

The Hunger Games: First experiences of Dystopia

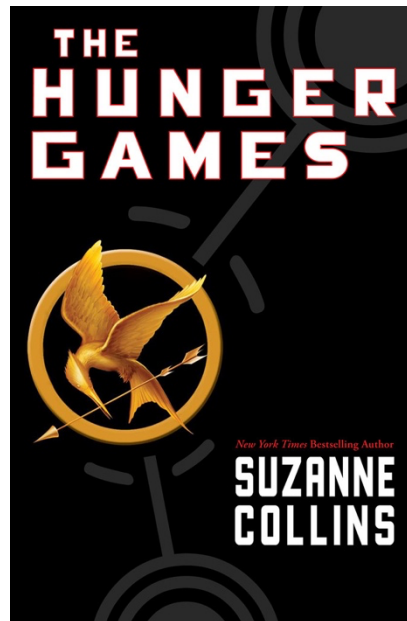
Exploring the similarities found in
Suzanne Collins' dystopian novel to the
typical teenage life.

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Whilst at first glance it is a ridiculous concept to attempt to compare the average British childhood experience to the one illustrated in the city of *Panem* in *The Hunger Games*, it is not an entirely dissimilar circumstance – especially the one experienced by our protagonist, Katniss Everdeen.

Familial issues, isolation, romantic problems, and an incessant urge to leave her 'district.' While the dystopian difficulties they face in the novel are far darker and more hopeless than the average British childhood should (hopefully) have been, the core moral and emotional dilemmas remain the same. In this way, we subconsciously, and perhaps unknowingly, form an understanding with this character, and are drawn in by the urge to know how this amiable character deals with the issues we also face.



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For example, Katniss has a problematic and unstable relationship with her mother, a plight that the majority of teenage girls can resonate with at some point during their adolescence. However, the independence this gave Katniss sparked jealousy in children with an insatiable curiosity such as my own. Living vicariously through Everdeen's dangerous adventures greatly contrasted with the small-town problems of the suburban midlands that my friends and I lived through.

Furthermore, one of the main subplots of the book series was the love triangle between Peeta, Gale and our heroine. In the era we were all entering our obsession with young love, her turmoil and romantic complications piqued our interest and set up an entirely new issue that Katniss had to face, adding further depth to the novels. The problems of a teenage girl rarely vary, regardless of if you're living in a dystopian world or not.

The film adaptations helped surge the franchise into stardom and popularity – not that it was exactly lacking before. The first

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two books in the series were both New York Times Bestsellers, but after the release of the first film in 2012, the publisher had reported over 26 million Hunger Games trilogy books in print.

The Hunger Games book trilogy contains much more thrilling and unnerving details than the film series was able to cover, and therefore remains a worthwhile read even after watching the films. Yet, due to its consequent mainstream audience and popular following after the film release, it was a widely discussed phenomena – and this brought the discourse of why there is something familiar about the concept.

The author, Suzanne Collins, revealed that inspiration for the text originates from both classical and contemporary sources. From distant textbook history that we were taught as children, to televised world events that were occurring while we were young.

The classical origins are from the Roman Gladiator games, a totalitarian government, a fight to the death, and was viewed as popular entertainment. The familiarities with the Capitol are striking. Collins explained to the New York Times that, ‘I was such a huge Greek Mythology geek as a kid, it’s impossible for it not to come into play in my storytelling.’ Also, inspiration from the modern world stemmed from the Iraq war. A war that, as children, many were aware of, but never really fully knew the severity and reality due to our young age.

The book trilogy also never failed to present fresh, unexpected challenges in each book, never straying too far from the cautionary message against dictatorship.

The story of the revolution against the Capitol is also a surprisingly prevalent event seen in real life, as modern revolutions have occurred as recently as this century.

In conclusion, the resemblances this text bears to our real life are surprisingly uncanny. Perhaps this was the reason for its success – however, I do not want to appear reductive.

The text was a fresh new perspective for a young adult series, and thus incredibly gripping. The ability to combine the classical world with the contemporary, while simultaneously drawing in the young minds of the twenty first century is certainly a grandiose achievement.



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