Mel Kennard, "Entry on: The Hunger Games (The Hunger Games, 1) by Suzanne Collins", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1466. Entry version as of July 12, 2026.

Suzanne Collins

The Hunger Games (The Hunger Games, 1)

United States (2008)

TAGS: Aphrodite Artemis Diana Gladiator Games Minotaur Theseus Venus

We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	The Hunger Games (The Hunger Games, 1)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2008, 384 pp.
ISBN	0439023483
Official Website	Suzannecollinsbooks.com (accessed: July 27, 2022).
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, Dystopian fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Mel Kennard, University of New England, mkennard@myune.edu.au
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaounde 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Creators

Suzanne Collins , b. 1962
(Author)

Suzanne Collins was born in Connecticut in 1962. A theatre arts major at the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham, she graduated in 1980, before studying at the Indiana University Bloomington, where she double majored in theatre and telecommunications, graduating in 1985. She then went on to complete a Master of Fine Arts in dramatic writing at the New York University Tisch School of the Fine Arts, where she graduated in 1989. Having completed extensive studies, Collins then went on to write for many children's television shows, both live-action and animated. She began writing children's novels during this period, with her first book, *Gregor the Overlander* (2003, Scholastic US), becoming a New York Times Bestseller. In 2008, *The Hunger Games*, the first book in a trilogy by Collins, was released to great success and was subsequently adapted into a film version, directed by Gary Ross and released by Lionsgate in 2012. Since then, Collins has published an autobiographical picture book, *Year of the Jungle* (2013) and a prequel novel to *The Hunger Games* trilogy, titled *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* (2020, Scholastic US). Her books have sold over 100 million copies worldwide. Collins currently lives in Connecticut.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: April 30, 2022).

Wikipedia (accessed: April 30, 2022).

Famousauthors.org (accessed: April 30, 2022)

Bio prepared by Mel Kennard, University of New England, mkennard@myune.edu.au

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Additional information

Adaptations

Film Adaptation:

The Hunger Games, Lionsgate, 2012. Directed by Gary Ross, starring Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Woody Harrelson, and Elizabeth Banks.

Translation

The Hunger Games is an international best-seller and has been translated into many languages, including:

Chinese: □□□□ [Yi E You Xi] trans. Jiawan Deng, Taibei Shi: Da Kuai Wen Hua/ Tsai Fong Books, 2009, 406 pp.

Dutch: *De honger spelen*, trans. Maria Postema, Houten: Van Goor, 2009, 395 pp.

French: *Hunger Games*, trans. Guillaume Fournier, Paris: Pocket jeunesse, 2009, 398 pp.

German: *Die Tribute Von Panem: Tödliche Spiele*, trans. Sylke Hachmeister and Peter Klöss, Hamburg: Ötinger, 2009, 414 pp.

Greek: *Αγώνες Πείνας* [Agōnes peinas], trans: Pīnelopī Triada, Athīna: Platypous Ekdotikī, 2009, 414 pp.

Italian: *Hunger Games*, trans. Fabio Paracchini, Milano: Mondadori, 2009, 368 pp.

Japanese: □□□□□□□□ [Hangā gēmu], trans. Naoko Kawai, Tōkyō: Kabushiki Kaisha Media Fakutorī, 2009, 479 pp.

Korean: *The Hunger Games* □□□□ [Hŏnggŏ geim], trans. Wŏn-yŏl Yi, Seoul: Bookfolio, 2009, 374 pp.

Polish: *Igrzyska śmierci*, trans. Malgorzata Hesko-Kołodzińska and Piotr Budkiewicz, Poznań: Media Rodzina, 2009, 350 pp.

Romanian: *Jocurile foamei*, trans. Ana-Veronica Mircea, București: Nemira Pub. House, 2009, 511 pp.

Spanish: *Los Jeugos del Hambre*, trans. Pilar Ramírez Tello,

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Barcelona: Molino, 2009, 396 pp.

Arabic: □□□□□ □ □□□□□ □□□□□□□ [Mubārayāt al-jaw‘ : riwāyah], trans. Saʿīd al-Ḥasniyah, Bayrūt: al-Dār al-‘Arabiyah lil-‘Ulūm Nāshirūn, 2010, 423 pp.

Hebrew: □□□□ □□□□□ [Miśḥaḳe ha-ra‘av], trans. Ya‘el Akhmon, Or Yehudah: Kineret, 2010, 334 pp.

Russian: *Голодные игры* [Golodnye Igry], trans. Aleksey Shipulin, Moskva: AST, Astrel’, 2010, 384 pp.

Catalan: *Els jocs de la fam : la trilogia en un únic volum*, trans. Armand Carabén, [Barcelona]: Estrella Polar, 2012.

Hungarian: *Az éhezők viadala*, trans. Benedek Totth, [Budapest]: Agave Könyvek, 2012, 390 pp.

Indonesian: *The Hunger Games*, trans.Hetih Rusli, Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2012, 406 pp.

Croatian: *Igre gladi*, trans. Mladen Kopjar, Zagreb: Profil, [2020], 270 pp.

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

Catching Fire (2009, sequel),

Mockingjay (2010, sequel),

The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes (2020, prequel).

Summary

16-year-old Katniss Everdeen lives in District 12 in the Nation of Panem (formally known as the United States of America). An impoverished District under the control of the ruthless Capitol, District 12 is responsible for the nation’s coal supply. *The Hunger Games* begins on the morning of the “Reaping” for the 74th Hunger Games. The Hunger Games are a televised fight to the death, in which two “Tributes” from each of Panem’s twelve districts, one male and one female, aged between twelve and eighteen, are sent into an arena, with only one surviving “Victor” making it out alive. The games function as both a punishment for when the districts rose up against

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of “Artes Liberales” of the University of Warsaw.

the Capitol and lost, as well as a reminder of the Capitol's lasting power over the people of the districts, so they will never rise up again. Katniss attends the Reaping with her younger sister Prim, who is twelve: this is her first Reaping and she is terrified. After a propaganda video is shown explaining the reasons for The Hunger Games, the names are drawn, beginning with females. Katniss waits in anticipation for her name to be drawn, but it isn't. Instead, Prim's name is pulled.

Katniss volunteers to take Prim's place in the Games alongside the male tribute: Peeta Mellark. Peeta is the baker's son and had helped Katniss after the death of her father, when she and her family were starving.

Katniss and Peeta are taken on a train to the Capitol, where they spend time with the Capitol's representative, Effie, and their future trainer, Haymitch, District Twelve's only surviving victor. On the journey, the two tributes show that they are determined and strong-willed and Haymitch realises they might actually have a chance to win in the Games.

After arriving in the Capitol, the Tributes are prepared for the Games: given costumes and training. Dressed as if they are on fire, Katniss and Peeta ride through the Capitol in a chariot, holding hands. Their outfits and their unity make them clear favourites with the Capitol audience.

When training begins, Haymitch orders Katniss and Peeta not to reveal their skills (archery and strength), but frustrated by the process of the Games, which are under the control of tv-producer-like Gamemakers, Katniss shoots an arrow into the mouth of a roast pig at their feast. Though she is worried she will face repercussions, Katniss is awarded a high score, and considered a favourite in the games. Meanwhile, Peeta, confesses in a pre-Games interview that he is in love with Katniss, a story that plays well with the fans.

The Hunger Games begin the following morning. Advised to stay out of an initial skirmish at the 'Cornucopia,' a giant horn in the centre of the Arena, which is filled with food and weapons, Katniss snatches a backpack and runs to the woods, looking for water. Over the following days, Katniss faces fire, set by the Gamemakers, and encounters a group of 'Career' Tributes, strong tributes from wealthy districts. Katniss is dismayed to see that Peeta has joined them and that one of

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

them, a girl called Glimmer, has a silver bow and arrow, which she doesn't know how to use. Sponsors send Katniss medicine for her burns and she settles into the tree. Later, she is alerted by Rue, a twelve-year-old female tribute from District 11, that there are Tracker Jackers, deadly wasps whose poison causes hallucinations, in the tree above her. Katniss uses her knife to saw through the branch with the hive on it, and drops into the Career Tributes below, getting stung herself in the process. She makes it away from the Careers, moving in the opposite direction, when she remembers the bow and arrows. Wrestling them from Glimmer's Tracker Jacker-stung corpse, Katniss isn't sure if she is hallucinating or not when Peeta comes running at her, telling her to get out of there, before he fights and is injured by District 2's male Tribute, Cato.

Katniss passes out from the Tracker Jacker venom and when she awakes, she finds Rue watching her, and the two form an alliance. Although Rue is from a different district, the little girl reminds Katniss of Prim and she quickly becomes protective of the younger tribute, knowing that the two of them cannot both survive the Games. When the two decide to split up, so that Katniss can destroy the Career Tributes' food supply, located at the Cornucopia, Rue teaches Katniss a simple tune that is repeated by the Mockingjays in the Arena. Mockingjays are birds capable of mimicking human song and are hybrids between Mockingbirds and Jabberjays – birds that were created by the Capitol during the districts' uprising that are capable of memorising and mimicking human speech. Rue tells Katniss that she chose to trust her because the bird on Katniss' pin, given to her by a girl in District Twelve, is a Mockingjay. While Rue starts fires to draw the Careers away from their camp, Katniss destroys their food supply.

After a night spent hiding from the vengeful Careers, Katniss finds Rue, who is then impaled with a spear by the male Tribute from District One. Katniss shoots the male Tribute and then stays with Rue until she dies, singing to her. After Rue's death, Katniss decorates her body with flowers, wanting to hide the ugliness of the child's murder. Grieving and alone, Katniss is surprised when a message is delivered to the Tributes: The rules of the Games have changed. Two Tributes may leave the Arena alive, provided they are both from the same district. Unable to restrain herself, Katniss calls out Peeta's name.

Having overheard the Careers talking, Katniss knows Peeta is injured, having been cut with a sword by Cato. Katniss sets about finding

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Peeta, eventually locating him near a river, where he has used mud and leaves to camouflage himself. Katniss cleans him up and is dismayed to find he is badly injured. Katniss manages to get Peeta to a cave, where she looks after him. After the two kiss, Haymitch sends Katniss a pot of broth. Katniss again understands that this is a message: play up the romance with Peeta and they'll get more gifts from sponsors.

Peeta's condition continues to deteriorate and Katniss realises that he has blood poisoning. When another message, this one of a "Feast" at the Cornucopia, where each Tribute will find something they desperately need, is made, Katniss goes to the feast to find medicine to cure Peeta. After further fighting, during which other Tributes are killed, including a Career Tribute, Cato, who is torn apart by wolf-like creatures that resemble the dead Tributes, Katniss and Peeta believe that they have won the Games.

One final announcement reveals that the rule revision has been changed again, so that there can only be one winner. Unwilling to kill Peeta, and wanting to defy the Capitol, Katniss pulls out some poisonous berries, called Nightlock, that she has collected in the forest. As she and Peeta are about to eat them, they are told to stop. That there can be two winners. They are announced as joint winners and the Games end.

Katniss and Peeta return to the Capitol, where Haymitch warns Katniss that the Capitol and particularly the president, President Snow, are furious at her stunt. He tells her that the danger isn't over yet and she must continue to act as though she were in love with Peeta. Cinna helps, dressing Katniss in girlish outfits that emphasise her innocence. The two survive the post-Games interviews, where Katniss learns that Peeta's leg has been amputated, before they return home. On the trip home, Katniss explains the situation to Peeta, who, unlike her, is genuinely in love and he gets upset. When the train pulls into District 12 though, Peeta holds out his hand, willing to play the role of happy couple one more time. Katniss takes Peeta's hand "holding on tightly, preparing for the cameras, and dreading the moment when I will finally have to let go".

Analysis

The Hunger Games forms part of a range of Young Adult Dystopic Fiction novels that experienced popularity during the early 2000s to

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

the mid-2010s. Although a dystopic novel set in a futuristic world, it nonetheless draws upon motifs from mythology throughout its narrative.

Of these motifs, the most obvious, and the one most often sited as inspiring Collins' dystopic world, is the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. In this myth, every nine years seven male and seven female tributes from Athens are forced to travel to the island of Crete, where they are thrown in a Labyrinth that is the domain of the Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull creature. Theseus, son of the King of Athens, volunteers to be one of the tributes in the tale, so that he might defeat the minotaur, and is helped by Ariadne, daughter of King Minos. There are many parallels that can be drawn between the tale of Theseus and the Minotaur and *The Hunger Games*. First, the seven male and seven female Athenian tributes in the myth are transposed into the twelve male tributes and twelve female tributes of *The Hunger Games*. Second, Theseus, who in the myth volunteers as tribute in order to kill the minotaur, is reflected in the character of Katniss in *The Hunger Games*, although Katniss volunteers as tribute not in order to defeat the minotaur and the regime it represents, but rather to save her sister from the fate of being a tribute.

Although these parallels between the tale of Theseus and the Minotaur and *The Hunger Games* seem obvious, they also allow for more subtle allegories between the two stories to be read. While the Arena in *The Hunger Games* functions as a stand-in labyrinth, it must be asked, who takes on the role of minotaur in these games? Initially, it seems as though the minotaur's role is fulfilled by each and every one of the tributes, as they hunt each other and fight to death in the arena. However, it is important to note that the tributes do not do this by choice and few of them, with the exception of the Careers, exhibit what could be defined as natural bloodlust. Consequently, they do not fit the description of metaphorical minotaurs. The "muttations" seen throughout the Games, such as the Tracker Jackers and the wolf-like creatures that closely resemble the slain tributes certainly share characteristics with the minotaur. They, like the half-human half-bull minotaur, are hybrid creatures who kill based on instinct and incite terror within the tributes, even the bloodthirsty Cato, who encounter them. But, unlike the minotaur, some of the muttations, like the mockingjay birds, are depicted in a positive light, and the muttations are one of many threats present in the arena, rather than being the sole threat, as the minotaur is. Perhaps then, the minotaur figure can be seen in the Gamemakers, who orchestrate the Games, and thus, are

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

truly responsible for the deaths of the tributes. However, similarly to how Daedalus designed the labyrinth for King Minos, the Gamemakers are acting at the behest of someone else, President Snow and the totalitarian regime he represents. In this way, President Snow functions as a Minos figure in the novel. Consequently, it can be argued, that in *The Hunger Games*, there is no "true" minotaur, no one figure to which the minotaur of mythology can be likened, but rather there are many dangers in the Games that present a much more imaginable and tangible threat, both to the fictive tributes and to readers of the novel alike.

Like many dystopic novels of the mid-2000s and early 2010s, *The Hunger Games* can be read as a feminist tale, whose protagonist Katniss, presented in a fictive, futuristic setting, is depicted as a strong female character. Indeed, Katniss is shown as being a natural survivor, a determined hunter, and a character who remains unburdened by concerns of sentimentality. As a hunter figure, Katniss can be seen to embody the Greek Goddess Artemis, goddess of the hunt, of wild animals, and of young girls, and of Artemis' Roman counterpart, Diana. Katniss hunts with a bow and arrow, the chosen weapon of both goddesses, and indeed, when she acquires a silver bow and arrows during the Games, this parallel is strengthened, as Diana is often depicted as hunting with a silver bow and arrows herself. Further to this obvious connection with both the Greek and Roman goddesses, Katniss also resembles them through her relationships with both her sister Prim and the young Tribute Rue. Throughout the novel, Katniss is shown as being fiercely protective of both girls: she volunteers to take Prim's place in the Games in order to save her, and she forms an alliance with Rue once in the Arena. Such acts of protection of two young, prepubescent girls, strengthens the parallels between Katniss and Artemis/Diana, extending the resemblance beyond one shared trait.

While Katniss is presented as being a natural Artemis/Diana figure throughout the novel, it is important to note that she is also, on numerous occasions, forced into an Aphrodite/Venus role, particularly as Peeta reveals his love for Katniss, thus positioning her not only as a figure of strength, but also as one of desire. Throughout the novel, this is a role that Katniss consistently rejects, believing it makes her appear weak. However, when it is announced that two tributes from the same district may both win the Games, Katniss immediately begins searching for Peeta and then plays up the romance between the two of them in order to receive gifts from sponsors. As such Katniss' roles

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

throughout *The Hunger Games* shift between her natural role as an Artemis/Diana figure and her performative role as an Aphrodite/Venus figure. When the Games end and Katniss learns how displeased the Capitol is with her actions in the Arena, she relies more on her performative role than her natural role. The shift between which role Katniss uses in which situation demonstrates that the skills we have and the ways in which we are perceived can vary, depending on context. Thus, while Katniss is presented as more of an Artemis/Diana figure who rejects sentimentality and notions of romantic love (as, through her relationships with Prim and Rue, Katniss is shown as capable of other kinds of love), the value of such notions, of the Aphrodite/Venus figure, is nonetheless emphasised throughout the novel.

While *The Hunger Games* draws heavily upon mythological characters and motifs, it also draws significantly upon Roman history. The nation of Panem, which draws its name from the Latin saying "panem et circenses" (meaning bread and circuses), refers to the notion of superficial appeasement; that if members of a nation are provided with food and entertainment, then they will ignore the more insidious problems present within society. Such is the case with Panem, whose wealthier citizens from the Capitol, provided with all that they need and entertainment in the form of the Games, are happy to ignore the gaping social inequalities that exist between themselves and the citizens of the twelve districts, who provide them with all the essentials (and inessentials) that they take for granted. The Games, and particularly the glorification of the tributes, from parading them about to scoring and interviewing them, are reminiscent of gladiator tournaments, which often saw disadvantaged people, particularly slaves, forced to fight to death for the entertainment of others, with few receiving the same glorification and wealth that the surviving victors in the Games receive. Finally, the berry Nightlock that Katniss and Peeta threaten to use to commit suicide functions as a direct reference to the real poisonous berry Hemlock, taken by Greek philosopher Socrates after he was sentenced to death for impiety and corruption of the youth, namely his students. Each of these historical references present in *The Hunger Games* connects to the novel's social relevance, as these references create connections between the novel's themes of power and authority, of social inequality and injustice, and of the individual's desire to challenge a corrupt system, even if it comes at a personal cost to themselves. In this way The Hunger Games draws upon classical references to create a novel of

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

	great personal and social significance to its young adult readers, who may themselves be beginning to understand and, hopefully, question the world in which they live.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Artemis Diana Gladiator Games Minotaur Theseus Venus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Family Friendship Romance Teenagers Violence
Further Reading	Ruthven, Andrea, “The Contemporary Postfeminist Dystopia: Disruptions and Hopeful Gestures in Suzanne Collins’ The Hunger Games”, *Feminist Review* 116 (2017): 47–62.

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of “Artes Liberales” of the University of Warsaw.