

## **The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins**

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The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins, published in 2008 as the first book of a very famous trilogy, quickly became a major success among young-adult fiction and inspired many later novels of the dystopian genre. Although it's in some points different from classic dystopias, it is still commonly placed in the dystopian genre because it shows a grim future society shaped by extreme inequality, governmental power and their usage on control, and public spectacle. The story takes place in the nation of Panem, where the wealthy Capitol rules over the controlled and partially poor districts, and forces them to annually send selected children between the ages twelve to eighteen to fight for their lives on television. The novel mixes familiar dystopian elements with modern concerns about media, technology, and social division, and in the following text I am going to show why The Hunger Games fits the definition of a dystopian novel and deserves its place among contemporary dystopian works.

The first argument that proves that the novel "Hunger Games" is a dystopian novel is the fact that the book sets place in the future. According to the mayor of district twelve "There was a time before we called [this land] Panem" (P.18), which suggests that Panem exists after the current time era. Additionally, the quote "Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes out of a place that once was called North America" (P.18) indicates that Panem is located in nowadays North America and that something like an environmental crisis happened because only the "ashes" (P.18) of North America were left. This creates the image of a destroyed world that had to rebuild itself after a catastrophe. Such dark future settings are very typical for dystopian novels, because they often show societies that developed after wars, disasters, or environmental destruction. Also, Collins indicates that the capitol could gain so much power over Panem only because they used the disaster that was happening as a key to control and organize a new society from scratch. In these times, people would have been so desperate for a new beginning and a better life that they traded their freedom for a what they hoped better future, leading the way to a system that would be far worse that any of them could have imagined. They gave

their trust to the capitol to built a better future, but the capitol used that opportunity to gain control over the majority of Panems society, dividing the country in 13 districts and allowing themselves to have the best possible life at the expense of others.

Furthermore, Panem possesses advanced technology that doesn't exist in our current world which is used by the capitol to perform control over the citizens of the district and in some way also over the citizens of the capitol. In the districts, advanced technologies aren't common, because the capitol has control over their usage, which shows the citizens of the district the immense power the capitol owns over them and intimidates them to follow the rules so the technology isn't used against them. For example, in chapter six, when Katniss and Peeta talk about it not being possible to jump from the roof because "some kind of electric field throws you back on the roof" (P.81) shows that in their world that kind of technology is common, but from nowadays perspective it's hard to imagine because there hasn't been found a safe method to throw people back without causing intensive pain, it's only possible for small particles like electrons or ions. Also, the fact of an electric field being on the roof additionally shows the lack of trust and therefore the control the capitol has on the tributes, since the capitol doesn't want the tributes to commit suicide by jumping of the roof, they resolve the problem by acting with control by making it impossible.

Another point worth mentioning is the hovercraft, which is some type of a technology advanced aircraft manly used by the capitol to transport people. The quote "The hovercraft appeared out of nowhere. I mean, one moment the sky was empty and the next it was there." (P. 82) proves that the hovercraft owns an advanced technology to make it look invisible and that way to suddenly appear. Additionally, since the hovercraft appears almost immediately after a tributes death, it's certain that the capitol has constant surveillance over what is happening in the arena, which can work as a kind of intimidation on the tributes on what could happen to them in the worst case.

Thirdly, another important reason why "The Hunger Games" is a dystopian novel is the strong control that the Capitol possesses over the remaining 12 districts and therefore the lack of freedom the citizens of Panem have. In dystopian societies, governments usually use fear, strict rules, and surveillance to control the population, which is clearly the case in Panem. One example of this strict control is the reaping,

where every child between the age of twelve and eighteen is forced to attend the ceremony. The quote "Attendance is mandatory unless you are in death's door. This evening, officials will come around and check if this is the case. If not, you'll be imprisoned." (P.16) shows that the citizens are forced to obey the Capitol's orders, even if it's not what they want. Even if one would want to try to rebel against the reaping day and the concept of the hunger games, it would be basically impossible, because even a slightest form of protest is punished and could therefore endanger important pieces of your life like your family or work.

Furthermore, even the concept of the hunger games is used in favor of the Capitol. For the Capitol's citizens, the hunger games are used mainly for the purpose of entertainment. They see it as a public spectacle and normalize people dying in it, since they can't relate to their situation because they would never participate in the hunger games. Because of that, the Capitol doesn't hesitate to use labored functions like mutations, fire or extreme heat to drive the tributes together and therefore making it more interesting for the spectators of the Capitol. Also, the Capitol rivalizes the districts unconsciously by having the tributes from different districts fight against each other. For example, the "richer" districts like 1, 2 & 4 are trained to compete against the other districts, making them enemies before the games even started. In addition to that, another way the Capitol controls people is through constant surveillance and media attention. Katniss understands that she is always being watched, which becomes obvious in chapter twelve in the quote: "So as I slide out of the foliage and into the dawn, I pause a second, giving the cameras time to lock on me. Then I cock my head slightly to the side and give a knowing smile." (P. 164). This proves that the Capitol controls even how people behave in public.

In conclusion, "The Hunger Games" clearly belongs to the dystopian genre because it contains many typical dystopian elements like future setting, advanced technology and control. The novel takes place in the future after the reconstruction of the previous destroyed North America, it presents advanced technologies like the hovercraft that do not exist in our world today are common in their world. In addition to that, the story shows a society with extreme inequality between the poor districts and the rich Capitol, which exists only on the expense of the poorer district's production. The Capitol uses fear, surveillance, punishment, and the Hunger Games

to control the population and take away their freedom to maintain the guaranteed good life of the capitol. What's also worth mentioning is that Collins also criticizes topics that are important in modern society, such as media influence, social division, and the abuse of political power, which makes one wonder if our society is really that different from the one in the book or not. This makes the novel not only entertaining but also thought-provoking for readers, creating an interest in all sorts of readers. Because of that, the book "The Hunger Games" is considered a novel of the dystopian genre, including many key characteristics of dystopian novels and therefore being an example for following dystopian novels.