

# "the hunger games" by suzanne collins essay sample

[Entertainment](#), [Games](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Humans have been attracted to violence since the beginning of time, and as technology has evolved, so has the way that people get to experience violence in the world. The Hunger Games, by Suzanne Collins, chronicles the life of Katniss Everdeen, a sixteen year old girl living in a dystopic nation, where teenagers are forced to fight to the death so the world can be entertained. The Hunger Games is a young adult dystopian novel which warns readers of the danger of humans' attraction to violence in the media. Utopias originated from Thomas More's novel Utopia, written in 1516. Utopia, depicts a fictitious country named Utopus that was reshaped from a "Savage land into an ideal society through planning and reason" (Sisk 1). Utopus was the first attempt at creating a utopia. The term utopia is "Derived from the Greek ou ("not" or "no") and topos (place), a utopia is "no place," a land that does not exist (Sisk 1). People have attempted to create utopias in various ways, but this perfect place has ultimately failed to be in existence. Creating a utopia, however, "Is shown to be possible through social engineering" (Sisk 1). Meaning, one day there might be such a place, created with the help of the dystopia.

When utopias received criticism, "Dystopia began to evolve as a separate literary genre late in the nineteenth century as writers published anti-utopian "answers" and "replies" attacking utopian works" (Sisk 3). For example, "Ignatius Donnelly's Caesar's Column (1890) and Jack London's The Iron Heel (1907) reverse the utopian dream of ideal society by creating repressive totalitarian oligarchies determined to hold power at any cost" (Sisk 3-4). These novels criticized the idea of a utopia or "perfect place" by showing how a totalitarian government is far from an ideal one. After the first

dystopian novels were introduced, dystopian fiction became even more widespread and popular at the end of World War II. The utopia was still popular in the nineteenth century, but when "Faced with the horrors of the twentieth", the dystopia grew to be the more "Vital and relevant of the two genres" (Sisk 3). The idea of a dystopia was more relative to the lives of the people that read them. Dystopias continued to gain popularity through the twentieth century.

The events during this era "Lent strength and scope to the development of dystopian fiction, as horrific events and movements rendered the utopian ideal increasingly absurd and made it possible for dystopias to posit terrible fictive societies" (Sisk 4). Cultural trends expressed in dystopias brought fear to the reader because they realized that they were living in an anti-utopia. By proving that a perfect society is not possible, "Dystopia shocks the reader into accepting humanity's flaws as ineradicable and thereby working toward a better society rather than an ideal one" (Sisk 2). So dystopias are trying to help create a better society and not a utopia. Dystopic novels have evolved from utopic ideals and are the more popular genre because the problems illustrated can actually happen. The Hunger Games is a dystopian novel because it follows the general layout of a typical dystopian novel. Collins starts by describing the conditions of District Twelve – where Katniss lives – to give the reader an idea of what life is like in Panem, her country. As Miller describes a dystopian novel, "First, the fictional world is laid out" (4). The conditions of where and how they are living are laid out at the start of the novel.

The way that the circumstances are laid out in *The Hunger Games* gives the reader an idea of the world that Katniss lives in. Collins states sarcastically, “ ‘ District Twelve, where you can starve to death in safety’... even here, even in the middle of nowhere, you worry someone might overhear you” ( 6). This reveals to the reader that District Twelve is poor, under constant surveillance, and far from an ideal place to live. *The Hunger Games*, like many other dystopic novels, sets up the fictional world. Eventually, typical dystopic plot developments are made in *The Hunger Games*. Once the plot thickens, “ ‘ Somebody new, a misfit, turns up, or the hero stumbles on an incongruity. A crack opens in the facade” (Miller 4). The new ‘ misfit’ causes a change in Katniss and the story. In *The Hunger Games*, a character named Rue allies with Katniss and Rue’s unfortunate death opens a crack in the facade of the novel. Katniss’ state of mind changes from just survive the Games to, “ ‘ I want to do something right here, right now... Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I” (Collins 236-237). Not only is there a new character involved, Rue’s death convinces Katniss that she has to do something about the problems in her society.

A dystopia’s main purpose is to try and teach the reader about something horrible that is going on in his or her world. They are meant to stir something in the readers’ mind to think about the problem with a current cultural trend. Even though the cultural trend is very real, “ ‘ Dystopias are solely fictional, presenting grim, oppressive societies – with the moralistic goal of preventing the horrors they illustrate” (Sisk 1). Although they are fictional, the problems they point out can very easily become reality. A society, like the one in *The*

Hunger Games is far from an ideal one. Freedom is not a possibility for the people of District Twelve; in fact "... enclosing all of District 12, is a high chain – link fence topped with barbed wire loops" ( Collins 4). The Hunger Games, like typical dystopias, tries to prevent the horrors they illustrate from occurring. There is a huge contrast between the purpose of an adult dystopian novel and the purpose of a young adult dystopian novel. Young adult dystopias are meant to frighten the reader, but do not take hope away from them. Sisk explains how a " Dystopia walks a fine line between evoking the sensations of fear and inducing a sense of futility" (2).

Young adult dystopias are meant to include details and events that scare the reader, but do not create a feeling of uselessness. The Hunger Games frightens the readers to provoke them to cause change. The totalitarian rulers of Panem take " The kids from our district, force them to kill one another while we watch – this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy" (Collins 18). Even though there is a feeling of uselessness, change is still possible because of people like Katniss, who recognize the problem with society, and are ready to do something about it. The actual Games have an attentive audience because people enjoy watching violence. Although blood and gore is not attractive to some, " Violence in the media draws us in with its flashy exterior" (Harris 1). The Hunger Games is a perfect example of using flashy exterior to lure viewers. The show begins even before the Games when all the contestants dress up to put on a show for the crowd. As soon as District Twelve's carriage enters, Katniss senses, " The pounding music, the cheers, the admiration... No one

will forget me. Not my look, not my name. Katniss. The girl who was on fire" (Collins 70).

The flashy exterior – gaudy outfits and joyful atmosphere – of the opening ceremony creates anticipation for the violence that is to come. Everyone in Panem seems to enjoy the Games, but even if one does not, they are forced to watch and pretend to take pleasure in the Games. Violence lures viewers in, and most viewers will continue to watch although they do not want to. As Harris states, " Violence gets people in the seats, but that doesn't mean they enjoy watching it" (1). It is hard to turn away from the appeal of violent mass media, especially in The Hunger Games where the Games are such a big part of the culture. Almost everyone in Panem celebrates violence, however, the people of District Twelve see the problem with children killing one another. Right after Rue is killed, Katniss receives a loaf of bread from, " The people of District 11 who can't even feed themselves... It had been meant for Rue, surely. But instead of pulling the gift when she dies, they'd authorized Haymitch to give it to me." (Collins 239). District 11 is clearly against the Games, so when their tribute is killed, Rue's people, who had scavenged money to help her, help Katniss as a thank-you, and as an act of revolt against the Capitol.

The Hunger Games uses violence for more than one purpose. Violence can provide entertainment and also be used to control a group of people. Harris explains that, " Witnessing violence fulfills needs unrelated to enjoyment, such as reinforcing expectations of social norms" (1). By using violence as punishment, people will follow the rules that they are forced to live by. The

Capitol uses cruelty, making children kill each other, to control the way the people of Panem act. After the revolt against the Capitol, "The Treaty of Treason gave us new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games (Collins 18). The Capitol expects the people of Panem to obey the laws, so after the people of District 13 revolted, the Capitol created the Treaty of Treason to make the people act according to their social norms.

The Hunger Games is a young adult dystopian novel containing all of the characteristics of a typical dystopic novel. Katniss Everdeen sees the negative effects of the oppression going on in her world. Even though Katniss cannot do it by herself, there is hope that it is not too late to change the problems going on before her eyes. Dystopian fiction is relevant to society today because harmful cultural trends, like humans' attraction to violence in the media, are expressed in dystopias. These novels are created for the purpose of arousing fear in the reader, and making that person want to prevent the horrors these novels depict.