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**Book Club Kit Discussion Guide**

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*The Hunger Games*  
by  
Suzanne Collins  
(New York: Scholastic, 2008)

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**Author:**

Suzanne Collins is the author of the bestselling Underland Chronicles, which started with *Gregor the Overlander*. In the *Hunger Games*, she continues to explore the effects of war and violence on those coming of age. Suzanne lives with her family in Connecticut.

[From the book jacket.]

**Summary:**

Could you survive on your own, in the wild, with everyone out to make sure you don't live to see the morning?

In the ruins of a place known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. The Capitol is harsh and cruel and keeps the districts in line by forcing them all to send one boy and one girl between the ages of twelve and eighteen to participate in the annual Hunger Games, a fight to the death on live TV.

Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives with her mother and younger sister, regards it as a death sentence when she steps forward to take her sister's place in the Games. But Katniss has been close to dead before—and survival, for her, is second nature. Without really meaning to, she becomes a contender. But if she is to win, she will have to start making choices that weigh survival against humanity and life against love.

[From the book jacket.]

**Questions:**

1. The *Hunger Games* is written in the first-person, present tense. How does this affect the story?
2. In what ways is Katniss well prepared to be a contestant in the Hunger Games?
3. How does Katniss feel about the country of Panem? Why does she need to make her face “an indifferent mask” and be careful what she says in public?

4. Describe the relationships of Katniss with Gale, with Prim, with her mother. How do those relationships define her personality? Why does she say about Peeta, “I feel like I owe him something, and I hate owing people.” How does her early encounter with Peeta affect their relationship after they are chosen as tributes?
5. How do Katniss's feelings about Peeta evolve over the course of the book?
6. Besides the Hunger Games, what other ways does the Capitol control the districts and their people? What are some signs of resistance both from the districts and within the Capitol?
7. How does the fact that the tributes are always on camera affect their behavior from the time they are chosen? Does it make it easier or harder for them to accept their fate? How are the “career tributes” different from the others?
8. Why are the “tributes” given stylists and dressed so elaborately for the opening ceremony? Does this ceremony remind you of events in our world, either past or present? Compare those ceremonies in real life to the one in the story.
9. The Hunger Games are meant to dehumanize the tributes. In what ways do some tributes resist this and show compassion for others?
10. When Peeta declares his love for Katniss in the interview, does he really mean it or did Haymitch create the “star-crossed lovers” story? What does Haymitch mean when he says, “It’s all a big show. It’s all how you’re perceived.” Why do they need to impress sponsors and what are those sponsors looking for when they are watching the Games?
11. Before the Games start, Peeta tells Katniss, “...I want to die as myself...I don’t want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I’m not.” What does this tell you about Peeta? What does he fear more than death? Is he able to stay true to himself during the Games?
12. Why does Katniss ignore Haymitch’s advice to head directly away from the Cornucopia? Did she do the right thing to fight for equipment? What are the most important skills she has for staying alive – her knowledge of nature? – her skill with bow and arrow? – her trapping ability? What qualities of her personality keep her going – her capacity for love? – her intelligence? – her self-control?
13. Why does Peeta join with the Career Tributes in the beginning of the Games? What does he hope to gain? Why do they accept him when they start hunting as a group? Why do groups form in the beginning when they know only one of them will be able to survive?

14. What makes Katniss and Rue trust each other to become partners? What does Katniss gain from this friendship besides companionship? Is Katniss and Rue's partnership formed for different reasons than the other group's?
15. Discuss the ways in which the Gamemakers control the environment and "entertainment" value of the Games. How does it affect the tributes to know they are being manipulated to make the Games more exciting for the gamblers and viewers? Does knowing that she is on live TV make Katniss behave differently than she would otherwise?
16. When does Katniss first realize that Peeta does care for her and is trying to keep her alive? When does she realize her own feelings for him? Did Haymitch think all along that he could keep them both alive by stressing the love story? Are they actually in love?
17. What do you think is the cruelest part of the Hunger Games? What kind of people would devise this spectacle for the entertainment of their populace? Can you see parallels between these Games and the society that condones them, and other related events and cultures in the history of the world?
18. In 1848, Karl Marx wrote in **The Communist Manifesto**, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Discuss this statement as it applies to the society and government of Panem. Do you believe there is any chance to eradicate class struggles in the future?
19. What is the significance of the mockingjay pin that also appears on the book's cover?
20. Reality TV has been a part of the entertainment world since the early days of television (with shows such as "Candid Camera" and the "Miss America Pageant"), but in the 21st century there has been a tremendous growth of competitive shows and survival shows. Discuss this phenomenon with respect to **The Hunger Games**. What other aspects of our popular culture do you see reflected in this story?
21. What characters or plot points were left undeveloped in this book that you believe will be explored in future books in the series?

[From Scholastic and NoveList.]

### **Further Reading:**

Kristin Cashore, *Graceling* (2008)

Graced — or cursed — with the gift of killing, Katsa breaks free of her uncle the King, who employs her as his personal assassin, and makes a better life for herself on her own.

Cory Doctorow, *Little Brother* (2008)

Following a terrorist attack on San Francisco, the overzealous Department of Homeland Security takes control of the city, restricting civil liberties and harshly interrogating innocent people — until techno-savvy teenager Marcus decides it's time to resist their illegal methods.

Lois Lowry, *The Giver* (1993)

When Jonas becomes the Receiver of Memories, he learns the shocking truth about the nature of the seemingly perfect society in which he lives.

Susan Beth Pfeffer, *Life As We Knew It* (2006)

An asteroid knocks the moon closer to Earth, triggering a series of devastating natural disasters. Sixteen-year-old Miranda describes in her journal her family's struggles to survive as food and supplies diminish.

Scott Westerfeld, *Uglies* (2005)

At the age of sixteen, everyone in Tally's futuristic society undergoes surgery that makes them beautiful. But if Tally doesn't discover the whereabouts of her runaway friend, she may remain an Ugly forever.