

The hunger games and the hero's journey

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The Hunger Games is nearly everything a reader could enjoy. There's action, adventure, romance. Not to mention the metaphor for unequal social classes...In the book, Katniss Everdeen leaves the familiarity of her home and family. She embarks on the journey that will lead her to the arena where the Games take place. Katniss breaks the 1-tribute-winner rule by threatening to perform a double suicide with the other tribute from District 12, Peeta Mellark.

They then return home, victors of the games. There is a reality and deeper meaning in the story. In the Hunger Games, Panem is a metaphorical world for Collins to communicate the inequality of modern social classes. In the book, there is no mention of money. There is however, mention of rich, poor, and hunger. The importance of food in the book is colossal.

As soon as Katniss and Peeta get on the train, there are pages of food descriptions. When the decadent courses are served, Katniss describes "never having had food like it." The simplest way to think about food in the story is that it's equivalent to wealth and social status. The poor part of Panem, District 12, has hardly any food and they are described by Effie Trinket as "savages." What's more, is the Capitol dangling the tesserae and food rations in front of their faces.

In the book, if you want more food for your family, you have to increase your chances of going in to the arena where the odds, if you're poor, are NOT in your favor. It's unfair. The reaping system sums up to: If you want to live, you have to die. We know the food each district or family has represents

their wealth, the Capitol (not even being a part of the Districts or the games) being the wealthiest. In Districts 1-4, it's considered an honor to be a tribute.

Tribute even means a gift that shows gratitude, respect, and admiration. Yet Katniss feels as if she has fallen from a tree, her breath knocked out of her, when her sister Prim is called. There is no applause or celebration in this District. Panem is a lot like a social caste. In many different real world societies, a social caste loosely translates to "If your parents are poor, then you're poor too." The same goes for being rich, and you can't move your way up or down the social ladder.

This is where Collins begins to use the Hero's Journey. This theme of inequality that she sets up leads to that advantage, that extortion the Capitol holds over the other Districts, especially 10, 11, and 12. The Capitol people, not being apart of the Districts at all, never have to go into the games. There aren't contestants or tributes from the Capitol, they are merely the audience. This means that they never have to embark on the Hero's Journey. This is true in our modern day era.

If you can afford it, you are assured an easy life, and you never have to commence on the journey that many fight for. This difficulty is perhaps what the games themselves symbolize. That the arena is society, that the tributes are really just different classes. The "careerers" from the richer Districts are prepared and expected to win and succeed. The poorer Districts aren't as fortunate and almost never have any victors from the games. Haymitch in the book, one of the two winners from District 12 and the only living one

during the 74th Hunger Games in which the book takes place is a perfect example.

He is what must prepare Katniss and Peeta for the games, and he is their only source of knowledge. Then of course there is Districts like 1 and 2 that have numerous victors and tons of survival advice. The rich in the book are trained to win the games, prepared for whatever the arena, or, society has to throw at them. Collins uses the Hero's Journey to her advantage, making the upper-class seem much less appealing and us readers end up cheering for the underdog as we are so used to doing. This allows Katniss to win the Games without anyone having a second thought, despite the improbability of the situation.

This story is more than fiction. Suzanne Collins expresses ideas of social class inequality using Panem as an example and a metaphor. So ask yourself: Are the odds in your favor?