



# The Hunger Games

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Katniss Everdeen lives in District 12, a bleak coal-mining region of Pamen, a country which emerged from the ashes of ?a place that was once called North America?. She is 16, resourceful and resilient, a skilled hunter who supplements the meagre table of her mother and younger sister, Prim. Each year, in the far-off ruling city of Capitol (for this is a very Roman regime), the Hunger Games are devised. Bread and Circuses to keep the masses happy. A girl and a boy from each district are ceremonially selected by lot to appear in the arena ? an enclosed tract of land which one year might be a desert, the next a forest. TV cameras cover every corner of the terrain. After makeovers for the 24 competitors, the games begin, with glitzy razzmatazz, interviews and weapons training ? hungrily swallowed by the viewing population. Then the competitors are turned loose in the arena. The game is simple; kill or be killed ? last one standing is the winner. Huge bets are placed. This is the ultimate reality show ? ?Gladiators? in the true Roman manner.

In District 12, the lot falls on gentle Prim, but Katniss immediately volunteers to take her place. Once the games and the killings begin, the contest provides an utterly compelling read. The Games Controllers introduce new hazards; flood or fire, perhaps, to build excitement ? and viewing figures. Commentators whip up the tension. Helicopters swiftly remove the corpses; and each night, deaths are recorded by images of the victims projected into the sky, so Katniss knows who?s left in the game. I found myself anxiously ? naively ? wanting her to win; or for the novel to offer some other way out for her.

But hold on a moment. What?s happening here? These games are voyeuristic in the extreme ? a horrific extension of our own **Big Brother**. All bar a couple of the deaths carry no more emotional weight than Clint killing off another bad guy in a spaghetti western. But, while we may be appalled, we may also get caught up in the excitement ? and doesn?t that make us no different from the watching millions? For me, Ms Collins has written her readers ? quite brilliantly ? into an uncomfortable conflict; unless, perhaps, she means finally to ask us to consider our own reactions? If so, I missed the clues. She is certainly not above a spot of manipulation ? one very important strand of this story remains exasperatingly untied (the romantic strand at that). Book 2 is a Must.

Running Order:

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