

Coming Fall 2010, the inaugural year of our all university reading program,

KSBN - K-STATE BOOK NETWORK

Featuring *New York Times* Bestseller
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

www.k-state.edu/ksbn



Some information and some suggestions for teachers who want to incorporate the book or references to the book in their fall classes

The Book. The Hunger Games is a thrilling page-turner about a future in which a brutal reality TV show dominates mass culture. Each year a lottery selects representatives from each region to compete in a televised fight-to-the-death known as the Hunger Games. To survive, Katniss will not only have to rely on her hunting and gathering skills, but decide who to trust, who to love, and who to leave behind. A twenty-first century version of *Brave New World*, *The Hunger Games* raises powerful questions about contemporary "civilization" and the future of humanity.

The Readers. All freshmen will receive a copy of the book during Orientation and Enrollment and be asked to read it over the summer. The rest of the K-State community – students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni – will also be invited to read the book as part the university-wide reading program. Copies will be available for purchase at Varney's and the K-State Student Union Bookstore.

The Rationale. Common reading programs have become widely popular at universities across the country. They build community: incoming students immediately have something they can discuss with each other and with other students, staff, and faculty. They send the right academic message: students are asked to read a book and to think about it critically at the very start of a student's undergraduate experience. They function as a high-impact educational practice: common intellectual experiences are powerful, proven means of preparing students for success in college.

The Events. In the fall, KSBN will host a series of events focused on the book. Students will have opportunities to discuss the book inside and outside classes, to participate in a campus-wide multi-player game, and to attend lectures and programs designed to stimulate thinking about the book's often unsettling questions about mass culture and our world's future. These events will help provide a distinct K-State personality to the reading program as a whole.

What You Can Do. Generate excitement about *The Hunger Games* by incorporating the book into your classroom discussion. The following pages are full of discussion questions, classroom ideas and activities, and assignment suggestions appropriate for any discipline. They are organized by themes and can be used directly in your classroom or adapted for your teaching needs.

LEADERSHIP

- Partnership
 - Katniss learns from her peers (Gale, Peeta, Rue) before, during, and after the Hunger Games. She learns about hunting from Gale, integrity from Peeta, and music and trust from Rue. She also learns survival skills from Haymitch and Cinna.
 - What are the benefits of working with people inside and outside your field?
 - What kinds of partnerships will help you to grow as a student?

- Integrity and Identity
 - On page 52, Katniss remembers what her father said about the plant that she was named after: “As long as you can find yourself, you’ll never starve.”
 - What does this passage say about identity? How do new experiences, adversity, or challenges affect your identity?
 - On page 141, Peeta says that he wants to “die as myself,” that he doesn’t “want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I’m not.” With that comment in mind, Katniss decorates Rue’s body with flowers after her death to honor Rue’s character.
 - What does it mean to have integrity? How can you be the kind of student, leader, or person who has integrity?

- Assumptions
 - Throughout the novel, Katniss makes assumptions about people based on what district they are from. Others make assumptions about Katniss based on her costume and behavior at the Opening Ceremony.
 - What kinds of assumptions might people make about you based on where you’re from, your major, etc?
 - How can we deal with people’s assumptions?

- Questioning Authority
 - Katniss questions the authority of the Capitol as well as other sources of authority. However, she is not always able to express those ideas of dissent.
 - Is it okay to question assumptions, authority, or power structures? If so, when?

- Identification
 - Which of the characters do you identify with most? Why? What makes them compelling or interesting?

SOCIAL ISSUES

- Class
 - Katniss makes distinctions between her family in the Seam, Peeta’s merchant class family, and the wealthy Peacemakers. Furthermore, there seems to be an array of classes in the Capitol, ranging from the silent avoxes to the subservient designers to the rich and powerful Gamemakers.
 - How do these class distinctions affect the characters’ lives? How does being a member of a lower class affect Katniss’s daily activities?
 - What are the advantages of being wealthy in this society? In the Hunger Games competition? What are the advantages to being wealthy in United States society today?

- Futuristic Panem vs. Contemporary America
 - Look at the U.S. Constitution or the 27 Amendments.
 - Instruct students to pick one Amendment or section of the Constitution and illustrate how it prevents America from transforming into Panem.
 - Possible questions to ask:
 - What rights does your selected Amendment or section of the Constitution guarantee?
 - What would happen if your chosen Amendment or tenet of the Constitution were compromised in some way?

- Gendered Identities
 - Katniss is gendered as male in many ways. For example, she hunts and provides food for her family. Peeta, on the other hand, does “traditionally female actions” like baking and inside housework.
 - What role does gender play in Panem and the Hunger Games? Does gender affect characters’ skills or actions?
 - How does Collins subvert traditional portrayals of gender, and what is the effect?

- Naming and Its Influence on Identity
 - How do the characters’ names influence your perceptions/expectations of that character? Do the names communicate any specific character traits?
 - How does naming relate to identity?
 - If you could rename the characters, what would you name them and why? If you could rename yourself, what would you be?

- Child/Parent Relationships
 - Throughout the novel, Katniss must provide for her mother and younger sister, Prim. Gale must also hunt to support his family.
 - How are parent/child relationships portrayed in this novel? What does this indicate about the nature of families, children, adults?

- Excessive Consumption
 - Collins depicts the Capitol as a place of excess. Examples of excess include rich, elaborate and plentiful food, spacious living quarters with a variety of forms of automation, luxurious furniture, fine and fashionable clothing, and abundant use of electricity. Several times within *The Hunger Games* Katniss and Peeta compare these excesses with the modest resources available to those who live in District 12. How does the government keep those who “have not” in the Districts from knowing just how much excess the people in the Capitol enjoy? What do you think would happen if the Capitol was not able to control this knowledge?

MEDIA

- Examining Media as a Rhetorical Tool
 - Television is an important tool in the world of *The Hunger Games*. In the book, the Capitol broadcasts the Hunger Games to all the districts. The constant filming of the children and their behavior on camera affects how their family and the other viewers perceive them.
 - Show various clips from political campaigns, reality TV shows, news programs, video games, etc. and ask students to record their feelings and thoughts as they view each clip.
 - Discuss student reactions. How did they feel during a particular clip? What about the clip made them feel that way?
 - Examine and discuss how the images, background music, or composition of the clip explicitly and implicitly deliver a message. (For example: The camera is looking up at

President Obama as he delivers his speech, placing him on a higher plane than the viewer. This makes him seem powerful and mighty.)

- Possible questions to discuss afterwards:
 - How does the media serve as a rhetorical tool in *The Hunger Games* and in our society today?
 - Is digital media good for communicating with society? What are the negative aspects of communicating with society via television or other forms of digital media?
- Create a Book Trailer
 - Generate a list of the most interesting themes and conflicts in the book. Of those on the list, which are most important for a viewer who has not read the book?
 - Storyboard the progression of the trailer. Brainstorm still images, music, or action shots that you could use. If you are in a tech classroom, students could search for images as their group works on their storyboard.
 - Film a short book trailer (between 2-4 minutes) and debut them in class.
- Examining the Connection Between the Hunger Games and Reality TV
 - Brainstorm a list of reality television shows similar to the Hunger Games. What elements are the same? What elements are different?
 - Discuss issues related to the merit and allure of reality television. Possible questions to ask:
 - Based on the book and your knowledge of reality TV shows, do you think these shows are harmful or helpful for society?
 - What is exciting, interesting, or addictive about these shows—in the book and in real life?
 - Is there a risk in presenting people’s real-life struggles as entertainment? Does it dehumanize people in some way?

SCIENCES

- Food Production in Panem
 - District 11 is responsible for producing most of Panem’s food, although the citizens of that district are strictly forbidden to eat it.
 - How does Panem’s method of food production and distribution resemble or differ from that of the United States?
- Biological Engineering in *The Hunger Games*
 - Katniss mentions that the government has biologically engineered certain animal species (like the tracker jackers and the jabberjays for example) so that they can serve as tools for the government.
 - What stance does *The Hunger Games* take on biological engineering? Does the book have any specific opinions on the ethics of this practice? How does this fictional account relate to the biological engineering taking place in our world today?
- Trading and Bartering in Panem
 - Throughout the novel, Katniss survives by trading the spoils of her hunt for other vital supplies.
 - How does this system of economics compare to the economical system we use today? Are there countries that still use trading and bartering?
- Make a Map of Panem

- Create a map that mirrors the action and geography of *The Hunger Games*. The map can be a rough estimation or it can be spatially accurate. Use clues, landmarks, notations –whatever devices are necessary to communicate the geography of the area.
- Think about the following questions as you construct your map:
 - Where is District 12, the district that Katniss and Peeta live in?
 - Where is the Capitol?
 - What parts of the text support your placement of the districts, Capitol, and other notable landmarks on your map?

SURVIVAL SKILLS

- Resourcefulness
 - On page 94, Katniss talks about how her resourcefulness has helped her family to survive during hard times in Panem.
 - What are the resources (on campus, in your department, in your major, etc.) that will help you be successful?
 - Who are your sponsors or allies in your field?
 - What are the pitfalls of your field or chosen major? How can you avoid those?
 - How does being resourceful make you stronger as a student or future employee?
- Academics as Performance
 - Katniss must perform well in the *Hunger Games* to ensure her survival.
 - Can we see academics as a performance? What does it mean to perform well in an academic or job context? How can you ensure that you perform well?
- Constructed Knowledge
 - What happens when knowledge is constructed?
 - What happens when people consent/dissent in your field or in academics?
- Adapting to a New Place
 - Throughout the novel, Katniss must adapt to different places and situations. For example, Katniss encounters new things when she leaves District 12 and goes to the Capitol.
 - What is difficult about adapting to a new place? What are the advantages of experiencing new places or situations? What are strategies for adapting?
- Hunting
 - Who are the hunters in this book? Who are the hunted? When does the hunter/hunted distinction break down and no longer seem applicable? Does the novel have anything unexpected to say about hunting?
 - When or how might certain kinds of "hunting" skills make you a better or stronger student? When do the instincts of prey (evasion, quickness, survival, etc.) help make one a better or more successful student? When is it best to not think of a college education in terms of competition, survival, and pursuit/flight?
- Training Center
 - Before Katniss goes to the Hunger Games, she develops her skills and learns new ones in the Training Center.
 - What is the training center in your field or area of interest? How can it help you prepare for your future academic or job interests?
- Knowledge of Nature

- Collins depicts the practical knowledge Katniss has of nature and her skills gained in the woods outside of District 12 as a significant advantage to survival. For Katniss, and a few other tributes like Rue, familiarity with nature, such as knowing how to recognize edible, medicinal, and poisonous plants, and being able to climb trees to avoid predators prove to be significant advantages. Knowledge of nature is often lost as cultures become more industrialized and urbanized. Do you have the kinds of knowledge and skills that would aid you in surviving in the arena? Who taught you about nature? Who will you teach about nature?
- When Katniss and Peeta are working together in the arena Katniss finds herself comparing Peeta's lack of knowledge and skill in nature to Gale's significant knowledge and skill in nature. How do these teenager's families contribute to these differences? What role do the Capitol's rules and laws play in these differences?