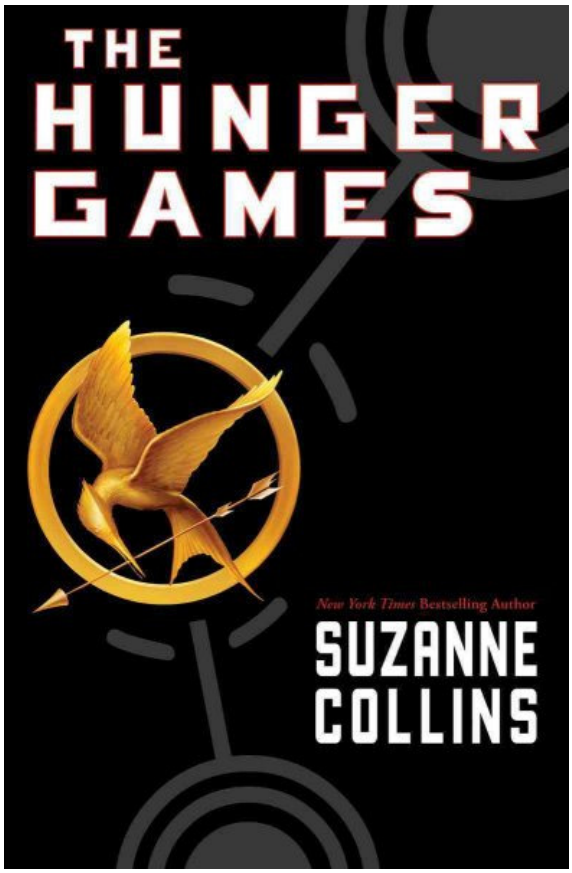

Books in a Box

Reading Guide

Blaine
Bookmobile
Deming
Everson
Ferndale
Island
Lynden
Maple Falls
Point Roberts
Sumas
wcls.org

the best place to begin

whatcom county
library system

Books in a Box Information

We hope you will enjoy the convenience of having multiple copies of the same title to share—either with your official book group or with an unofficial friends-and-family group!

Some general information about the kits:

- Kits check out for six weeks.
- Kits are available to reserve, but we cannot guarantee their availability for specific dates.
- One person in the group is responsible for the kits full return.
- Return kits in person at any Whatcom County library

How do I find a list of all your kits?

- Go to www.wcls.org
- Click on “catalog”
- In the Subject Keyword Search type “book club kit”

This list includes kits owned by both Whatcom County and Bellingham Library Systems. Please note that the Bellingham kits must be picked up and returned to the Bellingham Library. Whatcom County kits can be reserved and sent to any location for pickup.

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. How does Katniss feel about the country of Panem? Why does she need to make her face "an indifferent mask" and be careful what she says in public?

2. Describe the relationships of Katniss with Gale, with Prim, with her mother. How do those relationships define her personality? Why does she say about Peeta, "I feel like I owe him something, and I hate owing people." How does her early encounter with Peeta affect their relationship after they are chosen as tributes?

3. How does the fact that the tributes are always on camera affect their behavior from the time they are chosen? Does it make it easier or harder for them to accept their fate? How are the "career tributes" different from the others?

4. Why are the "tributes" given stylists and dressed so elaborately for the opening ceremony? Does this ceremony remind you of events in our world, either past or present? Compare those ceremonies in real life to the one in the story.

5. When Peeta declares his love for Katniss in the interview, does he really mean it or did Haymitch create the "star-crossed lovers" story? What does Haymitch mean when he says, "It's all a big show. It's all how you're perceived." Why do they need to impress sponsors and what are those sponsors looking for when they are watching the Games?

6. Before the Games start, Peeta tells Katniss, " . . . I want to die as myself . . . I don't want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I'm not." What does this tell you about Peeta? What does he fear more than death? Is he able to stay true to himself during the Games?

7. Why does Katniss ignore Haymitch's advice to head directly away from the Cornucopia? Did she

do the right thing to fight for equipment? What are the most important skills she has for staying alive - her knowledge of nature? - her skill with bow and arrow? - her trapping ability? What qualities of her personality keep her going - her capacity for love? - her intelligence? - her self-control?

8. Why does Peeta join with the Career Tributes in the beginning of the Games? What does he hope to gain? Why do they accept him when they start hunting as a group? Why do groups form in the beginning when they know only one of them will be able to survive?

9. What makes Katniss and Rue trust each other to become partners? What does Katniss gain from this friendship besides companionship? Is Katniss and Rue's partnership formed for different reasons than the other groups?

10. Discuss the ways in which the Gamemakers control the environment and "entertainment" value of the Games. How does it affect the tributes to know they are being manipulated to make the Games more exciting for the gamblers and viewers? Does knowing that she is on live TV make Katniss behave differently than she would otherwise?

11. When does Katniss first realize that Peeta does care for her and is trying to keep her alive? When does she realize her own feelings for him? Did Haymitch think all along that he could keep them both alive by stressing the love story? Are they actually in love?

12. What do you think is the cruelest part of the Hunger Games? What kind of people would devise this spectacle for the entertainment of their populace? Can you see parallels between these Games and the society that condones them, and other related events and cultures in the history of the world?

13. In 1848, Karl Marx wrote in The Communist Manifesto, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Discuss this statement as it applies to the society and government of Panem. Do you believe there is any chance to eradicate class struggles in the future?

14. Reality TV has been a part of the entertainment world since the early days of television (with shows such as *Candid Camera* and the *Miss America Pageant*), but in the 21st century there has been a tremendous growth of competitive shows and survival shows. Discuss this phenomenon with respect to *The Hunger Games*. What other aspects of our popular culture do you see reflected in this story?

(Questions provided by Scholastic Books.)

Author Bio: Suzanne Collins

Source: *Scholastic* (www2.scholastic.com).

Suzanne Collins made her mark in children's literature with the bestselling series, *The Underland Chronicles*, for middle grade readers. Her debut novel, Gregor the Overlander, received numerous accolades in both the United States and abroad. Alice in Wonderland provided inspiration for this series. Suzanne was struck by how pastoral the setting must seem to kids who, like her own, lived in urban surroundings. In New York City, you're much more likely to fall down a manhole than a rabbit hole and, if you do, you're not going to find a tea party. What might you find?

Suzanne is breaking new ground with *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Poignant and rich with edge-of-your-seat pacing, this series is set in a district that evolved from the ruins of what was once known as North America. "It's hard to choose one element that inspired The Hunger Games," says Suzanne. "Probably the first seeds were planted when, as an eight-year-old with a mythology obsession, I read the story of Theseus. The myth told how in punishment for past deeds, Athens periodically had to send seven youths and seven maidens to Crete where they were thrown in the Labyrinth and devoured by the monstrous Minotaur. Even as a third grader, I could appreciate the ruthlessness of this message. 'Mess with us and we'll do something worse than kill you. We'll kill your children.' Other early influences would have to include watching too many gladiator movies which dramatized the Romans' flair for turning executions into popular entertainment, my military specialist dad who took us to battlefields for family vacations, and touring with a sword fighting company in high school. But it wasn't until the much more recent experience of channel surfing between reality TV programming and actual war coverage that the story for this series came to me."

Suzanne Collins has had a successful and prolific career writing for children's television. She has worked on the staffs of several Nickelodeon shows, including the Emmy-nominated hit Clarissa Explains it All and The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo. She received a Writer's Guild of America nomination in animation for co-writing the critically acclaimed Christmas special, Santa, Baby!

Suzanne currently lives in Connecticut with her family and a pair of feral kittens they adopted from their backyard.

Reviews

Booklist

★ *The Hunger Games,* Suzanne Collins. Scholastic Press, $8.99 (384p) ISBN 978-0439023528

This is a grand-opening salvo in a new series by the author of *The Underland Chronicles*. Sixteen-year-old Katniss poaches food for her widowed mother and little sister from the forest outside the legal perimeter of District 12, the poorest of the dozen districts constituting Panem, the North American dystopic state that has replaced the U.S. in the not-too-distant future. Her hunting and tracking skills serve her well when she is then cast into the nation's annual Hunger Games, a fight to the death where contestants must battle harsh terrain, artificially concocted weather conditions, and two teenaged contestants from each of Panem's districts. District 12's second "tribute" is Peeta, the baker's son, who has been in love with Katniss since he was five. Each new plot twist ratchets up the tension, moving the story forward and keeping the reader on edge. Although Katniss may be skilled with a bow and arrow and adept at analyzing her opponents' next moves, she has much to learn about personal sentiments, especially her own. Populated by three-dimensional characters, this is a superb tale of physical adventure, political suspense, and romance.

"Reading *The Hunger Games* is as addictive (and as violently simple) as playing one of those shoot-it-if-it-moves videogames in the lobby of the local eightplex; you know it's not real, but you keep plugging in quarters anyway." (**Stephen King, *Entertainment Weekly***)

"Collins has written a book that is exciting, poignant, thoughtful, and breathtaking by turns. It ascends to the highest forms of the science fiction genre and will create all new fans for the writer." (**Elizabeth Bird, *School Library Journal***)

"Brilliantly plotted and perfectly paced." (**John Green, *The New York Times***)

Suggested Readalikes

The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood.

The Pickup Artist, Terry Bisson.

Little Brother, Cory Doctorow.

Dune, Frank Herbert.

The Children of Men, P.D. James.

The Left Hand of Darkness, Ursula K. LeGuin.

The Giver, Lois Lowry.

The Road, Cormac McCarthy.

Nineteen Eighty-four, George Orwell.

Life as We Knew It, Susan Beth Pfeffer.

The Woman on the Edge of Time, Marge Piercy.

The Forest of Hands and Teeth, Carrie Ryan.

Unwind, Neal Shusterman.

Uglies, Scott Westerfeld.

Web Resources

Author interview: http://www.teenreads.com/authors/au-collins-suzanne.asp

Blog post about Panem: http://thehogshead.org/the-hunger-games-panems-politics-4426/

Hunger Games wiki: http://thehungergames.wikia.com/wiki/The_Hunger_Games_Wiki