

Class in "the hunger games"



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The theme of class takes a centre stage in the novel "The Hunger Games" more than any other. The novel portrays the Capitol as that which is highly stratified along the social and economic lines; the rich are entitled to all sorts of privileges and opportunities while the poor are bound to languish in abject poverty. "The Hunger Games" give that true reflection of the American society considering the Capitol and the neighboring districts explicitly represent all segments of the American society. Affluence characterizes the Capitol where the merchants and wealthy lot live in sharp contrast to Seam, the poorest District 12. Although popular belief had it that America is a land of equality where all are entitled to have a fair share of its vast resources regardless of their race and economic status, class distinction is a reality in America.

Before hunger games start in the Capitol, contrasting background information about localities inhabited by main characters accentuate the theme of class against the prevailing social and economic inequalities in the society. Based on the author's description of the poorest District 12 where the protagonist Katniss Everdeen lives, the deepest levels of poverty and desperation are brought into sharp focus. Suzanne Collins paints a picture of utter destitution that gives a vivid description of the protagonist's family set up. "Scrawny kitten, belly swollen with worms, crawling with fleas" (Collins 3). Katniss's family, her mum and sibling Prim, could not even afford to wear a smile in the morning because they are a frustrated and worried lot, "my little sister, Prim, curled up of her side, cocooned in my mother's body, their cheeks pressed together" (p, 2). This denoted desperation that is brought

about the myriads of problems affecting the family- lack of decent living environment and food.

Similarly, the entire neighborhood of the District 12 is neglected by the government authorities despite the presence of marauding wild animals from the surrounding yet an expansive wood. The residents of District 12 run a higher risk of contracting deadly diseases from vermin vectors due to the unhygienic conditions around their houses. " The goat cheese was placed on the table, under a wooden bowl to protect it from hungry rats and cats alike..." (4). In the same manner, the high chain-link fence topped with barbed-wire loops to separate Meadow from the woods is not functional, " it's supposed to be electrified twenty-four hours a day as a deterrent to the predators that live in the woods-pack of wild dogs, lone cougars, bears- that used to threaten our streets" (4). This leaves these the residents of District 12 predisposed to deadly attacks by the fiery wild dogs and bears.

Furthermore, residents of the District 12 are bound to do the odd and laborious jobs to eke out a living. The likes of Katniss rise against all odds to venture into dangerous woods in search of fresh meat with the full knowledge of peacekeepers. " Most of the peacekeepers turn a blind eye to the few of us who hunt because they are hungry for fresh meat as anybody is" (7). The other group of the District 12 residents work in the coal mines throughout the day where they suffer self-inflicted physical injuries on knuckles and fingers. In the event of mining accident these desperate workers are most likely to lose their lives- as the case with the tragic death of Gale's and Katniss' fathers.

Nevertheless, this economic and social hardship is endemic to District 12 and its residents. The residents of the Capitol and other Districts are leading a luxurious life as revealed in the life of Peeta Mellark, the latest new hunting partner Katniss met in the woods long after Gale Hawthorne. In the author's own presentation, it is most notable that Peeta is totally different from the two (Katniss and Gale) in all aspects- physical, social and economic dimensions. Fully aware that Peeta comes from a richer region of the District and is born in a wealthy family to a renowned baker, he is highly esteemed, revered and admired wherever he goes; his physical strength is admirable compared to the lethargic males of his age from the Meadow and he never lacked in the course of his upbringing; there is plenty of food, opportunities and privileges from the comfort of their luxurious home.

This explains why Peeta Mellark is chosen to represent District 12 despite the fact that the poor Gales could excel better than him in the "Hunger Games" (134). As illustrated in the "Class in America", amassing of much wealth, privileges, opportunity and high esteem constitutes the advantages of wealth in Panem and the United States of America. In these highlighted societies, the rich are the sole residents of posh estates within serene neighborhoods; get the best quality of education; had their luxurious needs prioritized in the society over the poor; and the poor work for their own economic and social gains in the societies. These descriptions perfectly match those of the rich and powerful game makers of the Capitol in "The Hunger Games".

In conclusion, the theme of class is strongly reflected in the novels "The Hunger Games" and the "The Class in American". The rich are entitled to all

opportunities, privileges and highly esteemed social status in the society while the poor are downtrodden in an abject poverty. Nobody bothers about the wellbeing of the poor including the government.