumors of rebellion in the districts. Katniss and Peeta, to their horror, are the faces of that rebellion. The Capitol is angry. The Capitol wants revenge.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Katniss and Gale

- How did Katniss's participation in the Games change her relationship with Gale?
- Why does Gale refuse Katniss's offer to try to escape into the wild?
- What does he mean when he says, "It can't be about just saving *us* anymore"?

A Relationship in the Spotlight

- How do the events of the Victory Tour affect Katniss and Peeta, their relationship to each other, and their feelings about their future?

Government and Control

- Why do you think President Snow comes to Katniss's home?
- What does he mean when he says, "... you have provided a spark which left unattended may grow into an inferno ... "

- Why do the Capitol officials attack those who befriended Katniss? Why is Cinna attacked just before Katniss is placed in the arena?
- What effect does this have on Katniss?

Decency vs. Determination

- What makes Katniss say, "No wonder I won the Games. No decent person ever does."
- Is she being too hard on herself?
- What makes her realize that fighting the Capitol is more important than running away?
- What is the importance of her meeting with Bonnie and Twill in the forest?

Titular Symbolism

- What is the meaning of the title?
- Identify at least two of the ways in which the theme of "catching fire" is represented in this book.

CATCHING FIRE

REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Haymitch's Legacy

- What do Katniss and Peeta learn when they watch the video of Haymitch's Hunger Games, the Second Quarter Quell?
- How does it affect their understanding of Haymitch and the mockingjay symbol?
- In what way did Haymitch trick the Capitol?

Resistance and Respect

- How do both Peeta and Katniss mock the Gamemakers during the "talent show" portion of the training?
- Why do they each take the chance of offending those who will control the Games?
- How does this change their feelings for each other?

Resistance and Community

- When does Katniss realize the importance of forming alliances with the other tributes?
- Why does Finnick save Peeta's life? Describe the relationship between Katniss and Johanna.
- What important contribution does each one of the allies make to keep the group alive?
- What is the role of the unseen "sponsors"?

Knowledge and Power

- What does Haymitch mean when he tells Katniss, "You just remember who the enemy is—that's all."
- Who *is* the enemy? Is Peeta or Katniss more important to the rebellion?
- Why were Katniss and Peeta not aware of the plans for the rebellion?
- Why were they kept in the dark when other tributes knew about it?

RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

Abuses of Power

- Why do you think the Capitol devises a special reaping for every 25th Game?
- Do you believe the requirements were decided in the past or were they designed for this Game to force Katniss and Peeta back to the arena?
- What does the Capitol hope to gain by sending previous victors back to the Games?
- Why does the Capitol believe that a sense of hope is so dangerous in the districts?
- Compare this to actual historical conflicts you have studied when one group of people tried to control and exert power over others in their country.

Symbols of Resistance

- What is the significance of the mockingjay image?
- What does a symbol like this mean to the people in the districts and the people in the Capitol?
- Discuss how the mockingjay species developed and why their song is important.
- Identify symbols that have had meaning in historical struggles and fights for freedom.
- What symbols are important to people in struggles today?

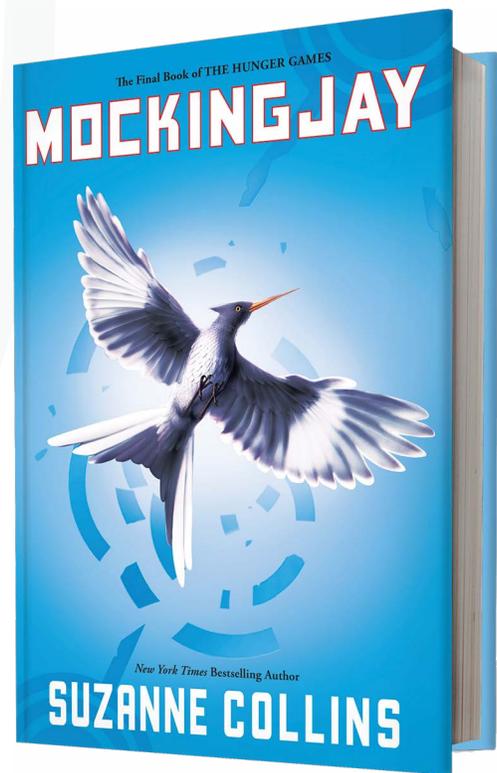
MOCKINGJAY

ABOUT THE BOOK

Katniss Everdeen, girl on fire, has survived, even though her home has been destroyed. There are rebels. There are new leaders. A revolution is unfolding.

District 13 has come out of the shadows and is plotting to overthrow the Capitol. Though she's long been a part of the revolution, Katniss hasn't known it. Now it seems that everyone has had a hand in the carefully laid plans but her.

The success of the rebellion hinges on Katniss's willingness to be a pawn, to accept responsibility for countless lives, and to change the course of the future of Panem. To do this, she must put aside her feelings of anger and distrust. She must become the rebels's Mockingjay—no matter what the cost.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Home and Security

- What is Katniss's greatest challenge when she returns to see the ruins of her home?
- What is the meaning of the rose she finds on her dresser?
- Why does she keep repeating facts about herself?
- Why does Katniss take the cat Buttercup back to District 13?
- What role does Buttercup play in the story in later chapters?

Love vs. Power

- Discuss how the relationship between Katniss and Gale is changing in this book.
- Did Katniss ever love Gale the way he wants her to love him?
- Does Gale truly love Katniss?

Performing the Mockingjay

- What influences Katniss's decision to take on the role of the Mockingjay?
- Discuss the conditions she requires.
- How does Coin react to those conditions?

Growth and Sisterhood

- Discuss the changing nature of Prim's role in the story as she grows older.
- Identify times when Prim helps Katniss when no one else can.

Romance and Female Agency

- How does Katniss feel when she overhears the conversation between Gale and Peeta about which one of them she will choose?
- In the end, why do you think she makes the choice she does?

MOCKINGJAY

REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Control vs. Leadership

- What makes Katniss say, “In some ways District 13 is even more controlling than the Capitol”?
- Discuss the feelings between Katniss and Coin. Why do they distrust each other, even though they are fighting on the same side of this conflict?
- Do you believe that Katniss is a threat to Coin’s power?

Trust and Betrayal

- Why does Katniss feel guilt and insecurity when confronting Peeta, and what makes her say, “Finally, he can see me for who I really am. Violent. Distrustful. Manipulative. Deadly”?

Truth and Closure

- Why does Paylor allow Katniss to enter the rooms where Snow is being held?

- Does she know that Snow will reveal the role of the rebels in Prim’s death?
- Do you think Snow tells Katniss the truth?
- Do you think that Katniss assassinates Coin to avenge Prim, or because she believes it is for the greater good of the country?
- How does Katniss escape retribution for Coin’s death?

Questionable Motivation

- What are Coin’s motives in ordering Peeta to join Katniss’s squad in the Capitol?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having him on the squad?
- When Boggs transfers the Holo to Katniss, why does he say, “Don’t trust them?” Who does he mean?

RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

Media and Influence

- Discuss the role of “propaganda” in our own society today on television and beyond, and the techniques that are used to influence our thinking.
- How do these techniques compare to those used by the Capitol and the rebels of District 13 in *Mockingjay*?
- What can viewers do to be sure they are not being swayed by propaganda, both in the story and in our own world?

Actions vs. Their Results

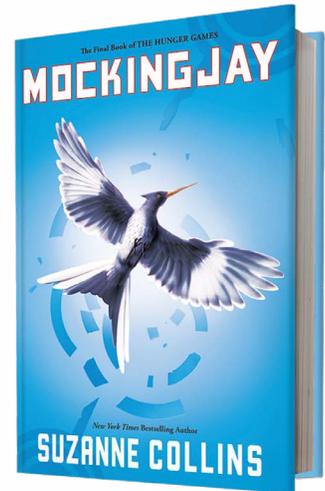
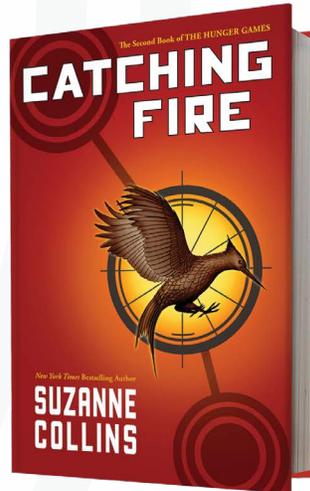
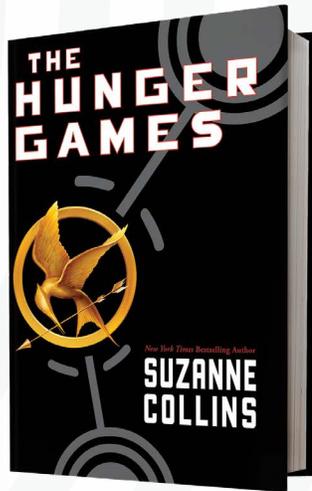
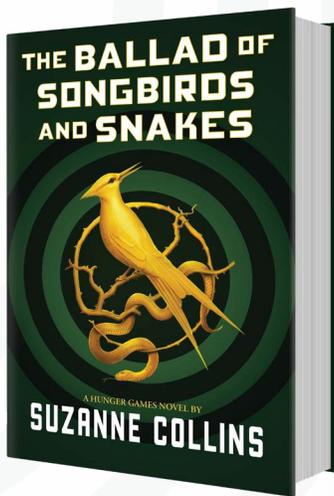
- When Katniss learns of the work Gale is doing with Beetee, using the psychology of trapping as much as the mechanics, she says, “Seems to be crossing some kind of line.” Gale’s reply is that they are “following the same rule book President Snow used.” Do the ends in this battle justify the means, as Gale seems to imply?

- Who is responsible for killing the children with exploding parachutes?
- Discuss incidents in recent history when similar tactics were used against an enemy, and when fighters may have crossed “some kind of line.”

Living with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Research the symptoms and treatment of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). How is this condition portrayed in the Hunger Games books?
- Discuss the many ways it can appear in real life.
- How does Katniss counteract her symptoms?
- How does each of the tributes that have been in the arena cope with these problems, including the older ones like Haymitch?

COMPARING THE BOOKS



QUESTIONS AND ANALYSIS

Should Violence Be Justified?

- Suzanne Collins has said that she wants to examine aspects of “just war theory” in these books. What is your understanding of that term?
- Societies have been trying to justify war against others throughout history. What would constitute a “just war”?
- Can you justify the treatment of the Capitol toward the districts?
- Can you justify the uprising of the districts against the Capitol?
- What could stop this cycle of destruction?

The Evolution of the Games

- Compare the Hunger Games in *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* to the contests in later years as described in *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*.
- How do you imagine the changes in the Games came about over the years?
- What aspects of Lucy Gray’s Hunger Games appeared in later years?
- What part did Snow play in making those changes?

Narrative Structure

- The first three books in the series are three parts of nine chapters, while *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is three parts of ten chapters. Many plays have three acts. How does that affect the action in each book?
- What is distinct about each section?
- What similarities are there between the first, second, or third sections in each book?
- What are the outer, inner, and emotional journeys of Coriolanus in *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*?
- In interviews, Suzanne Collins has shared that when she is planning out her book, she determines “the dramatic questions of the story for the outer, the inner, and the emotional journeys of the protagonist.”
- What are the journeys of Katniss in the Hunger Games books?
- How do those journeys progress separately throughout the books, and how do they converge?

COMPARING THE BOOKS

QUESTIONS AND ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

The Normalization of Violence

- Why are all citizens of Panem required to watch The Hunger Games on television as the Games progress through the years?
- How does this affect the people?
- Why don't they rebel earlier against the brutality of the Games?
- What is the importance of the propos that are created for the rebellion in *Mockingjay* and the way they are used?
- Discuss the effect of television and reality TV in your own life.

Fiction vs. Reality

- Compare the society in Panem (the government, its tight control on the population, and the forces for the later rebellion) to others that you have studied or encountered in books or films.
- Consider historical and contemporary nations as well as fictional worlds. What does Panem have in common with these cultures, and how does it differ?
- What can we learn about our own world from studying and reading about historical and fictional societies?

Music and Resistance

- Discuss the role of music throughout this series of books. What is the significance of the "Hanging Tree" song? How many ways does that song play a part throughout the series?
- Research the history of the song "Strange Fruit" sung by Billie Holiday and discuss its similarities and differences to Katniss's song.
- Research the role of music in uprisings in history, e.g., the American and French Revolutions, the American Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

Social Manipulation

- Discuss the concept of *Panem et Circenses* that Plutarch explains to Katniss.
- What is the effect of easy food and entertainment on the citizens of the Capitol?
- How does this society compare to that of the Roman Empire?
- Why do the districts in Panem seem to have no concept of history before "The Dark Days"?

Art and War

- The poet Wilfred Owen wrote in the early 20th century, "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity . . . All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful." Discuss this quote in relation to Suzanne Collins's writing about the conflict between the Capitol and the rebels.
- What warning must the people of Panem heed if their new government is to succeed?
- What warning must we heed about our own society and government?

Exploring "Real" Entertainment

- Reality TV has been a part of the entertainment world since the early days of television, with an increase in quantity and sophistication through the 21st century. How is the world of The Hunger Games a reaction to these shows?
- How do these books influence the way you perceive the "reality" of these shows?
- What other aspects of popular culture do you see reflected in this story?

COMPARING THE BOOKS

QUESTIONS AND ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

Changing the Games

- Compare the Games in *The Hunger Games* and in *Catching Fire*—the training sessions, the interviews, the set-up of the arena, the strategies that Katniss and Peeta use. How are they different and how are they the same?

The Victor Alliance

- Why are Finnick and Johanna important to Katniss? Compare her connections to them in *Catching Fire* during their time in the arena to their relationship in *Mockingjay*.

- Discuss how Finnick and Johanna each help Katniss prepare for the final fight.
- What is the effect of Finnick’s “propo” about his treatment by President Snow?

Fiery Symbolism

- Discuss the symbolism of fire throughout the series.
- How does Katniss change from the synthetic “girl on fire” created by Cinna for the opening ceremonies in *The Hunger Games*, to the girl whose spirit “catches fire” for the rebellion, to the girl who nearly dies by fire in the overthrow of the Capitol in *Mockingjay*?

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONNECTIONS

Learn More: The Legend of King Minos

- Suzanne Collins was inspired by the Greek legend of King Minos of Crete who demanded that seven Athenian boys and seven Athenian girls be sacrificed periodically in the labyrinth of the Minotaur until the hero Theseus volunteered to go in place of one of the youths and was able to slay the monster.
- The story can be studied in Edith Hamilton’s *Mythology: Times Tales of Gods and Heroes* and in Mary Renault’s fictionalized version *The King Must Die*.

Learn More: The Ancient Roman Empire

- The names of the residents of the Capitol and District 2 recall those used in Roman times.
- Study of the Roman Empire will yield many connections to The Hunger Games trilogy—the autocratic rule of The Capitol, the political machinations of President Snow, training of youth for a fight to the death to amuse the Capitol’s citizens, and the politics of the rebellion.

- Even the name of the country, Panem, comes from the Roman phrase, “panem et circenses”—the bread and circuses which the Romans provided to control the population by keeping them contented and entertained.
- Reading classic literary novels of Rome, such as Howard Fast’s *Spartacus* and Robert Graves’s *I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God* will enhance those connections.

Learn More: The Medieval World

- Joan of Arc is an historical figure brought to mind by Katniss and the way she is manipulated for political and tactical reasons.
- Joan’s peasant upbringing, determination, and sheer grit in the face of her enemies in 15th century France make a fascinating comparison to the role Katniss takes on for the rebellion in *Mockingjay*.

COMPARING THE BOOKS

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONNECTIONS (CONTINUED)

Learn More: Shakespeare's Plays and Adaptations

- There are a number of themes in Shakespeare's plays that can be compared with The Hunger Games books and *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*.
- You can read *Julius Caesar* to see more about how Roman history connects with themes of power and the downfall of the powerful.
- You can compare Snow's hold on the presidency to the tragic results of ambition and thirst for power in *Macbeth*.
- The star-crossed lover theme can be compared to *Romeo and Juliet*, and the effort involved in bringing down a despotic ruler plays out in *Richard the III*.
- For another view of Richard III, see Josephine Tey's compelling mystery *The Daughter of Time* (Touchstone, 1995), exploring the idea that history is written by the victors in any conflict.

Learn More: Art as War Critic

- Wilfred Owen, a young man who fought and died in the trenches of Europe in World War I, wrote poignant poetry about the futility and horror of war.
- His poems were used as text for Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, written for the re-consecration of Coventry Cathedral, an historic building destroyed in the Battle of Britain during World War II.
- This musical piece was meant to be a warning to future generations about the futility of war:
<http://www.its.caltech.edu/~tan/Britten/britwar.html>

Learn More: Class Struggles in Literature

- In John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, set during the Dust Bowl years in the United States, extreme hunger leads ordinary people to seek extraordinary ways to stay alive in the Great Depression.
- Steinbeck vividly depicts the struggle between poor farmers, bankers, and property-owners, a class struggle that is echoed in the difference between the Capitol and the districts in the Hunger Games series.

Learn More: Society and Control in Literature

- The futuristic novels *Brave New World*, *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, and *Fahrenheit 451* all reflect the rigid control and stratified society of the populace that we see in The Hunger Games trilogy, while *The Lord of the Flies* explores how vicious young people can become when forced to survive in a wilderness setting.
- Research the cultures and events in their own lives and times that led Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Ray Bradbury, and William Golding to create these bleak novels.

Learn More: Ritualistic Murder in Literature

- "The Lottery," a short story by Shirley Jackson, first published in *The New Yorker* in 1948, is a chilling tale of ritualistic murder committed as a fertility rite in small-town America (*The Lottery and Other Stories*, 2nd edition, by Shirley Jackson, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2005).

PRAISE AND ACCOLADES FOR THE SERIES

★ “Collins’s characters are completely realistic and sympathetic as they form alliances and friendships in the face of overwhelming odds; the plot is tense, dramatic, and engrossing.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “A superb tale of physical adventure, political suspense, and romance.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “[A] compulsively readable blend of science fiction, survival story, unlikely romance, and social commentary.”

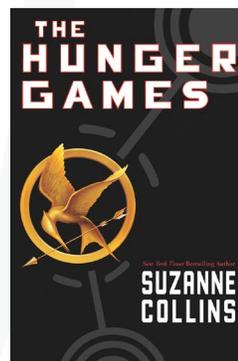
—*Horn Book*, starred review

“I couldn’t stop reading.”

—**Stephen King**, *Entertainment Weekly*

“Brilliantly plotted and perfectly paced.”

—**John Green**, *The New York Times Book Review*



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—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Perfect pacing and electrifying world-building . . . these books are also brimming with potent themes of morality, obedience, sacrifice, redemption, love, law, and, above all, survival.”

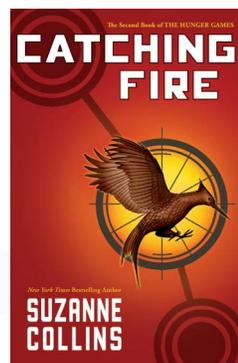
—*Booklist*, starred review

“Whereas Katniss kills with finesse, Collins writes with raw power.”

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“Fans will be happy to hear that *Mockingjay* is every bit as complex and imaginative as *Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*

“Suspenseful . . . Collins’ fans, grown-ups included, will race to the end.”

—*USA Today*



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo credit: Todd Pitt

Bestselling author **SUZANNE COLLINS** first made her mark in children's literature with the *New York Times* bestselling Underland Chronicles fantasy series for middle grade readers. She continued to explore themes of war and violence for a YA audience with The Hunger Games Trilogy. *The Hunger Games* (2008) was an instant bestseller, appealing to both teen readers and adults. It was called "addictive" by Stephen King in *Entertainment Weekly* and "amazing" by Stephenie Meyer on her website. The book appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than 260 consecutive weeks (more than five consecutive years), and there are more than 100 million copies of all three books in the trilogy, *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), and *Mockingjay* (2010), in print and digital formats worldwide. Foreign publishing rights for The Hunger Games Trilogy have been sold into 56 territories in 53 languages to date. In 2012 Lionsgate launched the first of four films based on the novels, starring Jennifer Lawrence. To date, the franchise has earned nearly \$3 billion at the worldwide box office.

Year of the Jungle, Suzanne Collins's picture book based on the year her father was deployed in Vietnam, with illustrations by James Proimos, was published in 2013 to great critical acclaim.

Suzanne Collins also had a successful and prolific career writing for children's television. She has worked on the staffs of several Nickelodeon shows, including the Emmy®-nominated hit *Clarissa Explains It All* and *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo*. She received a Writers Guild of America nomination in animation for co-writing the critically acclaimed Christmas special, *Santa, Baby!*

In 2010 Suzanne Collins was named to the *TIME* 100 list as well as the *Entertainment Weekly* Entertainers of the Year list; in 2011 *Fast Company* named her to their 100 Most Creative People in Business; and in 2016 she was presented the 2016 Authors Guild Award for Distinguished Service to the Literary Community for exemplifying the unique power of young people's literature to change lives and to create lifelong book lovers. It was the first time the Guild presented its annual award to a YA author. *The Atlantic* called Hunger Games heroine Katniss Everdeen, "the most important female character in recent pop culture history," and *TIME Magazine* named Katniss to its list of "The 100 Most influential People Who Never Lived."

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