

## *The Hunger Games*

### Responses to Preparing for the Film

1. Students will be familiar with the concept of a utopian society--a highly desirable or near-perfect society where individuals live in harmony with each other and with their environment. A utopia is a type of paradise, that we can only dream about, where all individuals would feel valued, respected, and safe, encouraged to explore and develop their talents, and express their ideas without fear of reprisals.

Most students will be able to imagine the opposite of that ideal--a dystopia--that stifles individuality and freedom of thought. Dystopias are often utopias that went awry. Dystopias typically feature a dramatic contrast between the privileges of the ruling class and the deprivation of the working classes. In dystopias, the elite frequently are corrupted by their power and affluence and tend to oppress and abuse the lower classes. Violence, surveillance, and propaganda are often used to keep the powerful in control. Individuals may be brainwashed into believing that the dystopia is better for them since it often is technologically advanced, but it also is dehumanized and repressive, with widespread discrimination and intimidation. The natural world is often distant and devalued.

Some students will be familiar with dystopias in literature--Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. Many more students will recognize dystopias in films--*The Matrix* films, *RoboCop*, *Blade Runner*, *Divergent*, and of course, *The Hunger Games* and its sequel *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*.

2. If parents are absent, irresponsible, or weak, the oldest child may feel responsible for the younger children and may become overly protective, anxious, and even possessive. Older siblings who are prematurely burdened with responsibilities can become resentful and angry, feeling that they have been deprived of their own childhood and that they aren't ready to take care of others yet. Some older children may be proud that they can help the younger ones and that they are needed and important. Such responsibility could give older siblings a sense of identity and a goal or aspiration that keeps them from being self-indulgent or frivolous.
3. When governments threaten people's values, the citizens might become angry and rebellious. Groups of citizens might form an underground resistance, one that organizes factions to counter the irrational or immoral central power. Clandestine activities motivated by individual and family survival will predominate. Individuals in the society might work together to rebel against and oppose the threatening governing body.

In any case, individual citizens would need to consider their own values and what is meaningful to them. If the threatening government stays in power for more than a generation, the youngest generation may develop values and behavior patterns quite different from those of their grandparents. Some may become indifferent to that controlling element in their lives and learn to live an existence that centers on family or self, without concern for the larger state. However, for those who believe that government can facilitate the achievement of the highest values in life—the pursuit of happiness—a government that seems immoral or unjust would be the greatest imaginable threat.

4. Surprisingly, rivals sometimes fall in love because as they focus on each other, they may admire their opponent's strength and sense of dedication or commitment. Rivals may even empathize with their opponent since they share the same challenges and burdens. Rivals often have studied each other and may feel familiar and close despite the opposition. They may also feel that a competent rival is a worthy match, deserving of their attention and affection.
5. The director must cast Katniss Everdeen so she is both assertive and sensitive, skilled but not arrogant. Beautiful but natural, Katniss must show that she is adept and self-reliant. She needs to demonstrate the skills of an archer and the balance and grace of a dancer. Casting Peeta and Haymitch would also be challenging for these characters must be likeable and multi-dimensional, not flat. The director would also need decide if Effie Trinket should be developed beyond her outrageous costumes. Cinna's character would need to convince viewers that even though he works for the government, he doesn't support their values but admires what Katniss represents.

Perhaps most importantly, the director would need to decide how to depict some of the tributes so that the audience can feel thankfully distant from those who die early on, how to engage the audience in deaths that help to show Katniss's character, and how to briefly characterize the tributes whose values the audience deplores and would like to see defeated. The decision would need to be made about how much of the initial setting, the District 12's poverty and deprivation, should be shown, and then how much of the contrasting images of the train's splendor and the Capitol's glitz and technology should be depicted in the film. Should the sci-fi technology and opulence dominate the setting of the film? Designing special effects to capture the adventures during the Games, especially the attack of the wasps and the beasts, would be a challenge. Students who have read Suzanne Collins's novel might have valuable insights about how the film departs from the text or how they imagined differences between what they read and then see in the cinematic treatment of the book.

### **Responses to Reflecting on the Film**

1. In penance for their uprising some 73 years prior to the time of the film, each of the twelve districts in the country of Panem must deliver to the Capitol a female and male tribute between the ages of 12 and 18 years. At a public "Reaping," these young people will be chosen at random from a drawing and will enter the arena and fight to their deaths until one survivor remains. The voice of the government explains that there was "a particularly painful part of our history," but the pageant of The Hunger Games is "the way we have been able to heal." The government of Panem states that the Hunger Games remain a pageant that "knits us all together." The war, the uprising that "rocked our land," in which "the districts rebelled against the country that fed them, loved them, protected them" finally ended, and the people "rose from the ashes and a new era was born." The government of Panem "swore as a nation" that they would not know treason again and would agree to offer up the tributes to keep the peace. As the film's voice of history reports to the tributes: "The lone victor would serve as a reminder of our generosity and forgiveness. This is how we remember our past; this is how we safeguard our future."

The government of Panem is clearly totalitarian, in control of its population and past history and adept at manipulation and propaganda. The citizens may dislike the policies of the government, but however barbaric they may seem to someone outside the system, the Hunger Games are a spectacle that Panem citizens submit to, perhaps enjoy, and watch on television. In spite of the dread of becoming a part of the Games, young people submit to the ritual without overt dissent. The government of Panem has its own logic behind the Hunger Games, and their creation of the Pageant shows remarkable, and frightening, artistic and technological control.

2. Our initial introduction to Katniss Everdeen occurs when she comforts her younger sister Prim from a nightmare shortly before the Hunger Games are scheduled to begin. We see Katniss's compassion as she reassures Prim that since this is the first time that Prim's name has been entered in the drawing, it is unlikely that she will be chosen. At Prim's request, Katniss sings her a soothing song and Prim joins in. Katniss is gentle and supportive with Prim, appreciating how well Prim remembers this song from long ago. We see Katniss as loving, intuitive, and empathetic, someone whom younger ones can trust and depend on during their vulnerable moments. We also appreciate that Katniss doesn't burden her sister with her own concerns. When Prim asks her where she is going, Katniss just says that she needs to leave briefly but will be back soon.

Then we see Katniss outdoors, independent and fearless, hurrying past impoverished homes and ignoring "keep out--high voltage" signs as she finds her bow where she has hidden it and goes to hunt food for her family. When her friend Gale appears during her hunt, we see him teasing her good-naturedly, calling her "Catnip," and offering his food to her. Gale also shares her rebellious spirit as he claims that if no one watches the coverage on the screens, "they won't have a game. We could take off and live in the woods." Katniss reveals her skepticism, "They'd catch us--cut out our tongues." She also reveals, "I'm never having kids." Together they mock the government's trite mottoes.

When we later meet Katniss's mother, we immediately see that Katniss is really the one in charge of the family. When Prim's name is later drawn, Katniss demonstrates her courage and selflessness as she volunteers to go in Prim's place. Later, while Prim and her mother visit Katniss in seclusion, Katniss gives Prim a mandate: "Don't take any extra food from them. It's not worth putting your name in more times. Gale will bring you game. You can sell cheese." Then she admonishes her mother, "You have to be there for her. You can't tune out again--not like when dad died. No matter what you *feel*, you have to be there for her." Her mother promises, and they hug. This exchange reveals that her mother has not been able to properly protect and care for them and that Katniss has had to assume the role of mother and father--guardian and nurturer.

When Gale comes to send her off, we see his belief in her: "You're stronger than they are. Get to a bow. You know how to hunt." And Katniss reveals that she is relying on Gale to fill her role as provider and protector: "Take care of them, whatever you do. Don't let them starve." Katniss's deep love for her family is clear, and her trust in Gale and his love is also reaffirmed.

3. The train ride to the arena for the Games is striking in its development of both character and setting. In contrast to the poverty and gray tones of the mining community, District 12's setting, the train is opulent, colorful, stylish, and luxurious. Rich and beautifully designed foods are readily available and displayed on buffet tables, a profound contrast to

Katniss's need to search for food to sustain her family. Gorgeous furnishings of crystal glasses and exquisite tableware tantalize the senses. In contrast to the mean, Medieval and hungry hovels of Katniss's and Peeta's families in District 12, the train is a quiet technological triumph, one long and splendid dining car that moves at 200 miles per hour.

The representatives of the Government of Panem, Effie Trinket and Haymitch Abernathy, might have remained undeveloped and amusing caricatures in the film. Effie Trinket evolves only slightly, a flamboyantly costumed character who is more at home with sound-bites than real content. She is a woman of glib slogans, caught up in the propaganda of her government. She evolves into a real person only when she shows some anger when Katniss seems disrespectful. Effie is motivated by wanting to be part of a winning team that can be achieved if Katniss does well.

Haymitch is far more fully developed as a person than a mere representative of the government. At first Haymitch is depicted as a self-serving drinker who greets his wards with ominous advice: "Embrace the probability of your imminent death and know in your heart that there is nothing I can do to save you." Katniss and Peeta at first have muted animosity and contempt for Haymitch's drinking and indifference to their plight. But as the film continues, his character develops and he begins to offer insight and advice, for example: "To stay alive, get people to like you." As he sees the earnestness in Peeta and the competence in Katniss, he starts to give specific and life-saving direction. He provides the young people information that describes the games and their history. He informs them that other districts than their own have academies that program their potential tributes for triumph in combat. But he also admits that these districts that win almost every year and train their potential tributes so expertly also run the risk of creating arrogant young people who are not liked. He pointedly shares this insight with Katniss, who might otherwise become arrogant because of her archery skills, dominance, and intelligence.

Haymitch prepares Katniss and Peeta for the one-by-one presentation, and in his earnest desire to help his wards, he declines alcohol to seriously teach them how to present themselves well in order to gain audience approval, sponsors, and support. His succinct bit of wisdom motivates Katniss's winning behavior: "Make sure they remember you." His enthusiastic appreciation and support of Katniss's dramatic action with bow and arrow—her shooting the apple out of the mouth of the roasted pig on the buffet—gives her the emotional support that she needs. Specific advice from Haymitch contributes to Katniss's success. He prepares her for entering the arena by telling her not to go for the bow and arrow—her weapon of choice—because "It's a blood bath; they're trying to pull you in." Instead, he tells her, "to run, find high ground, and look for water; water is your new best friend." He also tells her not to step off of the starting pedestal too early because "they'll blow you sky high." Indeed, Katniss stops to survey the other tributes' rush for weapons in the middle of the field and she watches the quick death of a significant number of her peers.

Finally, Haymitch gives Katniss his personal endorsement and, thereby, confidence when he tells her: "Katniss, you can do this." He is confident that she has the character, stamina, and skills to win The Hunger Games. He actually saves her life when it appears that Seneca is going to have Katniss murdered to distract the television audience from the riots in District 11, prompted by the death of Rue. Haymitch encourages Seneca to keep Katniss alive, to play up the "young love" story, giving the audience "something to root for." From a self-absorbed, hard-drinking, cynical person,

Haymitch develops into a personable, perceptive, caring mentor who also suggests, in his subtle comments and perceptions that contrast with Effie's, his disdain for the Panem government.

4. The film portrays Peeta Mellark as a hard-working son of bakers, who is often degraded and insulted by his mother. In fact, Peeta admits to Katniss in front of Haymitch: "I have no chance of winning. None. It's true; everybody knows it. My mother said, 'District 12 might finally have a winner.' But she wasn't talking about me. She was talking about you." After he admits this, we see flashbacks of him feeding old, stale bread to their animals, while Katniss hungrily watches nearby. In one flashback, his mother stands in the rain and slaps and yells at him, but when she goes inside, he still throws a loaf onto the ground, for Katniss. He later tells Katniss that he regrets not handing the bread to her, as he wanted to.

He obviously has had a crush on Katniss for years. When he is interviewed by the Master of Ceremonies, Peeta says that he has no girlfriend back home but "that there is this girl that I've had a crush on forever. But I don't think she actually recognized me until the Reaping." When the MC suggests that this girl will definitely go out with him if he wins, Peeta says, "I don't think winning is going to help at all because she came here with me." Upon hearing this, Katniss is outraged and off-camera she grabs him aggressively because she fears, "He made me look weak." However, their mentor Haymitch tells Katniss, "He made you look desirable."

Later, she apologizes to Peeta for going after him and he confirms that he had meant his admission as a compliment. She appreciates his honesty and they both talk candidly. He expresses his fear: "I just don't want them to change me. I don't want to be another piece in their game." Peeta realizes that he may have to kill someone as expected in the Games, but "if I'm gonna die, I want to still be me." Peeta has strong ethics and principles. He is sensitive and compassionate but also intelligent and strategic. Even though Haymitch seems cynical and uninterested in mentoring them, Peeta is determined to talk to him more and take advantage of Haymitch's experience.

Peeta has exceptional upper body strength in his arms from throwing heavy bags of flour. When Katniss sees the other tributes laughing as Peeta falters during a training session, she urges him to throw a heavy weapon and show his strength: "Those guys are looking at you like you're a meal. Throw it." He follows her advice and earns their respect. He also develops other survival skills, using his training at the bakery. Having decorated cakes for years, Peeta is a capable artist and is able to paint his skin to resemble bark so that he can camouflage himself when needed.

Peeta admires Katniss's strength and courage and has no desire to undermine her abilities nor does he feel threatened by them. At the end when he is convinced that one of them must die, he is ready to sacrifice himself so she can be the victor. He deeply loves her and does not want to forget these experiences and emotions that they have shared together.

5. The Pageant of The Hunger Games is dramatic in its appeal to the audience that yearly attends or tunes into the spectacle. To create audience interest, the Tributes are clothed by stylists in extraordinarily dramatic **costumes**. They are flashy and sexy garments that are generic and designed to appeal to the superficial tastes of the garishly clad audience in the arena. In their scrubbed, de-haired, and made-up faces, the tributes present an image to which the audience might aspire. In spite of the moderator's insistence that the

costumes reflect each tribute's individual personality, it is clear that the stylists have tried to create the most memorable and flashy costume imaginable—indeed, clothing that produces flames in Peeta's and Katniss's example.

**Drama** is created by the entrance of the tributes to the arena. The paired tributes of each district enter the arena in a chariot pulled by dark and beautiful steeds, a haunting suggestion of the gladiator battles in the arenas of ancient Rome. The importance of gaining audience interest cannot be understated. The last thing the government of Panem would want is for the citizens of the state to question the rationale of The Hunger Games. In their engagement in watching the dramatic show, the audience forgets the plight of 23 of the 24 participants in the Games.

**Television hypes** the production with a moderator amplifying the action in the arena. He boasts the number of people “straining to get a look at the tributes,” a hyperbolic figure that ignores the fate of the majority of the games' participants. Drama is further heightened by the televised first competition. The audience witnesses Katniss's failed first shot, when her arrow misses the target, and then the indifference of the officials to her second successful aim. When the officials fail to notice her well-placed shot, she directs her third arrow into the center of an apple lodged in a buffet table's roast pig, exactly where they are all congregated and in conversation, indifferent to the tributes' competitions.

**Televised interviews** parody our own television programs: a glitzy host works the crowd for laughter and frames his questions for superficial sound bites. After Katniss replays her flaming dress routine to successfully arouse the audience, the host concludes his interview with her by taking her hand and asking her about her sister, reminding the audience that Katniss volunteered herself as a replacement for Prim. Human interest stories, to stir the audience to tears, is a staple of television programming and a sure-fire way to retain an audience.

An additional pitch for audience engagement is framing Peeta's **romantic interest** in Katniss as a story of “star-crossed lovers.” That he cares for Katniss is undeniable, and her desire to protect and care for him is a development of the plot. The television moderator is delighted to push the audience into watching the development of their romance; it's good for increasing audience interest and attracting more viewers, evidenced by Katniss's home boyfriend Gale's new interest in watching the televised proceedings for the first time—in spite of his belief that if everyone lost interest and stopped tuning into the televised Hunger Games, the government would stop having them.

**The setting** of the arena is designed for dramatic effect and to impress the viewers with the power of the government staging The Hunger Games. Flags, banners, and tidy geometric patterns create the décor of the arena which might remind the audience of the stadiums of Nazi Germany where Hitler created the rhetoric and drama that led an entire population to forego critical thinking and to support his unimaginable “final solution”—the murder of 6 million Jews, Romas, handicapped people and homosexuals—those citizens deemed undesirable to the state. As the Games progress, the drama of combat is heightened by the **booming of a cannon** for every Tribute's death, an aural effect that increases tension during the competition. Televised images from **hidden cameras** bring the home viewers directly into the combat zones as the tributes struggle against physical, medical, and emotional conflicts.

**Technological drama** creates audience interest. The directors of the Games can create unexpected physical barriers for Katniss—a forest fire, balls of flames, vicious

dogs—and the audience is pulled into the video-game like conflict directed from the electronic board at headquarters. An individual tube lifts Katniss into the arena, a closed door with no escape until it opens on the battlefield and creates plenty of anxiety for the watching audience. Further drama is created by the countdowns—as for a rocket launch—a device used throughout the film to heighten tension.

All of the effects are designed to deflect Panem's audience from thinking about The Hunger Games as something vicious that should be stopped, not a spectacle to view for entertainment but a manipulation by the government of Panem to control its citizens, to keep them unquestioning and subservient. The President reveals his thinking when he asks Seneca: "Why do we have a winner in the Games instead of rounding up 24 young people and executing them all?" He insists that "Hope is the only thing stronger than fear" and he continues by saying that "a little hope is effective; a lot of hope is dangerous." Manipulation of the people's thinking and thereby their behavior is the motive for The Hunger Games.

6. The role of one Panem stylist, Cinna, is twofold: to show that not all who work for the government have been corrupted by its decadence and abuse of others and to provide support for Katniss. Cinna immediately expresses his admiration for Katniss because she volunteered to go in her sister's place: "That was one of the bravest things I've ever seen--what you did for your sister." Although he works for the government, Cinna values Katniss's courage, kindness, self-sacrifice, and love for her family. He lets her know that he plans to help her in any way that he can.

While Cinna is expected to dress the tributes according to their district, he tells Katniss, "I think somebody that brave shouldn't be dressed up in some stupid costume, now should they?" Instead of dressing her and Peeta in coal mining outfits, he designs special suits for them that can be lit on fire and can captivate viewers. Cinna wants them to be awe-inspiring, memorable, and appealing--to help them win sponsors and admiration. After their presentation, Katniss is referred to as "the girl on fire," and this term becomes a metaphor for her courage as well. Cinna also designs a dress for her for the final evaluation so that when she spins around, flames radiate from the hemline.

Rather than portraying Katniss and Peeta as pitiful victims from an impoverished district, Cinna helps the audience admire them, cheer for them, and supply them with extra provisions. Katniss is so concerned that she doesn't know how to get people to like her, but Cinna tells her he liked her immediately just because of who she is. Cinna also tells her that when she is answering the Master of Ceremony's questions, she should pretend that she is talking to Cinna and that the audience will like her as he does. In fact, when Katniss is about to be released into the arena, Cinna tells her, "I'm not allowed to bet, but if I could, I'd bet on you." His confidence in her certainly helps Katniss believe in herself. He also lets her wear her sister's mocking-jay pin under her cape as she begins the Games.

7. Throughout the film, the bond between Katniss and Prim is highlighted by their deep concern for each other. When Katniss is at a flea market, she sees a pin featuring a mocking jay and wants to get that for her sister, as a special token to keep her safe and feeling secure during the Reaping. After Katniss volunteers to replace Prim in the Games, Prim gives Katniss the pin to keep *her* safe. Even though such pins would not be approved by the government, their stylist Cinna appreciates its emotional importance and lets Katniss wear it under her costume.

During the games, the youngest tribute Rue feels attached to Katniss, and Katniss assures her that she won't attack her. Rue seems like Katniss's younger sister Prim. This connection develops when Rue and Katniss confirm their alliance and Rue suggests that they make sounds that the mocking jays can echo, so that Katniss and Rue can reassure each other that they are fine. The mocking jay is a reminder of the image on the pin that Katniss got for Prim from the outdoor market. Katniss gives this pin to Prim to keep her secure and safe during the Reaping. Prim returns the pin before Katniss departs for the Games, and Cinna lets Katniss wear the pin concealed under her jacket. When Katniss is crowned by the President, he sees the pin that she is now wearing openly and comments that her District must be proud of her, a remark that viewers may perceive here as ominous. During the Games, Rue and Katniss both rescue and help each other as sisters would. When Rue is dying, Katniss sings the same tune that she sang to Prim after Prim's nightmare. When Rue dies, Katniss surrounds her with flowers and honors her as she would a family member.

8. The rivals are developed in varying degrees to underscore character traits the audience will respect or reject and to help us better understand Katniss. We learn from Haymitch that some districts early on train youths for the Games and when we see these tributes training for the Games, we view warriors adept at climbing and skilled with knives and arrows. These tributes form an alliance to eliminate their rivals; we do not see them betraying each other for alternative adversities befall them.

Rue is a potential rival, but she is shy and sweet and immediately befriended by Katniss. She helps Katniss survive the malignant tributes who wait for Katniss under her elevated tree limb, as she nurses her wounds and tries to sleep. Rue quietly climbs the tree and points out a wasps' nest, silently indicating that Katniss should saw the nest down so that it will fall on the rivals sleeping below. Rue and Katniss form an alliance to survive, and in fact for two days, as Katniss sleeps, Rue applies leaves as a healing poultice to Katniss's wasp stings. But Rue is killed by a rival, and Katniss has no trouble killing that rival to avenge Rue's death. Katniss sings to Rue as she dies, the song that she sings to comfort Prim, and although Katniss is devastated, she manages a simple but poignant ceremony to mark Rue's death. The audience perceives in Katniss's anguish how much Rue mattered to her, how like a younger sister Rue was to Katniss and how senseless she finds the Hunger Games.

The rivals who mock their killing of a tribute who screamed for mercy—off camera—the audience naturally disdains. Their evil is in marked contrast to Katniss's goodness in befriending Rue and her embracing Peeta, both weaker participants who bring out Katniss's maternal graces and aversion to wanton killing. Katniss kills with impunity the rival who attacks her and laughs about killing the girl who cried for mercy, and the audience sees that while Katniss will not participate in gratuitous killing—thereby holding her own values against the government's contrived Games—she will punish a rival who is arrogant and merciless. This theme is underscored when another rival girl taunts Katniss by asking about her “lover boy,” and says, “Too bad you couldn't help your little friend, Rue.” This rival is so malignant that the audience approves Katniss's desire and ability to kill her because of her brutality and her arrogance in bragging about it.

At the end of the film, Cato, Peeta and Katniss are the lone tributes who have survived and they must face ferocious beasts created by the Games's organizers to further



complicate their survival. Cato has Peeta in a choke hold, and Katniss must decide how to eliminate Cato who is profoundly injured but won't cease his hold on Peeta. Because Cato is arrogant as well as brutal, and he is holding Peeta even though Cato knows that he himself is mortally wounded, Katniss has no qualms about eliminating him. Because Cato is using Peeta as a shield, Katniss's skills in archery are highlighted as she adeptly drops Cato and sends him sliding to the beasts. Her willingness to put Cato out of his misery, killing him directly with her final arrow rather than have the beasts savagely devour him alive, reveals her merciful humanity.

Early in the film Peeta expresses his desire: "I wish I could think of a way to show them they don't own me." Katniss agrees. Throughout the film, when the government vacillates on whether one or two tributes can be Victors in the Games, Katniss and Peeta know that they will stay together, in life or in death, in part to show the government of Panem that they cannot be controlled. Moments from their devouring poisonous berries together, the Games are stopped. They have never really been rivals and their mutual respect for each other reveals their core values—values that contrast with those of most of the other tributes.

9. Katniss catches and holds the television audience's attention by distinguishing herself at the Reaping ceremony when she courageously volunteers to go in her young sister's place. Then Katniss and Peeta are captivating as they appear in a chariot with their suits ablaze. When Katniss is televised demonstrating her expertise as an archer, she misses the first target, but then is upset that the hosts laugh at her and dismiss her, ignoring her second effort which is a perfect bull's eye. In anger that they ignored her success, she aims at an apple in the mouth of a roasted pig on the dining table, directly behind the Games director, Seneca. Her arrow barely misses his face but hits its target exactly, causing everyone to stop conversations and take note of her audacity and expertise. Katniss then bows low in an exaggerated gesture as she says sarcastically, "Thank you for your consideration." Everyone at the evaluation is "startled" by Katniss's aggression and later the President bellows at Seneca, "She shot an arrow at your head!" But Katniss's move wins her a high rating and a nearly perfect score.

The audience continues to be intrigued by Katniss, especially once Peeta confesses his feelings for her, and they begin to be portrayed as "star-crossed lovers." Katniss resents that term at first, but then realizes that Haymitch can use it to their advantage. Indeed, Haymitch is able to find sponsors who provide a special salve for her sores and later for Peeta's wound. Because Katniss has a number of tributes ganging up against her and goading each other to "kill her," Katniss continues to be the center of attention. This is especially true when the rules change and two tributes from the same district are allowed to win. Katniss and Peeta's love is compelling for an audience. When the two seem to have won, but the rules change again and now only one can survive, the audience is spellbound. Katniss's decision to call their bluff, to force them to accept them both as winners insures that nobody has quite played the game as she has, and she has certainly given them a gripping show. In addition, the government's constant manipulation of the Games and insertion of new threats and impossibilities illustrates that she is proficient at adapting to every challenge and keeping the audience enthralled.

10. Elements of *The Hunger Games* satirize many aspects of society. The rulers of Panem expose the flaws of governments that ignore the needs of its citizens, and the film dramatizes the distance between the elite and lower classes. When Katniss and Peeta are

on the train, being transported to the arena, they are startled by the opulence and ostentatious display of food, luxury items, and technology. The film is criticizing governments that are indifferent to the poverty, hunger, and poor working conditions of the people in the districts. The death of coal miners in underground tunnels remind viewers of the indifference of governments to the safety of its workers is not limited to the fictitious Panem.

Government engineering of toxic chemicals, weapons, and altered crops is exposed in the genetically engineered wasps in the film. The vicious beasts sent to kill the remaining tributes may satirize the drones deployed by the American government to anonymously eliminate adversaries.

The inane slogan of Panem's Games, "May the odds be ever in your favor," recalls the propaganda and mindless rhetoric of many governments that attempt to instill hope and enthusiasm in dismal realities. Claims that the Games will help "heal" and "knit" the society together and "safeguard" their future reminds the film audience of universal war rhetoric. Concern about government manipulation of citizens is exposed in the film. Certainly images of Imperial Rome are echoed in the arrival of the tributes by chariot, and the arena setting, with well-designed architecture, banners and stirring music, suggests the sophisticated stadiums and spectacles of Nazi Germany. The film audience is compelled to consider whether actual governments, like the government of Panem, engineer distractions to deflect their citizens from the sort of protests and riots shown in District 11 in the film. A reasonable question might be whether governments appease or control class struggles and the hunger of their citizens with spectacles like those in *The Hunger Games*. Does the international excitement of events like the Olympics and World Cup Soccer competitions distract the poor and hungry in the host country from realizing that their government has spent extraordinary amounts of money for stadiums and spectacular shows on opening night rather than subsidizing food, shelter, and education for its citizens? Class discussion may be directed to the question of whether it is the intention of the film to expose and satirize the drama of international sporting competitions and governments' use of money to stage these events.

Popular television programming seems to be satirized as the plot structure and some of the devices used in the film reflect images of televised shows. The film exposes Ultimate Fighting Championships that audiences gather to watch, and the film criticizes the lust for blood and the violence that such programs perpetuate. Images of *The Survivor*, competitive cooking shows, singing and dancing contests, the Academy Awards, and even the Olympics are reflected and perhaps mocked in *The Hunger Games*. A whimsical set of rules in *The Hunger Games* may satirize the dictated rules for actions of the contestants in some television contests.

The film exposes the fact that television competitions may be indifferent to the individuals competing to win. There may be disregard for their safety and survival—exposed in the film as an explicit desire to eliminate by death all but one contestant. Suspense is valued by including the audience in the judging and by focusing on the fashion and make-up of the participants, hosts, and audience. The images created for the tributes and the observers of the Games may satirize the televised Academy Awards and other entertainment industry award shows. The organizers of the Games, like the developers of television programs, are ever aware of the ratings and how many people are attending the show or are watching televised programs at home. For that reason, the feelings of the viewers are manipulated and exploited. Human interest is stirred in the audience by accounts from home. In *The Hunger Games*, for example, a frightened and

protected little sister Prim, and Katniss's romantic attachment with Peeta are exploited by the television moderator to gain audience interest. In the television interview in the film these themes are heightened as the camera zooms in on the television host's hand, as he grasps Katniss's hand to comfort her as she admits to taking Prim's place in the Games. The film's director is satirizing the emotional appeals of some television programming. The inflated voice tones of the film's Game host satirize the hype and exaggerated emotions of television hosts. The film's interviews with the tributes satirize the television interview that features subjects in flashy costumes and glib comments over thoughtful commentary.

Finally, as the spectators of the Games seem indifferent to the fact that young people will be maimed and die during the "Games," and may even relish the opportunity for seeing people suffer and die for their amusement and their government's gratification, present television audiences may be indifferent to the "reality" of reality shows: many exploit young contestants and manipulate them to perform in ways that mock admirable values and encourage behavior that should be deplored.

Our culture's valuing novel clothing, intense cosmetic procedures, and extraordinary make-up may be satirized in the film's depictions of the preparations of Katniss for the televised presentation. Costumes are designed to appeal to the audience and create a memorable impression, not necessarily reflecting the personalities of the tributes as the host suggests. Cinna reprises Katniss's original flaming dress to memorable effect. Certainly the film's detailing the scrupulous removal of hair on Katniss's body suggests the director's intention to satirize our culture's preoccupation with body waxing. The extraordinary eyelashes affixed to the contestants' lids may satirize our culture's fascination with eyelashes. It is difficult to watch *The Hunger Games* without becoming aware of how many superficial values in our culture the film exposes.

11. During the actual Games, Katniss and Peeta encourage each other and take care of one another when each is wounded. When Katniss has been bitten by some genetically engineered wasps that cause hallucinations, she imagines Peeta urging her to escape while she can. This warning inspires her to move to a safer place.

Later, when Katniss hears that two victors may be crowned if both originate from the same district, she is encouraged to seek Peeta. She discovers Peeta disguised by the painted designs on his skin that he uses as a camouflage. She sees that he is badly wounded from a sword, and she refuses to leave him. They find a cave, and she kisses him gently on the cheek, affirming to the audience that romance is developing in these "star-crossed lovers." She brings Peeta soup and medicine from the sponsors, and she recalls how he once fed her, too. He apologizes for having thrown the bread to the ground for her. She embraces and kisses him. They fall asleep in each other's arms and find comfort in each other.

When the government places fierce animals in the arena, Katniss and Peeta flee from the beasts. Katniss manages to kill both Cato and the animals, and she and Peeta embrace as winners. However, the rules are changed again and now only one victor may be crowned. Peeta concedes that one of them should go home and he tells her, "Go ahead. They have to have their victor." But Katniss refuses: "No, they don't. Why should they?" She has toxic berries in her hand, and she asks him to trust her plan, giving some to him that they will eat together. As they count, "One . . . two . . ." he touches her braid tenderly and says "three," just as the announcer says, "Stop" and announces them both as

winners.

When they return to the Capitol, Haymitch realizes the serious consequences of their refusal to turn on each other and advises them to claim that they are so in love and couldn't help themselves. In fact, Katniss tells the MC that when she saw Peeta at the river, "I felt the happiest person in the world. I couldn't imagine life without him." She looks into Peeta's eyes and they hold hands. Peeta claims, "She saved my life." And she adds, "We saved each other."

However, when Peeta privately asks her, "What happens when we get back?" she answers, "I don't know. I guess we try to forget." Peeta tells her, "I don't want to forget." She and Peeta hold their hands high for all to see, but she sees Gale and her family in the audience. Gale has twice seen Katniss and Peeta kiss on camera, and the film ends with uncertainty about Katniss's feelings for either Peeta or Gale. Their relationship has evolved through the course of the Games. What might have been a rivalry is defeated by Peeta's admitted attraction to Katniss, their mutual protection and nursing of each other, and finally Katniss's return of affection.

12. There are multiple consequences of Katniss's decision to unite with Peeta rather than abandoning or defeating him when she had multiple opportunities. Within the context of the film's plot, they work together to survive. He deflects the other Tributes from the trail of finding Katniss and she nurses him back to health. They return to District 12 as double victors, two exemplary people united. Her physical and intellectual skills, superior in many ways to Peeta's powers, have saved them both. She is a feminist icon, embodying the strengths of many women in that she is smart, maternal, nurturing and cooperative, willing to work with Peeta and share the spotlight.

Most important thematically, a consequence of her not abandoning Peeta shows the government of Panem that she can stand up to their manipulation and attempt at control. She models the success of cooperative behavior and in winning with Peeta defeats Panem's value of competitive, aggressive action. Her decision that she and Peeta will end their lives together by eating poisonous berries, rather than submit to the government's attempt to force combat between them, shows that she won't be owned by Panem, a goal that she and Peeta have earlier expressed. She has control of their lives by having control of their deaths. Katniss's courage and wisdom are evident in her decision to not defeat Peeta. Consequently, her inner integrity is intact. She exemplifies the best aspects of strength, courage and nobility by not defeating Peeta. A consequence of returning to District 12 with Peeta—and seeing her friend with her sister, is that Katniss must make decisions about her personal life.

The most serious consequence of her survival with Peeta also includes a question about their future political roles in overthrowing Panem and the Hunger Games, guaranteeing a sequel to the first film of *The Hunger Games*. Clearly, a critical consequence of Katniss's survival is the awareness that she poses a threat to the state. She is so much a threat that Seneca, who has permitted two victors, is escorted by guards and locked in a room with a bowl of poisonous berries. The President's expectation that Seneca must kill himself underscores Haymitch's warning that the consequences of crossing the State are far beyond Katniss's understanding. Katniss's refusal to kill Peeta has deadly consequences. Therefore, Haymitch advises Katniss to claim, when interviewed on television, that her love for Peeta compelled her to consider a suicide pact because she couldn't imagine living without Peeta.

Ultimately, Katniss has triumphed, and she thereby thwarts the state's game plan

to defeat inferior beings, those who were not trained in the combat academies to produce skilled warriors. We are not privy to Katniss's thinking, to know if she is naïve in believing that she can return home a victor whose combat skills and strong values guarantee her to be a superior person. And the state's plan for controlling this admirable victor are addressed in the sequel to this first film.