

Catching Fire



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SUZANNE COLLINS

Suzanne Collins's father was a U.S. Air Force officer, and her family moved frequently when she was a child, spending time in the eastern United States as well as parts of Europe. Because of her father's military experience, it was important to him that his children understood war—not just where battles took place, but why and how they played out. Eventually, Collins attended Indiana University and earned a degree in theater and telecommunications. After a few years, Collins went back to school to earn a playwriting degree from New York University, and shortly after graduation, she began writing for television. Collins wrote for several Nickelodeon shows, Scholastic Entertainment, and Kids' WB, and she was eventually inspired to try writing a children's book series. The result was *The Underland Chronicles*. A few years later, Collins was watching television, switching between channels covering reality TV and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—and that's when she came up with the idea for the novel [The Hunger Games](#). Collins followed [The Hunger Games](#) with additional best-sellers in the series — *Catching Fire* and [Mockingjay](#) — both of which were bestsellers.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Suzanne Collins came up with the idea of [The Hunger Games](#) while watching news coverage of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The depictions of these wars, when combined with the popularity of reality TV, and the ways in which coverage of the wars seemed itself to be a kind of reality TV, led Collins to imagine the dystopian setting of Panem, where violence becomes a major form of entertainment. Around the time Collins was writing [The Hunger Games](#), the world was also seeing the beginnings of the ongoing global recession that began in 2007, emphasizing the wealth gap and the conditions of poverty both within the United States and abroad.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Suzanne Collins drew from the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur when coming up with the idea of tributes for the Hunger Games. [The Hunger Games](#) has also been compared to the popular Japanese novel-turned-film, *Battle Royale*, in which junior high school students are forced to fight to the death in a program led by an authoritarian Japanese government. The success of [The Hunger Games](#) trilogy also inspired many other series depicting teenagers fighting for truth and survival in dystopian futures, including [Divergent](#) and [The Maze Runner](#).

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Catching Fire*
- **Where Written:** Sandy Hook, Connecticut, United States
- **When Published:** September 1, 2009
- **Literary Period:** The young adult “boom” of the 2000s
- **Genre:** Science Fiction/Fantasy, Young Adult
- **Setting:** Various parts of the country of Panem (a futurist North America)
- **Climax:** Katniss shoots an arrow at the force field surrounding the Hunger Games arena
- **Antagonist:** President Coriolanus Snow
- **Point of View:** First person, from Katniss's point of view

EXTRA CREDIT

A woman of her Time: It's no mystery that Suzanne Collins has had a major influence on world culture in the 2000s and 2010s. In 2010, Time Magazine made it official by placing her on its prestigious list of the world's 100 most influential people, alongside Barack Obama, Steve Jobs, and Oprah Winfrey!

From famous to mega-famous: In late 2010, it was announced that the Hunger Games books would be adapted into films, starring Jenifer Lawrence as Katniss Everdeen. Collins was heavily involved in the filming process. *Catching Fire*, the second film, grossed almost one billion dollars, and was the most financially successful film featuring a female lead in cinematic history.



PLOT SUMMARY

Katniss Everdeen has won the Hunger Games, an annual festival sponsored by the government of her nation, Panem. The government requires that each of the twelve districts of Panem send two competitors, one male and one female, to fight each other and compete in a sadistic series of challenges, until there is only one champion. The entire population of Panem watches the Hunger Games on television. Katniss and her co-representative from District 12, Peeta, won the games together, defying the government's rules. The “Head Gamemaker,” Seneca Crane, allowed Katniss and Peeta to be co-champions because he thought it would make for a good story: indeed, Katniss pretended that she was in love with Peeta to please the media.

Shortly after winning the Games, Katniss is back in District 12. She now lives in a luxurious house, along with a former victor, Haymitch, her mother, her sister Prim, and Peeta. One day,

Katniss returns to her home to find Coriolanus Snow, the president of Panem, waiting for her. Snow informs Katniss that she is about to embark on her “Victory Tour,” during which she’ll visit all twelve districts. He tells Katniss that her defiance of the rules of the Hunger Games caused rebellion in the twelve districts, and he warns her that if she disobeys the government’s rules again, her family will be killed. As Snow leaves, he gives Katniss one more piece of information: he knows that Katniss kissed Gale. Gale, Katniss’s lifelong friend, has been referred to as her “cousin” in the news, because the media doesn’t want to distract from Katniss’s supposed romance with Peeta.

Concerned for her family’s safety, Katniss begins her Victory Tour, accompanied by Haymitch, Peeta, and her entourage, including stylists, makeup artists, and escorts. Before she leaves, Katniss’s mother gives her a small pin shaped like a **mockingjay**, a rare bird of Panem. During her visit to District 11, Katniss and Peeta appear in the Justice Building before the district’s entire population. Katniss, who’s wearing her pin, remembers Rue, a young competitor from District 11 who died in last year’s Hunger Games. Katniss goes “off-script,” telling the crowd that she’ll always remember Rue, and inspiring many to clap and cheer. As Katniss and Peeta leave the building, they’re horrified to see “Peacekeepers”—government soldiers—shooting those who applauded. Afterwards, Katniss tells Haymitch and Peeta everything President Snow told her. Peeta is upset that Katniss and Gale kissed, though he knows that he’s being selfish. Peeta sincerely loves Katniss, but recognizes that Katniss doesn’t return his feelings.

As Peeta and Katniss proceed with the rest of their tour, they “stick to the script” during all public appearances. Katniss begins to have nightmares about Rue and the Games, and sometimes sleeps in Peeta’s bed for comfort. The last stage of the tour takes place in the Capitol, where the government is based, and where the richest and most powerful citizens of Panem live. In the Capitol, during their final public appearance, Peeta proposes marriage to Katniss, having confirmed with Katniss and Haymitch that the marriage will keep their families safe. Katniss accepts Peeta’s offer of marriage, though she does so out of concern for her loved ones, not love for Peeta. Immediately afterwards, Katniss makes eye contact with President Snow, who is presiding over the event. Snow gives a barely perceptible shake of the head that, in Katniss’s mind, means that Katniss has not done enough to comply with his requests. After the event, Peeta and Katniss attend a huge ball where Katniss meets Plutarch Heavensbee, the new Gamemaker. She notices that Plutarch is wearing a watch with a mockingjay on it.

Katniss, Haymitch, and Peeta return to District 12, where they learn that there are uprisings in other parts of Panem. In response to these uprisings, the government has sent more Peacekeepers to District 12: rules are being more strictly

enforced, and many citizens are jailed or killed for breaking the law. Convinced that President Snow wants her dead, Katniss prepares to leave District 12, along with Haymitch, Peeta, Gale, and her family. Katniss first tells Gale of her plan to leave—Gale is eager to join her, until he realizes that Peeta will be coming, too. Shortly thereafter, Gale is savagely whipped for illegally hunting in the woods. Katniss’s mother takes care of Gale, using medicines that seem harsh and brutal to Katniss, but ultimately cause him to heal more quickly. In the following weeks, Katniss’s mother tends to dozens of victims of the government’s brutality, and Katniss herself tends to Gale, even kissing him and falling asleep beside him. Peeta is displeased when he sees that Katniss has been sleeping with Gale.

Katniss, furious with the government, sneaks out to hunt in defiance of the rules. When she sneaks past the fence around District 1, she encounters a woman, Twill, and a girl, Bonnie, who claim to be from District 8. They explain that Katniss’s defiance of the Capitol, via her speech about Rue and her performance in the Hunger Games, has triggered a wave of rebellion against President Snow, and, in response, the spread of Peacekeepers throughout Panem. Twill explains that they are headed to District 13—an area that the government claims to be radioactive, but which Twill believes to be home to a huge group of rebels. Bonnie shows Katniss a small cracker, decorated with Katniss’s mockingjay; this encourages Katniss to trust Bonnie and Twill. Nevertheless, her concern for her family forces her to return to District 12, rather than joining her new friends on their journey.

Shortly after meeting Bonnie and Twill, Katniss returns to the Capitol with Peeta for a lavish photo-shoot preceding their wedding. During her time there, the government announces an unexpected change in the Hunger Games for that year. Because it is the 75th anniversary of the Hunger Games, the Capitol will require the 12 Districts to send former victors, rather than new competitors, as is the usual procedure. Katniss realizes that she is the only woman from District 12 ever to win the Games—this means that she will be forced to compete in the Games for a second time. Shortly thereafter, Peeta insists that he’ll volunteer to compete in the Games, protecting Katniss for as long as possible.

Katniss is distraught at having to compete in the Games again—she realizes that she won’t be able to co-win the Games with Peeta this time, and thus, one of them will have to die. Nevertheless, she resolves to try her hardest to protect Peeta from the other competitors, and to ultimately sacrifice her own life to do so. Haymitch, who has always favored Peeta over Katniss, agrees with Katniss’s plan, and spends the following months rigorously training both Peeta and Katniss. Katniss gains new respect for Haymitch—in the past, she’d thought of him as a lazy alcoholic, but now she realizes that he’s an intelligent, athletic man whose talents haven’t left him in the years since he won the Hunger Games himself.

After months of training, Haymitch, Peeta, and Katniss prepare for the Games. As expected, Katniss's name is selected, along with Haymitch's, but Peeta immediately volunteers to take Haymitch's place. The three of them go to the Capitol, where Haymitch will continue to coach Katniss and Peeta. At the Capitol, Peeta and Katniss meet the other competitors in the 75th Hunger Games. Notable contestants include a young woman named Johanna, who previously won the Games by pretending to be weak; a handsome young man and "fan favorite" named Finnick Odair, who won largely by seducing his opponents into trusting him; a middle-aged couple named Wiress and Beetee, who won by using their vast intelligence; and a group of "Careers" (people who train for the Games and then volunteer to participate) famed for their brutality. Following Haymitch's instructions, Katniss forms an alliance with Wiress and Beetee. Katniss learns from her allies that the Gamemakers are using invisible force fields to protect themselves from the competitors, and prevent the competitors from escaping the Games. Katniss also learns how to identify these force fields—they leave a telltale "shimmering square." During these days, Katniss begins to develop feelings for Peeta, and tells him, knowing full well that she's likely to die in the upcoming Games, that she wants to spend the remainder of her life with him. Katniss notices Plutarch Heavensbee presiding over the Games, and feels intense hatred for him.

Hours before the Games begin, Haymitch tells Katniss to remember who the "real enemy" is. Katniss prepares to enter the enormous arena where the Games occur, accompanied by her stylist and friend, Cinna. A tracking device is forcibly injected into her arm, allowing the Gamemakers to follow her every move. Seconds before Katniss is raised into the arena, Peacekeepers attack Cinna, sending a clear message to Katniss: she must "behave" or her loved ones will be hurt.

The Hunger Games take place in a huge, circular arena full of water, with twelve spokes connecting the circumference to a small island in the center. Katniss manages to swim to the island, followed by Finnick, who is from a coastal district. On the island, there is a massive pile of weapons, from which Katniss takes a bow and arrow. Finnick insists that he and Katniss form an alliance—though Katniss is initially reluctant, she agrees after Finnick helps both her and Peeta. They also align with Mags, an old woman from Finnick's district. The group of four makes its way to the far side of the island, where Katniss notices a force field too late to prevent Peeta from electrocuting himself. After Finnick performs CPR on Peeta, saving his life, Katniss realizes that she'll never be able to kill Finnick. At the end of the first day, a cannon fires, indicating that almost half of the contestants have already been killed.

The group of four encounters a series of challenges: first, a cloud of mist that paralyzes anyone who walks through it. Katniss, Finnick, and Peeta run away from the cloud, with Finnick carrying Peeta. Because Katniss is too weak to carry

Mags, the group is forced to leave her to die. This devastates Finnick, since Mags was one of his only true friends. Shortly afterwards, the remaining group encounters a swarm of monkeys, a massive tsunami wave, and lightning. Their most traumatizing challenge occurs when Katniss and Finnick are confronted by a swarm of birds who speak with the voices of their loved ones: Katniss, for instance, hears the sound of Prim screaming.

The group meets Wiress and Beetee, who have banded together with Johanna. Wiress, who's been mentally disturbed by the Games, continues to mutter, "tick tock," irritating Johanna. Katniss correctly deduces that Wiress is saying that the arena is built like a clock: each twelfth of the circle contains a different challenge, each of which occurs exactly once every twelve hours, for one hour at a time. Before Katniss has time to process this information further, a group of Careers attacks her and her allies, killing Wiress in the process.

Beetee, who has previously chosen a long, thin wire from the pile of weapons, proposes that the group lure the remaining competitors to the beach, connect the beach to the lightning area with the wire, and wait for the lightning to electrocute them. The group agrees, largely because no one is clever enough to think of a better plan. The group splits in two: Katniss and Johanna unravel the wire along the beach, while Finnick, Beetee, and Peeta go to the lightning area of the arena. While Katniss is unraveling the wire, a heavy object hits her on the head. Half-knocked out, she feels Johanna cutting her on the arm with a knife and then running away. Katniss concludes that Johanna and Finnick must have had a plan all along to betray Katniss and Peeta.

Still desperate to save Peeta's life, Katniss staggers toward the edge of the island, where Beetee and Peeta have gone. Lightning is about to strike, electrocuting most of the beach. In the lightning area, she sees Beetee lying on the ground, a deep wound in his back. Suddenly, she sees Finnick running toward her, followed by a Career named Enobaria. Katniss is about to shoot Enobaria, thinking that Finnick will stagger toward the lightning, eliminating himself, when she remembers Haymitch's warning to remember the real enemy. Realizing that Haymitch was talking about the Gamemakers, Katniss turns from Finnick to the force field that keeps the competitors trapped inside the arena. She shoots her arrow at the "shimmering square" at the exact instant when the lightning strikes. There is a large explosion, and Katniss loses consciousness.

When Katniss wakes up, she is lying in a large hospital room. She notices Beetee next to her, and concludes that the Gamemakers are keeping them alive for some other sadistic game. She staggers up and walks toward the sound of voices. In a nearby room, she is surprised to see Haymitch talking with Finnick and Plutarch Heavensbee. Plutarch tells Katniss that he has been part of a plan to overthrow the government, and was working with Finnick, Johanna, and Haymitch. Along with

Haymitch, Plutarch planned to free Katniss and Peeta from the Hunger Games by blowing up the force field, and then take them to District 13. Haymitch didn't tell Katniss or Peeta because he knew they had to have plausible deniability if the plan failed. Meanwhile, he enlisted the help of Finnick, Beetee, and Johanna, who were instructed to protect Katniss and Peeta at all costs.

With Beetee's help, the group has escaped from the Hunger Games. But Katniss is horrified to learn that the government has captured Peeta, Johanna, and Enobaria before they could be freed from the arena. In the depths of her misery, Katniss finds that Gale is also a part of the rebel alliance. Gale tells Katniss that they will free Peeta from the government. He also gives her shocking news: District 12 has been destroyed.

resident of District 12, Gale is a resourceful, rugged young man, for whom Katniss has had romantic feelings at many points. He and Katniss have been friends since childhood, and they still enjoy hunting together. Gale is jealous of Katniss for spending time with Peeta and ultimately marrying him. Like Peeta, Gale despises the Capitol, and tries to challenge its authority at all times. Sometimes, his challenges can be as simple as breaking the rules of poaching and hunting (a crime for which he's ultimately punished with a brutal flogging), or as significant as leading a district-wide uprising against the government's authority. Where Peeta seeks to dismantle the government "from the inside," Gale tries to fight the government using more direct, head-to-head methods. By the end of the book, he's firmly established himself as a member of a huge rebel alliance against the government.

President Coriolanus Snow – The tyrannical leader of the government of Panem, President Coriolanus Snow appears in only a few chapters of *Catching Fire*, but his presence suffuses the entirety of the book—as Katniss puts it, he could have her killed at any time with a wave of his hand. In addition to being a brutal, even sociopathic leader, Snow is a cunning politician who recognizes the importance of spectacle and appearances. It is for this reason that he threatens to kill Katniss's family if she "misbehaves" during her Victory Tour—the threat that sets off the plot of the novel.

Haymitch Abernathy – District 12's middle-aged, alcoholic, lazy former champion in the Hunger Games, Haymitch is an enigmatic presence in *Catching Fire*. While he struggles with alcoholism and acts childish to Katniss at many points, Katniss is forced to acknowledge his prowess as an athlete and a tactician—the qualities that led him to win the Hunger Games years ago. Furthermore, she gains respect for him for maintaining an ascetic, lonely lifestyle, thereby saving any loved ones from government intimidation and surveillance. Ultimately, Katniss learns that Haymitch is a rebel leader, maintaining a studied veneer of indifference and sloth to hide his true investment in defeating President Coriolanus Snow.

Plutarch Heavensbee – The current Head Gamemaker, Plutarch initially strikes Katniss as a vain, superficial, and heavily sadistic man—in other words, the perfect Head Gamemaker. Only in the novel's final pages is it revealed that Plutarch is secretly a rebel, using his influential government position to tamper with the Hunger Games and free Katniss and Peeta. Ultimately, Plutarch remains a mystery: it's not clear how much of his personality is "for show" to disguise his rebel allegiances, and how much of it is, in fact, his true self.

Effie Trinket – An employee of the Capitol, Effie Trinket is Katniss Everdeen's personal escort during both the Hunger Games and the subsequent Victory Tour. She's punctual and precise, and plans Katniss's complicated visits throughout Panem. It's left unclear how we should think of Effie—on one hand, she's always been loyal to Katniss, but on the other, she



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Katniss Everdeen – The protagonist of *Catching Fire*, Katniss is an enormously brave and resourceful young woman who struggles with great challenges despite her age. She is the victor of the Hunger Games shortly before the beginning of *Catching Fire*, and is caught in an "in-between" stage in this novel (the middle of the Hunger Games trilogy). While she's still enormously protective of the people she loves—her mother, her sister Prim, her friend Gale, and her co-champion Peeta—she's unsure how to go about protecting them. Katniss wants to defy the tyrannical authority of the government, headed by President Coriolanus Snow, but must also participate in events designed by the government to boost morale and loyalty. Katniss faces considerably more adversity in *Catching Fire* than she does in the previous book, [The Hunger Games](#), as now she's forced to participate in a second Hunger Games, while also facing the weight of her memories of the previous Games.

Peeta Mellark – The handsome, politically savvy, and immensely compassionate co-champion (along with Katniss Everdeen) of the Hunger Games, Peeta struggles with conflicted feelings for Katniss throughout the book. He's very attracted to Katniss, and professes his love for her many times. In many ways, this love grows stronger during the course of the book, as Peeta and Katniss bond over their shared experiences in the previous Hunger Games. At the same time, Peeta recognizes that Katniss doesn't return his feelings, and only marries him to please President Coriolanus Snow. He's also jealous of Katniss's feelings for her friend Gale Hawthorne. In the end, Peeta's fate is highly poignant: he reconfirms his loyalty to Katniss by protecting her at all costs, but also knows that she's unable to make up her mind whether she loves him or Gale.

Gale Hawthorne – A friend of Katniss Everdeen and a fellow

seems shockingly indifferent to the murder and violence that take place at the Hunger Games every year.

Finnick Odair – A young, beautiful, and intelligent champion of the Hunger Games, he competes in the 75th Hunger Games alongside Katniss. Finnick is known to be seductive and manipulative, and he is enormously popular in the Capitol for his suave demeanor. During the Games, Katniss is initially reluctant to trust Finnick, but she ultimately comes to respect him after he saves Peeta’s life and shows compassion for Annie Cresta. In the end, it’s revealed that Finnick is a rebel, and working with Plutarch and Haymitch to free Katniss and Peeta from the Hunger Games.

Johanna Mason – A young, wily Hunger Games victor who returns to the Games to compete against Katniss. Johanna is aggressive and bold, and almost immediately Katniss dislikes her. Gradually, Katniss comes to respect her more after she openly criticizes the government in the middle of the Hunger Games, knowing full well that her words are being recorded. Ultimately, it’s revealed that Johanna is a rebel, working with Finnick and Haymitch, among others, to free Peeta and Katniss from the Hunger Games arena.

Beetee – A brilliant and eccentric Hunger Games competitor who previously won the Game using his vast intelligence and resourcefulness. Though Katniss suspects Beetee of treachery at several points during the Games, she eventually realizes that he is a rebel, working with Haymitch to break through the force field surrounding the Hunger Games arena and free her.

Katniss’s mother – Katniss has a conflicted relationship with her mother. Following her father’s death, her mother fell into deep depression and now rarely speaks. As a result, Katniss has a difficult time feeling love and affection for her mother, even as she recognizes that her mother is a kind and intelligent woman. During the course of the novel, Katniss comes to recognize the extent of her mother’s compassion—her mother is a skilled nurse and healer, without whom the people of District 12 would suffer greatly.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Greasy Sae – An old resident of District 12 who sells food, supplies, and alcohol to a large chunk of the area’s population, and helps to raise funds for Peeta and Katniss during their time in the Hunger Games.

Darius – A friendly, likable Peacekeeper who occasionally spends time with Katniss, and is ultimately punished for his lenience in punishing Gale.

Seneca Crane – The Head Gamemaker, responsible for organizing the complicated challenges of the Hunger Games. He chooses to allow both Katniss Everdeen and Peeta to win the Games, and is ultimately executed for his lenience.

Venia – One of the attendants charged by the government with

dressing and prepping Katniss for her public appearances, both during the Hunger Games and during her subsequent Victory Tour.

Octavia – One of the attendants charged by the government with dressing and prepping Katniss for her public appearances, both during the Hunger Games and during her subsequent Victory Tour.

Cinna – Katniss’s stylist and friend, responsible for designing the dresses she wears as a contestant in, and later a victor of, the Hunger Games. Cinna is a thoughtful, responsible man, whose interest in trust and friendship contrasts markedly with the superficiality of his profession.

Caesar Flickerman – The vain, superficial TV personality tasked with interviewing the contestants in the Hunger Games, Caesar Flickerman is a hugely popular figure in the Capitol and, thanks to the ubiquity of television, throughout Panem.

Mayor Undersee – The mayor of District 12, and father to Madge Undersee.

Madge Undersee – The daughter of Mayor Undersee, and a friend to Katniss Everdeen.

Romulus Thread – The Head Peacekeeper of District 12, following the “clamp down” on crime in the area.

Cray – The Head Peacekeeper of District 12, prior to the government’s “clamp down” on crime.

Bristel – A friend and crewmate of Gale.

Thorn – A friend and crewmate of Gale.

Bonnie – A young girl from District 8 who’s forced to leave with her friend and teacher, Twill, and head to the mysterious District 13 in order to join the rebel cause.

Twill – A middle-aged woman from District 8 who joins the rebel cause after witnessing the government’s violence and brutality first-hand. She takes care of Bonnie, and with her tries to reach District 13, where the rebel alliance is rumored to be based.

Flavius – One of the attendants charged by the government with dressing and prepping Katniss for her public appearances, both during the Hunger Games and during her subsequent Victory Tour.

Wiress – An elderly, somewhat odd Hunger Games victor who competes in the 75th Hunger Games alongside Katniss. Wiress seems eccentric and mentally unstable to many around her, but those who listen to her closely, such as Katniss and Beetee, recognize that she’s actually very intelligent and perceptive.

Claudius Templesmith – The official announcer of the Hunger Games.

Enobaria – A former champion of the Hunger Games, who returns to competition against Katniss. At the end of the novel, it’s revealed that Enobaria is a rebel, and thus a secret ally of Katniss and Peeta.

Cashmere – A former champion and career tribute (one who volunteers for the Hunger Games in the hopes of winning fame, glory, and money), who competes in the 75th Hunger Games against Katniss.

Brutus – A former champion and career tribute (one who volunteers for the Hunger Games in the hopes of winning fame, glory, and money), who competes in the 75th Hunger Games against Katniss.

Gloss – A former champion of the Hunger Games, who competes in the 75th Hunger Games against Katniss.

Mags – An elderly contestant in the 75th Hunger Games, and a former victor of the Games. Mags is very close with Finnick, and during the Games, they work together to survive.

Annie Cresta – A champion of the Hunger Games, beloved of Finnick Odair. Though we never see Annie in the novel, Finnick hears her voice during a psychological challenge during the Hunger Games. It's made clear that Finnick loves her deeply.

Chaff – A former champion of the Hunger Games, who competes in the 75th Hunger Games against Katniss. Chaff is an old friend of Haymitch.

Seeder – A former champion of the Hunger Games, who competes in the 75th Hunger Games against Katniss Everdeen. Seeder is a resident of the same district as Rue, and seems to feel an unspoken connection with Katniss.

Cecilia – A middle-aged competitor in the 75th Hunger Games, and a mother of three.

Woof – An elderly competitor in the 75th Hunger Games.

Hazelle – Gale's mother, whom Katniss likes.

Rory – Gale's brother.

Vick – Gale's brother.

Posy – Gale's younger sister.

Rue – A young competitor in the Hunger Games from District 11, whom Katniss protected, but ultimately failed to save from death during [The Hunger Games](#). Rue's death causes Katniss an inordinate amount of guilt in *Catching Fire*.

Glimmer – A young competitor in the Hunger Games who was from District 2, and whom Katniss killed.

Marvel – A young competitor in the Hunger Games who was from District 1, and whom Katniss killed.

Primrose Everdeen – Katniss's beloved younger sister, the person for whom she risked her life by entering the Hunger Games before the events of *Catching Fire*. While Prim barely appears in this novel, Katniss's love for her is an important factor in many of her decisions.

coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



SYMBOLS AND INTERPRETATIONS

At the “twist ending” of *Catching Fire*, it becomes clear that Suzanne Collins has been deliberately misleading us for most of the book. Haymitch

Abernathy, who had seemed to be little more than a lazy alcoholic, turns out to be a shrewd, resourceful man, one who has been planning a rebellion President Snow's government. This surprise ending encourages us to go back and rethink our initial assumptions about *Catching Fire*.

On closer inspection, *Catching Fire* is largely about how to interpret ambiguous signs and symbols. The most overt symbol in the novel, the **mockingjay**, is subject to interpretations from many different characters. To Twill and Bonnie, for instance, the mockingjay is a symbol of Katniss's defiance of the government's orders. It represents actions like her refusal to allow Peeta to die during her first Hunger Games, or her noble speech about Rue, a young girl who died in the Games. On the other hand, to many of the people who live in the Capitol, the mockingjay is merely a symbol of the Hunger Games themselves, and thus a symbol of the government's power (or its tyranny). Through the symbol of the mockingjay, Collins outlines the basic problem with symbols and non-literal messages: they're so open to interpretation that they can mean essentially opposite things to different people.

Throughout *Catching Fire*, Katniss is herself faced with ambiguous signs, like President Snow's expression, Plutarch Heavensbee's watch, and Haymitch's advice that she should remember the “real enemy.” Katniss is forced to interpret these signs, and often she interprets them incorrectly. It's appropriate that *Catching Fire* is the middle book in Collins's *Hunger Games* trilogy, as here Katniss is caught in an awkward “in-between” stage, and this is reflected in her confusion regarding signs and symbols. Just as Katniss is often unable to interpret the symbols she encounters, she is also unable to stop herself from being interpreted and treated as a symbol by other people. When she makes a speech about Rue, for instance, her words are immediately interpreted as a sign of rebellion against President Snow, and given a meaning that Katniss herself never considered.

Partly because *Catching Fire* isn't the conclusion of her trilogy, Collins doesn't fully resolve the ambiguity in the mockingjay. Katniss isn't entirely sure where she stands politically, and thus she can't stand behind any one interpretation. Similarly, Collins doesn't detail any foolproof way of interpreting symbols—sometimes Katniss interprets correctly and sometimes she doesn't. In the simplest terms, however, Collins



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-

suggests that one should interpret ambiguous signs by paying close attention, collecting as much information as possible, and never rushing to conclusions. Thus, at the end of the novel, Katniss finally reaches the “correct” interpretation of Haymitch’s advice by patiently thinking it over again and again. At the same time, Katniss declines to be a pawn for the government, and instead takes decisive action. At the same time that she reaches a stable interpretation of the world, she seems to be arriving at a stable interpretation of herself and what she stands for.

The problem of how to interpret signs and symbols is crucial to *Catching Fire*—so much so that Collins can’t entirely solve it. She will return to this theme in the third volume of her trilogy—titled, appropriately enough, [Mockingjay](#).



HIDDEN RESISTANCE VS. DIRECT REBELLION

As she embarks on her “Victory Tour” of Panem at the start of the novel, Katniss faces a challenge—the government warns her to “behave,” or else they threaten to kill her loved ones. By going “off-script” in any way, President Snow explains, Katniss would send a subversive message to the twelve districts of Panem: that it’s okay to be disobedient to the government. Thus, she must stick to the script at all costs, smile and wave for the cameras, make bland speeches about the importance of the Hunger Games, and generally honor the formalities of the Victory Tour.

As a result of the government’s conniving, Katniss finds herself in a strange position. She despises the government for impoverishing her home, District 12, and forcing her to risk her life in the Hunger Games, yet as a result of having won the Hunger Games, the same government has given her a national platform from which to speak. In a sense, Katniss plays the part of a “Trojan Horse”—she’s fighting the government from the inside, using the government’s own weapons—a ubiquitous media, quick transportation, etc.—against it.

There are many disadvantages to Katniss’s “Trojan Horse” approach, however. To begin with, Katniss herself isn’t sure where her allegiances lie. For much of *Catching Fire*, she’s careful never to deviate from the script for any reason, since she’s concerned that she’s putting her mother and sister’s lives in jeopardy. This points to a general, obvious weakness in fighting the government from the inside: Katniss depends upon the government’s power to broadcast her message of rebellion, and thus she is at the government’s mercy in more ways than one.

Another problem with fighting the government from within is that Katniss’s message sometimes gets misinterpreted (See Symbols and Interpretations theme as well). While her [mockingjay](#) pin becomes a symbol of resistance to government tyranny in some districts, in the Capitol it’s seen as a symbol of

the Hunger Games themselves—in other words, a symbol of the government’s power. As a consequence of her strategy to fight from within, Katniss is not only partnering with the government, she’s sometimes building support for it.

In general, fighting the government from the inside is a slow, fitful process, and it’s often difficult to tell if any progress is being made at all. Yet the “Trojan Horse” approach to rebellion has some advantages over its more obvious alternatives. Katniss’s friend Gale wants to use force and espionage to bring down the government in District 12, but he is no more successful than Katniss—in most ways, in fact, he is significantly less so. For disobeying the government’s rules, he’s savagely whipped, and as a result spends the next few weeks recovering. Though he wants to organize the miners of District 12 against President Snow, it quickly becomes clear that Gale will never defeat the government’s powerful, well-organized troops, no matter how many miners join him. Attacking President Snow’s government from the outside isn’t any more efficient or productive than attacking it from the inside.

At the end of *Catching Fire*, the government is still very much in power—in other words, the theme of attacking from within hasn’t been fully resolved. Yet Collins concludes with a single, powerful illustration of the advantages of the Trojan Horse strategy. Katniss, imprisoned in the Hunger Games arena, recognizes that her real enemies are not the people she’s fighting in the Games, but actually the government officials who created and run the Games. Thus, she fires an arrow at the force field surrounding the arena, freeing herself from her prison and, quite literally, attacking the government’s power from the inside. Katniss sends a clear message of rebellion to audiences watching her throughout Panem. Attacking the government from the inside is difficult and sometimes seems hopeless, but ultimately it’s an intelligent, productive way to battle tyranny and injustice.



SURVEILLANCE AND MANIPULATION

A tyrannical government, headed by President Snow, controls the nation of Panem. While this government has a huge amount of physical power over Panem, one of the most important aspects of its power is its ability to run surveillance on its citizens, or—just as powerful—*imply* that its citizens are under constant surveillance, and thus manipulate their behavior.

At the beginning of *Catching Fire*, President Snow tells Katniss that he’ll be watching her to make sure that she “behaves” during her tour of the twelve districts of Panem, rather than trying to start a rebellion against the government. The fact that Katniss believes him so readily indicates just how extensive the government’s surveillance of its citizens is: it taps their phones, installs secret cameras in their houses, and sometimes makes them compete in the Hunger Games, filmed by a TV crew at all times. In short, Katniss’s society is one in which the people are

under near-constant surveillance, especially if they've been judged by the government to be "dangerous." (In this sense, Panem it must be said, bears an uncanny resemblance to many real-world countries, including the United States.) This leads us to ask a number of questions. What does it mean to be watched at all times? How does it influence one's sense of safety, or one's interactions with others?

To begin with, the threat of constant surveillance makes people censor their own behavior and act more cautiously. At many points, Katniss makes her speech milder and less politically charged because she guesses that the government is tapping her phone. This is, of course, what President Snow wants. Nevertheless, there are several times in the book when Katniss seems to forget that she's being watched. During her Victory Tour, she describes herself forgetting that her relationship with Peeta, the Hunger Games' co-champion, is all for show—she thinks that she feels genuine love and affection for him. This suggests that the government's surveillance and spying is so pervasive that it becomes a part of people's lives—their cautious, self-censored behavior becomes, simply, their behavior. A third effect of government surveillance is that it encourages people to place greater value on privacy and intimacy. When she's sure that they're alone, Katniss savors her interactions with Gale, because she knows how rare these moments are. Thus, even the most banal of conversations with Gale becomes special.

Surveillance is a recurring theme in all three volumes of the Hunger Games, and because *Catching Fire* is only the middle book in the trilogy, Collins doesn't resolve this theme altogether. The book ends with Katniss, knowing full well that all of Panem is watching her, openly defying the government's authority by shooting at the force field that imprisons her in the Hunger Games. Collins suggests that one cannot merely accept or adapt to constant surveillance, as some of the characters (including Katniss) appear to do. Instead, the best course of action would seem to be, "Be yourself." And yet immediately after this, Collins reveals her "twist ending"—all along, Katniss has been manipulated by a group of rebels, including her mentor, Haymitch Abernathy, into defying the government. Is it really possible to "be yourself," Collins seems to ask, if you don't know who your friends are? On this uncertain note, Collins moves on to [Mockingjay](#).



PAIN, PLEASURE, AND SELF-CONTROL

In the first book of the Hunger Games trilogy, Katniss Everdeen endures an extraordinary amount of pain. She faces death many times during her competition in the Hunger Games, and at several points has to kill other competitors. In *Catching Fire*, it's clear from the beginning that these changes have had a major impact on Katniss's character. She struggles with the trauma of her time in the Hunger Games, often having nightmares about Rue, her

friend and fellow competitor, who was killed during the competition. In addition to the more obvious conflicts with President Snow and the government, one of the most important narratives in *Catching Fire* concerns how Katniss deals—or fails to deal—with her own pain and trauma.

While *Catching Fire* doesn't resolve Katniss's problems with pain and trauma (there's a whole other book in the series, after all), it contains important examples of how *not* to deal with pain. When her friend Gale is injured, Katniss begs her mother to use a powerful painkiller, morphling, to relieve her friend's suffering. Katniss's mother refuses, on the grounds that morphling will weaken Gale in the long term. By forcing him to confront his own pain in the short term, Katniss's mother allows Gale's wounds to heal.

Later, Collins reveals that many other Hunger Games victors have turned to drugs—such as morphling—to hide their pain. When these victors are required to compete in the Games a second time, Katniss sees, terrified, that many of them are addicted to painkillers, and can barely tell where they are. The message is clear: Katniss can't "drown out" her pain (or, for that matter, the pain of her loved ones) with instant gratification or distraction. While this method may be rewarding in the short term, it does nothing to fight the source of the pain itself, and thus makes the victim weaker. There is, in fact, no easy solution to Katniss's pain. Nevertheless, it's clear that she needs to exercise self-control and discipline to avoid making the mistakes of her fellow Hunger Games champions.

Peeta, Katniss's co-champion in the Hunger Games, represents another important facet of her quest to resolve her pain and trauma. Because Peeta was also a competitor, he understands Katniss's feelings, and on several occasions they sleep next to each other to avoid getting nightmares. Friendship, understanding, and even love help Katniss to fight pain by passing it on to others.

By the end of *Catching Fire*, Katniss is caught in an "in-between" stage. She's experienced a great deal of pain, learned how *not* to deal with it, and also found some methods for coping with her pain in a healthy, productive way. The last line of the book, in which she learns that her home, District 12, has been destroyed by the government, then poses an implicit challenge: will she learn from her pain, or will this new tragedy prove too much for her?



WOMEN, FEMININITY, AND SEXISM

Since being published, the Hunger Games books have been celebrated as important illustrations of feminism for young adult readers. The protagonist of the books, Katniss Everdeen, is a strong young woman who doesn't shy away from defending herself or asserting her opinions. As such, she's noticeably different from the female protagonists of many other young adult novels.

Even as *Catching Fire* begins, we find Katniss engaged in a stereotypically masculine enterprise: hunting for food in the woods. We later learn that Katniss is hunting because her friend, Gale, has been unable to do so himself, since he's taking care of his family—a stereotypically feminine undertaking. The message is clear: strong women are more than capable of doing men's work, and men shouldn't shy away from performing roles most commonly associated with women.

Though her resourcefulness as a hunter and a Hunger Games victor proves that she's as strong and capable as any man, Katniss struggles with implicit sexism and chauvinism at many points in *Catching Fire*. One sees this during the Victory Tour, which Katniss must embark upon after winning the Hunger Games. Katniss has to put up with hours of makeup, dresses, etc., before she makes public appearances on the tour. The sexism of this is aptly symbolized by a nightmare Katniss has during her Victory Tour, in which she runs through a forest wearing an enormous dress, and finds that the dress slows her movements. Evidently Haymitch, the government, and, for that matter, most of Panem, expect Katniss to be “pretty” and demure—in other words, the stereotypical woman. That Katniss struggles with these expectations suggests, firstly, that she's a strong woman, and secondly, that Panem's feminine stereotypes are nonsensical.

This isn't to say that some remnants of sexism don't persist in *Catching Fire*. Most notably, it seems clear that Katniss will “end up” with a handsome, passionate young man, whether it's Peeta or Gale, by the time the Hunger Games trilogy is over. This reflects the longstanding assumption in literature (and, unfortunately, life) that the young, beautiful female character is somehow “incomplete” until she settles down with a husband. Nevertheless, it's important to recognize that Collins tells the story of the “love triangle” between Gale, Peeta, and Katniss from Katniss's point of view, rather than from either of the two men's point of view. Katniss isn't being pushed or pulled into romance—here, as in the rest of her life, she asserts her independence.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



MOCKINGJAY

The most important symbol in *Catching Fire* is the **mockingjay**. (The third volume of *The Hunger Games* is actually called *Mockingjay*.) Katniss Everdeen first receives a mockingjay pin from her mother, and then wears it during her Victory Tour of the twelve districts. During the tour, Katniss's pin inspires many in the Capitol to wear mockingjay pins of their own. To these people, Katniss is a model

contestant in the Hunger Games, and a “fashion icon” to be enthusiastically imitated. Yet Katniss's pin also inspires rebels who defy the government's authority. To them, Katniss is a defiant Hunger Games contestant, one who openly disobeys the government's rules. The mockingjay thus points to the problem with symbols themselves: because their meaning is, by definition, not explicit, symbols can be said to “mean” any number of things, some of them contradictory. One of Katniss's principle challenges in *Catching Fire* is to interpret ambiguous symbols of this kind, like President Snow's expressions, Haymitch's ambiguous advice, and the parachutes she's sent during the Hunger Games. Only with care, intelligence, and, in many cases, trial and error, does Katniss get these symbols' meanings “right.” In another sense, the mockingjay is a symbol of Katniss. Mockingjays are the descendants of jabberjays—genetically engineered birds that the government sends to act as spies. The Mockingjays, then, represent the tendency for the government's efforts to maintain control to have unintended consequences. Much like a mockingjay, Katniss has grown strong by taking care of herself, despite (or *because of*) the fact that society has largely ignored her, since she's a young woman and from a poor family. Even more importantly, Katniss appears to be an agent of the Capitol—participating in the Hunger Games and later the Victory Tour—when in reality, she is whole-heartedly against the government. Katniss's fame was created by the government, but that fame gives her power, too.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scholastic Press edition of *Catching Fire* published in 2013.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ If it were up to me, I would try to forget the Hunger Games entirely. Never speak of them. Pretend they were nothing but a bad dream. But the Victory Tour makes that impossible. Strategically placed almost midway between the annual Games, it is the Capitol's way of keeping the horror fresh and immediate. Not only are we in the districts forced to remember the iron grip of the Capitol's power each year, we are forced to celebrate it.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 3-4

Explanation and Analysis

Here Katniss offers an explanation of the Hunger Games,

the brutal competition she was forced to compete in the previous year. The Hunger Games are an annual event in which the people of the districts of Panem are forced to send players, who compete with one another for the "honor" of winning the Games. The Capitol—the ruling government of Panem—hosts the Hunger Games, along with a Victory Tour that keeps memory of the Hunger Games fresh in everyone's minds. During the Victory Tour, Katniss, as a champion of the Games, must tour the country celebrating her own "success."

In one sense, Katniss's quote emphasizes the personal toll the games have taken on her. She won the tournament, but in the process she was forced to kill opponents, betray friends, and experience great trauma and loss. She's haunted by her own actions, and the Victory Tour is torturous because it forces her to remember the most traumatic events of her life. In a broader sense, though, the quote also alludes to "societal memory." The Capitol's goal in instituting the Victory Tour is to force all of Panem to remember the events of the Hunger Games. In doing so, the Capitol builds allegiance between the Districts of Panem: everyone in the country unites together around the Games and therefore the Capitol. Furthermore, the constant emphasis on the Hunger Games as a source of both entertainment and fear keeps the people of Panem from joining together against the government.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☝☝ People viewed your little trick with the berries as an act of defiance, not an act of love. And if a girl from District 12 of all places can defy the Capitol and walk away unharmed, what is to stop them from doing the same?

Related Characters: President Coriolanus Snow (speaker), Katniss Everdeen

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

President Snow's speech to Katniss illustrates both the strength and the flaws of the government he heads. Snow has come to warn Katniss not to "misbehave" during her Victory Tour. She's under strict instructions to stick to the script at all times—to act like a typical lovestruck teenage girl, not a potential rebel leader. Snow knows that Katniss despises his government, and he also knows that she is hugely influential and has a talent for improvising—as a result, he's scared that Katniss will try to denounce or

criticize the government during her Tour. Since Katniss will have an audience of millions at this time, Snow is right to be afraid.

A natural question would be, "Why doesn't Snow just cancel the Victory Tour?" Canceling the Tour might be the easiest way to ensure that Katniss doesn't do harm to his government, but it would also undermine the importance of tradition in Panem. Because Panem celebrates the Hunger Games every year—and because Snow's government maintains its power in part because of the popularity of the Hunger Games—Snow has no choice but to allow Katniss to make her tour as usual, despite the risk. Snow's speech demonstrates the power *and* the weakness of his government, while also showing us how Katniss might use her popularity to oppose Snow. With her widespread fame and national platform, Katniss has a powerful weapon on her side: if she were to criticize Snow, millions of people would listen to her. It's a mark of Katniss's danger that Snow has to threaten to hurt her family in order to make her "behave."

Chapter 3 Quotes

☝☝ My time in the arena made me realize how I needed to stop punishing [my mother] for something she couldn't help, specifically the crushing depression she fell into after my father's death. Because sometimes things happen to people and they're not equipped to deal with them.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Katniss's mother

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 31-32

Explanation and Analysis

Katniss's experiences during the Hunger Games have simultaneously matured her and stunted her development. On one hand, she's been forced to experience things that no human being should experience: she's been forced to murder to survive, for example. Her time in the arena has made it difficult for her to pursue a relationship or form a close friendship. And yet Katniss's experiences in the Hunger Games have also made her a more empathetic person: in this quote, she explains how her own brushes with death have taught her to understand her mother's depression. The calm, stoic explanation Katniss gives for her mother's depression—"sometimes things happen to people"—sounds like the words of a much older, more experienced woman.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☝ I think of Haymitch, unmarried, no family, blotting out the world with drink. He could have had his choice of any woman in the district. And he chose solitude.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Haymitch Abernathy

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

Katniss's mentor and model is Haymitch Abernathy, a former Hunger Games champion enlisted to prepare Katniss for the tournament. For most of the first book of the Hunger Games trilogy, Haymitch is portrayed as a figure of ridicule: a lazy, drunken complainer who's been resting on his laurels ever since winning the Hunger Games years before. But in this section of *Catching Fire*, Katniss begins to see Haymitch in different terms. Suddenly, Haymitch's sullenness and drunkenness become tragic and even impressive, rather than ridiculous.

In part, Katniss has changed her attitude toward Haymitch because of her own experiences in the Hunger Games. Unlike most champions, Katniss finds it impossible to rejoice in her own success: she's too naturally sympathetic to celebrate murder and bloodshed. Surrounded by the glitz and sleaze of the Victory Tour, Katniss looks to Haymitch as a kindred spirit: someone who won the Hunger Games but never enjoyed them for a second. Furthermore, Katniss is beginning to see that Haymitch's sullenness and drunkenness are noble and even rebellious. Haymitch knew that the President of the Capitol would try to pressure him into obeying the government by threatening his family, so Haymitch chose not to have a family at all rather than put innocent people in danger. By largely refusing to participate in the pomp of the Hunger Games and the Victory Tour, Haymitch is also refusing to empower the government any further: without Haymitch, Snow has one less way of controlling his people.

Chapter 5 Quotes

☝ Everything is happening too fast for me to process it. The warning, the shootings, the recognition that I may have set something of great consequence in motion. The whole thing is so improbable. And it would be one thing if I had planned to stir things up, but given the circumstances... how on earth did I cause so much trouble?

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 68

Explanation and Analysis

Katniss has just finished making an off-script speech to a large group of people. In her speech, Katniss has praised Rue, a young girl whom Katniss watched die in the Hunger Games. Katniss's speech—intended as an act of love, not an act of rebellion—incites a riot, since the people can't stand the thought of a government that put Rue in harm's way so callously.

At this early point in the Hunger Games trilogy, Katniss doesn't entirely realize how much power she wields over the people of Panem. She's aware of her national platform, but she has yet to realize how easily an emotional speech or a passionate defense of her friends can encourage a riot, or even an outright rebellion against the government. In general, Katniss is a reluctant leader, not even aware of her own political powers. Perhaps it's *because* she's oblivious to her own gifts that she's such an effective speaker. In a society where every moment on television is carefully scripted and choreographed, even the smallest flash of originality or improvisation registers as a rebellion against the government (the institution that keeps TV so carefully censored).

☝ *Did I do it? Was it enough? Was giving everything over to you, keeping up the game, promising to marry Peeta enough?*

In answer, he gives an almost imperceptible shake of his head.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), President Coriolanus Snow, Peeta Mellark

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

At the conclusion of Katniss's Victory Tour, Katniss is unsure if she's pleased President Snow or not. While she's been careful not to say anything that could be interpreted as a denunciation of Snow's government, Katniss has inadvertently caused riots and rebellions across Panem. (A few chapters after this quote, Katniss realizes just how successful she's been in challenging the government's authority: she's caused full-scale uprisings against the Capitol in several districts.)

The quote also illustrates the extent to which Katniss will go to protect her family and keep up appearances. Because she's afraid that her mother and sister will be murdered for her defiance of the rules, Katniss tries to overcompensate by getting engaged to Peeta, her co-champion in the Hunger Games. While Katniss has romantic feelings for her childhood friend, Gale, she's loyal first and foremost to her family. Thus, she decides to marry Peeta in the hopes that she'll entertain the country and please Snow. Snow's shake of the head, however, seems to indicate that Katniss hasn't done enough to neutralize her own threat. But because Snow's gesture is so small and hard to read, it's not completely clear if Katniss's interpretation is right or wrong. Snow's head-shake is only the first of many ambiguous symbols and speeches in this book.

people of the Capitol themselves: that they're arrogant, materialistic, and superficial.

It's not until much later that Katniss realizes the truth: Plutarch is secretly an ally to Haymitch and other rebels, and a friend to Katniss. By showing Katniss his watch, he's actually trying to give her a hint that he's on her side, and cluing her in about the nature of the upcoming Hunger Games; namely, that the arena is designed to resemble a watch. Katniss's confusion in interpreting the mockingjay—supposedly a symbol of rebellion, or even of Katniss herself—illustrates the strangeness of *all* symbols. Seen from different points of view, Katniss—herself a living symbol—can be interpreted as a mascot for the Capitol, or its worst enemy.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☝ There was something strange about it. Almost clandestine. But why? Maybe he thinks someone else will steal his idea of putting a disappearing mockingjay on a watch face. Yes, he probably paid a fortune for it, and now he can't show it to anyone, because he's afraid someone will make a cheap, knockoff version. Only in the Capitol.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Plutarch Heavensbee

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

At the "meet and greet" for the year's new edition of the Hunger Games—in which both Katniss and Peeta are being forced to compete—Katniss meets the new designer of the Hunger Games, a man named Plutarch Heavensbee. Plutarch flashes Katniss his new watch, which is adorned with the image of the mockingjay. The mockingjay was also the symbol Katniss chose for herself during her previous Hunger Games, and lately it's become a popular symbol of Katniss herself.

At Katniss describes the scene, Plutarch's mockingjay watch is a symbol, which she tries with difficulty to interpret correctly. Katniss's interpretation of the watch is that Plutarch is an arrogant man, and he's trying to show it off to Katniss without giving away the idea to his peers. Katniss's interpretation of the watch reflects her opinions about the

Chapter 7 Quotes

☝ The jabberjays were mutations, genetically enhanced male birds [...] The jabberjays were left to die. In a few years, they became extinct in the wild, but not before they had mated with female mockingbirds, creating an entirely new species.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 91-92

Explanation and Analysis

In this section, Katniss explains where mockingjays—a futuristic form of mutated bird—come from. Because the mockingjay is explicitly described as being a symbol of Katniss herself, it's fitting that Katniss's explanation is full of symbolic allusions to Katniss's own personality. As Katniss explains, the mockingjays are natural survivors: their very existence is a testament to their ancestors' cleverness and strength. Furthermore, the mockingjays' nature is deeply divided: half mockingbird (a peaceful, natural bird) and half jabberjay (a brutal, government-bred animal). In much the same way, we might say that Katniss's own personality is resilient and deeply divided. Katniss is a natural survivor, who manages to win the Hunger Games due to her speed and skill. She's also a conflicted young woman: in part, she's peaceful and gentle, but she's also capable of acts of incredible brutality. Above all, the comparison between Katniss and the mockingjay reminds us that Katniss is partly—but not entirely!—a tool of the government. While she's been partly "bred" by the Capitol, she's also

abandoned her role and rejected the Capitol, in much the same that the mockingjays have rejected the jabberjays' mission to help the government that created them.

Chapter 8 Quotes

☝☝ My mother has to save the strongest for the worst pain, but what is the worst pain? To me, it's always the pain that is present. If I were in charge, those painkillers would be gone in a day because I have so little ability to watch suffering. My mother tries to save them for those who are actually in the process of dying, to ease them out of the world.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Katniss's mother

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 113

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Katniss shows how her encounters with pain and danger can make her stronger, wiser, and more mature. After Katniss's friend Gale is whipped and beaten for daring to break the government's rules, Katniss's mother gives Gale a relatively weak treatment that does little to improve his pain. While Katniss is astounded and enraged that her own mother is being so "harsh" with her friend, she gradually comes to realize that her mother is doing the right thing. There are times when one has no choice but to experience pain, Katniss realizes. As brutal as it might seem to let Gale go through so much suffering, it's better than wasting an entire supply of painkillers on one person. Katniss's description of her mother's remedies suggests that Katniss is learning to respect her mother for her wisdom and experience, and recognizes that she herself has a lot to learn about taking care of herself.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☝☝ But then the axe fell. Peacekeepers began to arrive by the thousands. Hovercrafts bombed the rebel strongholds into ashes. In the utter chaos that followed, it was all people could do to make it back to their homes alive.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Twill, Bonnie

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 145

Explanation and Analysis

Bonnie and Twill, two refugees from the faraway District 8, explain their trials and tribulations to Katniss, whom they regard as a hero. In District 8, they joined a massive uprising against the government's power, inspired largely by Katniss's speeches. But very quickly, the government sent in new troops to suppress the uprising: vastly outnumbered, Bonnie and Twill could only watch as their homes were destroyed. It's a mark of the government's power that Bonnie and Twill describe the government forces as "peacekeepers" without any apparent irony: they're so used to using this term that they don't stop to consider how inappropriate it is.

Bonnie and Twill's description is also a powerful reminder of the government's force. Previously, President Snow has threatened to use excessive force to prevent Katniss from speaking out against him in public. For the most part, however, Snow has maintained his power, both over Katniss and over Panem as a whole, simply by manipulation and making threats along these lines. It is a sign of Katniss's success as an instigator that people across the country are now calling Snow on his bluff; in other words, testing the government's actual strength by rioting in the streets. President Snow's ideal society is one in which he rules the country by controlling the rules of the Hunger Games, rather than by using actual military force on civilians. Paradoxically, the fact that Snow is now forced to use his "peacekeepers" to suppress the people is a sign that Katniss is inspiring the people to rise up, and Snow's position is weakening.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☝☝ I thought no one saw me sneak under the fence, but who knows? There are always eyes for hire. Someone reported Gale kissing me in that very spot. Still, that was in daylight and before I was more careful about my behavior. Could there be surveillance cameras?

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Gale Hawthorne

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

Although President Snow rules Panem partly through

military power, his single most powerful weapon is intimidation; the illusion of constant surveillance and control, rather than actual control itself. We can see this in the quote from Chapter 11, shortly after Katniss sneaks under the fence and returns to her home in District 12. Because it's illegal for civilians to leave District 12, Katniss is naturally frightened of being caught. But even more seriously, she's concerned that she's been captured on video sneaking under the fence. President Snow's seemingly limitless knowledge of Katniss's whereabouts and thoughts—knowledge he's displayed before—have convinced Katniss that she's always being watched.

Katniss's thoughts illustrate the vast surveillance power of the government over which Snow presides. In Panem, the media are so widespread that it's not unreasonable to think that there are cameras even in the wilderness. In particular, Katniss's experiences during the Victory Tour and in the Hunger Games—where there literally *were* cameras in the wilderness—bias her to the view that she's being watched at all hours of the day and night. Even if Katniss is wrong and there are no cameras, her fear indicates that Snow has done an excellent job of intimidating his people into thinking of him as a god who watches his people constantly.

Chapter 12 Quotes

☝ [Gale] must also know that if we don't revolt in 12, I'm destined to be Peeta's bride. Seeing me lounging around in gorgeous gowns on his television... what can he do with that?

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Peeta Mellark, Gale Hawthorne

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 170

Explanation and Analysis

This darkly humorous quotation shows the psychological consequences of living in a world where one's actions are filmed and recorded at all times. After a Victory Tour and a session in the Hunger Games, Katniss is used to being watched. With opposition to the government at an all-time high in District 12, Katniss is well aware that there might be a rebellion in the District very soon—by the same token, she knows that government officials like President Snow and Romulus Thread are aware of the rebellion, too. In this section, Katniss finds herself thinking like Thread; i.e., putting herself in the position of a government official. She's so used to being watched that the thought process comes naturally to her.

Furthermore, Katniss's thoughts about the uprising in District 12 betray some of the weaknesses in the government of Panem. Although the government has an obvious interest in subduing the 12 districts of Panem, it also draws a lot of its power from the Hunger Games—in other words, from creating action, excitement, and violence. Katniss is only half-joking when she says that Thread has no interest in keeping her subdued and boring in her wedding dress. As absurd as it sounds, the government partly has an interest in creating a revolt in District 12: it thrives on diversions of exactly this kind. Katniss's joke reminds us that she is both an asset and a liability for the government: she entertains the masses (the source of the government's power) but also has the potential to mobilize the masses against the government.

Chapter 13 Quotes

☝ I'm glad I won only last year. Otherwise I'd know all the other victors, not just because I see them on television but because they're guests at every Games. Even if they're not mentoring like Haymitch always has to, most return to the Capitol each year for the event. I think a lot of them are friends. Whereas the only friend I'll have to worry about killing will be either Peeta or Haymitch.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Peeta Mellark, Haymitch Abernathy

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 176

Explanation and Analysis

Katniss has been summoned to the Capitol to compete in another edition of the Hunger Games. When she arrives, she's intimidated but also strangely relieved: because of her youth, she hasn't made any lasting friendships with the other competitors. Unlike the other competitors, then, she'll have less guilt about killing her opponents (with the obvious exceptions of Haymitch and Peeta). Katniss's observation is also oddly characteristic of her personality, because it's both callous and compassionate. On one hand, the quote suggests that Katniss will have no problem killing dozens of people, simply because she's never met them before. On the other, the quote suggests that Katniss is thinking about guilt and loss, and that she has compassion for *some* people (such as Peeta) and empathy for others (who must struggle to kill their friends). In general, then, the quote illustrates the two sides of Katniss's complex personality: her brutality and her compassion.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☞☞ Effie doesn't know that my mockingjay pin is now a symbol used by the rebels. At least in District 8. In the Capitol, the mockingjay is still a fun reminder of an especially exciting Hunger Games.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Effie Trinket

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 190

Explanation and Analysis

As Katniss prepares to compete in her second round of the Hunger Games, she reunites with her publicist, Effie Trinket. Effie is strangely oblivious to Katniss's "cult status" as a mascot for the revolution against the government—as far as she's concerned (or so Katniss believes), Katniss is just an especially popular victor. Effie's cluelessness is reflected in her adoption of the mockingjay pin: Effie wears this pin on her body, unaware that for some people, the pin is a symbol of rebellion against the very government she serves.

More broadly speaking, Effie's adoption of the mockingjay pin points to the basic ambiguity in Katniss's role as a national celebrity. Because Katniss is forced to speak in allusions and riddles (rather than denounce the government directly), many of her remarks can be interpreted as either pro- or anti-Capitol. Katniss herself is a symbol—an instantly recognizable national celebrity—and like any popular symbol, she can be interpreted in more than one way. Katniss hates the government, but she's still unsure if she wants to commit to the dangers of becoming a revolutionary. In all, the ambiguity of the mockingjay pin reflects Katniss's uncertainty about her own identity and her future.

Chapter 16 Quotes

☞☞ Kids in costumes are silly, but aging victors, it turns out, are pitiful. A few who are on the younger side, like Johanna and Finnick, or whose bodies haven't fallen into disrepair, like Seeder and Brutus, can still manage to maintain a little dignity. But the majority, who are in the clutches of drink or morphling or illness, look grotesque in their costumes.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Seeder,

Brutus, Finnick Odair, Johanna Mason

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 214

Explanation and Analysis

As Katniss prepares to compete in the Hunger Games for a second time, she meets her competitors—previous victors in the Games. This is Katniss's opportunity to study how other people have dealt with fame and celebrity. What she discovers is "pitiful." The vast majority of people who have won the Hunger Games haven't weathered success very well. Most have become addicted to drugs or alcohol—either because they need a vehicle to escape from their memories of murder, or because they've turned to extravagance in their fame. The prevalence of addiction among the victors suggests that victory is its own prison: for all their fame and glory, the winners of the Hunger Games are just as bound to the government as the other citizens of Panem.

Although Katniss is sizing up her competition and trying to figure out how to protect the people she loves, her thought process also reminds us of how strong and mature she is in comparison to most. It's true that she hasn't had to live as a victor for very long, but she also clearly maintains greater self-control than most of her peers.

☞☞ "I like the District Three victors," I say. "Wiress and Beetee."

"Really?" he asks. "They're something of a joke to the others." "Why does that not surprise me?" I say. I think of how Peeta was always surrounded at school by a crowd of friends.

Related Characters: Peeta Mellark, Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Beetee, Wiress

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 220

Explanation and Analysis

At this point, Katniss and Peeta are trying to build a team of allies so that they can survive the Hunger Games. Katniss's approach to recruiting teammates is vastly different from Peeta's, shedding light on the differences between their personalities. While Katniss favors competitors who are calm, quiet, and intelligent, Peeta favors competitors who are strong, fast, or otherwise athletic. (In short, Katniss and Peeta like competitors who mirror their own personalities.)

As Katniss correctly points out, Peeta's preference for "jocks" and gregarious friends stretches all the way back to his time in school, when he was always very popular.

Katniss's disagreement with Peeta reminds readers that they're far from a perfectly compatible couple; on the contrary, they're very different people. The differences between Katniss and Peeta are especially important in light of the "love triangle" between Gale, Peeta, and Katniss. From what we've seen of Gale, he's closer to Katniss's personality than Peeta is, at least in terms of quietness and introversion.

Chapter 17 Quotes

☝☝ They will be looking for some sign that their battles have not been in vain. If I can make it clear that I'm still defying the Capitol right up to the end, the Capitol will have killed me ...but not my spirit. What better way to give hope to the rebels?

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 243

Explanation and Analysis

In this section, Katniss makes the difficult decision to sacrifice her own life in order to save Peeta's. Although she's won the Hunger Games alongside Peeta before, she's certain that the government won't allow her this way out a second time. Because the purpose of this edition of the Hunger Games is to weaken Katniss's power, there's no way Katniss and her "husband" will be allowed to survive together.

Although the only goal of the Hunger Games is to survive (one could say that its guiding principle is "Look out for yourself"), Katniss decides to protect Peeta's life instead of her own. The beauty of this decision is that it's at once instantly sympathetic and rebellious against President Snow's government. By sacrificing herself, Katniss would be breaking the rules of the Hunger Games (even if it's the unwritten rule of self-preservation) and therefore encouraging the people of Panem to break the rules, too—i.e., to challenge Snow's authority. While challenging Snow's authority isn't Katniss's priority—her priority is protecting her friend Peeta—her decision also reflects her growing commitment to the rebel cause.

Chapter 18 Quotes

☝☝ A shadow of recognition flickers across Caesar's face, and I can tell that he knows that the mockingjay isn't just my token. That it's come to symbolize so much more. That what will be seen as a flashy costume change in the Capitol is resonating in an entirely different way throughout the districts. But he makes the best of it.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Cinna, Caesar Flickerman

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 253

Explanation and Analysis

As Katniss prepares to begin the Hunger Games, she's forced to give a series of TV interviews with Caesar Flickerman, a popular TV personality. Although the interviews are intended to be glossy and mindlessly entertaining, Katniss uses them as an opportunity to speak to her rebel supporters across Panem while *also* conducting a traditional interview. Mostly with the help of her designer, Cinna, Katniss manages to play both sides of the field by wearing her symbol, the mockingjay. To mainstream fans of the Hunger Games, Katniss seems no different from any other victor. To rebels, however (and to Caesar, who clearly knows about the significance of the mockingjay), Katniss's mockingjay is a sign of solidarity and support; a gesture of disrespect and even outright rebellion against the government.

Yet Katniss's hidden resistance is uneven and unpredictable: there's no guarantee that it'll inspire any real rebellions, since her mockingjay could easily be interpreted as a normal victor's "costume." But her hidden resistance is also the safest and arguably the most powerful way to oppose the government, considering that the government is powerful and all-seeing. Instead of firing shots at Snow and then trying to hide, Katniss uses her mockingjay to hide in plain sight.

Chapter 19 Quotes

☝☝ All right, maybe killing Finnick would be a little premature. He's been helpful so far. He does have Haymitch's stamp of approval. And who knows what the night will hold?

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Haymitch

Abernathy, Finnick Odair

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 278

Explanation and Analysis

In this quotation, written as Katniss's stream-of-consciousness, we see Katniss trying to decide whether or not to kill one of her fellow competitors in the Hunger Games. Finnick Odair is a famously devious and unpredictable competitor whom Katniss immediately distrusts, and yet he's also remarkably brave—and most important, he saves Peeta's life, seemingly proving his loyalty to Katniss and Peeta. Katniss ultimately chooses not to kill Finnick because of this. And yet the mere fact that she's seriously considering doing so speaks miles about her character during the Hunger Games. Katniss may be the protagonist of these novels, but she's also ruthless and willing to kill to protect the people she loves. Even if she's less ruthless and less willing to kill than some of her competitors, she's still very dangerous, and has been turned callous by the horrible situations she's forced to survive.

present *cameras* know that she knows how to detect a forcefield.

Katniss's decision suggests a few things about her character. She's playing the game very strategically, recognizing that she shouldn't share a huge advantage—knowledge of how to detect the forcefield—with her competitors. Evidently, Katniss has learned from her prior experiences to be careful and tactical. It's also clear that Katniss has learned a lot from her Victory Tour: she's used to being filmed and watched at all times, whether she's in the Games or not. In general, Katniss's behavior shows how strategic, hidden resistance can be more effective than direct rebellion against the government. Instead of challenging the government's power directly—by complaining about the forcefield and trying to fight it, for example—Katniss exhibits self-control and files away the information for the future. Her subtlety pays off in the novel's climax, when she finally takes a decisive step—firing an arrow at the generator—and translates hidden resistance into direct rebellion at the perfect time.

Chapter 22 Quotes

☝☝ I stare into the night, thinking of what a difference a day makes. How yesterday morning, Finnick was on my kill list, and now I'm willing to sleep with him as my guard. He saved Peeta and let Mags die and I don't know why.

Chapter 20 Quotes

☝☝ One way or the other, I have a very valuable piece of information. And if they know I have it, they might do something to alter the force field so I can't see the aberration anymore. So I lie.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 284

Explanation and Analysis

Thanks to a conversation with her two competitors, Beetee and Wiress, Katniss learns that it's possible to see the force fields that the government had placed around the perimeters of the Hunger Games arena: there's always a telltale shimmer around the forcefield generator. But, as the quotation explains, Katniss chooses not to share this information with her competitors—and even more importantly, she chooses not to let the ever-

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Mags, Finnick Odair, Peeta Mellark

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 314

Explanation and Analysis

During the Hunger Games, Katniss makes alliances with her competitors, and changes these alliances several times. For instance, she begins by thinking that Finnick Odair is a devious, dangerous young man, but after Finnick saves Peeta's life not once but twice, Katniss decides that can trust Finnick—there's no reason for Finnick to save Peeta's life, except that he, like Katniss, is trying to help Peeta survive.

The passage is also important because it reinforces the theme of ambiguous symbols. Here, one could say that Finnick himself is the "symbol"—he projects an image of seductive, untrustworthy charm, yet also displays clear signs of compassion and honesty. Katniss is unsure how to

interpret Finnick's behavior, pointing toward her general confusion about how to interpret the Hunger Games, her friends' actions, and her place as a celebrity in Panem.

Chapter 23 Quotes

☝☝ There are six of us now. Even if you count Beetee and Wiress out, we've got four good fighters. It's so different from where I was last year at this point, doing everything on my own. Yes, it's great to have allies as long as you can ignore the thought that you'll have to kill them.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Wiress, Beetee

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 329

Explanation and Analysis

As the Hunger Games go on, competitors are eliminated in a series of brutal and bizarre challenges. In this section, Katniss assesses where she and her allies stand in the game. Her heart sinks as she realizes the truth: she's almost at the point where she and her allies will have to turn on one another. Katniss's realization points to a more general problem with the Hunger Games: the more friends you make, the better you're likely to do for the first half of the Games; but the more allies you make right away, the more emotionally wrenching the second half of the Games will become. It's as if the Games are designed to be as psychologically challenging as possible—which, of course, they are.

The quotation also points to some important changes in Katniss's character that have set in during this novel. Both because of her victory in her first Hunger Games and because of her closer relationship with Haymitch, Prim, and her mother, Katniss has been thinking in more compassionate terms. President Snow has made it clear that if Katniss disobeys him at all, her family and friends will be hurt; as a result, she can't delude herself into thinking that she's a free agent who can act however she pleases. What's true in life, then, is also true in this year's Hunger Games: Katniss makes more alliances, and pays the emotional price for doing so.

Chapter 24 Quotes

☝☝ My mouth drops open in shock. No one, ever, says anything like this in the Games. Absolutely, they've cut away from Johanna, are editing her out. But I have heard her and can never think about her again in the same way. She'll never win any awards for kindness, but she certainly is gutsy. Or crazy.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Johanna Mason

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 346

Explanation and Analysis

During the Hunger Games, with millions of people watching her, Johanna makes a joke about the people of Panem rebelling against the government. Naturally, the editors of the Games will never allow this sentiment to be broadcast. Still, the fact that Katniss finds Johanna's word so shocking and impressive—far more so than any literal action could be—says a lot about the kind of woman Katniss has become over the course of this novel. As Katniss proceeds with her tour of Panem, being filmed at all hours of the day, she becomes so used to the camera that she can't conceive of the camera ever turning off. Even when she's alone in her bed, she has the reflexive feeling that someone, somewhere, is filming her. Because she has the sense of always being watched, and because she knows very well that if she doesn't "behave" on camera, her family will be murdered, Katniss has no choice but to follow directions, opposing the government's authority only in the smallest, subtlest ways.

When one considers Katniss's history with surveillance, then, it's not surprising that she's so impressed with Johanna's direct statement. It's Katniss's burden to always check her own statements for fear that they'll anger Snow. She's certainly willing to incite rebellion against the government, but she'd never dare to oppose it as Johanna just has—she's also probably jealous of Johanna for being able to speak her mind so plainly.

Chapter 27 Quotes

☝☝ But will Peeta know that or will he keep fighting? He's so strong and such a good liar. Does he think he has a chance of surviving? Does he even care if he does? He wasn't planning on it, anyway. He had already signed off on life. Maybe, if he knows I was rescued, he's even happy. Feels he fulfilled his mission to keep me alive. I think I hate him even more than I do Haymitch.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Haymitch Abernathy, Peeta Mellark

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 387

Explanation and Analysis

In the final pages of *Catching Fire*, Katniss is rescued by a group of rebels including Haymitch, Plutarch Heavensbee, and others. Peeta, on the other hand, is kidnapped by the government of Panem and placed in captivity as a warning to Katniss, now perceived (correctly) as an enemy of the government. In simplest terms, Katniss was trying to save Peeta's life by sacrificing her own, only to find that Peeta's life has been placed in danger because of her own rebellious escape (and furthermore, he was trying to sacrifice *his* life to

save *hers*).

As Katniss realizes, she's become increasingly emotionally reliant on other people since winning the Hunger Games last year. Traumatized by the violence she witnessed, she's relied on Peeta (one of the few people who understands what she's going through) for love and understanding. The advantage of emotional dependence is that in Peeta, Katniss has a good friend: someone who can empathize with her and lessen her pain. But the challenge of emotional dependence, of course, is that when Katniss loses Peeta to the government, she feels more pain than she ever thought was possible: her connection with Peeta is now a horrible burden. In the depths of her misery, Katniss even says that she hates Peeta—a clear sign that she resents the bond of guilt and fear that now links her to him.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Katniss walks through a mysterious wood. She thinks about her recent victory. As a result of winning the annual “Hunger Games,” she now lives in Victor’s Village, and will soon march through a Victory Tour, surrounded by reporters. She thinks about the people who helped her win the games: her stylist Cinna, who designed her outfits, and her escort, Effie Trinket. Katniss wants to forget the Hunger Games altogether, but the Capitol forces her—and everyone else—to remember them. In this way, it reminds the districts of the Capitol’s great power.

Katniss is walking through the woods to hunt on behalf of her lifelong friend Gale Hawthorne, whose family isn’t rich enough to buy meat from town. Katniss and Gale used to go hunting together, but now Gale works in a coal mine, and Katniss hunts alone. Technically, hunting in the woods is illegal, though it is fairly easy to evade punishment. Now, Katniss only sees Gale on Sundays. While they’re still friends, Katniss and Gale feel a distance between each other because of the Hunger Games.

Katniss proceeds with her hunting, using traps to catch a large number of rabbits and other small animals. She walks back to her community, District 12. Katniss’s family—her mother and her sister, Prim—are happy to live in Victor’s Village, but Katniss herself prefers her childhood home in District 12.

Katniss walks to her house. There, she changes out of her hunting clothes and notices her bow and arrow—the weapons that helped her win the Hunger Games—hanging on the wall. She thinks that she is famous and rich because she won, but also hated in the Capitol for the way she won.

Katniss leaves her house and walks through the streets of District 12, carrying some of her catches. She sees Hazelle, Gale’s mother. Katniss recalls that an explosion killed both Hazelle’s husband and Katniss’s father years ago. After Hazelle lost her husband, Gale became the primary supporter of his family, which consists of his mother, his two brothers, Rory and Vick, and his baby sister, Posy. Katniss gives Hazelle the animals she caught that morning. Hazelle smiles and mentions that Gale looks forward to seeing Katniss every Sunday. Katniss blushes.

While Collins clearly expects readers to have read [The Hunger Games](#)—the prequel to *Catching Fire*—the opening pages of this book are also meant to be disorienting. Whether we read the last book or not, we’re confused about where Katniss is and what the oppressive government of the Capitol will do to her next. Indeed, the only “certain” thing in this opening section is the vast power of the Capitol.



From this section onward, Collins emphasizes many class and economic differences. Gale, whose family is poorer than most in his already poor district, has to break the law just to survive. At this point in the novel, it’s fairly easy for characters to break the rules of their world—Katniss and Gale can still hunt, even though it’s technically illegal.



Collins shows Katniss to be an enormously resourceful young woman. While “hunter” is a stereotypically male profession, Katniss does a man’s job—both in the abstract sense of hunting and in the specific sense of doing Gale’s work for him.



Collins doesn’t have time for a detailed recap of the last novel, but she establishes the basic takeaway of the book: Katniss won the Games but alienated the Capitol in the process. Clearly, this will be the principle conflict of the novel.



Unlike the protagonists of many other novels about children and young adults, Katniss and Gale are given real adult responsibilities, like providing for their families by working and hunting. This early “adulthood” comes from family tragedy—Gale is forced to be the “father” in his family precisely because he doesn’t have a father.



After leaving Hazelle's house, Katniss walks to Hob, a market area where Katniss usually sells her catches. Katniss regards the Hob as a shady, crime-ridden area, but she also knows that it was a resident of the Hob, Greasy Sae, who raised funds to "sponsor" Katniss and Peeta during the Games. During the Games, Districts are allowed to pay for gifts for their competitors. Today, Katniss doesn't have any catches left to sell, but she buys liquor, bread, coffee, and other foodstuffs. The liquor is for Haymitch, the man who mentored Katniss and Peeta, the two co-winners of the Games. Their victory was the first time in history that two people won the Hunger Games instead of just one.

Katniss walks to Greasy Sae's stall in the Hob, where she crosses paths with a Peacekeeper named Darius. Darius greets Katniss happily, and asks her when she's leaving District 12 for her tour. Katniss explains that she's leaving by train at noon. Greasy Sae asks Katniss about Gale, Katniss's "cousin." This reminds Katniss of the strange lie that reporters have circulated about Gale. Because reporters wanted to "play up" Katniss's romance with Peeta during the Games, they couldn't have Gale, who's very handsome, distracting from the story. Thus, they pretended that Gale was Katniss's cousin. Katniss notes ruefully that even people in District 12 seem to have forgotten that Gale and Katniss aren't, in fact, related at all.

Katniss leaves the Hob and walks to Victor's Village, a small community near District 12 where the winners of the Games, and those close to them, are allowed to stay. Katniss has a huge house in the Village, which she shares with her mother and sister. Haymitch and Peeta have similarly massive houses. Katniss walks into Haymitch's house, which is luxurious but filthy, since Haymitch is lazy and always drunk. She sees Haymitch sleeping on the floor, and irritably yells at him to wake up. Haymitch wakes up, and Katniss reminds him that he'd asked her to wake him before the reporters arrive in Victor's Village.

As Katniss and Haymitch bicker, Peeta walks into the room. He has been baking bread in Haymitch's house—Katniss notes that this is his "job" now, just as it's her job to hunt. Peeta is stiff and awkward around Katniss, and Katniss behaves the same way around him. They have been awkward since they won the Games together, but they both recognize that the reporters and spectators of the Games want them to be in love. Haymitch calls Peeta and Katniss "lovebirds," and tells them to get ready for the tour.

Collins takes this section as an opportunity to catch us up on the events of the previous novel, [The Hunger Games](#). Peeta and Katniss's victory was only possible because of the help of many people, including Haymitch, who is seemingly an old alcoholic. Katniss's purchase for Haymitch is a gesture of gratitude for his help, rather than an approval of his alcoholism. In this way, Collins reinforces the point that Katniss is, in many ways, more mature and grown-up than the adults in her world.



At the beginning of the novel, there's more leeway in the laws of the land. This is aptly symbolized by Darius, a "Peacekeeper"—in other words, a soldier and police officer from the Capitol—who is nonetheless friendly and warm with Katniss. Collins also reminds us of the strict censorship of the press in the world of Panem: anything that doesn't support the approved "story" is twisted or censored. Because Gale's existence complicates the media's love story, he's changed from Katniss's friend into her cousin. The irony is that, from Collins's perspective, Gale's existence actually makes Katniss's "love story" more interesting, as we're meant to wonder whom Katniss will end up with: Peeta or Gale.



We begin to get a sense of the adults in Katniss's life. Some, like her mother, are mostly remarkable because they accept Katniss's generosity without question. Others, like Haymitch, seem remarkable only insofar as they're immature—drunk, lazy, and forgetful. It's like Katniss is the parent, waking Haymitch up for his big day—not the other way around.



Collins paints a strange picture of a "family" in this scene. Katniss, the active, athletic hunter, is the "father-figure," while Peeta, the cook, is the "mother," and Haymitch is the lazy, drowsy child. This goes to show that all the usual stereotypes about people—how they should behave based on their age and their gender—hold no currency with Collins.



Katniss leaves Haymitch’s house and walks to her own. There, her mother is waiting for her. She tells Katniss that a messenger is waiting to talk to her, and Katniss notices that she looks frightened. Katniss, who knows better than to disobey anyone working for the Capitol, follows the messenger into a room of her house. There, she finds President Snow, the leader of the Capitol.

The first chapter, like most of the others in the novel, ends with a “cliff-hanger,” meant to build suspense and leave us wanting to know what happens next. We’ve been given hints of the enormous, ominous power of the government already, so it’s doubly shocking to see the Capitol’s leader appear in the novel so soon.



CHAPTER 2

Katniss stands in her home, looking into the fearsome eyes of President Snow. Katniss is used to seeing Snow on television, surrounded by flags. She wonders what he could be doing in District 12—usually, the President of the Capitol leaves Victory Tour business to other government officials.

Collins raises the suspense in this opening section by explicitly asking us—through Katniss’s inner dialogue—what Snow is up to. His typical reliance on the media suggests that this must be an important occasion.



Katniss realizes why Snow must be here: he’s angry with Katniss for disobeying the rules of the Games and allowing Peeta to win the Games along with her—usually, only one victor is allowed every year. This disobedience, she thinks, might be viewed as an act of rebellion. Katniss was allowed to be the co-winner with Peeta because the reporters liked their “story”—that they were “insanely” in love with each other. Standing before Snow now, Katniss is terrified: she knows full well that Snow is powerful enough to have her murdered with a wave of his hand.

Katniss survived the Hunger Games by manipulating the media, rather than dismantling either the media or the government: she can only save herself and Peeta by giving the reporters a “juicy story.” Clearly, Snow has a problem with Katniss’s actions, because they amount to a kind of rebellion, however harmless-seeming, against the usual state of affairs at the Games.



President Snow asks Katniss, point-blank, if she’s going to be “difficult” during the Victory Tour. Katniss replies that she won’t. Snow adds that Katniss shouldn’t cause any problems, as she did during the Games, or else she’ll endanger the lives of her family members, and of Gale. He invites Katniss to sit down, and she does so.

In contrast to the glossy appearance of power and authority that he projects on television, Snow is short and direct with Katniss face-to-face. It’s important to note that he makes the stakes of Katniss’s Victory Tour very clear: he threatens her family.



Snow continues explaining his position to Katniss. He’s viewed Katniss as a “threat” to the Capitol, he explains, ever since Katniss and Peeta won the Games together. At the end of the Games, Katniss and Peeta threatened to kill themselves by eating poisonous berries if they weren’t allowed to win the Games together. The designer of the Hunger Games, Seneca Crane, allowed them to win, Snow explains, because he was “sentimental.” He calmly explains to Katniss that Seneca has been executed.

One question that isn’t directly addressed in this section is why Snow cares about Katniss’s performance in the Games at all. The answer is complicated. To people all over Panem, the Hunger Games are a symbol of the government’s power. Thus, by breaking the rules of the Games, Katniss and Peeta made a statement challenging the government. This statement was only a challenge because of the equivalence between the Games and the government — an equivalence created by the government itself, because of the way it uses the Games to assert and symbolize its power.



President Snow goes on to explain that Katniss's threat of suicide has been dangerous for the Capitol's authority. Many of the other Districts saw Katniss's behavior as an act of rebellion. Snow fears that Katniss has inspired people in some Districts to start uprisings against the government's authority. Snow talks as if he's concerned for stability and peace, but Katniss knows that he doesn't care about peace at all—he only wants to stay in power.

Katniss tells President Snow that she didn't intend to start uprisings, and Snow replies that he believes her. He notes that the clothes she wore during the Games, featuring fiery colors, were oddly appropriate—her example has provided a “spark” for other Districts, which may one day become a huge flame that destroys all of Panem (the “universe” of [The Hunger Games](#).) Katniss asks Snow why he doesn't just kill her. Snow calmly replies that this would only create more outrage.

Snow continues to prod Katniss for weaknesses. He asks her how Peeta, the “love of her life” has been, and notes that she's clearly indifferent to him. He calls Gale “handsome,” noting that he could easily kill him off if he needed to do so. Katniss hates Snow for saying such things, and worries that he knows that she has feelings for Gale.

Katniss thinks about a moment she spent with Gale in the woods shortly after winning the Games. Katniss has been surrounded with cameras and reporters for the last month, and seeing Gale in the woods was one of the first moments of privacy she'd had after her victory. Gale, she sensed, was angry with her for seeming to love Peeta. Katniss didn't know how to explain herself to Gale, but she strongly wanted to go back to being friends with him. Then, as they stood alone in the woods, Gale kissed her, saying that he had to kiss her “at least once.” A week later, Katniss saw Gale, and Gale acted as if the kiss had never happened. As she thinks all this, Katniss looks at President Snow and wonders if he knows about her complicated relationship with Gale—it's possible that he's installed cameras in the woods.

Katniss begs Snow not to hurt Gale. She promises to behave during her Victory Tour by pretending to love Peeta. Snow smiles and nods—this is exactly what he wants to hear. He stands up to leave Katniss's house. As he walks out the door, he whispers to Katniss, “I know about the kiss.”

Snow elaborates on the link between Katniss's behavior at the Games and growing rebellion. The irony, once again, is that Katniss's actions were only rebellious because the government itself has made such a point of directing people's attention to the Games, and of associating its own power with the Games. Katniss is a “Trojan Horse,” entering the Games and then attacking the rules from the inside.



For all her maturity, Katniss is still unsure whether she wants to oppose the government or not. For the time being, at any rate, her priorities lie with her family, not with abstract causes of rebellion and uprising, as much as she hates the government and Snow.



Snow is the embodiment of the government of Panem, in more ways than one. In Katniss's world, there is constant surveillance—everything people do is being recorded, and often even broadcasted on television. Snow, with his sixth sense for Katniss's actions, represents the surveillance state in all its glory and oppressive power.



Because there are cameras and reporters everywhere in her world, Katniss views privacy as a genuine luxury. She behaves completely differently around her loved ones when she thinks they're alone compared with when they're being filmed. Similarly, others, Gale included, are forced to change their behavior when they know that Katniss is being watched. It's also important to note Snow's gravitas and power of manipulation: even without saying that he saw Katniss with Gale, he makes Katniss worry that he did.



It's almost amusing that Snow is being so straightforward here: he began his visit by telling Katniss that he'd kill her family, and he ends it by telling her, in no uncertain terms, that he knows about Gale. There is little ambiguity to interpret here.



CHAPTER 3

Katniss stands alone in her house. President Snow has just left, and Katniss is trying to make sense of everything he's told her. Snow has threatened to kill Gale and Katniss's family if she doesn't comply with the Capitol during her Victory Tour. Her only way of protecting her love ones' lives is to pretend to be in love with Peeta, thereby giving the reporters and audiences what they want.

Katniss's mother comes in and asks her if she's all right, and Katniss pretends to be cheery. She lies and says that President Snow always visits victors before their tour. Katniss thinks about her relationship with her mother. Though she's always blamed her mother for the way she fell into depression after her father's death—irrationally, she admits—she is trying to be warmer with her now. Katniss thinks of a “wonderful thing” her mother did for her: when reporters asked her mother about Katniss's “boyfriend,” Peeta, her mother replied that Katniss was too young to have a boyfriend at all.

Katniss thinks that there are three people she could talk to about her conversation with Snow. One is her stylist, Cinna. He is a kind man, but Katniss fears that he's at risk already—if she told him about Snow's threat, he could be executed. Katniss could also talk to Peeta. Previously, she's made it clear to him that she was only pretending to be in love with him, but now she'll have to ask him to pretend to be in love with her. Finally, Katniss could talk to Haymitch, her mentor. The problem is that he might not understand, or care, about Katniss's problem.

Katniss takes a bath in preparation for the beginning of her tour. In the middle of her bath, two of her “attendants,” Venia and Octavia, burst in without warning, saying that they need to apply Katniss's makeup immediately. They scold Katniss for not taking better care of her looks in recent weeks. Together, Venia and Octavia paint Katniss's nails, pencil her eyebrows, give her fake eyelashes, etc.

As Venia and Octavia work, they mention the “Quarter Quell.” Every 25 years, the Capitol puts on the usual Hunger Games, along with other special celebrations and ceremonies, most of which are cruel and sadistic for the Districts. This year is the 75th year of the Hunger Games. Venia and Octavia mention that Haymitch may be required to compete in challenges, since he won the Games years ago. Katniss has never asked Haymitch about his victory, and he has never volunteered the information.

In this opening section, Katniss lays out the basic challenge she'll have to deal with in the book. Interestingly, it's almost the reverse of her problem in the first novel: where before Katniss behaved normally, only “misbehaving” at the end of the Games, she must now behave under threat of death.



Although Katniss's problem is unfathomable to most of the readers of these young adult novels, Collins does an impressive job of rendering her conflicts comprehensible to teenagers (who hasn't kept a secret from their mother?). Katniss's relationship with her mother is uncertain, but there are plenty of signs that Katniss respects her mother, and recognizes that she's an intelligent, thoughtful woman.



Katniss struggles to conceal the vast secret Snow has told her. We see, very clearly, the extent of the surveillance state. If Katniss tells Cinna about her problem, then there's a serious risk that the government will find out, so talented has it become at spying on its own employees. For the time being, Katniss is forced to keep her secret, and this causes her a great deal of stress in the early chapters of the novel.



It's darkly humorous that Venia and Octavia are so concerned with Katniss's appearance, and have no idea of the moral dilemma she's faced with. This reinforces the superficiality of the residents of the Capitol: people are so concerned with their appearances that they seem not to mind that the government wields a tyrannical amount of power over their lives.



Although Haymitch has appeared to be just a lazy alcoholic so far, we sense that there's another side to his personality. He's lazy, but he also clearly possesses great strength and willpower—only people with these two qualities are capable of winning the Hunger Games. It's also a sign of Haymitch's secret maturity that he refuses to brag about the Games—he doesn't have the same bloodthirsty love for the Games that others do.



Katniss's mother enters Katniss's room as Venia and Octavia are applying her makeup. She tells Katniss that Cinna, her stylist and close friend, has arrived. When Katniss's makeup is done, she walks downstairs and greets Cinna. Katniss can't help but tell Cinna what Snow has told her—she finds it very easy to talk to Cinna, and often talks with him on the phone in her new house.

Cinna is sympathetic when Katniss tells him about Snow, but he urges her to get to work on her “talent.” Ever victor of the Games, traditionally, must have a talent—Peeta's talent, for instance, is painting. Katniss thinks that she has no talent but hunting. Cinna suggests that she say her talent is designing clothing, and Katniss agrees, since this will allow her to spend more time with Cinna. Cinna gives her a sketchbook full of dresses that she has supposedly designed—in reality, Cinna himself designed them.

Effie Trinket, the organizer of the Victory Tour, arrives at Katniss's house. The sight of Effie reminds Katniss of the Games, and thus of Rue, the young girl who allied with Katniss during the Hunger Games. Katniss was forced to let Rue die. Even now, she can't stop thinking about the sight of Rue lying on the ground with a spear through her stomach.

As Katniss prepares to leave for her tour, her mother gives her a pin shaped like a **mockingjay**. Effie shouts that it's time for Katniss to leave. Katniss remembers her conversation with Snow, and her face breaks into a huge (and fake) smile.

Katniss walks toward the train station, surrounded by her entourage, and by reporters. She approaches Peeta and gives him a kiss—the first kiss she's given him in months. Peeta is nervous and sad, since Katniss has already made it clear that she's only pretending to love him, but he “plays along” and smiles for the camera. Katniss notices that his artificial leg—which he was forced to get after losing his real leg in the Games—is still giving him trouble.

It's strange that Katniss is so open with Cinna right after worrying that she could be endangering other people's lives with her information. Perhaps this is a sign that, in spite of her great maturity and integrity, Katniss still has a lot of growing to do. It's also a suggestion that she struggles to keep the kinds of secrets that other people—Haymitch, for instance—conceal more effectively.



In this section, we can't help but compare the Hunger Games with the Miss America pageant—in which the competitors must show a “talent”—singing, piano playing, etc. This seems to be precisely Collins's point: she wants us to make the uncomfortable connection between the bland reality TV of our era and the bloodthirsty broadcasting of Panem.



For Katniss, who has seen the bloody underbelly of the Hunger Games, the sight of this pomp and pageantry is cruelly ironic, and only makes her think of her guilt and acts of killing. Katniss's guilt for Rue's death is proof that she's a better human being than the spectators who watch and enjoy the murders of the Games.



Collins here introduces the mockingjay, a prominent symbol, to the novel. Still, it's not yet clear what the pin symbolizes, either for Katniss or for us as readers.



Like Katniss, Peeta harbors “wounds” from the Games. Katniss must deal with her guilt and conflicting emotions, while Peeta also has physical wounds to recover from. We get a better sense of the agony of performing for the cameras at all times—Peeta can't express his true feelings for Katniss.



Peeta and Katniss walk to the train station, where they're ready to leave District 12, along with their stylists, Effie, and Haymitch. Once they're on the train, Katniss insists that she has to talk to Haymitch immediately. Knowing that the train is probably bugged, she suggests that she and Haymitch talk outside when the train stops for fuel. Outside, she explains what Snow told her: if she rebels against the Capitol at all, her loved ones will die. Haymitch sighs and tells her the truth: every year when the Hunger Games begin, she and Peeta will be back in the news. Reporters will "check up" on their romance. Thus, the only way to keep her loved ones alive is to marry Peeta.

Despite his drunkenness, Haymitch proves himself to be an intelligent and thoughtful mentor. His advice that Katniss marry Peeta seems sensible, since it will put the reporters at ease. It's not immediately clear how Haymitch regards the government of Panem. It seems likely that he hates it as much as Katniss does, since he was forced to compete in the Games, too. Yet it also seems that Haymitch has reached a cynical "truce" with the government—he's not about to start any uprisings.



CHAPTER 4

Haymitch and Katniss walk back inside the train, which finishes refueling and moves on. Katniss goes to her train car and sits alone, thinking about what Haymitch has told her. If she marries Peeta, she realizes, Snow might try to pressure her into having children. This means that her children may one day be drafted to compete in the Hunger Games themselves. Even though the selection process for choosing tributes is supposedly random, Katniss suspects that it's actually rigged. Katniss realizes that Haymitch, who could have married anyone he wanted after winning the Games, may have chosen to stay single because he didn't want to put other people—including his own children—in danger.

As Katniss thinks more about Haymitch, she gains new respect for him. His drunkenness and cynicism, while off-putting, are motivated by a genuine sense of despair—he knows that he can never have children, or they'll eventually be drafted in the games. In this way, Haymitch's alcoholism is almost noble—he is abusing his own body because he is too moral a person to put someone else in danger. Katniss still has to make her own peace with her situation as a victor, and Haymitch's example will be highly important to her.



It is getting late. Alone in her train car, Katniss tries to sleep, but finds that she can't stop thinking about Gale and her family. She resolves to appear to be in love with Peeta, thereby keeping them safe.

Katniss's guilt about Gale, Rue, and others will haunt her throughout the novel. Her only defense against these things, it would seem, is to project an image of happiness.



The next day, the train stops in District 11. Katniss remembers that Rue, the young girl who died during the Games, was from this District. In District 11, Katniss attends a delicious dinner, but she finds that she can't enjoy her food because she's concerned for her family. She also notices that Haymitch and Cinna aren't present at the dinner. Effie explains that Haymitch is probably drunk and asleep, while Cinna has been working hard to design Katniss's outfits, and is probably resting, too.

While the victors of the Hunger Games are showered in love, attention, and money, Katniss cannot enjoy these things. It's unclear if the other victors go through the same emotions—guilt, anger, frustration—after they win, but most probably do. At any rate, Katniss won't be comfortable settling into her new life as a victor. She's not motivated by hatred for the government so much as by her own guilt.



Katniss thinks about how hard her “team” works to make her look beautiful. They always want to make “alterations” to her body—tattoos, surgeries, etc.—but Cinna insists that they hold off on doing so. Katniss thinks about the wealthy, powerful people who live in the Capitol, most who have had elaborate surgeries and procedures done on their bodies. Katniss wonders if they realize how bizarre they look to “the rest of us.”

After the dinner in District 11, Katniss and her crew get back on the train and move on to the next district. Only a few hours after they depart, the train breaks down, irritating Effie. While technicians try to repair the train, Katniss walks outside, staring out into the wilderness that surrounds the train tracks. As she walks around, she hears a voice and turns—it’s Peeta.

Peeta tells Katniss that he needs to talk to her about Gale. He admits that he’s had a crush on Katniss for a long time, and that he knew she had “something with Gale” for a while. He also apologizes for trying to hold Katniss to the things she said during the Games—he recognizes that she was only pretending to love him in order to win the competition. Katniss is touched by Peeta’s apology, and together, they agree to try to “just be friends.”

Peeta offers to show Katniss his paintings, which have an entire train car to themselves. He holds Katniss’s hand, and Katniss is happy to know that he’s touching her out of friendship, not romance, either fake or sincere. Inside the train, Katniss is surprised to see that Peeta has painted scenes from the Hunger Games. Many of these scenes show her fighting—in one, she’s lying in a pool of blood. Katniss tells Peeta that he’s a brilliant artist, but also admits that she hates these paintings, because they remind her of the most painful days of her life. Peeta nods in understanding, and explains that he needs to paint the Games because he sees them “every night.” As they talk, they feel the train lurch forward. The technicians have made their repairs, and the train will be in District 11 soon.

As the train arrives in District 11, Peeta and Katniss see a huge barbed wire fence with large metal towers positioned along it. Katniss had learned from Rue that District 11 was more severe and tyrannical than District 12, but she hadn’t expected such an intimidating sight. She also notices that District 11 is huge, far larger than her own District. The train stops near a large, crumbling marble structure, the Justice Building, which Katniss recognizes from school lessons in her childhood.

The false physical beauty and gaudy tattoos that Katniss sees in her team reflects the general emphasis on appearances that Snow (and the culture of Panem) stresses. Katniss, with her troubled thoughts, finds it almost impossible to maintain an appearance of beauty and happiness—she’s more thoughtful and sensitive than her society wants her to be.



Effie is a representative of the Capitol—in all its superficiality and emphasis on smooth, punctual performances—and yet Effie is a comical figure, not a sinister one. She’s simply a product of the Capitol’s emphasis on appearances and ceremony.



Peeta’s apology to Katniss seems perfectly sincere, but Katniss’s insistence that they “be friends” will never work out, we sense. The “love triangle” between Gale, Katniss, and Peeta will persist throughout the remainder of the book, reminding us that, like the media of Panem, we want a “good story.”



Even when Peeta seems to be platonic friends with Katniss, we sense a sexual undercurrent in their behavior. Peeta, for his part, is sensitive and intelligent, as his paintings attest. More to the point, he clearly struggles with the same feelings of guilt and trauma that Katniss has been dealing with. This connects the two, and suggests that Peeta is ideal for Katniss, as he understands exactly what she’s going through. Perhaps it’s symbolic that the train begins to move again after Katniss talks with Peeta—having a sympathetic friend helps Katniss “move forward” with her life.



As we get closer to the Capitol, we get more signs of the government’s harsh rule. The decaying state of the Justice Building seems to symbolize the decaying state of justice, both in the district and in Panem itself. People are murdered, victors are blackmailed for good behavior, and innocents are threatened. Justice is truly a dying concept here.



In District 11, Effie has arranged for Peeta and Katniss to greet the District Mayor and read a scripted thank-you that the Capitol has sent. Katniss thinks that it's traditional for the Games winners to say a few words about dead tributes with whom they were allied—thus, she should say something about Rue. Though she has struggled to write anything about Rue, Peeta has prepared a brief statement on this topic.

Katniss, Peeta, and their entourage are welcomed off their train by a group of “Peacekeepers” (government soldiers). They escort them into a truck, which drives to the Justice Building. At the Justice Building Katniss and Peeta are invited onto a huge stage, and a vast audience cheers for them. The Mayor reads a speech, and although Katniss is very nervous, she has previously been “drilled” so many times that she says her lines without thinking. Afterwards, Peeta delivers a short speech about how Rue helped him and Katniss win the competition. Peeta announces that the families of the dead tributes from District 11 will receive one month's worth of Peeta and Katniss's winnings every year until Katniss and Peeta die. This is an unprecedented display of generosity, and the crowd gasps and cheers in response to it. Katniss herself is so impressed that when she kisses Peeta at the end of the ceremony, her kiss isn't forced at all.

Just as the ceremony is about to conclude, Katniss feels a sudden desire to speak her mind. Even though her time for speeches has passed, she interrupts the Mayor to talk about Rue. She tells her audience that Rue will always be with her, and that she sees Rue in her own younger sister, Prim. Though Katniss's voice is unsteady, she bravely finishes her speech, thanking District 11 for its enormous sacrifice.

When Katniss falls silent, there is a pause. Then, an old man in the audience gives a whistle. It is the same whistle that Rue used to whistle when she worked in the orchards of District 11. It's also the same whistle that Katniss used to communicate with Rue at the end of the Games. Soon, everyone in the audience is whistling. Katniss is almost moved to tears, but she's also worried that this display of unity will be interpreted as a sign of rebellion—exactly what Snow has warned her to avoid.

The ceremony concludes, and Peeta and Katniss are escorted out of the Justice Building. As Katniss leaves, she sees a horrible sight: the old man who first whistled is dragged out of the building, pushed to the ground, and shot in the head.

Katniss's immaturity is on full display in this section. She has feelings about Rue's death—guilt, sadness, etc.—but she struggles to communicate them, and thus move past them. That Peeta is “speaking for” Katniss about Rue suggests that Peeta is a good, understanding friend, and also that Katniss isn't yet ready to confront her own demons.



It's especially unnerving that Katniss reads through her prepared script because she has no words of her own to say—the government, as well as Peeta, is speaking for her. Peeta's generosity seems enormous, but one wonders whether it accomplishes much in the end. He isn't directly challenging the authority of the government, but only trying to mitigate a problem. Peeta is advocating a petty “progressivism,” instead of addressing the root cause of Rue and District 11's problems: the tyranny of the government. We begin to see that Katniss has genuine feelings for Peeta, but these are complicated by the public nature of their relationship.



Katniss's interruption is a small but pointed act of rebellion, one that fits the title of the first part of the novel: a “spark.” While Katniss is a little clumsy in the way she goes about praising Rue, it sends a clear message of compassion and solidarity, precisely the opposite of what the government encourages.



Evidently Katniss's words have a profound effect on the people of District 11. Katniss is clearly unsure of herself at this point—after instigating a minor uprising, she's a little ashamed of doing so. It's as if she doesn't know what she's capable of accomplishing simply by making a speech. Again, it's ironic that the government gives Katniss the platform from which she causes rebellion.



Katniss sees firsthand the real consequences of stirring up rebellion. Whether the sight of this murder will discourage her from future rebellious acts or not remains to be seen.



CHAPTER 5

Katniss and Peeta there are rushed back to a small room in the Justice Building, from which they've just come. There, they find Haymitch, Effie, and Cinna. Effie frantically asks what's going on—Peeta replies, a little too calmly, that “an old truck backfired.” Even as he says this, they hear two more gunshots. This terrifies everyone, Effie in particular.

Haymitch shouts that everyone needs to follow him. Wordlessly, he walks up a staircase in the room where they've been moved. Upstairs, they find a luxurious banquet hall where, presumably, they were supposed to eat dinner. Haymitch notices that Katniss and Peeta have been fitted with microphones for the ceremony—he rips these off their chests and throws them to the floor. Katniss realizes that Haymitch knows his way around the Justice Building, because he visited there himself years ago, when he won the Hunger Games.

Haymitch leads Peeta and Katniss up a ladder, which leads to the dome at the top of the Justice Building. He leaves the rest of the entourage in the banquet hall. In the dome, he asks Peeta to explain to him what's going on. Peeta explains the whistling incident that led to three deaths, and wonders aloud why the Peacekeepers would kill someone simply for whistling. In response, Katniss reluctantly explains what President Snow told her—she needs to preserve order or risk her friends' lives. Katniss tells her friends the entire truth, including the kiss Gale gave her.

Peeta is angry that Katniss didn't tell her about her conversation with Snow. He explains that he had a right to know, since he has loved ones who are in just as much danger as Katniss's. He worries that his generosity led three people to be executed, a suggestion that Katniss can't disagree with. Peeta is also angry, he says, that Haymitch gave Katniss help during the Hunger Games, but never aided him until Katniss had allied with Peeta. Katniss realizes that Peeta has a point—Haymitch, who should have been equally helpful to both tributes from District 11, favored Katniss from the beginning. Haymitch promises that he'll keep Peeta fully informed from now on. Peeta nods, but leaves the dome and climbs back down the ladder.

Katniss, still standing in the dome with Haymitch, asks him about favoritism. Haymitch tells her that he always preferred Peeta to her, but when he noticed that Peeta was protecting Katniss, he realized that he could do more good by sending supplies to Katniss. Haymitch concludes by telling Katniss, very curtly, that they have a ceremonial dinner to attend.

In this section, Peeta displays his talent for lying and putting on an appearance of normality. His talent for both far outstrips Katniss's. He's a better politician, and is socially savvy even in times of crisis.



We get more signs that there's more to Haymitch than meets the eye. He's resourceful, and possessed of a good memory—thus, he remembers exactly where to go in the Justice Building, based on a handful of visits he made a long time ago. More impressively, Haymitch shows his awareness of the surveillance going on in Panem—something which the other characters seem to forget about.



It isn't long before Katniss tells someone else about Snow's warning. She's tried to keep the truth to herself, nobly defending her friends from danger, but she's found that she's incapable of keeping such an important secret—indeed, there seems to be no point in keeping the secret anymore. We see the lengths the characters have to go simply to speak to one another honestly. They not only have to pluck up the courage to do so, but they have to find a place and time where the government won't be listening.



Peeta's anger seems a little hypocritical, since we've just seen him do essentially the same thing to Katniss: tell a noble lie designed to keep others out of danger and above suspicion. This suggests that Peeta's not really angry about Katniss's secret meeting with Snow at all—he's angry that Katniss kissed Gale. This verifies what was obvious all along, that he's not really “just friends” with Katniss at all. We're also reminded that Peeta is the stronger and more capable Hunger Games competitor, and Haymitch favored him for this reason.



Haymitch, may be something of a sexist in naturally choosing Peeta over Katniss, and assuming that he would be a better competitor in the Games. At the same time, Peeta is generally more affable and outgoing than Katniss, and better at winning people over.



As Katniss, Peeta, and their entourage prepare to go to their dinner, Effie complains that she doesn't like how they've been treated: they've been rushed into cars and pushed around by Peacekeepers. Peeta apologizes to Katniss for his outburst in the dome—he realizes that he shouldn't be angry with Katniss for keeping secrets from him, since he's concealed the truth from her before. This reminds Katniss that Peeta first told her he loved her on television, in front of all the people of Panem.

The narrative “fast forwards” to describe Katniss and Peeta's tour routine. They ride in the train, arrive at each new district, make polite speeches, smile winningly for the cameras, attend banquets, pretend to love each other, and move on to the next district. Katniss notes that her speech in District 11 was edited before being broadcast over television and radio. Subsequently, she's careful to give calm, uncontroversial speeches. She also notices that in some districts, such as 8, 4, and 3, the citizens are visibly angry with her for winning the Games. They seem to resent a resident of District 12—the poorest and smallest district—for winning such a prestigious competition.

As Katniss moves on with her Tour, she gets little sleep, and begins to lose weight. At night, she pictures the horror of the Games. Peeta sleeps in Katniss's bed because it calms her and helps her sleep, and this fact becomes the subject of much gossip among the entourage.

The visits to the final two districts, 2 and 1, are the most challenging for Katniss, since the tributes from these districts might have survived the Games had it not been for Katniss. She personally killed a girl, Glimmer, from District 2, and a boy from District 1, whose name, she learns, was Marvel.

Katniss and her entourage reach the Capitol, where the most powerful and privileged people of Panem live. Here, unlike in any of the districts, there is no danger of an uprising.

Katniss and Peeta take up residence in the Training Center of the Capitol, where they'd previously spent time during the Hunger Games. There, Katniss proposes that she and Peeta marry during their time in the Capitol, thereby giving the reporters exactly what they want. Peeta agrees immediately, but then leaves the room. When Katniss tells Haymitch about her proposal, Haymitch tells her that Peeta had wanted to marry Katniss, but not for the sake of publicity.

While Effie seems like an embodiment of the government's discipline in the earlier chapters, it's clear that even she has her limits. She's very much on the side of the victors, although still unwilling to do anything against the Capitol. Like many of the characters in the novel, Peeta has a difficult time navigating between television and reality, especially in his position of fame and celebrity.



It's unclear what, if anything, Katniss's small acts of rebellion and compassion accomplish. Certainly, they never pass outside the district in which she makes them, as the government edits all communications. But perhaps it's a sign of Katniss's strength that she's forcing the government to censor her communications in the first place. Collins reminds us of the class tensions implicit in Katniss's world—she's a poor person, and thus viewed with suspicion by the wealthy and powerful.



It's already been made clear that Katniss is attracted to Peeta because he knows what she's been through at the Games. Here, this sense of understanding leads to, it would seem, genuine affection.



Katniss is forced to confront the darkest parts of her past—the fact that she murdered young people from other districts. Everyone in Panem knows about this too, which makes the pageantry of the Victory Tour more grotesque.



The richest and most powerful people in Panem have no incentive to rise up—they're happy with their lives, and thus support the tyrannical government.



It's important that Katniss, not Peeta, “proposes” Peeta's proposal. This makes it clear that she is only interested in marrying him to maintain the appearance of normality and protect her family. Yet Peeta is still attracted to Katniss, and obviously wants to marry her, regardless of keeping up appearances.



The night after Katniss discusses marriage with Peeta, they appear on the stage of the Training Center to talk with Caesar Flickerman, a charismatic reporter and broadcaster. There, Peeta proposes marriage to Katniss, and she accepts, following the script to which they've agreed. The audiences in the Capitol are almost hysterical with happiness. President Snow, who is presiding over the event that night, appears on the stage to congratulate Peeta and Katniss. As he congratulates Katniss, Katniss gives an almost imperceptible raise of her eyebrows, as if to ask if she's done enough to obey Snow's directions. In response, Snow silently shakes his head.

The character of Caesar Flickerman is an important one in the novel—much as Snow is the embodiment of the modern surveillance state, Flickerman represents the emphasis on superficial entertainment. People like Flickerman are important to Panem because they disguise the fundamental ugliness of the Hunger Games—the fact that it involves the murder of dozens of innocent people. Snow's head-shake, so important to the rest of the novel, is a highly ambiguous gesture. He shifts between making his thoughts plain and not expressing himself with words at all.



CHAPTER 6

President Snow has just given Katniss indication that she's failed to obey his directions. Yet Katniss is not afraid or angry—surprisingly, she's relieved. After weeks of putting on shows for the people of the districts, Katniss is happy that she no longer has to pretend to be obedient—even if it means that she's infuriated Snow. She imagines leaving District 12 and going into the wilderness with Peeta, her family, Haymitch, and Gale and his family.

Katniss is less willing than ever before to keep to the appearance of normality. It's even possible that she's intentionally failed to keep up this appearance so that she can rebel against the government's authority. Yet she's not willing to translate her rebellious feelings into a genuine uprising—she's still concerned for a small group of people.



As Katniss stands on the stage, surrounded by cheering crowds, she continues to smile at President Snow. Snow proposes that she and Peeta get married in the Capitol, a suggestion that makes the crowd cheer. Onstage, Katniss banters playfully with Snow, hating him the entire time. The knowledge that she's planning to escape from District 12 allows her to enjoy herself as she smiles vapidly at Snow.

Where earlier Katniss struggled to keep secrets of any kind from her loved ones, she seems to be genuinely enjoying the secret she now keeps from Snow. She appears to be having a great time at the ceremony, when in reality, she's plotting (rather naively) to run from Snow.



Following her performance with Peeta, Katniss attends an enormous banquet. For the first time since her tour began, Katniss feels hungry. She samples many of the dishes, and notices, with a mixture of pride and surprise, that some of the people of the Capitol have imitated her **mockingjay** pin and wearing pins of their own. She notes with great pleasure that this must annoy Snow greatly. At the banquet, many government officials introduce themselves to Katniss. Though Katniss is polite and charming, she's utterly indifferent to these people.

The mockingjay pin can be said to symbolize almost anything—it can be a symbol of rebellion, or one of naive respect. The mockingjay pins at the Capitol are probably just meaningless fashion statements, but Snow is still angered by how much influence Katniss has. He also probably doesn't like seeing a symbol of rebellion even among his most harmless and vapid subjects.



While the members of the entourage gorge themselves on food and drink copious amounts of alcohol, Katniss and Peeta find it impossible to enjoy themselves at the banquet. Together, they go to the dance floor. There, Peeta confesses that he can't stop thinking about the death and pain he encountered at the Games. Katniss remembers the starving children of District 12, and thinks with disgust about the gluttony on display in the Capitol that night. Peeta looks around to make sure that no one is listening, and then whispers to Katniss that they may have been wrong to try to pacify the people of the districts. Katniss doesn't disagree, but she tells him, "Save it for home."

A man named Plutarch Heavensbee introduces himself to Katniss as the new Head Gamekeeper, and asks Peeta if he can steal Katniss for a dance. Peeta obliges, and Plutarch begins to dance with Katniss. She naturally despises Plutarch, since he'll be responsible for devising the sadistic details of the Games. Katniss wonders if Plutarch thinks about his predecessor, Seneca Crane, who was executed. Plutarch jokes about his responsibilities as Gamekeeper, and Katniss laughs along, secretly disgusted. As their dance ends, Plutarch confides that he has to go to a "strategy meeting" for the upcoming Games. Usually, these meetings are secret, but he tells Katniss that he's sure she can keep his secret—Katniss assures him that she can. As Plutarch says goodbye, Katniss points out that he's wearing a beautiful wristwatch with a **mockingjay** on its face. Plutarch responds that his watch is "one of a kind," and walks away. Katniss wonders what Plutarch means. Perhaps he's trademarked his watch, irrationally afraid that others will steal his idea. This kind of fussiness, Katniss thinks, is typical of the Capitol.

As the party draws to a close, Effie tells Katniss that they'll need to return to the train and ride back to District 12 that night. At exactly 1 AM, everyone is back on the train, leaving the Capitol. Katniss falls asleep, exhausted. The next day, she wakes up to find Peeta sleeping next to her. Peeta tells her that he sleeps better with Katniss, since his nightmares are usually about "losing her." Katniss is uncomfortable, and doesn't know how to respond.

We get an apt metaphor for Katniss and Peeta's common alienation here. While everyone else eats—in other words, indulges in superficial pleasures—Katniss and Peeta talk about their feelings, a more profound and mature kind of pleasure. Notably, it's Peeta, not Katniss, who suggests that pacifying people might not be the best tactic to use. Katniss, by contrast, is still unsure what to do about rebellion and uprising. She's more cautious than Peeta, though admittedly this is partly because she's worried about endangering her family.



It's not clear what to make of Plutarch. He seems like another in a long line of sadistic Gamemakers, but at the same time, he's oddly friendly and even flirty with Katniss, asking her to keep his secrets, and talking at length about his wristwatch. If the mockingjay is a symbol of rebellion, as Katniss has previously seen, then it's unclear why the Gamemaker would wear such a thing. For the time being, Katniss (rather obtusely) interprets the watch as proof that Plutarch is superficial and jealous, just like the other residents of the Capitol. In general, this exchange suggests the basic problem with symbols themselves—because they're not literal, it's often difficult to decipher exactly what they mean. Thus, a mockingjay can mean two contradictory things to two different people. This is also Collins giving a hint about her twist ending, when Plutarch is revealed as a rebel.



It's interesting that Katniss doesn't ask Peeta to sleep next to her—he simply does so. Katniss seems content with this, suggesting that her bond with Peeta is stronger than it seemed to be at first. Peeta is a sympathetic, loving friend—exactly the kind of person Katniss needs at the moment.



By the end of the day, the train is nearing District 12, where there will be a huge Harvest Festival. Katniss and Peeta go to the house of the mayor, Undersee, to plan the details. After arriving at Undersee's house, Katniss notices a news bulletin on television: there has been a riot in District 8. The television shows footage of burning buildings, Peacekeepers shooting into crowds, and screaming children. Katniss notices that there are still banners depicting her face, left over from the Victory Tour. This must be what Snow meant by "uprising," she realizes.

Katniss doesn't know her own strength—this is part of what makes her an interesting character, but it also makes her come across as simplistic at times. She's motivated by a few basic things, like survival and love for her family. Thus, when a simple action—a speech, a pin—has mammoth repercussions, she's genuinely surprised, and because we see everything through Katniss's own inner dialogue, we are supposed to be surprised as well. Collins has already suggested that symbols and gestures have great power, but this is the first time we see an uprising of this scale.



CHAPTER 7

Katniss walks through the woods, carrying a bag of food and a flask of tea. She leaves these things for Gale, at their usual meeting place. Then, afraid that the government is watching them somehow, she walks to the lake near the woods. It is there that she and Gale have planned to meet—Katniss thinks that they need to talk.

We seem to be back where we started here, with Katniss delivering food to various people in her community. Yet this reinforces how much Katniss has changed in the past 100 pages, as she's now more cautious about where she goes and whom she talks to.



The narrative cuts back to Katniss's discovery of riots in District 8. Disturbed, Katniss was about to run out of the Mayor's house when she ran into the Mayor himself. The Mayor greeted her politely, and mentioned that his daughter, Madge, was waiting to see Katniss. Katniss, who likes Madge, went to talk to her.

Katniss's lack of comprehension about the uprisings in District 8 is so great that she was about to leave her engagement, and only the presence of the Mayor himself persuaded her to stay.



During her conversation with Madge Undersee, Madge complimented Katniss for her **mockingjay** pin, and they discussed the history of mockingjays. Long ago, the government genetically engineered male birds called jabberjays. Jabberjays were intended to be capable of remembering long passages of human speech. The government sent them to the districts as spies, thinking that the jabberjays would report back to them with valuable information. When this failed to work (the districts intentionally lied when there were jabberjays around), the government left the jabberjays to die out. Instead, they adapted to life in the wild, mating with mockingbirds and evolving into mockingjays, female songbirds.

Collins's discussion of the mockingjay is highly important to the novel's symbolism. One might say that Katniss herself is the mockingjay: she's a seemingly weak, unimportant thing (a woman from district 12, the least popular and powerful district), and yet she's a survivor who can overcome adversities of almost any kind. It's also important to note that the government "created" mockingjays, albeit accidentally. In much the same way, the government has "created" the threat that is Katniss, by giving her celebrity and a national platform, but also great pain and plenty of reasons to hate them.



Katniss continues to walk to the lake, wondering if Gale will be able to track her path from their usual meeting point. After a few hours, Katniss reaches a small abandoned house near the lake. She waits here, and soon Gale arrives, having tracked her path. Katniss greets Gale and then cuts to the chase: Snow threatened to kill Gale, she tells him. Gale coolly thanks her for informing him, and makes a sarcastic comment about Peeta, Katniss's new husband. Katniss protests that their marriage is only for show.

Because Gale and Katniss are being watched at all times (for all they know), they have to devise increasingly elaborate strategies for speaking to each other honestly. Katniss faces the difficult task of justifying herself to both of her lovers, Gale and Peeta. Her argument with Gale parallels the one she had with Peeta two chapters ago, suggesting that Gale and Peeta, whatever their differences, are at least equal in their love for Katniss.



Katniss explains to Gale her decision to marry Peeta. She mentions Snow's visit to her house and the shootings in District 11. Then, she proposes that she and Gale run away from District 12 to be safe. To her surprise, Gale eagerly agrees to this, and tells her that he loves her.

Katniss is unsure how to respond to Gale. She tells him that she can't think about love—she's too busy trying to survive. She tells Gale that he should try to bring his family along with them. She also adds that she'll try to bring her own family, along with Haymitch and Peeta—but the mention of Peeta angers Gale. Katniss insists that they must all leave together, or the government will torture those who stay behind. In her haste, she lets slip that there's been an uprising in District 8—a fact Gale hadn't known.

Gale presses Katniss for information about the uprising in District 8. Katniss admits that she saw fires and Peacekeepers on television. She also tells him that she is the cause of the riot, since she could have killed herself with berries during the Games. Gale promptly dismisses this suggestion as an absurdity. He also insists that he has to join the fight against the Peacekeepers in District 8, rather than let innocent people be shot. Katniss can't understand Gale—she repeats that they must leave District 12 and try to survive on their own. Gale angrily leaves the house.

Alone in the woods, Katniss wonders if she'll be able to convince her family to leave District 12 with her. After sitting alone for a few moments, she leaves the house and walks through the woods back to her home in Victor's Village. She must find Peeta, she decides, and convince him to leave with her. In Victor's Village, Katniss finds Peeta and tells him her plan to leave District 12. She's surprised to find that Peeta is willing to leave the District with his family—however, he adds that he doubts Katniss herself will want to leave the district. Before he and Katniss can discuss the matter any further, they hear a strange sound come from nearby. They run towards the sound, which is coming from a nearby square.

In the square, Katniss and Peeta see a large crowd gathered around a mysterious object. When the crowd notices Katniss, they push her away, saying that she could “get him killed.” As Katniss is about to ask who “he” is, she sees Gale, tied to a post, his naked back exposed. A tall, muscular man, the Head Peacekeeper of District 12, is whipping Gale brutally.

Collins uses this scene to clarify some of the differences between Gale and Peeta. Where Peeta seems relatively comfortable in his world (despite being haunted by the Games), Gale is eager to run away from his existing life.



Katniss seems a little amateurish in this scene—she hasn't really thought through her own escape plan, and she's unable to face or articulate any romantic feelings at the moment. Gale's anger resembles Peeta's anger in the earlier scene—he's jealous of Peeta, just as Peeta is jealous of him. Katniss, it's strongly implied, will have to choose one of them before the story is complete.



If anything, Gale (and Peeta) are braver and more openly rebellious than Katniss. Where Katniss wants to run away from the government, Peeta and Gale want to confront it, using force if necessary. Katniss is more used to working “in the system”—dismantling the Capitol by breaking its rules, rather than attacking the Capitol directly. In all fairness, Katniss is also motivated by her love for her family—she doesn't want to put them in danger.



It's strange to find that Peeta, like Gale, is initially willing to leave the village. This points to the fact that he's courageous and, perhaps even more importantly, in love with Katniss. Peeta's remark about Katniss's unwillingness to leave the district can be interpreted in a number of different ways, but it suggests that Katniss is too comfortable with her life—a life of fighting the Capitol from the inside instead of from the outside—to join the rebel cause right away.



The reason for Gale's punishment isn't clear, but this only makes Katniss feel guiltier, as her recklessness seems to have endangered the lives of the people she cares about—precisely what she has been trying to avoid.



CHAPTER 8

Katniss watches in horror as the Head Peacekeeper whips Gale. Though the crowd whispers that she should move away, she yells, “No!” and runs through the crowd toward Gale. There, she blocks the Head Peacekeeper’s whip, receiving a bloody wound on her cheek and arm.

Before Katniss can say anything further, a voice calls out, “Hold it!” It is Haymitch, walking through the crowd. Katniss notices Darius lying on the ground, and wonders if he tried to protect Gale before the Head Peacekeeper took over. Haymitch loudly complains that Katniss has a photo-shoot next week: the wound from the Peacekeeper’s whip will be hard to cover up. The Peacekeeper looks nervous, but he explains that Gale was poaching illegally. Together, Katniss, Peeta, and Haymitch order the Peacekeeper to stop whipping Gale, threatening to use their influence against the Peacekeeper if he should continue.

Katniss, Peeta, and Haymitch untie Gale from his whipping post. He is unconscious from the pain. They carry Gale toward Katniss’s family’s house, followed by Bristel and Thorn, Gale’s crewmates. Bristel and Thorn explain that Gale had taken a wild turkey to the house of Cray, the usual peacekeeper. Instead of Cray, he found a new peacekeeper—a man named Romulus Thread. (Neither Thorn nor Bristel know what happened to Cray.) After Romulus confronted him, Gale was dragged to the whipping post, forced to plead guilty to his crime, and whipped. Darius tried to prevent Gale’s whipping, but when he intervened, Thread knocked him to the ground.

The group has arrived at Katniss’s house in Victor’s Village. Katniss’s mother, a skilled nurse and healer, emerges from the house, and sees Gale. Immediately, she fetches medicines from her cabinets: herbs, hot water, cloths, tinctures, etc. Katniss is privately amazed that her mother is so calm in the face of such horrible injuries—it is only at these times, she thinks, that her mother truly comes alive. Haymitch notes that in the old days, when whippings were more common, everyone went to Katniss’s mother for care. He sends Bristel and Thorn home, bribing them to keep quiet about everything they’ve seen.

For all her caution and desire to run away from the government, in a crisis Katniss proves herself to be a brave young woman, enduring great pain to protect her friend.



Haymitch is able to manipulate the Peacekeeper in a way that neither Katniss nor Darius is capable of doing, perhaps because he’s more experienced than either of them in dealing with matters of politics and appearances. Haymitch pressures the Peacekeeper to “lay off” because Katniss’s fame is well-known, and the Peacekeeper is forced to relent. This reminds us that the society of Panem is highly superficial, and everyone has respect for celebrities. But it also suggests how Katniss’s celebrity might be something that could be used to combat Snow just as it is here used to beat back Snow’s Peacekeeper.



It’s unclear, based on this explanation, if Gale is being punished on Katniss’s behalf or not. Certainly, he committed a crime that wouldn’t ordinarily be punishable at all (Gale is friends with Cray), so this suggests that something has changed in the last few days, and all the evidence points to Katniss being the cause of this change. The government punishes someone close to Katniss as another method of intimidating her and warning her to “behave.”



Katniss gains new respect for her mother in this moment of crisis. Much like Katniss herself, her mother is at her best in emergencies, but knowing her in her lethargic, depressed everyday life, one would never guess this side of her personality. Haymitch seems wise and mature here, and is more insightful about Katniss’s mother than Katniss herself is.



As Katniss watches her mother treat Gale, she notices that he's regaining consciousness. Katniss remembers that her mother keeps powerful painkillers for serious accidents. Nevertheless, her mother insists on giving Gale a simple herbal brew, one which Katniss knows to be weak. She yells to her mother to give Gale something stronger, but her mother refuses. Katniss tries to find the stronger painkillers, and her mother tells Peeta and Haymitch to drag her from the room, which they do.

Peeta and Haymitch drag Katniss to another room of her house, where they stay with her. Peeta tells Haymitch what Katniss told him about the uprising in District 8, and adds that Katniss wants to leave District 12 immediately. Haymitch remains silent.

After a short time, Katniss's mother leaves Gale and begins to treat Katniss's face. She gives Katniss herbs and other simple treatments. As she works, she asks Haymitch if "it's starting again," in reference to the whippings. Then there's a sudden knock at the door—afraid, everyone except Gale goes to answer it. It is Madge, carrying vials of strong medicine called Morphling, which she says her mother purchased from the Capitol. Katniss's mother takes the vials to Gale, who is still in a huge amount of pain. It occurs to Katniss that Gale might have had "something going on" with Madge, a thought that irritates her. Katniss's mother gives Gale the morphling, and he falls into a deep sleep.

As Katniss watches Gale sleep, she imagines him as the boy she first met when she was a small child. She realizes, for the first time, that she couldn't live in District 12 if Gale were to die. Katniss begins to think that she's been cowardly for planning to leave District 12. Perhaps, she realizes, she has been rebelling against the government all along with knowing it—by threatening to kill herself with poisonous berries, by wearing a **mockingjay** pin, and by speaking out about Rue. She whispers to Gale that she's sorry, and kisses him—to her surprise, Gale answers her. Katniss tells Gale that she'll stay with him, even if it means putting herself in danger. Gale says that he'll do the same, and falls asleep again.

CHAPTER 9

Someone shakes Katniss's shoulder—she's been sleeping next to Gale. It is Peeta, staring at Katniss very sadly. Katniss feels guilty for lying next to Gale. Katniss starts to apologize for suggesting to Peeta that they run away, but Peeta cuts her off, a little angrily—there is nothing to apologize for, he insists.

Katniss's compassion is sincere and well-founded, but her mother clearly knows what she's doing. Thus, Katniss's actions seem immature and unwise: her sympathy for her friends is so great that she doesn't want to see them experience any pain whatsoever, even when present pain is necessary for a better future.



Haymitch's silence can be interpreted any number of ways. He's such a complex character to begin with—both cynical and noble—that we cannot tell which direction he's leaning in.



The word "morphling" is meant to sound like "morphine." Perhaps this suggests why Katniss's mother is so reluctant to use painkillers—one could become a morphling addict, just as many people become morphine addicts after using it as a painkiller. Katniss's jealousy over Gale doesn't lead to any actual facts about their relationship—rather, it confirms that Katniss has feelings for Gale, even if she's conflicted because of her feelings for Peeta, as well.



Here, Katniss comes to understand that there is more than one way to oppose the government. One can run from it, thereby refusing to play by its rules, but this is ultimately a form of cowardice and instant gratification. Thus, Katniss has been planning to run away from the Capitol because she's afraid—yet she disguised her fear as sympathy for her family and for Gale. Katniss is beginning to realize that more direct forms of confrontation are necessary. This suggests her growing maturity—and it's no fluke that it coincides with the kiss she gives Gale.



Collins keeps up the "love triangle" aspect of the story. In one way, this slightly undermines Katniss as a strong, independent female protagonist, as it seems inevitable that she will end up with one of the two young men in her life.



Katniss goes to sleep in her own room. She dreams about the Hunger Games, and wishes that Peeta were there to keep her safe. Then she remembers that she's decided to join forces with Gale, and that her marriage to Peeta is the government's design, not hers. The next morning, there is a blizzard outside. Katniss is glad, since it will make it harder for Peacekeepers to reach her, at least for a day or two.

During the blizzard, Katniss considers what she's agreed to by agreeing to stand with Gale against the government. Katniss is endangering her family, even her younger sister, Prim. At first, Katniss feels guilty for endangering Prim, but then she realizes that the Capitol has already hurt Prim. They've sent her father to die in the mines, they've starved her almost to death, etc.

Katniss walks downstairs, where she finds her mother tending to Gale. Katniss's mother prepares a complex combination of half-melted snow and herbs, soaks it in a rag, and applies it to Katniss's face. Katniss is amazed to find the pain in her face disappearing almost immediately. Katniss's mother explains that she had to wait for Katniss's wound to "set" before she could apply this remedy. Katniss apologizes to her mother for yelling yesterday about Gale's medicine.

Katniss's mother tells Katniss that Peeta left early in the morning, and suggests that Katniss call him to make sure he made it through the blizzard safely. Katniss does so, and Peeta answers, a little irritably, that he's fine. Katniss adds that she needs to talk to Peeta, but doesn't say anything more, since she knows the phones are probably tapped.

After two days, the blizzard subsides. Katniss calls Peeta and tells him to meet her in the square in the center of District 12, so that they can find Hazelle and tell her about Gale. Katniss also convinces Haymitch to join them, though he is reluctant. Haymitch asks her what her "plan" is, and she responds that she wants to start an uprising. Haymitch laughs at this suggestion, and tells her that she should prepare for her next photo-shoot instead.

One of the challenges of living in a society where appearances and the media are so important is that one finds it difficult to distinguish between one's own desires and those that society imposes. Katniss exemplifies this problem, as she desires Peeta, in part because reporters keep telling her that she should.



Building off of her realization at the end of the last chapter, Katniss refuses to let her concern for her family members dictate her behavior as she used to. Now, she's more realistic about her family: she's not doing them any good by playing the government's game. On the contrary, she's only continuing to support the tyranny that hurt them in the first place.



A key part of Katniss's maturity in these scenes is her acceptance that some pain is necessary in the short-term, if only so that one can grow stronger. She's now more willing to sacrifice her own happiness, and that of others, to fight the government. In much the same way, she's more willing to accept that Gale needed to endure some short-term pain in order to be healthier in the long run.



Peeta and Katniss's conflicted relationship is even further challenged by the fact that the government is constantly watching it, or rather, listening to it. Thus, Peeta and Katniss can't resolve their difference at the moment—they'll have to find the right time, when they're truly alone.



Haymitch seems utterly cynical in this moment. This fits with his surface persona of the lazy alcoholic, though it contrasts markedly with his reputation as an active warrior in the Hunger Games. Katniss proves that she's changed her mind about rebellion in the last few chapters—her insistence that she start an uprising is sincere.



Katniss walks to the square with Haymitch and Peeta. When they arrive, she notices that the area has been transformed in the last few days: there is now a government seal hanging from the Justice Building, a crowd of Peacekeepers, and a gallows. Haymitch sees that his usual vendor of liquor has closed shop—he says that he’s going to buy rubbing alcohol from the apothecary. As he walks away, Peeta and Katniss realize that they need to stop him, or he’ll kill himself. Peeta says that he has enough liquor at home to satisfy him, and tells Katniss that they should go find Hazelle instead.

As Katniss and Peeta walk through the streets, they notice how terrified the people of District 12 have become in only a few days. Katniss thinks that she was a fool for planning an uprising—she’ll never be able to assemble people. Katniss and Peeta reach Hazelle’s house. They tell her that Gale is doing better, though he’s too weak to leave Katniss’s house. Hazelle accepts this information, noting that Katniss’s mother is the best of nurses.

After their brief visit with Hazelle, Katniss and Peeta prepare to walk back to Victor’s Village. Katniss says that she wants to walk through the Hob, and Peeta volunteers to go with her. In the Hob, they find only a burning building. Katniss wonders where Greasy Sae has gone, but Peeta assures her that they won’t be able to find her there. As they walk back to Victor’s Village, Katniss notices the Peacekeepers lining the streets, and realizes that she recognizes none of them.

Days pass, and District 12 continues to fall into disrepair. The mines close down, and a huge chunk of the population starts to starve. Peacekeepers occasionally arrive with food, but it’s usually filthy or even rotten. People are punished harshly for minor offenses. Gale recovers from his wounds and returns to his home, and for the time being, he doesn’t mention rebellion of any kind. Katniss senses that he’ll be inspired to rebel, however, after he sees the state of District 12. One positive development is that Katniss convinces Haymitch to hire Hazelle as a maid. This gives Hazelle much-needed food, and also greatly improves the state of Haymitch’s house.

Due to the new severity of life in the district, there are more sick and wounded people, all of whom go to see Katniss’s mother. In the meantime, hunting laws are strictly enforced, so Gale and Katniss do not try to hunt there. Katniss receives a present from President Snow: a wedding dress. Katniss cannot understand what Snow is planning. It seems that he wants Katniss to marry Peeta, only to kill them both afterwards.

Once again, Peeta and Katniss seem like the “parents” to Haymitch in their odd, dysfunctional family. Haymitch can’t control his own bodily urges, while Katniss and Peeta have to prevent him from hurting himself.



Only a few moments after discussing starting an uprising, Katniss now gets cold feet. She sees the devastation her actions have caused: people are terrified of violence from the government being directed their way. In contrast to Katniss’s uncertainty, the government seems utterly and terrifyingly efficient, deploying troops throughout Panem in only a few days.



In contrast to her warm, personal relationships with her friends and family, Katniss regards the Peacekeepers as strangers and aliens in her district. In the past, Katniss had enjoyed a happy relationship with one Peacekeeper, Darius, but he has now been beaten and punished, indicating that from now on, law and order in District 12 will be strictly, and savagely, enforced.



In response to the signs of rebellion in Panem, the government sends a clear message to the districts: rebel, and you’ll be punished with austerity, tyranny, and starvation. The message seems to have worked, since the people of District 12 are now terrified of disobeying the Capitol in any way. It’s also important to notice that Peeta and Katniss continue to take care of Haymitch, cleaning his house and helping their friend Hazelle in the process.



In their meeting, Snow was clear and concise with Katniss. Now his messages are increasingly complicated, even seeming to contradict one another. Perhaps this is his intent: he wants to confuse Katniss while also reminding her of his total power over her life.



Worried about the mixed message Snow is sending, Katniss decides to take matters into her own hands, though she doesn't immediately reveal how. Early one morning, at the break of dawn, she puts on the special clothing Cinna has made for her: waterproof boots and a snowsuit. Wearing this, she quietly runs to the fence around District 12. She slips under the fence, a little surprised that there aren't more guards there. Past the fence, Katniss retrieves a bow and quiver of arrows she's placed there long ago. Now armed, she walks further from the fence, eventually coming to an abandoned cement house.

Just as she is about to come to the cement house, Katniss hears the click of a weapon. Turning around and drawing her weapon, she sees someone in a Peacekeeper uniform, standing with a woman. To Katniss's surprise, the Peacekeeper drops his weapon, a gun, and the woman cries, "Stop!" As Katniss points her bow and arrow at the two strangers, the woman holds a small object out to Katniss.

CHAPTER 10

Katniss stands in the snow, pointing her bow and arrow at the two mysterious figures. The woman is holding out a small object—a cracker, it seems—on which a **mockingjay** has been drawn. The woman insists that she and her companion are on Katniss's side. Suspicious, Katniss orders them to come closer, very slowly. They do so, and Katniss sees that they're young. The woman carrying the cracker introduces herself at Twill—Katniss notices that she looks to be about 35 years old—and her companion introduces herself as Bonnie. They say that they've run away from District 8, and that they stole a dead Peacekeeper's uniform and gun. The gun now lies on the ground where Bonnie dropped it—Katniss quickly picks it up.

Katniss asks Bonnie and Twill about the cracker. Bonnie seems surprised—she mutters to Twill that Katniss might not know "any of it." Instead of explaining herself, Bonnie tells Katniss that she and Twill are heading to District 13—the district that was supposedly blown up 75 years ago. Katniss senses that Bonnie and Twill are telling the truth, though she keeps Bonnie's gun for herself. Remembering that escapees are often hunted down by hovercrafts, she asks Bonnie and Twill if they're being followed. They insist that the government thinks they died in a factory explosion.

It's unclear exactly what Katniss is planning here: abandoning her family, or merely hunting. Either would be an affront to the rules of the District, which are now strictly enforced. Nevertheless, it may be that Collins's lack of explanation in this section reflects Katniss's lack of a plan of any kind—it's as if she needs to leave District 12, but doesn't know where she's going now.



The first Part of the novel ends, as usual, on a note of suspense, so that we want to read ahead to see what happens next. This also reflects Katniss's curiosity about what the Peacekeeper is holding: she doesn't want to kill anyone yet, because her curiosity, like ours, is too strong.



The mockingjay, as we've already seen, can symbolize any number of things. Here, it would seem to be a symbol of friendship or solidarity, though why is left unclear. Katniss seems confused about whether or not to trust the women, and her reasoning is clear enough: Snow and the media have confused her so thoroughly that it is only practical to second-guess everything she hears.



Bonnie and Twill's story is implausible—so implausible that it's probably true. It's strange that Bonnie and Twill were able to avoid detection, since the government has a reputation for keeping meticulous track of all its citizens. But perhaps this suggests that the government isn't as powerful and efficient as it likes to pretend: it merely projects such an image to discourage people from rebelling.



Katniss tells Bonnie and Twill to follow her into the cement house. They do so, and inside, Katniss realizes that they have been trying to survive by boiling water over a fire. District 8 is mostly urban, Katniss remembers—it's amazing that Twill and Bonnie have survived in the wild for so long, she thinks. Katniss gives Bonnie and Twill some of the food that she packed. As she presents them with food, Katniss remembers feeding Rue during the Hunger Games.

Bonnie and Twill explain themselves to Katniss. They were textile workers in District 8. Twill was also a schoolteacher, and Bonnie was one of her students. Twill and her husband were working with a secret group of rebels. The day that Katniss came to District 8, the rebels were preparing for an uprising. Later, when Peeta proposed to Katniss in the Capitol, the rebels used the celebration as a pretext for organizing outside. They used their vast numbers to overtake District 8. But within a few days, Peacekeepers arrived to reclaim the city, and the Capitol refused to send the district food. After only a few more days, the rebellion had been halted, and Bonnie and Twill were back to work at the textile factory. One day, they were late to their factory shift. Because of this, they narrowly avoided an explosion at the factory, which killed Twill's husband and Bonnie's family.

Bonnie and Twill continue their story. Twill had stolen Peacekeeper uniforms from the factory before it was blown up. Using these uniforms, she and Bonnie were able to leave District 8 in a cargo train without being stopped. They decided to head for District 13. When Katniss protests that this district is nothing but rubble, Twill explains that the government always shows the same footage of rubble on television—there must be something else going on there. Twill adds that she has noticed the same **mockingjay** flying through District 13 in TV footage of the area, proving that the government is hiding something. She adds that the people of District 13 might have moved underground after their home was destroyed. She says that they used to specialize in nuclear technology. Katniss finds it hard to believe that there is a community in District 13—even if there were, she thinks, the people there must be selfish for refusing to help the starving in other parts of Panem.

Bonnie tells Katniss that Katniss is a beacon of hope for District 8, and her act of defiance during the Hunger Games inspired thousands of rebels. Katniss realizes the truth about President Snow: he never seriously believed that Katniss's good behavior could quell a rebellion in District 8. He only wanted to prevent Katniss from *joining* the rebellion, thereby making it far stronger.

Katniss confirms her resourcefulness here. While most people in Panem never leave their comfort zones and explore nature (breaking the rules in doing so), Katniss's poverty has compelled her to be comfortable surviving in the wilderness. Thus, her supposed weaknesses have actually made her stronger.



Bonnie and Twill's relationship is another example of an "artificial family," not unlike the kind that Collins depicts between Katniss, Peeta, and Haymitch. The efforts of the people of District 8 to rebel illustrate the limitations of direct confrontation with the government. While such action sends a message and often accomplishes a great deal, it also leads the government to send brute force, quelling the rebellion quickly and violently. Katniss's efforts to dismantle the government from the inside may prove more effective in the end, because they use the government's own power against it.



Much like Katniss herself, Bonnie and Twill are talented at seeing through the media and its version of reality. We get another potential meaning for the mockingjay here as well, as it seems to symbolize the tiny "flaws" in the government, or at least in its propaganda—chinks in its armor, related to the later motif of the imperfect force field in the Hunger Games arena. This also corresponds to the small but precise ways that Katniss has used her mockingjay to oppose the government's authority. Katniss's reaction to the "selfishness" of District 13 suggests that she's growing more morally conscious: she's concerned with the welfare of all of Panem, not just those in her own district.



Bonnie confirms what we'd already suspected about Snow: he was never trying to send a direct message to Katniss, but only trying to confuse her and distract her, focusing her attention away from uprisings of any kind. Snow's strategy demonstrates how powerful Katniss can be if she sets her mind to the rebel cause.



Katniss tells Bonnie and Twill that she needs to leave them. She walks away from the concrete building, stashes her weapons in their usual hiding place, a hollow log, and approaches the fence around District 12. She is surprised to hear a familiar buzzing sound: for the first time in a while, the fence has been electrified.

Katniss's parting here seems rather abrupt, but perhaps this indicates that she needs to think about all the information she's just received. We're also given another indication that the government is always watching—when Katniss goes to the fence, it's as if someone has noticed that she is missing.



CHAPTER 11

Katniss stands by the electrified fence around District 12. She wonders if Thread has been following her, and concludes that this is entirely possible—Snow found out that Gale kissed her in the middle of the forest, after all.

Katniss's suspicions reflect the paranoia that Snow and the government like to cultivate in their subjects' minds. They want the people of Panem to be afraid of them, and to think them capable of anything.



Katniss decides to find a tall tree, climb it, and jump over the electrified fence. She finds the tree and jumps, injuring herself in the heel in the process. She realizes that she can't tell her family that she was in the woods, as her mother will be furious that she endangered her life. She walks back to her house, deciding to tell her mother that she slipped off the roof of her house while trying to fix a leak.

Katniss realizes that she still needs to conceal the truth from her loved ones. She can't tell them about her plans for an uprising, and she certainly can't tell them about her meeting with Bonnie and Twill. Katniss's lie seems rather obvious, but once again, the clearer the lie, the more likely people are to believe it.



As Katniss returns to her house, she sees two Peacekeepers standing outside. Her mother emerges from the house and tells the Peacekeepers, very nervously, that Katniss has returned for dinner—just as she said she'd do. The Peacekeepers tell Katniss that they've been waiting for hours to deliver a message for her. Walking inside, Katniss lies and says that Prim sent her to visit the local "Goat Man," but gave her the incorrect directions. This lie fools the Peacekeepers, though they seem suspicious. They tell Katniss that Thread has electrified the fence around District 12, and encourage her to pass the information on to her "cousin," Gale. The Peacekeepers leave.

Katniss's suspicions seem to be confirmed here, as the Peacekeepers noticed as soon as she left her house, though she is able to divert them with another rather awkward lie. Once again, it's unclear if the Peacekeepers know that Gale is her cousin or not. Katniss, for her part, thinks that they are trying to send a message about Katniss's relationship with Gale—but this could reflect her own paranoia.



The evening passes uneventfully. Prim tells Katniss about her day at school, and Katniss's mother fixes everyone soup and bread. Privately, Katniss can't stop thinking about Twill and Bonnie and their information about District 13. Over the course of the next few days, Peeta visits Katniss and helps her assemble a "family book." In District 12, every family keeps records of their family history, along with important pieces of information, such as geography, medicine, etc. Peeta helps Katniss draw plants that are useful for making medicines. Katniss finds this work relaxing, and enjoys watching Peeta's face and hands as he works.

Katniss seems to be developing sincere feelings for Peeta now, as evidenced in the way she watches his hands and face with admiration and tenderness. It's unclear if Katniss is only feeling this way because the media has encouraged her to do so for so long, or because she is "truly" falling in love with Peeta. At the same time, the distinction between these two ways of looking at love is unclear and complicated—another kind of motif to interpret.



Katniss watches television carefully for signs of the “footage loop” that Bonnie and Twill told her about. A few days after she begins to look for it, she finds it. On television, a reporter in a protective suit seems to be standing in front of the Justice Building in District 13, explaining that the area is too irradiated for any life. But Katniss notices a **mockingjay** flying in front of the Justice Building, just as Twill has described. Katniss realizes that the footage of District 13 is decades old, and wonders what is going on in District 13 now.

Katniss, despite living in a society that’s bombarded with lies from the media, is now finding it easier to see through these lies. This is the paradox of a society with a large amount of censorship: the more censorship the government practices, the less effective the censorship becomes. In other words, people train themselves to see through the government’s propaganda.



CHAPTER 12

After discovering that the media is lying about District 13, Katniss spends her days trying to decide what she should do next. She cannot leave the district due to the Peacekeepers and electrified fence, and her twisted heel makes it difficult for her to move at all.

In spite of her desire to help the rebel cause, Katniss is restricted by her own body, as well as by the increased presence of Peacekeepers in District 12.



Many weeks have gone by, and winter is almost over, when Flavius, Venia, and Octavia arrive at Katniss’s house. They explain that they’re here for her bridal photo-shoot. Katniss doesn’t tell them anything about Twill, Bonnie, or District 8, but Octavia accidentally gives Katniss important information about District 4. She mentions off-handedly that “the weather” has been bad in District 4, making it difficult to find seafood for Katniss’s wedding. Katniss realizes that District 4 must have revolted as well.

A great deal of time passes in this chapter. As usual, Katniss’s attendants are so oblivious to what’s really going on in Panem that we can’t help but laugh, albeit a little uneasily. Octavia seems to not even understand what she’s just told Katniss. She’s so used to dealing with appearances that she can’t see through the government propaganda and understand what’s happening in District 4.



The bridal photo-shoot commences, with Effie keeping a tight schedule. Katniss wears many different dresses and poses for hundreds of photographs. By the end of the day her heel hurts from wearing various pairs of high-heeled shoes. That night, Katniss has a nightmare in which she’s wearing a heavy wedding dress and running, with great difficulty, from her opponents in the Hunger Games.

Katniss’s dream is heavily symbolic. She has often been interpreted as a feminist heroine, and so her heavy wedding dress, which restricts her movement, could be taken as a mark of the restrictions her culture places on all women. In another sense, it shows the many ways the government oppresses her: both through the violence of the games, and the psychological manipulations of her celebrity status in the media.



The next day, Katniss tells Haymitch about the possibility of an uprising in Districts 8 and 4, and suggests that there’s a community in District 13. Haymitch, unimpressed with her theories about District 13, tells her about rumors of rebellion in Districts 7 and 11. They speak in “shorthand,” thinking that the government might have bugged their houses. Haymitch points out that Districts 7 and 11 are far larger than 12, meaning that Peacekeepers will have a harder time defeating the rebels.

Katniss and Haymitch seem more skilled at avoiding the government’s wiretapping and bugging than the other characters. This points to their experience with such matters—Haymitch in particular has been dealing with wiretaps throughout his life, as a former victor. Haymitch seems insightful and well-informed, not at all like a man who spends all day drinking and sleeping.



Prim comes home from school and informs Katniss that her teachers mentioned that there would be a special television program that evening—Prim guesses that it will be Katniss’s photo-shoot. Katniss worries that Prim is right, since a broadcast on her marriage will anger Gale, who is still recovering from his whipping. Katniss has been visiting Gale regularly, but he is too weak to say much to her.

In the evening, Katniss is dismayed to see that Prim was right: her photo-shoot is on television, hosted by Caesar Flickerman. Katniss watches as audiences cheer for each of the different dresses she modeled the previous day. She realizes that there is a huge industry based around her wedding. People in the Capitol take bets on which dress she’ll wear, and spend huge amounts of time arguing about her fashion sense.

As the photo-shoot draws to a close, Flickerman announces that there is another big event that evening. He says that the 75th anniversary of the Hunger Games will take place this year, meaning that there will be a “Quarter Quell.” President Snow appears onstage to give a speech. Snow notes that in previous Quarter Quells, districts have been required to send additional tributes for the Hunger Games. For the third Quarter Quell, he announces, the male and female tributes will be selected from surviving victors of the Hunger Games. Katniss realizes the truth: as the only female victor from District 12, she will undoubtedly be forced to compete in the Hunger Games once again.

CHAPTER 13

Having just learned that she will be forced to compete in the Hunger Games for a second time, Katniss runs out of her house in Victor’s Village. She never imagined that she’d have to compete again—the laws have always been clear about victors being excluded from future competitions. Now, she faces the possibility of competing against her friends, Peeta and Haymitch.

Katniss tries to calm herself. She walks to Haymitch’s house in Victor’s Village, where she’s unsurprised to find him drunk. Haymitch thinks that Katniss has come to beg him to compete in the Games in place of Peeta. He adds that Peeta has already asked him for the opposite favor—Peeta wants to compete in the Game to protect Katniss. Katniss insists that she’s come to do nothing of the kind—she just wants a drink. Haymitch laughs bitterly, and pours her alcohol.

Even if Katniss is “officially” engaged to Peeta, she finds small ways to pacify Gale, or at least tries to do so. Here, we’re reminded that Peeta is by no means alone in his affection for Katniss, even if everyone thinks that Gale is Katniss’s cousin.



Katniss’s popularity with the rebels is paralleled by her popularity among the Capitol elite. This points to the basic problem with being a “figurehead”—it’s easy to manipulate what one stands for, so that one can actually stand for two contradictory things at the same time. We’ve seen this in the mockingjay already, and now we see it in Katniss herself.



Here we get a major plot development, one which we might have seen coming already: Katniss will have to compete in the Hunger Games for a second time. We can guess why Snow is doing this—he wants to put Katniss’s life in danger without the “blowback” of murdering her and making her a martyr. By placing her in the dangerous game (and effectively guaranteeing her death), Snow can get rid of a dangerous liability while also distancing himself from any blame.



For all of her paranoia about the Capitol and President Snow, Katniss has always expected that the government would honor its own rules. The true horror of Snow’s regime, then, is that it’s not bound to any kind of order at all—it can twist the laws to its own advantage at any time.



Haymitch isn’t an ideal mentor or father-figure by any means, but he’s all Katniss has. Peeta’s loyalty—and love—for Katniss is fully evident here, as he’s willing to sacrifice his life to protect her. Katniss asking for a drink is almost amusing, and a useful strategy to talk to Haymitch without irritating him further, but it also hints at the tragic spiral of addiction that many Hunger Games victors succumb to.



Haymitch and Katniss drink together. Katniss accuses Haymitch of hating his life, and Haymitch agrees. He adds that Peeta is a hundred times the competitor Katniss is, a suggestion Katniss ignores. Katniss proposes that she and Peeta compete in the Games, with Haymitch sending Peeta supplies. She reasons that she's as good as dead for her disobedience to President Snow, whereas Peeta still has a chance at survival. Haymitch, very drunk by now, agrees to this arrangement.

Katniss, drunk, returns to her house in Victor's Village, where her family is waiting for her. She wakes up the next day, barely remembering what happened to her when she came home. Her mother and sister walk into her room, carrying tea, and at this sight, Katniss bursts into tears.

Katniss walks downstairs, where she finds Peeta and Haymitch waiting for her. Peeta announces that he's poured out all of Haymitch's alcohol, and made arrangements with the district merchants to keep Haymitch from buying any more. He reasons that the three of them are a team, so everyone needs to stay sharp.

For the following days, Peeta, Katniss, and Haymitch prepare for the Hunger Games. They watch old footage of the victors, and Haymitch gives Peeta and Katniss information about the competitors' personalities and weaknesses. They exercise every morning and afternoon. Katniss notices that Haymitch, in spite of his drinking and lethargy, is still extremely fit, although his weaknesses are running and wielding a knife. On television, the rich and powerful takes bets on who will win the Games, and Katniss and Peeta are always among the favorites.

Gale, whose wounds have largely healed thanks to Katniss's mother's nursing, stops by Katniss's house regularly to teach her how to build snares and traps. Gale reluctantly admits that he can't force himself to hate Peeta, even though he's jealous of Katniss's marriage. Katniss privately worries that Gale might start an uprising in the mines of District 12—an uprising that will be quickly and brutally quelled by Peacekeepers. As Katniss continues to train for the Games, she thinks about Gale. She wants to tell him that she cares about him, and will value their friendship for the rest of her life.

The tables have turned—in the early chapters, Katniss was a “parent” to Haymitch, but now Haymitch plays the part of the parent to Katniss, albeit a rather incompetent one. He favors Peeta like a father favoring his favorite son, and it's hard not to notice the sexism implicit in his favoritism.



Katniss has to bear many responsibilities and suffer through extraordinary trials, but in scenes like this we are reminded that she is still very young, and often vulnerable.



Peeta takes on the part of the leader of the group of three victors in District 12: Katniss, Peeta, and Haymitch. Whereas Katniss's instinct is to play the part of the lone heroine, Peeta tries to “make a team.”



Once again, Katniss notices that there's more to Haymitch than meets the eye. In spite of his drunkenness, Haymitch is a strong, savvy victor, and he's also prevented Katniss and Peeta from seeing him as such. This suggests that he's consciously trying to hide this side of his personality, though why he'd do so isn't apparent. The industry of betting on the Hunger Games goes on as always—clearly, Snow's amendments to the rules haven't raised any eyebrows.



In this section, Collins tries to clarify the differences between Peeta and Gale. Though both men are attracted to Katniss, Peeta is more of a leader and an organizer than Gale. Whereas Gale recklessly wants to rise up against the Peacekeepers in District 12, Peeta slowly and calmly forms a team with the goal of taking on the Capitol in the newest Hunger Games. These qualities also correspond to two sides of Katniss: she's both reckless and calculating, at times a leader, at times a follower.



It is the day of the “reaping,” when tributes from each district are chosen for the Games. The process is quick: the district assembles outside the Justice Building, Effie reads Katniss’s name, followed Haymitch’s, and Peeta volunteers to take Haymitch’s place. Afterwards, Peeta and Katniss are marched into a train, escorted by guards. Katniss is taken from District 12 before she can tell Gale how she feels.

This scene is depicted quickly and without much detail, even though it’s highly important to the plot. (Indeed, in the first novel, a similar scene was one of the dramatic climaxes of the book.) Perhaps this is a sign that Katniss is “thinking bigger” than the Hunger Games now: she’s thinking about the Capitol, President Snow, and her feelings for Gale.



CHAPTER 14

Katniss sits in the train, watching District 12 recede from view. Peeta, who is sitting next to her, assures Katniss that they’ll write letters to their loved ones. Katniss thinks to herself that she’ll never write a single letter, as she can’t summon the concentration to put her thoughts into words. Her goal for the Games is simple: keep Peeta alive.

It’s interesting that Collins repeatedly describes Katniss as being inarticulate, considering that her novel is delivered from Katniss’s point of view. This is often a rhetorical strategy, however, as Collins sometimes makes Katniss’s inner dialogue seem overly naïve or confused in order to build up suspense or make a dramatic twist more surprising.



Katniss and Peeta eat dinner with Haymitch and Effie in the train. Effie mentions that she’ll be wearing dresses to match Katniss’s **mockingjay** pin. Katniss realizes that most people in the Capitol have no idea that, for the rebels, the mockingjay symbolizes uprising. As they finish their meal, Effie suggests that they discuss the other competitors in the upcoming Games. They range in age from 14 to 80. Some previously won their Hunger Games with brutality, while others won with shrewdness, or even by pretending to be disabled. Two of the competitors are brother and sister, and some of them volunteered to fight again, although most were drafted against their will. Haymitch remembers many of the competitors, including an old friend of his named Chaff.

In this section, Collins conveys a sense of vast confusion, part of which is confusion about how symbols work and what they mean. As we’ve already seen, the mockingjay can mean almost anything to anyone: it can be a symbol of conformity and fashion, as it is to the people of the Capitol, but it can also be a symbol of defiance and rebellion against the Capitol. Similarly, to be a victor in the Hunger Games can mean almost anything: one can win by being strong, clever, resourceful, lucky, or any combination of factors.



Katniss tries to sleep, but can’t stop thinking about her competitors in the upcoming Games. She goes to talk to Haymitch, thinking that he must be awake, too. In the compartment next to hers, she finds Peeta, watching old footage of Hunger Games starring Brutus, a middle-aged competitor who has volunteered to fight again. Peeta asks Katniss if she’s doing all right, and if she needs to talk about her feelings. Katniss only shakes her head. But Peeta embraces Katniss, and she is surprised to feel a sudden sense of peacefulness.

Peeta seems more willing to “study” for the Hunger Games than Katniss is. Perhaps this is meant to suggest that he’s less scarred by the past Games than Katniss is, or else that he’s better at dealing with his trauma. The love triangle between Katniss, Peeta, and Gale persists—it seems like Katniss is more attracted to whichever young man she’s with right now.



Katniss and Peeta watch the tapes of previous Games together. In one clip, government officials in District 12 call out the names of the two tributes for that year, and Katniss catches a glimpse of her own mother as a young woman—Katniss thinks that she’s very beautiful. In the clip, Haymitch’s name is called, along with that of a teenager named Maysilee, who, Katniss recognizes, was an old friend of her mother’s and died in the Games. She wonders aloud if Haymitch was the one to kill Maysilee.

The clips of the Games continue. In one, Haymitch is about to participate in his second Hunger Games, as a part of the second Quarter Quell. As the games for that year go on, tributes brutally murder one another. One “Career” pack of tributes bands together to kill as many victims as possible. “Careers” train for the Hunger Games all year, then volunteer for it. On the third day, Haymitch is almost killed, but Maysilee saves his life, shooting his attacker with an arrow. Afterwards, Haymitch and Maysilee form an alliance.

Peeta and Katniss watch as the Games in their clip draw to a close. Haymitch and Maysilee break off their alliance, recognizing that it’s better to part ways in peace rather than betray one another. Almost as soon as they part, Maysilee is killed by a group of genetically engineered birds. As she watches, Katniss is reminded of her failure to save Rue. The Games end with Haymitch narrowly defeating a woman from District 1. Haymitch discovers a strange gorge that “throws back” anything one throws into it. (Katniss realizes that the gorge must have been designed to prevent competitors from killing themselves.) In his confrontation with his opponent, she drops an axe into the gorge—unaware what the gorge can do, she stands in place, long enough for her own weapon to jump back and kill her. In the process, Haymitch sustains a near-deadly chest wound.

Katniss notes, admiringly, that Haymitch managed to win his second Games without actually murdering his final opponent. This action undoubtedly displeased the government, since he used its own technology against it. Katniss hears a noise, and finds Haymitch standing behind her, drinking a bottle of wine. Katniss is annoyed that Haymitch has taken up alcohol again, but her annoyance is drowned out by the sense that she’s only just begun to understand what kind of person Haymitch is. She and Haymitch have both been disobedient to the Capitol—thus, they’ll have to work together to help Peeta survive.

Collins keeps on giving us hints that the Hunger Games aren’t just a sadistic exercise: they’re a harsh medicine that forces Katniss to “grow up.” Here, she glimpses her mother as a young woman. Katniss has been discovering new sides of her mother’s personality in the last few chapters, and this is no exception. In a twisted, roundabout way, the Games bring her closer to her family.



Collins reminds us that there are some competitors in the Hunger Games who volunteer for the position, aiming to kill as many people as possible. Considering the brutality and tyranny inherent in the Hunger Games, it’s particularly shocking that some people train for them. To be a Career means to actively support the Capitol’s oppression, and also to want to kill children for the sake of wealth and fame.



It’s important to note that Haymitch never faces any real moral dilemmas during his Hunger Games: he’s never put in the position of having to murder a friend, or betray someone who’s saved his life. Even in the final confrontation with the woman from District 1, Haymitch never kills her directly; instead, he turns her own weaponry (and the Capitol’s own technology) against her. This adds yet another dimension to Haymitch’s character, making him seem even more admirable and sympathetic despite the current state of his life.



Here Katniss makes explicit what Collins has been suggesting for the last 150 pages: there’s more to Haymitch than meets the eye. He’s strong, resourceful, and possessed of the same rebellious streak that Katniss exemplifies. The fact that he’s able to sneak up on Peeta and Katniss (presumably, two people who are good at noticing when they’re being ambushed) further stresses his talents for deception.



CHAPTER 15

As Katniss prepares for her Games, she's prepped and dressed by Flavius, Venia, and Octavia. All three of these stylists cry as they take care of her—they've clearly become attached to her in the past year, and don't want her to die. Katniss wonders if the rich and powerful people in the Capitol feel any sense of sympathy for Katniss and her peers.

On the day of the Opening Ceremonies, Katniss goes to see Cinna and discuss her clothing. To her relief, Cinna isn't tearful—he channels his feelings into his designs, he explains. Cinna explains that he'll apply more makeup to Katniss this year. He shows Katniss the dress she'll wear that day: it's black, but at the press of a button, it becomes a fiery red. Katniss tells Cinna that the dress is exactly what she needs to face her opponents at the Games.

Katniss leaves Cinna to attend to a few last-minute details, and she goes to the Remake Center, where the contestants have been assembled to meet one another. Katniss doesn't feel like meeting anyone, but she finds that the other competitors swarm around her. Finnick Odair, a famous victor who won his Games when he was only 14, greets Katniss as if they know each other well, though they're meeting for the first time. Katniss recalls that Finnick, a beautiful man with kind eyes, won by tricking his opponents into allying with him. He's been hugely popular in the Capitol ever since. Finnick tries to flirt with Katniss, licking his lips and complimenting her dress, but Katniss doesn't feel any attraction to him. When he sees Peeta walking toward him, Finnick leaves Katniss. Peeta doesn't seem jealous—he thinks Finnick is a little ridiculous.

Katniss and Peeta hold hands—they're both terrified of the Games, and nervous for the Opening Ceremony, which begins shortly. Katniss remembers preparing to kill Peeta only a year ago, during the last Hunger Games. At the time she was convinced that Peeta was trying to kill her.

The Opening Ceremony begins, and Peeta and Katniss rush to the chariot that will lead them around the massive City Circle in the center of the Capitol. Katniss notices the other competitors, dressed in bright outfits. President Snow presides over the ceremony and welcomes everyone to the Quell. Wearing her dark, mysterious clothing, Katniss enjoys the ceremony more than she expected—for once, she feels like herself.

Katniss's stylists represent the vapidness of the Capitol, but they're not entirely villainous characters, as they show genuine sympathy for their friend. This suggests that most people in the Capitol aren't actively evil, and can be sympathetic and moral—but with their willful ignorance and inaction they still support tyranny and oppression.



In many ways, Cinna is the character whose personality is closest to Katniss's. Like Katniss, he struggles with guilt, and recognizes the horrors of the superficial, sadistic Capitol culture. Yet he doesn't automatically turn to others for sympathy, much as Katniss doesn't tell everyone about President Snow's warning right away.



Finnick, who'll be an important character for the rest of the novel, debuts as a sly, manipulative victor. He's been popular in the Capitol because he is skilled at affecting an appearance of attractiveness and complacency, even innocence. This is what makes him dangerous to Katniss: he's similar to her, but a better showman. Finnick's flirtations with Katniss, which she doesn't return (at least not yet) further alienate him from our sympathy: Katniss is already locked in a love triangle with Peeta and Gale, and Finnick's attentions seem unwelcome.



Even if Finnick seems like a potential villain during the Games, Collins reminds us that appearances can be deceptive: Peeta, for example, seemed like a villain to Katniss only a year ago. Perhaps Finnick is no different.



In the past, Katniss has struggled to affect an image of happiness and contentment for her audiences. Now, she finds it curiously easy. It seems that she's beginning to enjoy the thrill of deception: in other words, she throws herself into her performances precisely because she now has something to hide. Katniss's growing enjoyment of acting and performance is a key part of her growth in the book—both as a symbolic public figure and as a young woman.



The chariot completes its cycle, and Peeta and Katniss return to the Training Center, where Cinna is waiting for them. Katniss notices that Haymitch is talking with Chaff, one of his oldest friends, and a fellow victor. Katniss has watched footage of Chaff many times, and she knows that he lost a hand in his Games. Chaff's partner from District 11 is Seeder, a strong, 60 year-old woman. Without thinking, Katniss runs up to Seeder and whispers, "The families?" Understanding that Katniss is talking about the people who whistled during Katniss's victory tour, Seeder replies that they're alive.

Capitol "attendants" lead the competitors to elevators that take them to their rooms. Standing in the elevator with Peeta, Katniss notices Johanna Mason, a victor who won the Games by pretending to be weak and helpless, and then murdering her allies. Johanna compliments Katniss's dress, and Katniss isn't sure how to respond—she doesn't trust Johanna at all. Suddenly, Johanna removes her own dress, so that she's completely naked. Katniss purposefully ignores this sight, and Peeta laughs.

Johanna walks off the elevator, still naked. Peeta, grinning, tells Katniss that the other competitors see Katniss as "pure" and incorruptible—thus, they're all trying to seduce her in some way. At their floor, Peeta and Katniss get off the elevator to find Effie and Haymitch waiting for them. Effie explains that they have two "Avoxes," or assistants, for the length of the Games. The first Avox is the same red-headed girl who took care of Katniss last year. The second is Darius, the former Peacekeeper from District 12.

CHAPTER 16

Katniss has just learned that her Avox (servant) is Darius. Avoxes have their tongues cut out, and Darius is no exception. They stare into each other's eyes, realizing that they have nothing to say to each other. Katniss thinks to herself that if she'd stopped Gale's whipping a little earlier, than Darius would never have been punished this way.

Katniss goes to her room and considers, guiltily, the misery that she's caused Darius. After a few hours, Effie summons her to dinner. At dinner, Darius is a server. Katniss spills a dish of peas on the floor, and when Darius rushes over to clean it, she bends over to touch his hand. After dinner, she, Peeta, and her entourage watch a recap of the Opening Ceremony. She notes that while a few of the competitors are young and healthy, many are ill or morphing addicts.

It's not immediately clear to us whether we should trust Chaff and Seeder, yet Collins gives us a major hint that we should respect Seeder. Like Katniss, she's highly concerned with the safety of other people. Indeed, their concern for others is so fundamental to their personalities that when they meet one another, they can communicate this sympathy almost without having to put their thoughts into words.



Even as Katniss learns to enjoy deception, she notices other victors who won the Hunger Games by excelling at similar feats of deception. As with Finnick, Johanna seems dangerous to Katniss precisely because they're so similar—and now Johanna seems to be trying to seduce Peeta.



Just as the Hunger Games are about to begin, Collins reminds us—and Katniss—of the stakes of her performance. Katniss has already put others' lives in danger, and now it is mercilessly revealed to her that she's condemned Darius to a life of servitude. Both Collins and the Capitol seem to enjoy heightening the suspense by terrifying Katniss.



Katniss makes explicit what Collins had implied in the last chapter: she is responsible for Darius's pain, and, moreover, the pain and suffering of many others. President Snow had already made this clear, and here he delivers Katniss another sinister reminder.



As Katniss struggles with the ramifications of her "success" as a rebellious competitor—endangering the lives of others—she also sees the kind of self-destructive misery that claims most victors in their later lives. For now she is haunted by the Games but still active and motivated by rebellion, yet slipping into addiction is always a danger when facing such trauma.



The next morning, after a night of nightmares about the competition, Katniss eats breakfast. She and Peeta must be at the Training Center by 10 AM. Before they leave, Haymitch advises them to make friends with the other competitors, as they're going to need allies. Otherwise, the older competitors, who've known one another for years, will band together and kill them off. Haymitch advises Katniss and Peeta to join with Chaff and Seeder, along with Finnick. Katniss is reluctant to make alliances of any kind, but Haymitch insists that she try. Katniss recalls that Peeta started out as part of the Careers in the last Hunger Games. She also notices that Haymitch is wearing a golden bangle around his wrist, though she doesn't ask Haymitch about it.

Peeta and Katniss arrive at the Training Center. Most of the other tributes are late. As they arrive, Katniss and Peeta decide to split up to meet more people. Peeta goes to meet Brutus and Chaff, while Katniss goes to talk to a trainer who specializes in knot-tying, and who's not part of the competition. As she talks to him, Finnick touches her shoulder and ties a complicated knot. Katniss remembers that Finnick is from a port area, meaning that he's had to weave nets and wield tridents for most of his life.

Katniss avoids Finnick and goes to a training station where tributes can learn to make fire. There are two middle-aged tributes from District 3 there, Wiress and Beetee. Wiress seems intelligent, but she has a strange habit of pausing mid-sentence. Beetee seems nervous and fidgety. Nevertheless, Katniss considers them decent allies, and also reasons that they can confirm the rumors of uprisings in District 3.

Wiress and Beetee turn out to be inventors: Beetee, for instance, has invented a music player no bigger than a piece of glitter. Katniss cautiously asks if District 3 has been having problems with Peacekeepers, and Beetee confirms that they have—orders have been backed up for a while. Wiress and Beetee watch Plutarch, who is sitting above the training stations. Wiress notices that there is a strange "ripple" effect around Plutarch—she guesses that there is a force field around him, probably to protect him from any potential attacks from the tributes.

Once again, we see that Katniss struggles with the "politics" of the Hunger Games: she's an individualist at heart, even if she has immense concern for other people. In order to win this version of the Games, she'll not only have to excel at athletic and physical challenges, but she'll also have to make friends with the other competitors. The section ends with Haymitch wearing another ambiguous symbol: the gold bangle. As with the mockingjay and Plutarch's watch, it's not immediately clear what it means, but it is significant.



The decision that Peeta and Katniss split up seems sensible, but they are also clearly stronger as a unit than divided, as Finnick immediately takes advantage of Katniss being alone. Katniss, as usual, is drawn to an outsider (the knot-tying trainer) while Peeta follows Haymitch's instructions and looks for strong allies.



Katniss's first instinct isn't to make political alliances, but when she puts her mind to it, she's savvier than she seems. Thus, she aligns herself with two competitors whom the other victors seem likely to ignore. Katniss is thinking "bigger" than the Games themselves—she's also considering the rebellions and uprisings in the other districts.



Beetee and Wiress are noticeably different from their fellow competitors—Beetee in particular seems like a kind of "MacGyver" figure, using his intelligence and handiness with small objects to win, rather than his strength. Similarly, Wiress is observant and insightful above everything else, and in a game that's full of strange objects and animals, being observant is a priceless asset.



The tributes eat together. Katniss is about to sit with Wiress and Beetee when she sees Peeta and a group of ten other tributes dragging all the tables together, forcing everyone to sit together. Peeta asks Katniss how she's been doing, and he tells her that the other tributes regard Wiress and Beetee as a joke. Katniss is irritated with Peeta, and remembers that even in school, he was always surrounded by a group of bullying friends. At lunch, Katniss sits with Peeta, Chaff, and Seeder. She finds Chaff more likable than she'd initially thought, though she still finds it hard to trust him.

After lunch, Katniss tries to befriend other tributes, such as Cecilia, a mother of three, and Woof, and old man. Since both of these people are from District 8, Katniss wishes she could mention Twill and Bonnie, but she doesn't. Katniss finds it difficult to connect with the tributes from District 1, largely because she killed their tributes last year.

The next day, there is another "training session," in which the tributes meet one another and show off their talents. Katniss shows her archery skills at an archery station in the Training Center. The other tributes then begin to regard her with respect, she notices. Katniss tells Peeta that she keeps remembering that soon, she'll need to kill all the other tributes—except for Peeta himself.

After lunch, the tributes are required to appear before the Gamemakers, one by one, and show them their special "talent." Peeta tells Katniss that he's unsure what he should do—he wishes he could bake them a cake. Katniss is similarly unsure how to impress the Gamemakers.

Katniss is the last tribute to appear before the Gamemakers, since she is the woman from District 12. Peeta goes immediately before her. When Katniss walks into the Gamemakers' room, she sees that the Gamemakers are irritable and sharp—clearly, Peeta has done something to get their attention. Katniss decides to show a "talent" that expresses her hatred for the sadistic Gamemakers. In the Training Room, she finds a rope, a dummy used for target practice, and a bowl of berry juice. She ties a noose around the dummy's neck, and paints a name on its chest: "Seneca Crane."

Although Peeta has been "running the show" for the last few chapters—training Haymitch and Katniss, etc.—here we see his limitation as a leader very clearly. Where Katniss pays attention to the unassuming, secretly talented victors, Peeta naturally gravitates to the same kinds of people: strong, muscular Careers who look down on intelligence and resourcefulness.



Once again, Katniss steers clear of the "obvious" victors in the Games, and instead makes the acquaintance of the weak and intelligent victors. She's limited in her political endeavors, however, by her own history with certain districts—District 1 most importantly.



Katniss is an excellent competitor because she exemplifies both sides of the Games: intelligence/resourcefulness and strength/athleticism. Archery perfectly captures this combination: to be a good shot, one must be observant and intelligent but also strong.



Once again, we're intentionally reminded of beauty pageants like "Miss America." The eerie similarities between the Games and existing American reality television are designed to shock us, but also question our own society and constant drive for entertainment.



Katniss again finds a way to work within the rules of the Hunger Games while also defying the authority of President Snow and the Capitol. Her display of rebellion is bolder and brasher than anything she's done up to this point: it's specifically calculated to disturb the Gamemakers, rather than serve any alternative purpose. Katniss is growing bolder, as well as more resentful of the government.



CHAPTER 17

The Gamemakers are shocked by this display, and two of them look like they're ready to faint. Plutarch Heavensbee tries to conceal his displeasure, but Katniss sees that he's as shocked as any of the other Gamemakers.

Katniss is dismissed from the Gamemakers' room and sent to her room, as the other tributes have been. There, Haymitch, Effie, and Peeta are waiting. Peeta explains, a little reluctantly, that he painted a picture of Rue on the floor, as she looked just after her death. Katniss explains her "talent" as well, but Haymitch is dismissive of both of these stunts. Effie in particular is certain that Peeta and Katniss will be punished for their misbehavior, but Katniss and Peeta smile and say that they're proud of what they did.

Katniss and Peeta retire to their room. Katniss suggests a disturbing possibility: Snow will make sure that they're killed during the Games. Peeta acknowledges that this is possible. Katniss privately wonders if she'll be killed and Peeta spared. In the last Games, after all, Peeta was motivated to defy the government by his love for Katniss, rather than any political goal. Katniss decides that she must find a way to defy the Capitol even if she dies for it: in this way, she'll continue to serve as an inspiration for rebels in Panem. Peeta and Katniss fall asleep in the same bed, and Katniss doesn't have any nightmares.

The next morning, Katniss and Peeta wake up in each other's arms. Peeta says that he wants to spend the remainder of his life with Katniss, and to her own surprise, Katniss agrees. They spend the entire day watching the skies and eventually the sunset. They don't see any of the other tributes or anyone from their entourage.

The next day is the last day of festivities before the Games begin. Katniss spends much of the day being dressed and made up by her prep team. Venia, Octavia, and Flavius are tearful, knowing that they might be saying goodbye to Katniss forever. Cinna shows Katniss a special dress he's designed for her that evening. The dress was originally intended to be Katniss's wedding dress, but Snow has mandated that she wear it to the Games instead. Cinna instructs Katniss to raise her arms high and twirl, but not until the end of the ceremony, when everyone is looking at her.

Katniss's "talent" show has had its intended effect, and disturbed and rattled the Gamemakers. It's amusing that, unlike Katniss and the other victors, the Gamemakers aren't particularly good at putting on an appearance of calmness and happiness—they display their fear almost instantly.



Katniss and Peeta both defied the Gamemakers with their "talent" without discussing it beforehand—this is a reminder of their strong personal bond. One interesting difference between their "talents" is that Katniss's was calculated to disturb the Gamemakers, while Peeta's paintings, though they had the same effect, were first and foremost a sincere expression of his love for Rue and the other dead tributes.



In this section Collins suggests a major difference between Katniss and Peeta. In spite of his appearance of political savvy and leadership, Peeta is ultimately less politically-minded than Katniss. Where Katniss wants to disobey and defy the government, almost for its own sake, Peeta is motivated by his love and affection for others—at heart, he's apolitical and more complacent.



It's a little surprising that Katniss "falls" for Peeta so quickly, but perhaps this is because she thinks she doesn't have long to live. She could die in only a few days, so she wants to spend her remaining time with someone who understands and respects her.



Katniss's stylists and makeup artists seem like dull, superficial people who rejoice in the Capitol's entertainments, but Collins also suggests that they have a sensitive human side that goes against the Capitol's sadism, as Octavia and her colleagues tearfully say goodbye to Katniss. Moreover, Cinna seems to have a trick up his sleeve—we can sense that he's changed Katniss's wedding dress in some secret way.



The tributes gather in the Training Center to be interviewed by Caesar Flickerman. Many of the tributes criticize Katniss's dress, calling it ugly and heavy. Katniss shrugs off these criticisms, and focuses on the bizarre spectacle of the tributes answering fluffy questions from Flickerman, only a few hours before most of them will die. Some of the tributes "play along," smiling and cracking jokes. Finnick recites a poem he wrote to the "love of his life," a ploy calculated to get the audience on his side. Surprisingly, many of the victors, such as Seeder, Chaff, and Beetee, suggest that the Quell should be called off, and even imply that Snow is too weak to cancel it.

When it is time for Katniss's interview, Flickerman asks her how she's feeling. In response, Katniss gives an answer about her upcoming wedding, and stands to show the crowd her dress. She raises her arms and twirls. In response, she hears screams, and realizes that she is on fire. But because she trusts Cinna, she continues to spin. Suddenly, the flames are gone—the top layer of the dress has been burned off, revealing its true form. Katniss is now wearing a dress designed to look like a **mockingjay**.

CHAPTER 18

Katniss has just displayed her dress, which Cinna has designed to resemble a **mockingjay**. Katniss explains to Flickerman, her interviewer, that the mockingjay is the bird on her pin. Flickerman compliments the dress and invites Cinna to take a bow—when he does so, Katniss fears that he'll be punished for this small act of defiance.

Katniss's interview ends, and Peeta walks onto the stage to follow her. He and Flickerman banter and crack jokes, but then Flickerman becomes serious. Flickerman points out that Peeta and Katniss will never be married, because at least one of them will die. Peeta responds that he and Katniss are already married—they've performed a casual toasting ritual. Flickerman plays his part perfectly, weeping slightly and putting his arm on Peeta's shoulder.

Just as Peeta's interview is about to come to an end, he tells Flickerman that he and Katniss are expecting a child. At this news, the crowd explodes with shouting, applause, and boos. Flickerman tries to end the interview, but the audience is too loud. Peeta simply walks off the stage.

Here the gruesomeness of the Hunger Games is on full display: not only will almost all of the tributes die in only a few hours, but they're first being forced to perform before a studio audience. We see that most of the victors try to use their celebrity status to rebel against the Games. Beetee and Chaff do this with direct appeals, while Finnick plays up romantic sympathy for himself so that the public will be angry if he dies—thus making the Games less popular with his many fans.



Our suspicions are confirmed: Cinna did tamper with Katniss's wedding dress before she wore it (the dress Snow sent her weeks before), and it seems likely that he did so as a sign of rebellion against the government. It's important that Katniss wasn't informed of this arrangement beforehand—indeed, this fact foreshadows major plot developments late in the novel.



Although Cinna has "surprised" Flickerman and the government with his dress, he may pay for his act of rebellion. At the same time, it's not immediately clear what the rebellion is, as the mockingjay is also a symbol of entertainment for the fans of the Hunger Games.



It's amusing, though also horrific, to see Peeta and Flickerman playing along with one another. Flickerman is a master showman, as Peeta is learning to be—they both pretend to be emotional because it's their job to do so. Like Finnick, Peeta builds up sympathy for himself and Katniss so that people won't support the Games.



Here Peeta makes a masterful political move that interferes with the government's plans—he is subtly rebelling from within the government's own system by turning the populace against the deadly nature of the Hunger Games. It's this fine line between rebellion and entertainment that makes the Games so fascinating for us, and so confusing for Katniss to navigate.



Peeta walks to Katniss, tears in his eyes, and Katniss wonders if the tears are real or fake. Peeta asks Katniss, point blank, if he needs to apologize for anything. Katniss insists that he needn't apologize at all. If she had known that Peeta was going to tell such a lie, she would have second-guessed him. As it is, Katniss feels empowered by Peeta's lie.

Peeta and Katniss return to their room, where Haymitch is waiting for them. He explains that the Games are in a state of chaos: people are calling for Snow to call off the Games immediately. Haymitch maintains that Snow will do nothing of the kind. Haymitch prepares to leave the Capitol. He wishes both Katniss and Peeta good luck, and warns Katniss to remember "who the real enemy is." With these words, he departs.

Peeta and Katniss go to bed together, not wanting to be apart. The next day, they separate, as tributes must enter the Games one at a time. Katniss is then marched into an office, where she's injected with a tracker that allows the Gamemakers to follow her at all times. Katniss and Cinna walk to the main arena, where Katniss is to be taken into the Hunger Games. She thanks Cinna for his help, and says goodbye to him.

Just as Katniss is about to be sent into the arena and begin her Games, Peacemakers burst into her waiting room and attack Cinna. He is brutally beaten, and he bleeds on the floor. At exactly this moment, Katniss is pushed into the arena.

CHAPTER 19

Katniss is standing in the Hunger Games arena. The voice of Claudius Templesmith, the official announcer, declares the beginning of the 75th Hunger Games. Katniss can only think about the sight of Cinna, lying beaten on the floor. Clearly, Katniss is being punished for inspiring protests and uprisings.

Slowly, Katniss takes in her surroundings. She is standing in a massive circular arena, with a small island at the center. This island is the Cornucopia, which contains useful supplies and weapons. The island is connected to the circumference of the arena by twelve enormous spokes, each of which supports two tributes. Beneath the spokes there is only water.

Here we see the dilemma of the Hunger Games, and of the surveillance state: with the government always watching, it's almost impossible to tell when people are being honest and when they're acting.



The superficial, lazy people who ordinarily watch the Hunger Games may have a grain of compassion and decency left in them: they support sadistic entertainment, but they don't want a pregnant woman (or a pregnant celebrity at least) to die. Haymitch's ambiguous words are another important symbol that Katniss must interpret.



Katniss has been dealing with government surveillance throughout her life. Being injected with the tracker is standard procedure for the Hunger Games—so that the cameras can follow the tributes—but also a sign of how important and how dangerous Katniss is to the Capitol.



Another person pays for Katniss's acts of rebellion. We can tell that Cinna's beating was timed to coincide exactly with Katniss's entrance into the Games. Snow uses timing in this way to communicate a clear message of intimidation, and to shake Katniss to her core just as her trials begin.



Clearly the government has gotten its message across: Katniss once again has to "behave," or she'll run the risk of putting her friends and loved ones in further danger.



Because the physical space of the Games is confusing and constantly changing, it's important for Collins to lay out the landscape of the environment in this early section.



A gong sounds, and almost without thinking, Katniss jumps into the water under the spokes and begins to swim toward the Cornucopia. Katniss has little trouble swimming. When she arrives at the Cornucopia, she finds among the supplies a bow and arrows. She hears a noise and sees Finnick standing close to her, carrying a trident and a net. Katniss thinks to herself that the arena was designed to give swimmers a huge advantage—thus, Finnick, from District 4, is the clear favorite.

Finnick grins and tells Katniss that they're allies. He shows her a gold bangle—the same bangle Haymitch was wearing the day Katniss arrived at the Training Center. Katniss realizes that Haymitch must have given Finnick the bangle, signaling Katniss to trust him. Suddenly, Finnick tells Katniss to duck—she does so, and Finnick throws his trident into the male tribute from District 5. At this, Katniss decides to ally with Finnick. They each patrol one side of the massive pile of supplies.

Patrolling the pile of supplies, Katniss and Finnick find weapons, but no food. Katniss sees other tributes approaching the Cornucopia, and shoots arrows at them. One of her arrows misses, but the other hits a tribute named Gloss in the calf. Katniss takes two long knives for herself. She sees Brutus running toward them, and shoots an arrow at him, which he blocks. Katniss and Finnick see that Brutus, Gloss, Enobaria, and Cashmere—four famous Careers who have fought in many Games—are approaching the Cornucopia. Katniss and Finnick decide to leave as quickly as they can. Suddenly, they see Peeta swimming toward the Cornucopia. Finnick offers to help him onto shore, noting that Katniss—whom he thinks is pregnant—shouldn't exert herself too much.

Finnick dives into the water to fetch Peeta. Meanwhile, Katniss notices an old woman from District 4, Mags, and the group of four careers. Finnick brings Peeta to the Cornucopia, and Peeta greets Katniss. Katniss suggests that they team up with Mags, and Finnick and Peeta agree. Finnick notes that Mags is one of the other tributes who likes him, and adds that her fishhooks will help them eat. Katniss sees Wiress and Beetee approaching, and is tempted to suggest that they team up, but realizes that Finnick might kill them immediately. She suggests that they move on.

The group of four gathers weapons—knives, bows, arrows, etc.—and moves away from the Cornucopia. As they walk away from it, into the island, the terrain becomes unfamiliar. Katniss realizes that they are entering a “jungle”—a kind of place utterly alien to Panem.

It seems that the Games have been designed to give specific competitors—in this case, Finnick—huge advantages. It's unclear why he is the favorite at this point, but at the end of the book we learn that Plutarch (the Head Gamemaker) and Finnick have been working together this whole time.



It's surprising that Finnick immediately saves Katniss's life, and this act adds to the sense of confusion and mystery that we get as Katniss enters the arena. It seems that many things are happening beyond Katniss's control or knowledge, and she must try to adapt to them quickly in order to survive.



We're reminded that there are certain victors who volunteer for the Games, year after year, in the hopes of eliminating weak players and winning fame and riches. It's also interesting that Finnick mentions Katniss's pregnancy—it's unclear if he's being sincere or sarcastic. Indeed, we're reminded of the way President Snow referred to Gale as Katniss's “cousin,” even though he knew full well that they weren't related by blood in any way. As with Snow and Haymitch, there's more to Finnick than meets the eye.



Finnick is given more sympathetic qualities in this scene—he has, or seems to have, love and sympathy for some of the other competitors, such as Mags. Finnick is also resourceful enough to recognize that they'll need to eat as well as kill—in other words, that there's value in the old, physically weak competitors as well as the young, strong ones. Yet Katniss doesn't entirely trust Finnick, so she tries to protect Wiress and Beetee from him.



The arena of the Hunger Games is designed to be exotic and mysterious to the people of Panem, who, it's implied, have never seen a jungle before. This could be because Panem is based on a future North America with no contact with the outside world, or because some apocalyptic event has destroyed much of the world's foliage.



As the group of four walks through the jungle, Katniss wonders if she shouldn't just shoot Finnick immediately. It would be "despicable," but she still doesn't fully trust him, and she'll have to kill him eventually in any case. Finnick seems to sense what she's thinking—he turns, raising his trident, and points out that every victor was chosen for his or her talents for killing. As Katniss and Finnick stare at each other, Peeta stands between them and suggests that they find drinkable water. Katniss agrees, reasoning that she can always kill Finnick in his sleep.

Ironically, Katniss seems to be guilty of much worse than Finnick—we've been given no real indications that Finnick intends to hurt or betray anyone, and yet Katniss is seriously considering killing Finnick in cold blood. The fact that she ultimately doesn't do so is, in part, a measure of her compassion, but mostly an indication of her rationality—she thinks there will be a better time to kill Finnick later on.



The group walks forward, and notices a strange "square" hanging above the trees. Peeta climbs the tree and tries to use his knife to probe the area. Katniss notices a "ripple" in the air, and recognizes that this is a force field of the kind that Beetee pointed out in the training area. Just as she starts to say something, there is a sudden "zap," and Peeta falls to the ground. Katniss frantically calls Peeta's name and feels for a heartbeat, but she doesn't hear one.

The chapter ends on another cliffhanger. That we've now encountered force fields twice in less than fifty pages suggests that they'll be important to the remaining plot of the novel, though exactly how remains to be seen.



CHAPTER 20

Peeta lies on the ground, unconscious, having just been electrocuted by a force field. Over Katniss's protests, Finnick bends over Peeta, pinches his nostrils shut, and blows into his mouth. Slowly, Katniss realizes that Finnick is saving Peeta's life by blowing air into his lungs. She remembers seeing her mother performing similar actions as a nurse.

The association between Finnick and Katniss's mother sends an important message: perhaps Finnick, like Katniss's mother, is more compassionate and loving than he first seems. Katniss isn't yet sure what to make of Finnick, but by now he's given her plenty of reasons to trust him.



After Finnick blows into Peeta's mouth, Peeta slowly regains consciousness. Katniss begins to laugh and cry with joy, and she realizes that now there's no way she could force herself to kill Finnick in his sleep. Finnick laughs off Katniss's tears, saying that she must be emotional from her pregnancy.

Finnick's second reference Katniss's pregnancy suggests that he knows or senses that it's a lie. This could also indicate that Finnick knows that Katniss is only pretending to be in love with Peeta, and thus that he's still trying to flirt with Katniss.



The group of four carries on exploring the jungle. Finnick questions how Katniss saw the force field. Knowing that everything they say is being recorded, Katniss lies and says that she was able to hear it—if the Gamemakers know that she can detect the "ripple," they might try to change the force fields and make them truly undetectable. The others accept Katniss's explanation.

Katniss is savvy enough to know that power doesn't only come from physical strength, but also from controlling important information. Thus, she doesn't explain her knowledge of force fields to the remaining members of the group, Peeta included—and so hides it from the government as well.



Katniss takes the lead in the group, still under the pretext that she has superior hearing. She notices Mags eating a nut growing on one of the trees, and yells for her to spit it out. Finnick only laughs. Katniss wonders how Finnick could be so cavalier about Mags and yet save Peeta's life.

Just because Finnick saved Peeta's life doesn't mean that he's a good person, as he seems perfectly willing to let Mags, someone he supposedly loves, endanger her own life. Again it's difficult to interpret his actions.



Katniss realizes that the force field that nearly killed Peeta is guarding the edge of the arena. She tries to find a high-enough point to look beyond the arena. Climbing a tree, she sees the entire arena for the first time. It's a perfect circle, with the jungle-island in the middle. Katniss can see "rippling squares" in the distance on all sides—they are surrounded by deadly force fields.

Katniss climbs down and reports what she's seen to Finnick, Mags, and Peeta. It occurs to her that their island is particularly small, and seems not to have any fresh water, perhaps because the government wants these unpopular Games over quickly—and thus, more tributes are supposed to die sooner.

It is late afternoon. Because Mags and Peeta are exhausted, the group sets up camp. They eat more of the nuts that Mags tried earlier, and Katniss says that she's going to try to hunt. As she walks into the jungle she hears the traditional cannon of the Games, which shoots once for every death so far. She counts eight cannon booms. To her frustration, she doesn't find any animals to hunt, with the exception of a big rodent, which she shoots. Carrying this, she returns to the camp. Mags, Peeta, and Finnick have built a hut from branches. She tells them that she's found no drinkable water, but notices that the rodent—which they decide to call a "tree rat"—had a wet mouth, as if it's been drinking recently. The group cooks nuts and rodent, and eats fairly well.

The group tries to fall asleep. Late at night a loud broadcast is made throughout the arena, naming the 8 dead tributes. All the tributes from Districts 1 through 4 are still alive, but Seeder, a mother of three, has been murdered. Then, a parachute falls from the skies, landing next to the group. Inside the parachute, Peeta finds a small metal rod. No one is sure what to do with it until Katniss remembers that she's seen something like it before: it's called a spile. It can be rammed into a tree trunk and used to drain syrup or other fluids. The group collectively realizes that this is how they'll find water. They jam the spile into a nearby trunk, and slowly, water drips through it. They drink—they've been parched all day.

The group finally falls asleep. The next morning, Katniss and Finnick awake to a loud tolling sound. There are 12 rings, which, they presume, stand for the 12 Districts, but they're unable to determine what the rings mean. In the distance, they see lightning, and it begins to rain. Suddenly, a fog trickles down to where the group is resting. Katniss walks through the fog, and immediately her body begins to blister.

Collins reminds us of the physical structure of the arena. It's important to keep this in mind throughout the rest of the book, as it determines the obstacles the characters encounter. For now, the primary obstacle is the arena itself—they can't escape from it or risk electrocution.



Katniss is again "thinking bigger" than she was in the Games last year. She recognizes that the Games are a political tool, and thus the structure and format of the Games reflects specific political decisions and strategies.



Mags's consumption of the nuts on the island (whether foolish or calculated) has paid off—without her initial sampling, the group wouldn't have any food to eat. This reminds us that the older competitors have legitimate value—it's not only a matter of being young and athletic that leads one to winning the Hunger Games. In much the same way, Katniss is intelligent enough to find a path that may lead to water, thereby saving the lives of her new allies.



The spile that falls from the sky is a strikingly literal form of "deus ex machine," a plot device in which the solution to a problem appears inorganically—that is to say, in a manner unrelated to the characters or the plot of the book so far. From the first book, we learn that gifts like this are the result of outside help—usually Haymitch putting rich fans to work.



It's not exactly clear what the twelve rings mean, though perhaps it's relevant to note that there are twelve "spokes" in the wheel of the arena, as well as twelve districts. Before Katniss—or we—can think about this matter any further, a new, unexpected danger appears.



CHAPTER 21

Having discovered a dangerous fog, Katniss yells for Finnick, Mags, and Peeta to run away as fast as they can. The four run through the jungle. Katniss is fast, and she has a sudden urge to abandon Peeta. Even so, she hangs back and helps him through the thick foliage. Finnick doesn't slow down, though he shouts for everyone to follow him. Katniss notices that the fog is affecting her nervous system as well as her skin, and she feels irrationally afraid.

The fog paralyzes Peeta's legs, and Mags is similarly unable to move. Finnick volunteers to carry Peeta, and tells Katniss to carry Mags, who's only about 70 pounds. Together, they move toward the water around the island. Katniss is grateful to Finnick for saving Peeta on multiple occasions. But before they get far, Katniss begins to feel her legs shake from the gas. She begs Finnick to carry Mags, but Finnick, crying, tells her that he can't—his arms aren't working. Mags silently crawls into the fog, and seems to die almost instantly.

Peeta, Katniss, and Finnick try to carry on, abandoning Mags's body. Just when it seems that they'll be unable to move any further, they notice that the fog seems to have stopped—it's reached some kind of barrier. The group manages to crawl to the water. There, Katniss forces herself to submerge her blisters in the salt water, which is highly painful, but also eases the blistering. She sees that Finnick cannot move—he's breathed in too much of the fog. She splashes salt water on his body while Peeta, who seems to have recovered somewhat, helps her.

Finnick slowly regains control of his muscles. Katniss notices that he looks weary, not only because of his running, but because he's just seen Mags, one of his only friends at the Games, sacrifice her life. For the next few hours, the three slowly recover. They swim in the water and do simple muscle exercises. The fog's effects seem to wear off.

After recovering, the group ventures back into the jungle. There, they're confronted with an intimidating sight: a huge pack of monkeys climbing through the trees. Peeta makes the mistake of making direct eye contact with a member of the pack, and this leads the monkeys to attack the group. Katniss uses her arrows to kill as many monkeys as possible, while Peeta and Finnick use their knife and trident, respectively. In the midst of the fight, another tribute enters the jungle: it is a morphling addict from District 6. In her delirium, she walks toward a monkey, and it bites her.

During the course of the Hunger Games, Katniss is confronted with various moral dilemmas—she wants to kill Finnick in cold blood, she wants to abandon Peeta, etc. Ultimately, she doesn't do either of these things, but she's sorely tempted. The Hunger Games are a psychological struggle as well as a physical one.



Mags' purpose in the plot of the novel seems to be that of a sacrificial lamb. Thus, she tastes the nuts when nobody else is brave enough, and she kills herself by walking into the fog in order to save the others from having to carry her. Mags's death inspires more guilt from Katniss—it's her own weakness, after all, that prevents her from carrying Mags, and thus condemns her to death. At the same time, Mags sacrifices herself, and there is strength in that.



In this section, we gain new sympathy for Finnick. He's just lost someone he presumably cares about a great deal, and he's also endured great pain as a result of his heroic decision to slow himself down and carry Peeta. From the perspective of a "fan" of the Hunger Games, Finnick is the most heroic character right now, since he's risked his own life several times already for others' sake.



The group has narrowly survived the encounter with the fog, even if they've lost a member along the way. It's still not clear how the island "works," but the group must decipher its secrets if they are to survive.



For all his strength and leadership, it is Peeta who makes the crucial mistake of looking the monkeys in the eyes. So far, Peeta is hardly the capable, able-bodied competitor he was last year: if it weren't for Katniss and Finnick, he'd be dead. Katniss is upholding her earlier decision, though, by fighting to keep Peeta safe.



CHAPTER 22

The group is fighting a huge pack of aggressive monkeys. In the midst of the fight, the monkeys suddenly and unexpectedly retreat, as if the Gamemakers are calling them away. Alone, Peeta, Finnick, and Katniss notice the tribute from District 6. The monkey's bite has seriously injured her, and she's bleeding copiously. Peeta holds the tribute, who looks grotesquely thin because of her dependency on morphling. Peeta sings her a childish song about color, and the song seems to please her. Slowly, she dies, and at the exact moment when she exhales her last breath, the cannon fires, indicating her death.

Exhausted from their fight with the monkeys, the group of three makes its way into the jungle in search of a big tree. They find one, and use the spile to draw more water from it. It is almost dawn when they've finished drinking. Katniss and Peeta go to rest, trusting Finnick to guard them. Finnick makes nets and baskets, which he uses to catch shellfish. When Katniss wakes up in the mid-morning, Finnick greets her with food.

Katniss realizes that she's been scratching her skin in her sleep. She goes to wash in the salt water, and mutters to Haymitch, who's watching the footage, that they could use some skin care. Almost too quickly, a parachute lands nearby. Attached, there is ointment, which Katniss, and then Finnick, apply to their skin. Finnick and Katniss tease each other about their hideous skin, and they seem to be enjoying each other's company. Another parachute arrives, this one carrying a loaf of bread. Katniss interprets the timing of this parachute to mean that she should continue being friends with Finnick.

Katniss does some math: they've been in the Games for about 24 hours. There are thirteen tributes remaining, most of whom are in the jungle, and some of whom are Careers. Suddenly, a huge wave hits the island, flooding the beach. The group manages to run to dry land before they're drowned, but the cannon indicates that another tribute hasn't been so lucky. Half of the tributes are now dead.

Katniss, Finnick, and Peeta notice another group of three in the distance. They're "in bad shape," with one member almost unable to walk. They are all covered in red paint. Finnick realizes that one of the members of the other group is Johanna, and he runs toward her. Katniss and Peeta run after him, seeing that the other two tributes are Beetee and Wiress.

It's interesting that Peeta, who's been slow and physically clumsy so far, excels at a different kind of task: soothing a dying woman. Peeta has a reputation as a strong, athletic victor, but from what we've seen, he excels at more peaceful—or even more stereotypically feminine—pursuits, like baking, painting, and singing. We're reminded of the precision of the Hunger Games as a media spectacle as well, as the cannon measures the lives of the tributes down to the last second.



Once again, Finnick proves himself to be a generous, resourceful, and generally excellent ally. We're no more sure of why he's helping Katniss and Peeta, but it's clear that his desire to help goes beyond his immediate self-interest. In a game where immediate self-interest is all-important, this is remarkable.



It's interesting that Katniss has to interpret the messages that Haymitch and the other observers send to her. This parallels the way that others must interpret the mockingjay, and how President Snow paired Cinna's beating with the start of the Hunger Games. In the absence of clear, explicit meaning, the characters have to use their interpretive skills to understand what's going on, with mixed success.



Collins reminds us of the "standings" in the Games at several points. Here, a giant wave sets the Games halfway between beginning and ending: exactly half of the tributes are dead, and half are alive.



It's interesting that Finnick runs to Johanna right away. This could suggest that they've previously made an alliance with one another, which may conflict with Finnick's alliance with Katniss and Peeta—or it may be more evidence of a larger plan beyond Katniss's knowledge.



The group meets up with Johanna, who explains that she, Beetee, and Wiress ran through a rainstorm of blood, hence the appearance of red paint. Beetee has also sustained a knife in the back, and Wiress is in shock—she continuously mutters, “tick tock.” Johanna is brusque and harsh with Wiress, although she tells Katniss that she saved Wiress’s life “for Katniss”—Katniss has no idea what this means. Katniss doesn’t attack Wiress, because Finnick seems to be friends with her.

Katniss tries to care for Beetee. She takes a clump of moss and soaks it with saltwater, then applies it to Beetee’s knife wound. Meanwhile, Finnick catches more shellfish, and explains to the new members of their group how they came to be on the beach. Katniss explains how they lost Mags: Katniss wasn’t strong enough to carry her. Although Finnick is cool and calm, Johanna points out to Katniss that Mags was his mentor, and “half his family.” Katniss feels both angry and guilty.

Katniss sits on the beach with Wiress, who continues to mutter, “tick tock.” She thinks about the twelve rings she heard last night, and the peculiar shape of the arena. Danger has come to each sector of the arena, seemingly either at midnight or noon. Suddenly, it hits her. Wiress was right: the arena is structured like a clock.

CHAPTER 23

Katniss has just realized that the arena is built like a clock. A new “horror” begins for a different hour in each sector: the monkeys, the fog, the rain, the wave, etc. After each hour, the horror abruptly ends. This explains how they survived the fog and the monkeys. Quickly, Katniss explains her clock theory to Johanna, Beetee, Finnick, and Peeta. As she explains, she remembers the watch Plutarch was wearing during her Victory Tour: this watch, she sees, was a clue to the way the Games would work. She wonders if Plutarch was trying to help her, and why he would do such a thing.

The group begins to move ahead, knowing that they’ll have to face challenges every hour. Beetee asks for his “wire.” No one knows what he means. Johanna says that Beetee took a wire from the Cornucopia to use as a weapon. She says she can’t imagine Beetee using a wire at all. This is suspicious, Katniss thinks, since Beetee is known to have won his Games with a wire. Katniss accuses Johanna of playing dumb. Johanna shoots back that she’s been distracted saving Wiress, while Katniss let Mags die. Katniss realizes that one of them will kill the other soon enough.

Unlike Finnick, Johanna seems insensitive, rude, and dismissive of all those who are older and feebler than she. She is, in many ways, the ideal Hunger Games competitor: a cold, unfeeling killer who doesn’t pity the weak, but uses other people’s pity to survive.



Katniss displays some of the same qualities and skills that made her mother such a valuable nurse in District 12. Katniss has also learned that she can’t always be gentle with people: sometimes, she needs to use medicines that are painful in the short term but better in the long run. Thus, she rubs salt in a wound—the proverbial painful medicine.



Once again, it’s Katniss who listens closely to the weak and unstable “outsiders,” discovering valuable information in the process. She’s strong and brave, but she’s also compassionate, and knows how to communicate and extract useful information from others.



We now see why it was important for Collins to remind us of the physical structure of the arena: so that Katniss’s realization makes sense to us at once. This also gives us another clue to complicate the character of Plutarch—he may have been helping Katniss by showing his watch to her before the Games. Katniss can’t comprehend why he would do this, but it does point towards the book’s twist ending.



Even as she revises her opinions of Finnick and Plutarch, Katniss finds new reasons to distrust the other competitors. Understanding information—and keeping track of what pieces of information the other victors do and don’t have—is a key part of winning the Hunger Games, it would seem. Again, Katniss flirts with the possibility of cold-blooded murder, but doesn’t act yet.



Katniss thinks ahead. She'll have to kill Johanna—indeed, she'll probably enjoy it, given everything Johanna has said to her. Beetee and Wiress will probably die on their own. Finnick is a problem, however, as Katniss knows that she can't kill him herself, after everything he's done for Peeta.

The group approaches the Cornucopia, where there are still a few weapons. Katniss gets more arrows, and notices Johanna picking up a heavy axe. She realizes that Johanna is from District 7, the lumber district, and has probably been wielding axes since she was a child. Meanwhile, Peeta sketches a rough map of the island in the sand. Each twelfth of the arena contains a different danger: monkeys, blood rain, etc.

Suddenly there's a noise: a group of Careers has approached the Cornucopia and slit Wiress's throat. Quickly, Johanna throws an axe into the chest of one Career, Cashmere, and Katniss kills the Career who killed Wiress, Gloss. Enobaria throws a knife into Finnick's thigh. Finnick, Peeta, Katniss, Johanna, and Beetee chase away the two remaining Careers, Brutus and Enobaria. Then, the Cornucopia begins to spin quickly, throwing Katniss onto the ground and throwing Beetee out to the water.

Finnick goes to retrieve Beetee from the water. As Beetee returns, Katniss notices that he's carrying a spool of wire, which is gold and very fine. Beetee points out that the spinning Cornucopia has disoriented the group: they don't know which sector of the Arena contains the monkeys, the fog, etc. Katniss realizes that the Gamemakers have intentionally spun the Cornucopia because she vocalized her knowledge of the clock—everything she says is being listened to, after all.

The group ventures back into the jungle, noting that it's "monkey hour." Johanna tells Katniss and Finnick to find water. Peeta will make another map of the arena. Katniss wonders if Johanna and Finnick are working together, trying to split up Katniss and Peeta. Then it occurs to her that the other competitors are clearly trying to keep Peeta alive. Finnick has repeatedly risked his life for him, and now Johanna has given him the easy, safe job of drawing a map. She wonders why other tributes would want Peeta alive.

Suddenly, Katniss hears a scream. She runs through the jungle in the direction of the noise. She hears the voice of her little sister, Prim.

Katniss's thinking in this section is surprisingly cold and unfeeling. It's as if the government has finally succeeded in its task: turning Katniss into a cruel, sociopathic killer, the kind that audiences of the Hunger Games celebrate.



Collins takes another opportunity to reverse traditional gender roles: it's Johanna, not Peeta, who wields an axe with great skill. Similarly, Peeta is the one to draw a map, reminding us that he's a talented painter—another "delicate," stereotypically feminine pursuit.



For all her cold thinking about murdering Johanna, Katniss avenges her allies, showing a dark kind of compassion for them. It's encouraging to see the group members working together instead of fighting amongst themselves, even if it seems clear that their alliance can't last much longer.



Katniss is, for the most part, resourceful and clever about what information she does and doesn't share with the group. Yet even she can make mistakes like this, forgetting that the government is constantly watching her. This reminds us of the power of surveillance: even when people know they're being watched, they often can't help betraying important information.



Katniss can see that the other competitors are purposefully keeping Peeta alive, but she's not insightful enough to see the bigger picture, and comprehend why they would do such a thing. There seems to be no reason to save Peeta, at least not within the limits of the rules of the Hunger Games. This suggests that Johanna and Finnick, like Katniss in a sense, are thinking "outside" the Games to bigger, and more mysterious, things.



Katniss has already endangered her friends, and even caused them physical harm. It's no wonder, then, that she runs for her family.



CHAPTER 24

Katniss cries for her sister, wondering, frantically, why she is in the arena. Then, she sees what's really happening: a jabberjay, perched in the trees, is making the sound of her sister's voice. This is only a sadistic trick of the Gamemakers, she tells herself.

As Katniss calms herself, she hears another cry, and watches as Finnick, his face alight with fear, runs past her. She tries to call to him, but she knows that nothing will work. Finnick calls out for "Annie," and Katniss manages to shoot with an arrow the jabberjay that's imitating "Annie." Finnick is still terrified, and he suggests to Katniss that the Gamemakers have kidnapped and tortured their loved ones, because the screams sounded real. Katniss realizes that Finnick could be right. This is the most harmful "challenge" they've encountered so far, she concludes.

Katniss and Finnick turn to see Peeta, Beetee, and Johanna standing only a few feet away from them. There is another force field between them, though this one, Katniss determines, doesn't electrocute people who touch it. The two halves of the group will be unable to communicate for the remainder of the hour. Meanwhile, more birds appear, and mimic the sounds of Katniss's loved ones: Madge, Gale, Prim, etc.

The remainder of the hour passes, painfully slowly. When it's over, Peeta tries to comfort Katniss, but she insists that somewhere, their loved ones are being tortured. Peeta speculates that the Gamemakers have only manipulated the sounds of their loved ones—there may not be any real torture involved. Beetee agrees with Peeta. Johanna points out that the entire country adores Prim—to hurt her would lead to an uprising. Katniss is amazed that Johanna would speak of an uprising out loud, knowing that they're being watched. She's forced to give Johanna some grudging respect for her bravery.

The group moves on. Katniss asks Peeta about the woman Finnick heard, Annie. Peeta guesses that this must be Annie Cresta, the mentally unstable former champion whom Mags volunteered to replace. Katniss is impressed with this information. Finnick truly cares about a lonely, unstable woman, rather than any of the young sweethearts he pretends to love on television.

While the Gamemakers' trick horrifying, it's almost refreshing to be reminded that Katniss cares about other people. She's been so harsh with her calculations about killing Johanna and Finnick that it's good to be reminded of her selfless love for Prim.



Finnick's reaction to the jabberjays is more evidence for his sympathetic character—like Katniss herself, he has people he truly cares about. This section is similar to those in which Collins stressed the similarities between Katniss and Peeta. The characters grow closer through enduring trials together.



While the previous challenges in the Hunger Games have been physical—rashes, chases, etc.—this challenge is psychological, and arguably much more devastating.



It's no coincidence that Katniss begins to develop new respect for Johanna and Finnick immediately after they're subjected to the same psychological torture. The jabberjays establish a strong bond between their victims: Katniss and Finnick, for instance, grow close in their fierce love for other people. Johanna shows that she too is thinking about the bigger picture—as Haymitch said, "who the real enemy is."



Finnick's love for Annie adds more depth to his character. As the "playboy" celebrity of the Capitol, he could date any woman he wanted, but Annie is the only one he truly loves. This also shows how close Finnick and Mags were, as Mags volunteered to save Annie.



At the end of the day, Finnick catches more food from the water, and the group eats. A loud announcement informs everyone that sixteen tributes have died, all in all, leaving only eight behind. The remaining tributes, besides the group, are Chaff and the two surviving Careers, Brutus and Enobaria. Suddenly, a parachute falls down, containing 24 small rolls of bread. The group eats fifteen of the loaves, leaving the rest for tomorrow. Johanna jokes that whoever is still alive at breakfast can have the rest, and Katniss laughs.

The group goes to the sector with the giant wave, and waits for the wave to recede. They then set up camp, thinking that they'll have twelve hours of safety. Everyone falls asleep except for Peeta and Katniss. Katniss notices that Finnick calls Annie's name in his sleep.

Peeta talks with Katniss about Haymitch and the inevitable end of the Games. Haymitch has promised both of them that he'll help them survive the Games—yet only one of these promises can be honest. Peeta points out that he'll have no reason to go on living if Katniss dies. By contrast, Katniss would have plenty of other loved ones to live for if Peeta were to die. Katniss can tell that Peeta is being sincere because he doesn't mention Katniss's "baby"—he's not playing to the cameras. She also senses that Peeta is talking about Katniss's love for Gale, and suggesting that one day she and Gale will end up together. Katniss is overcome with Peeta's kindness and sensitivity, and she kisses him. Though she's kissed him hundreds of times before, this is the first time she's ever done so out of genuine love.

Peeta leaves Katniss by herself, and Katniss thinks to herself that Peeta is the only person her age she knows who's fit to be a father. She imagines a future in which there is no Capitol and no danger involved in raising a child.

CHAPTER 25

The next morning, Katniss wakes up, thinking of Peeta. Then, she realizes that she'll probably be dead by the end of the day. Her only goal is to keep Peeta alive and help him win the competition. She eats some of the rolls the parachute sent the group yesterday, and for some reason she finds it difficult to make eye contact with Peeta.

Here, Katniss and Johanna further bond through finding humor in a dark situation. It's interesting to note that humor itself is often defined as the "defiance of repression" (Sigmund Freud wrote a famous essay on this subject). Thus, by laughing at her joke, Katniss continues to respect Johanna's bravery.



While Finnick has seemed to be putting on the appearance of compassion before, it's now clear that he feels genuine love for Annie—there's no way to keep up an act in one's sleep, after all.



Just as Katniss isn't sure what to make of Johanna and Finnick, she's also unsure of how to respond to Haymitch's messages, or what to think of his plans. Another interesting aspect of this section is the fact that Katniss only begins to show genuine love for Peeta during the Hunger Games, when millions of people are watching. She's becoming more comfortable with performance and spectatorship, simultaneously expressing her true emotions and acting for her audiences.



Katniss's love for Peeta seems to inspire her desire for rebellion: she wants a world in which her children can grow up without tyranny and injustice.



Katniss's harsh realism about her own death comes shortly after her kiss with Peeta and her thoughts about overthrowing the government. In short, Katniss's desire for a better future paradoxically accompanies her acceptance of the fact that she has no future.



Peeta tells Katniss that Beetee is constructing a trap for Brutus and Enobaria. Beetee reveals his plan to the group. As he explains himself, Katniss remembers that Beetee is far cleverer than the other tributes. Beetee plans to harness the lightning Katniss and Finnick encountered two days ago. Using his long, thin wire—which he claims he invented—he will connect the wet, salty beach to a place where the lightning strikes. Thus, he'll lure the remaining tributes onto the beach and electrocute them. The rest of the group has doubts about the plausibility of Beetee's plan, but they're not clever enough to come up with an alternative.

The group walks toward the lightning zone. Finnick mentions that Katniss can hear force fields. Even though Beetee taught Katniss how to spot force fields, he doesn't question this claim. In the lightning zone, they find a tree that seems to have been struck by lightning repeatedly. While Beetee examines the tree, Katniss catches tree rats and cooks them by throwing them at the force field. Beetee connects wire to the tree and "works with it." He tells the others that they can go back to the shore, and they do so.

Knowing that the force of electricity will probably kill off all life in the surrounding water, the group decides to fish for as much seafood as possible. They have a feast of oysters and fish, and additionally, a parachute arrives carrying more pieces of bread. Katniss eats her meal, trying unsuccessfully to avoid thinking about her impending doom.

CHAPTER 26

Night falls, but there is no broadcast in the arena—no one new has died all day. Katniss senses that the audience and the Gamemakers are thirsty for blood. Beetee and Finnick go to work uncoiling wire around the tree and across the beach. Beetee explains that he, Finnick, and Peeta will go back to the lighting zone and tie more wire around the tree. Johanna and Katniss will continue unraveling the wire on the beach, eventually dropping the spool of wire into the salty water.

Johanna and Katniss unwind the wire on the beach. Johanna hands Katniss the wire so that she can take over for a moment. Suddenly, there is a vibration—the wire has been cut. A heavy object hits Katniss in the back of the head.

We sense that Beetee can't really be trusted. As frightening as this may be for Katniss, and for us, it's refreshing to see that the intelligent, resourceful victors are just as dangerous as the strong, physically skilled ones. Beetee's wire could kill all the competitors on the island, regardless of their strength or speed.



It's a little odd that Katniss and the other members of the group accept Beetee's command that they walk back to the beach. This seems like a huge tactical error, since it gives Beetee unlimited control over his most important, personalized weapon: his wire. Collins again reminds us that experience and intelligence can be just as powerful as youth and physical stamina.



Katniss's seafood feast is something of a "last meal" for her, since she's essentially accepted that she's about to die. The end of this chapter isn't a cliffhanger like many of the other chapter endings in the novel. It's actually the opposite—a moment of peace and silence, a "calm before the storm."



An uneasy paradox at the heart of the Hunger Games trilogy is Collins' pairing of the reader's desire for action with the spectators' desire for bloody spectacle. We want something exciting to happen, and so do the spectators—and so we are forced to look at our own society and need for constant entertainment, and compare it to the Capitol.



The "action" we've been craving for the last two chapters has finally arrived—appropriately, in the form of a blunt, heavy object. Things quickly get very mysterious for Katniss.



When Katniss comes to, Johanna is sitting on top of her. Johanna stabs Katniss in the forearm and then rubs blood over Katniss's body. Johanna repeatedly tells Katniss to stay down. Katniss thinks that Johanna and Finnick have betrayed the group—they must have had an alliance to do so after a few days. Katniss is barely conscious, but she hears the sound of Brutus and Enobaria's voices, saying that she is as good as dead.

As she lies on the ground, Katniss thinks about Peeta, who is surely about to be killed by Finnick. Summoning her remaining strength, Katniss stands up, still covered in blood, and lurches through the jungle. She hears Finnick, running through the jungle and calling for Johanna and Katniss, and hides from him. After Finnick has passed, Katniss resumes her path to the lightning zone, where she thinks Peeta must be. Suddenly, she finds herself trapped in a net made of golden wire. Katniss struggles out of the trap, and moves on.

Katniss traces the loops of wire back to the tree in the lightning zone. There, she's surprised to find Beetee lying on the ground, wounded and clutching Peeta's knife. Katniss notices that Beetee is lying close to the force field, and also that there is still a large amount of wire lying on the ground. Katniss wonders if Beetee tried to probe the force field with a knife, only to be thrown back, just as Peeta was. As she takes this in, two cannons sound—two more tributes have died.

Suddenly, Katniss hears Peeta's voice, calling for her. Before she has time to register where Peeta is standing, she sees Finnick and Enobaria running toward the tree. Knowing that she is going to die from blood-loss, Katniss aims an arrow at Enobaria. Perhaps, she thinks, she can kill Enobaria and make Finnick dive for cover near the tree at the exact moment when lightning strikes—this should occur in only a minute or two. Since Katniss and Beetee are about to die, and since two other tributes are dead, Katniss's actions will leave Peeta alive, with only one tribute left to face.

Just as Katniss is about to shoot Enobaria, she remembers Haymitch's words—"remember who the real enemy is." It's clear to Katniss, as she thinks this, that the real enemies are the Gamemakers, not the individual tributes. She turns from Enobaria to the force field, in which she can see a tiny "chink," a "wavering square." Taking her bow and arrow, she aims and fires directly at the chink. Her arrow lands at the exact instant when lightning strikes the tree. There is a loud "bang," and Katniss is thrown to the ground. Before she loses consciousness, she thinks she sees a star.

Johanna's actions now seem more inscrutable than ever. Why, for instance, doesn't Johanna slit Katniss's throat? What is the purpose of cutting her arm? Collins makes Katniss straightforwardly confused, but it now seems clear that Johanna is part of some larger plan, and not Katniss's enemy at all.



The net that Katniss encounters suggests to us that Beetee must be responsible for at least part of Katniss's sudden "betrayal." This also implicates Finnick, since, we've been reminded many times, he is skilled at tying knots and setting up traps. In general, Collins creates an atmosphere of confusion, betrayal, and suspense.



We're unsure how to interpret the sight of Beetee, wounded and lying on the ground. To be sure, he's the victim of something or someone, but this doesn't automatically absolve him of complicity in what Katniss sees as a betrayal. Meanwhile, the suspense heightens as we hear the sounds of cannons. People are dying, but we don't know who.



Although Katniss has already contemplated killing Johanna and Finnick, for petty or calculated reasons, Collins now shows Katniss to be motivated above all else by her love for Peeta. Thus, she's planning to kill Enobaria not because she wants to win the Game or because she's jealous of the other players, but because doing so would give her loved one the best chance of being sole champion. This points to Katniss's maturity and selflessness, but also her growing affection for Peeta.



For all her compassion for Peeta, Katniss is also clear-headed enough to remember what Haymitch told her—and she has her epiphany at just the right moment, no less. Collins gives Katniss a sudden lucidity to act in this way and make the novel's climax come together seamlessly. Katniss again sees the bigger picture, recognizing that the "real enemy" is not her competitors, but the government that has instituted the monstrous spectacle of the Hunger Games in the first place.



CHAPTER 27

Katniss lies on the ground, having just shot at the force field near the edge of the arena. After lightning strikes the tree, there is a loud explosion. Trees burn, and the ground shakes. Above, Katniss thinks that she sees fireworks—perhaps the Gamemakers are trying to provide additional entertainment for their audiences.

As she lies on the ground, Katniss thinks back to President Snow’s announcement of the Quarter Quell. Snow claimed that the Quell was a reminder that even the strongest people in the districts couldn’t overcome the strength of the Capitol. Katniss wonders if the Games were meant to have a winner this year—perhaps everyone was meant to die. Katniss feels a sense of acute failure, as she hasn’t been able to save Peeta’s life.

A hovercraft floats above Katniss. A mechanical arm extends from it and latches on to her, and she is too weak to protest. Inside the hovercraft, Katniss sees Plutarch. He closes Katniss’s eyes, and Katniss realizes that she’ll soon bleed to death from Johanna’s wound. She loses consciousness.

Katniss wakes up, finding herself hooked up to complex machines. She sees Beetee, similarly hooked up, and wonders why the Gamemakers don’t simply let them die. This reminds her of Peeta. She wonders if she should try to find Peeta and kill him quickly and painlessly, rather than subject him to the tortures the Capitol surely has planned for him.

Weakly, Katniss unplugs herself from her machines and staggers through the mysterious building where she’s being kept. She finds Plutarch, who is talking to Finnick and Haymitch. She’s even more confused when Plutarch kindly tells her to sit down and drink a bowl of broth, which he sets in front of her. Haymitch sits down next to Katniss, and tells her that he’s going to tell her everything.

Here, seemingly at the end of her life, Katniss is reminded that, above all else, the Hunger Games provide entertainment—gruesome, sadistic entertainment—for millions of people in Panem. Clearly, she’s taken Haymitch’s advice about the “real enemy” to heart.



It’s as if being close to death is encouraging Katniss to see the big picture, rather than focusing on the precise details of how best to survive. It’s also important to note that as she is apparently dying, Katniss thinks of Peeta, not Gale.



It seems to be the end for Katniss. Plutarch’s gesture could be interpreted as a cruel one, or an incongruously gentle one. We’ve seen examples of this ambiguity in interpreting gestures throughout the book.



Even when it’s clear to her that she’s not going to die right away, Katniss continues to believe that the Gamemakers are trying to hurt her. Katniss has been “programmed” to think in the harsh terms of the Hunger Games for so long that it never occurs to her that she’s being cared for.



Throughout the book, Plutarch has been the embodiment of the Hunger Games’ cruelty and sadism. Thus, it’s only appropriate that the sudden revelations about the Hunger Games begin with a sudden revelation about Plutarch himself: he’s a kind man, after all.



Haymitch tells Katniss that there has been a plan to break the victors out of the arena. Tributes from the various “uprising” districts—3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 11—were informed of this plan. Plutarch was in on the plan—he’s been working against the Capitol for years now. Beetee, another rebel, was put in charge of blowing up the force field, thereby allowing the tributes to escape. By sending Beetee bread, Plutarch was able to symbolize the day and hour when they should begin their escape. At the moment, Katniss and her fellow rebels, including Finnick, are traveling to District 13. Most of the other Panem districts are in a state of rebellion.

Haymitch continues to explain the details of his plan to Katniss. Neither Peeta nor Katniss was informed of the plan, because, if the plan backfired, they’d have plausible deniability. The other tributes protected Peeta because they knew it was the only way to keep Katniss in their alliance. Johanna wasn’t trying to kill Katniss by cutting her arm—she was removing the tracking device from her body. Plutarch adds that Katniss had to be saved, because she’s become a symbol for rebels across Panem. Katniss suddenly gains new respect for Haymitch—this entire time, he’s been putting together a brilliant plan, while maintaining a façade of drunkenness and cynicism.

Haymitch then tells Katniss that the Capitol has kidnapped Peeta, Johanna, and Enobaria. Katniss is furious at this news, and she screams at Haymitch, until she’s forcibly sedated with a powerful drug. As Katniss feels the drug setting in, Finnick apologizes to her for failing to go back to find Peeta. Katniss doesn’t answer him. She’s lost the will to live, she feels: there is no way of knowing if she’ll ever see Peeta again.

Gale enters the room and greets Katniss. One of his arms is in a sling, but he looks confident and brave. Gale informs Katniss that her family is alive. Katniss demands to know what’s going on in District 12. Reluctantly, Gale reminds Katniss of the bombs and fires in the Hob. He concludes by telling Katniss that “there is no District 12” anymore.

Collins covers an enormous amount of information in a short number of pages. This is impressive in part because she’s misdirected us—for almost two entire books—into believing that the Hunger Games and their Gamemakers are uniformly evil. Now it is revealed to us that some of the Gamemakers, and some of the people who work for the government, actually desire to rise up against President Snow.



Collins confirms what she’s been suggesting about Haymitch throughout the novel—that he has been hiding a lot under his public image of laziness and drunkenness, and he’s far nobler and more intelligent than he seems. Haymitch, indeed, is now revealed as a much better politician than either Peeta or Katniss, as he has perfectly disguised his true self with a misguiding public persona. Johanna cutting Katniss’s arm is another gesture, like the symbol of the mockingjay, that can be interpreted to mean two contradictory things.



Even after all the revelations about the Hunger Games, Katniss’s love for Peeta remains the foremost thing in her mind. During the course of the Games, their common fears have brought the two closer together, even when they know perfectly well that audiences are watching them and examining their “romance.”



Gale had faded away as an important character in the second part of the book, and now he appears primarily to pass on terrible news to Katniss: her home, District 12, has been destroyed. While this is a major tragedy, it has one silver lining: without a home to go back to, Katniss has no choice but to commit to the act she’s been contemplating for the entire novel—rebellious openly against President Snow and the tyrannical government of Panem. With this dramatic finale, it’s implied that the third and concluding novel of the series will involve the “big picture,” rather than the isolated sphere of the Hunger Games arena. All-out war has begun, and Katniss—who has basically become “the mockingjay” herself—is now an important symbol of rebellion and hope.





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