*The Hunger Games*

Suzanne Collins, [*The Hunger Games*](http://www.amazon.com/Hunger-Games-Trilogy-Book-ebook/dp/B002MQYOFW/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1415898990&sr=1-1&keywords=the+hunger+games)(New York: Scholastic, 2008)

Suzanne Collins, [*Catching Fire*](http://www.amazon.com/Catching-Fire-Hunger-Games-Book/dp/0439023491/ref%3Dtmm_hrd_title_0?ie=UTF8&qid=1415899105&sr=1-1)(New York: Scholastic, 2009)

Suzanne Collins, [*Mockingjay*](http://www.amazon.com/Mockingjay-Final-Book-Hunger-Games/dp/0439023513/ref%3Dtmm_hrd_title_0?ie=UTF8&qid=1415899162&sr=1-1)(New York: Scholastic, 2010)

Summary:

Katniss Everdeen narrates each book of *The Hunger Games* trilogy in present tense, which heightens the anxiety already present in the plot. At some point in the future, following an apocalyptic event in North America (“Panem” in the novels), certain Districts (sections of the country) rebel against the government, known as the Capitol. As punishment, the Capitol creates the Hunger Games, a gladiator-type event where children from each District are “reaped,” placed in an arena, and forced to fight to the death, all before a live television audience. Katniss is unique in that she volunteers to participate in these “games” in order to protect her reaped sister. The books follow Katniss as she navigates the games and relationships with individuals in- and outside of the arena. She is a “flawed character” as well as a “tragic hero,” but she also ends up being a murderer, lover, and national symbol of a revolution. The novels spawned an entire sub-genre: teen dystopian fiction.

Themes, Symbols, & Motifs:

* Just war. The novels question whether war is inevitable, necessary, unjust, or avoidable.
* Entertainment/Voyeurism. The games in the arena are an exaggerated version of present day reality TV, but with many similarities.
* Materialism. The Capitol is a hyper-realized version of the excess of Western cultures. Individuals in the Capitol often have no concept of the struggles within the Districts.
* Love & loyalty. Katniss loves Peeta, Gale, Prim, and even Haymitch. In turn, many love *her* and must decide how to remain loyal when that love is tested.
* Government control & propaganda. The Capitol attempts to control the news that reaches the people of Panem to keep them pacified.
* Saving. Katniss tries to save Prim and Rue. Peeta tries to save Katniss. Even President Snow, in a way, tries to save Panem.
* Violence. The books are intentionally violent, particularly with their descriptions of kids murdering kids in the arena.

Discussion Questions:

1. Katniss kills many individuals, most notably at the end of *Mockingjay*. Were any of these killings justified?
2. Suzanne Collins has said that the books are “first and foremost a war story” which found their genesis in her father—who was in the military—discussing over the years the “idea of the necessary or unnecessary war.” How is that theme present in the books?
3. The books were made into films whose marketing campaign intentionally used images and phrases from the Capitol to promote the films. Was this ironic, creative, hypocritical? Is America the Capitol?
4. Compare and contrast the plot and thematic issues of *The Hunger Games* trilogy with perhaps the first “teen dystopian fiction” novel *The Giver* by Lois Lowry.