

Gender roles in the hunger games



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Is it natural for people to act outside the boundaries their gender? In today's society the answer is "no" and most people see it as unacceptable act. In *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, Katniss must endure a brutal competition where the last kid standing wins. Throughout *The Hunger Games* several characters such as Katniss and Peeta Mellark both reinforce and undermine gender roles. However *The Hunger Games* as a whole presents an argument against gender expectations.

When people act as we say "weird" it is because they did something out of the social norms, that's why when people act out of their gender it seems abnormal. In general gender roles are the guidelines of how either a female or male is supposed to act, according to society. For example a stereotype for men is not to be weak or vulnerable in public (but if they do they're to do it in private). A rule for women is to be weak physically and emotionally, and to have a man to care for them.

Overall, expectations are good because they give a general understanding of what is acceptable in society for men and women. However, that doesn't necessarily mean they are all true. Stereotypes play a major role in people's personality, they are what make people act tough. In the book *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins the character Katniss contradicts traditional gender roles. For example, Katniss volunteered for the hunger games so her little sister Prim wouldn't have to compete, knowing she was putting her life on the line.

Even though this is scary, Katniss insists "But I've had a lot of practice at wiping my face clean of emotions and I do this now," (Collins 40). Now

according to social norms females are very sensitive and emotional, yet Katniss manages to seem emotionless while stepping on stage and standing in front of every district. Judith Butler said that gender is nothing but imitation of an ideal, Katniss' character totally different from any other girl in this story or in reality. Therefore Katniss is far from supporting any female stereotypes.

Another character that undermines gender roles in *The Hunger Games* is Peeta Mellark, the son of a couple who owns the bakery where they're from. After Katniss steps up as the female representative for district 12, Peeta gets called next. Katniss observes "The shock of the moment is registering on his face, you can see his struggle to remain emotionless, but his blue eyes show the alarm I've seen so often in prey," (Collins 25-26). Again Judith Butler insists that gender is an imitation of an ideal, expectations clearly state that males are not supposed to be emotional but Peeta broke down and started crying in front of everybody which made him seem like a punk. Peeta is a complex character because in the beginning Peeta challenges gender roles, but towards the end during the hunger games he starts to uphold them. Throughout *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, Peeta Mellark endures a dramatic change and grows into a much more dominant person. Katniss is up in a tree when she realizes that the tributes (other people in the games) are coming her way to kill a competitor within her area, and she sees that unexpectedly Peeta is with them.

Katniss tells her readers "An argument breaks out until one tribute silences the others. 'I'll go finish her and let's move on!' I almost fall out of the tree. The voice belongs to Peeta," (Collins 160). If gender is just an imitation of an

ideal, at that time Peeta really proved that stereotypes are true by being the alfa male of the group. So Peeta definitely proved that in the end he supports gender roles. In The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins norms for males are mostly promoted, female gender roles on the other hand are mostly subverted.

Katniss is a 16 year-old girl who has to hunt and kill to provide for her family since her father passed away, and Peeta he used to be a quiet guy, who kept to himself, ultimately turned into a fierce killer that had to fend for himself in order to live. In today's world, gender roles serve to set guidelines of how men and women are supposed to act according to society. Its important to remember that society influenced the creation of gender roles, that's why it's out of the social norm for people to act as the other gender. Some people will never understand why others are like that but that's just how life is, full of unsolved questions.