



A Discussion Guide to Suzanne Collins' **The Hunger Games**

with use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)

**** ANSWER GUIDE ****

Dystopian Literature: A Primer

Dystopian Literature, literally “hard” or “bad” place, is fiction that presents an imagined negative society that is the result of frightening habits in our current way of life. These “frightening habits” are often political, environmental, or technological in nature and help bring about a disastrous end to society. Nineteen Eighty-Four, by George Orwell, is another example of dystopian literature.

Common characteristics of dystopian literature:

- The government is totalitarian, run as a *utopia*.
- Citizens have limited access to information not controlled by the state.
- Citizens are under constant surveillance, or perceive themselves as under constant surveillance.
- Citizens are separated into distinct class systems. The upper class enjoys the most freedom and wealth, are closest to the government.
- Citizens are dehumanized.
- The natural world is either not seen, or is not to be trusted.

Use the space below to record brief quotes or notes - and their corresponding page numbers - that identify Panem as a dystopian society.

Panem is divided into districts with no communication between them. The people are kept poor and starving.

In order to feed their families, children enter their names into the Hunger Games drawing multiple times for

Extra shares of food. Katniss avoids discussing “tricky topics”.

Several characters that we first meet in The Hunger Games play a large role throughout the trilogy. Obviously, Katniss is one of them. And Peeta. Things these characters do, say, or think clue the reader in to their motivations and thus point to major themes in the book. Listed below are several characters from The Hunger Games. Choose two characters (at least one from the list below, the other can be of your choosing, but may also come from the list) and, on the pages provided, make note of passages - and their corresponding page numbers - that stand out to you while you are reading.

Katniss Everdeen
Peeta Mellark
Cinna

Gale
Haymitch Abernathy

What motivates Katniss' decision to take Prim's place in the games? Love

Why does Katniss not want Peeta as a partner? Would you want Peeta as a partner? Why or why not?

Katniss does not want Peeta as a partner because he has already saved her life once before. She does not want to feel like she owes him something, so that she will not feel guilty if she is forced to kill him in the games.

Answers will vary

Why does Madge give Katniss the pin? What is significant about it, and does it tell us anything about the story (foreshadowing)?

Madge gives Katniss the pin as a show of solidarity. It is a mockingjay – a cross between a mockingbird and a Panem manufactured Jabberjay. It was a means of using the Capital's technology against them and so is a means of mocking the Capital.

Would you want to live in the Capital? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. The Capital is wealthy, but is largely immoral. The people are distracted with following their passions – however fleeting and grotesque – are not concerned with any virtue.

Read CCC paragraphs 2264, 2265, and 2268. When does Katniss first kill another person in the games? Is this warranted? Why does she distinguish between killing Glimmer and killing the boy from District 1?

Katniss first directly kills another person when she shoots the boy from District 1 with an arrow. It is acceptable because it is in self defence. It is different that killing Glimmer because Glimmer was killed indirectly through a Tracker Jacks attack. Katniss did not kill her directly.

When the announcement of Thresh's death is made, Katniss and Peeta mourn his loss.

"I have to bury the real pain because who's going to bet on a tribute who keeps sniveling over the deaths of her opponents...no one will understand my sorrow at Thresh's murder. Murder! Thankfully, I didn't say it aloud. That's not going to win me any points in the arena."

Do you agree with Katniss? Why or why not?

Disagree. By showing compassion for another person (not Tribute – person!) Katniss demonstrates charity. It becomes another way for the country to unite against the tyranny of Panem.

Read the CCC paragraph 2277. With this in mind, should Katniss have killed Cato? Is it “mercy” to end someone's life to stop the pain? What *should* Katniss and Peeta have done? _____

Katniss should not have killed Cato. It is not “mercy” to end someone's life with an arrow, to stop pain. Katniss and Peeta could have tried saving Cato, but it doesn't seem likely that they could have.

Answers will vary here, depending on the student's creativity and effort, but the fact remains that “mercy killing” is not a Catholic solution to Cato's suffering.

Why is The Capital mad at the end? _____

The Capital – President Snow – realizes he has lost the fear of the people. Katniss and Peeta have, through Charity, given the people hope.

What, then, has rendered the Capital powerless? What was the first action of the book that began to diminish the power of The Capital? _____

Ultimately, love has rendered the Capital powerless. The first action of the book that began to diminish the power of the Capital is Katniss volunteering to take the place of her sister in the games.

People often say The Hunger Games is about “kids killing kids.” Is this a true statement? Why or why not? _____

The book, and trilogy, The Hunger Games is about more than just “kids killing kids.” The author uses the setting – children competing in “games” - to magnify the horrors of Panem, a dystopian society.

In the foreground of the games, however, is a constant display of love and selflessness between

The various characters. Indeed, acts of charity and compassion are subversive in this society and are a portrayal of [Christian] nonviolent resistance.

Suggested activities for further enrichment:

- 1) Panem is godless. It seems all Christianity has been wiped clean from the society save in one name, that of Peeta. Write an essay on Peeta's role in The Hunger Games. Is he a Christ figure? A Peter? Use the notes you took above, and examples from the book, to support your answer.
- 2) Humility is a virtue. It consists of accepting our limitations and God-given talents. The tributes must go through a group training before the games. In essence, they are practicing humility. With your group, establish a training session. Pick one thing you are good at, and share it with your friends. They should do the same. Also, pick something you are *not* good at. Do you have any funny stories to tell about this?
- 3) Using Katniss' “Meadow Song” to Rue as your inspiration, craft your own lullaby.