

Beneath the hunger games

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



Kate Raffety 22nd of May, 2012 BENEATH THE HUNGER GAMES The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins is an insightful allegory set in a post-apocalyptic future. Through a gripping plot and intriguing characters along with rich intertextuality, symbolism and themes, she raises concerns and gives her opinion on issues in our communities and governments, taking many to the extreme to reinforce her message, while keeping it a fast passed fictional story. Government control of people is the most prominent theme in The Hunger Games, as it is featured throughout the novel in a variety of ways.

Propaganda, censorship, inequitable distribution of wealth, and manipulation are some of the many ways in which the Capitol controls people. All the wealth and resources flow to the Capitol and it is in control of everything. It uses propaganda and censorship to influence and direct public opinion, and the only information the districts receive is from the Capitol. The government broadcasts are compulsory viewing and all of it is extremely biased and misleading.

Sometimes half the truth is just as effective as a lie, with the capitol only selecting parts of the information to release, in this way it is easy to guide people's opinions. This technique is used on the districts, with all of the information they receive, and on the people from the Capitol, with the information they receive about the districts. Together the districts could easily overthrow the Capitol, so it is important that they be kept weak and separated. The most important of the Capitol's strategies for gaining and maintaining power, however, is the age-old technique of divide and conquer.

It involves breaking up larger concentrations of power into chunks that individually are isolated and weak. The Capitol has absolute power over the

districts, which is ultimately demonstrated by the games themselves. " Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch- this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. [] To make it humiliating as well as torturous, the Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event pitting every district against the others. (pg 22) The districts are battling starvation, while the capitol lives in luxury with anything they want at their disposal. At first glance the novel and our society seem quite different, but in reality there are many similarities. Whereas extreme inequity and class separation are noticeable in the novel, they are also prominent throughout the world, with great disparity in standards of living among and within countries. The Games are enjoyed as reality television for the people of the Capitol.

Their acceptance of it as entertainment, and their lack of compassion towards the tributes is an example of voyeurism and desensitisation. These are two challenges that younger generations face with technology giving them access to television, the internet, video games and movies. They are becoming faster paced and increasingly violent and explicit and emotional responses can become dampened. Reality television is becoming common with people living vicariously through the drama and becoming detached from reality. The standards of humanity in this novel are quite low.

There are key aspects of the novel, however, that show that human beings are essentially good when left to their own devices. After her father died, Katniss had to provide for her mother and younger sister. Katniss was searching for any morsel of sustenance to bring home to her family one night around the bakery when Peeta's mother yelled at her to move on. Peeta,

seeing her situation, let two loaves fall onto the coals of the oven and was punished for his carelessness. When he was told to feed them to the pigs, he instead slipped them to Katniss.

The next day they caught each other's eyes and when she looked away her eyes fell on a dandelion, which reminded her of how her father taught her to live off the land and thus she realised how she would support her family. Peeta saved Katniss and she felt this was a debt she owed him that may never be repaid. He wasn't obligated to help her, in fact he could have been penalized for it; he did simply because it was the right thing to do. Katniss cares about her family more than anything, especially her little sister.

But against all odds her sister is chosen for reaping, and Katniss, driven wild with fear, volunteers to take her place. " In District 12, where the word tribute is pretty much synonymous where the word corpse, volunteers are all but extinct" (pg 27). Katniss believes certain death now awaits her in the arena, but knows that the loss of her sister would be far worse. While in the arena, Katniss meets Rue, the tribute from district 11 and the two form an alliance. Katniss protects and helps her as best she can, giving her food and her precious sleeping bag while she carries the majority of the responsibility.

Rue can give little to Katniss for her to truly benefit from their partnership, however Katniss sees that Rue, the youngest of all the tributes, is vulnerable and does her best to keep her safe from harm, even if it means putting herself in danger. When Rue dies Katniss shows great respect for her and district 11. Katniss then finds Peeta, who has been severely injured and begins to nurse him back to health. He is too weak to sustain himself so

Katniss takes on the full responsibility of providing for him, dressing his wounds and taking the majority of the night watches.

It would have been much easier for Katniss to leave Peeta and escape up a tree where she feels secure, but despite this she does all she can to help him. She risks her life to save his when she goes to get the medicine and would have died if Thresh, the male tribute from district 11 hadn't felt the need to repay the debt of helping Rue. Thus, both Thresh and Katniss saved someone in a last-man-standing battle. This shows that they see themselves as more than just a pawn in the Capitol's games, they never lose touch with their humanity.

Inhumanity is portrayed in many ways in the novel including the Capitol making minors fight to the death, making previous victors mentor them, and inequitable distribution of wealth. In selecting minors as tributes, the Capitol's message was plain, " look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you" (pg 22). Taking children who are hardly considered old enough to fend for themselves and putting them in this position is inhumane on many levels.

The Capitol sustains power by fear, granting minimal rights to district citizens, no freedom of speech, and harsh punishments for disobeying their many strict rules. They treat their people as chattels who exist only for their benefit. Whereas this theme has been exaggerated in the novel, it still has parallels to our society. There are many ways in which governments treat their people and how the people treat one another that Collins has commented on with *The Hunger Games*. The novel teaches us that the <https://assignbuster.com/beneath-the-hunger-games/>

tyranny of a cruel and powerful government is a threat for which we must always remain vigilant.

Collins raises concerns about the path that society is travelling down with her novel. In some ways *The Hunger Games* is a warning, the message simply being that society should never end up like the one in the novel. Throughout her novel Collins comments on government control, inequity, class separation, reality television, humanity, inhumanity and the path that society has taken. She has taken many of the themes in her novel to the extreme, but this only makes what she has to say stronger. Collins, S. 2009. *The Hunger Games*, Scholastic, London. 454 pg.