

Mockingjay



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 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 for [The Hunger Games](#) trilogy 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 her books, the world was also seeing the beginnings of the ongoing global recession, 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 trilogy 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:** *Mockingjay*
- **Where Written:** Sandy Hook, Connecticut, United States
- **When Published:** August 24, 2010
- **Literary Period:** The young adult “boom” of the 2000s
- **Genre:** Dystopian Science Fiction/Fantasy, Young Adult Fiction
- **Setting:** Various parts of the country of Panem (a futuristic North America)
- **Climax:** Katniss kills President Alma Coin
- **Antagonist:** President Coriolanus Snow / President Alma Coin
- **Point of View:** First person

EXTRA CREDIT

From page to screen: *Mockingjay* has been made into not one but two films: *Mockingjay—Part 1* and *Mockingjay—Part 2*. The former was released in 2014, and earned many hundreds of millions of dollars; the latter is scheduled for release in November 2015.

A myth-lover: It's no secret that [The Hunger Games](#) borrows names and phrases from Greco-Roman mythology and history: Caesar, Plutarch, Coriolanus, and Alma are all classical allusions. Collins has admitted to being a lover of Greek and Roman culture—even when she was a child, she loved to study Greek history in school.



PLOT SUMMARY

The novel opens with Katniss Everdeen, a young woman, standing in the ruins of her former home, known as District 12. Katniss, a citizen of the futuristic country of Panem, has just escaped from a ceremony called the Hunger Games, which the government of Panem puts on every year. In the Hunger Games, competitors from each of the twelve districts of Panem compete with one another until only one person is alive. Katniss has escaped from the Hunger Games arena with the help of her mentor, Haymitch Abernathy, a number of other Hunger Games competitors, and Plutarch Heavensbee, a double agent who pretended to be working for the government, but in actuality works for a secret rebel alliance dedicated to defeating the government. Haymitch was unable to free Katniss's friend, Peeta, another Hunger Games

competitor from District 12, and as a result, Peeta is in government captivity, suspected of being a rebel.

In retaliation for Katniss's escape, President Coriolanus Snow, the leader of the government of Panem, has bombed District 12. Luckily, Katniss's lifelong friend, Gale, was able to lead many of the people of District 12 away from their home before the bombs dropped. Gale led his people to District 13, a secret area that the government had falsely claimed to be uninhabited. Katniss, Gale, and many of the former residents of District 12 now live in District 13, which is located almost entirely below the ground.

District 13 is led by President Alma Coin, a tough, often brutal leader. Katniss, with her insubordination to the government, has inspired many of the districts of Panem to rebel. With this in mind, Coin wants Katniss to be a "mascot" for the rebellion: to travel through Panem, playing the part of the "Mockingjay," a symbol of the movement. Katniss reluctantly agrees to be the Mockingjay, though she has a number of conditions—one of these conditions is that, after the rebels win the war, Katniss will be allowed to kill Coriolanus Snow herself. One night, Katniss watches government television and sees an interview between Peeta and Caesar Flickerman, the official TV reporter of Panem. In the interview, Peeta tells Caesar that he thinks the rebellion is suicidal, and that Katniss and all other rebels should throw down their weapons. After watching this interview, many of the rebel leaders, including Coin, want Peeta to be tried for war crimes. As another one of her conditions, Katniss ensures that Peeta will be issued a full pardon when the war is over. With this agreement set up, Katniss embarks on her duties as the Mockingjay.

Plutarch and his assistant, Fulvia, prepare Katniss to film a series of propaganda videos designed to attract people to the rebel cause. These videos are awkward and unconvincing, as Katniss struggles with her duties as a mascot. Haymitch points out the problem: Katniss is at her best when she improvising, not when she's following a script. With this in mind, Coin sends Katniss out on missions into other districts, accompanied by Gale, Coin's assistant, Boggs, and a large TV crew. The goal is for Katniss to encounter some real danger, show real courage, and thus inspire as many people as possible to join the rebel alliance.

Beetee, a rebel agent who competed in the Hunger Games alongside Katniss, has designed explosive arrows for her. Gale and Beetee also show Katniss a clever **double bomb** that they plan to use on the government soldiers.

Katniss's first destination is District 8, where large riots are being organized against Snow's government. There Katniss meets Commander Paylor, an important rebel leader. Paylor takes Katniss to visit rebel hospitals, where Katniss's presence by itself is enough to console the sick and wounded. Suddenly, Paylor cries out that there is a government air raid underway. Instead of returning to safety, as Plutarch and Haymitch have

instructed her to do, Katniss bravely runs out into the open, shooting explosive arrows at the fleet of government hovercrafts now bombing the hospital. Katniss successfully defends District 8 from this threat, and after the hovercrafts leave, she delivers a stirring speech about how "fire is catching."

Back in District 13, Katniss is amazed to see her own speech broadcast throughout Panem—Beetee hijacks the government's media network and uses it to send out the rebels' messages. Haymitch congratulates Katniss but warns her about disobeying him again. One night Katniss is surprised to see another interview with Peeta, on a government-sponsored channel. Peeta claims that the rebels are causing mayhem, and, seeming to speak directly to Katniss, he asks her if she really trusts the rebel leaders. Even in the coming days, the rebel leaders don't mention Peeta's interview to Katniss at all, and even Gale doesn't bring up Peeta. Katniss tells Gale that she saw the interview, and that she's furious with him for not bringing up the issue when he saw her. She also wonders, privately, if her actions in District 8 haven't caused Peeta more misery—since he's in government captivity, it's easy to imagine Snow torturing him more harshly as a result of Katniss's attacks.

Katniss's next mission is to District 12. There, the TV crew films her singing a song her father taught her, called "**The Hanging Tree**." Afterwards, Katniss and Gale walk through their old community, and Gale admits that he's in love with her. Katniss kisses Gale, but the kiss brings him little happiness—he says that Katniss only loves him when he's in pain.

When Katniss returns to District 13, there is another interview with Peeta playing on television. In the middle of the interview, Peeta yells out that District 13 will be "dead by morning." On television, guards seize him and beat him savagely. Haymitch realizes that Peeta was trying to warn the rebels of a government attack. Coin orders everyone in District 13 to retreat into bunkers. Katniss spends the next few days with her mother and sister, Primrose, and hears explosions above her, indicating that the government is bombing District 13. During their time in the bunker, Primrose points out that Snow will keep Peeta alive in order to weaken Katniss. Finnick Odair, another rebel and former competitor in the Hunger Games, tells Katniss that Primrose is correct: Snow likes to control his enemies by imprisoning their loved ones. His own love, Annie Cresta, he explains, is also in captivity.

Shortly thereafter, Coin announces that Gale, Boggs, and others are going on a mission to rescue Peeta from the government. Katniss is forbidden to go on this mission, since she's too valuable to the rebel cause, a reason that Katniss finds infuriating. Only a few days after the mission leaves, it returns with both Peeta and Annie Cresta. But when Peeta sees Katniss, he tries to strangle her. Haymitch realizes that Peeta has been tortured and conditioned by the government until he believes that Katniss is the cause of all evil in Panem. Peeta

must slowly be de-conditioned until he's comfortable with Katniss once again.

Katniss's next mission is in District 2. As she arrives there, Gale tells her that he's not jealous of Peeta anymore—indeed, he feels sorry for him. Impulsively, Katniss kisses Gale, and they reminisce about their time in District 12. Soon after, the rebels discuss a plan to bomb the “Nut,” a large government stronghold in District 2 that nonetheless houses a large number of civilians. Gale proposes that the rebels kill civilians, reasoning that the government already blew up District 12, and thus, it's due for a retaliatory bombing. The rebels agree to this plan, and the next day, a bomb goes off in the Nut, causing many innocent people to die. In the ensuing chaos, Katniss is shot, though her body armor protects her. She wakes up back in the District 13 hospital, and slowly begins to recover.

The next mission is to the Capitol itself, but Katniss is not invited to join it, since she needs more time to recover. Katniss begs Coin for a chance to go to the Capitol and kill Snow—reluctantly, Coin agrees, if Katniss can recover her health in the next month. Katniss goes on a strict regimen of training and exercising, undergoing a dangerous series of accelerated surgeries in the process. After a month, Katniss succeeds in qualifying for the mission. Her fellow soldiers include the camera crew, Gale, Boggs, Boggs's subordinate, Jackson, and Finnick. Plutarch will be supervising the mission as usual: he explains that the area surrounding the Capitol has been filled with “pods”—essentially, futuristic land mines—that release dangerous objects when they're activated. Before defecting to the rebel cause, Plutarch stole the holographic plans for the pods, meaning that the mission members will be able to tell which pods are dangerous and which are decoys.

Katniss and her mission arrive in the Capitol. They spend the next several days shooting at pods. Katniss is bored, and secretly plans to run off on her own to find Snow and kill him. Just as she's finalizing her plans to do so, a new member of the mission arrives: Peeta, who's slowly been recovering from his conditioning. Katniss is horrified that Coin has sent Peeta to be with her, and privately wonders if Coin wants her dead. She discusses this with Boggs, who grimly tells her that this is entirely possible—Coin wants to eliminate potential rivals as soon as possible. Boggs orders that Peeta be watched around the clock so that he doesn't have any opportunities to attack Katniss.

One day, Boggs walks through an abandoned building outside the Capitol, and accidentally activates a bomb that blows off his legs and kills him. Before he dies, Boggs passes his holographic plans of the pods to Katniss, and warns her, “Don't trust them.” The ensuing chaos reactivates Peeta's Capitol conditioning, and in the struggle he kills a rebel soldier by pushing him into a nearby pod. The remaining rebel soldiers restrain Peeta by knocking him out and handcuffing him.

In the aftermath of the explosion, Katniss lies and tells Jackson

and the other soldiers that she's on a secret mission to kill Snow. To Katniss's surprise, the camera crew goes along with this lie and pretends to have been given the same instructions. Jackson reluctantly agrees to go into the Capitol and find Snow. When Katniss asks the group what they should do next, Peeta whispers that they should kill *him*. He explains that he's become a danger to the mission—he could kill Katniss at any time. Katniss refuses to believe this, and insists that she'll keep Peeta alive.

The mission enters the huge network of tunnels underneath the Capitol. There, Katniss is horrified to find a Pod called the Meat Grinder, which kills Finnick and alerts an army of “mutts” (half-human, half-animal soldiers of the government) to their presence. The mutts chase the rebels through the tunnels, with Jackson bravely staying back to defend her fellow soldiers. Once Katniss and the others have run away, they activate an emergency bomb contained in the holograph, blowing up the army of mutts. Katniss is amazed that Peeta has stayed calmer than any of the other soldiers. She tells Peeta that she's afraid, and kisses him. He kisses her back, and tells her that he won't let Snow kill her.

The remaining members of the mission proceed to the house of a woman named Tigris, who is sympathetic to the rebel cause. Tigris gives Katniss and her friends elaborate disguises and warm clothes, and points them in the direction of Snow's mansion. The night before the mission is scheduled to leave, Katniss overhears Peeta and Gale talking about her. Gale says that Katniss always chooses whichever one of them “she can't survive without,” a suggestion that hurts her feelings, but which she can't entirely disagree with.

The next day the mission sets out for Snow's mansion. Before they can get far, there is a riot, followed by an air raid. Government soldiers, recognizing Katniss and her friends, shoot at them, and in the chaos Katniss is separated from the mission. Stumbling through the crowds of rioting citizens, Katniss sees parachutes falling from the sky. The parachutes contain bombs, which blow up a huge chunk of the city. After the explosion, Katniss sees a girl running toward the area of greatest damage, trying to help the injured. To her horror, she realizes that this girl is Primrose, her own sister. There is a second round of explosions, even deadlier than the first. In this second explosion, Primrose is killed, and Katniss loses consciousness. In her unconscious state, she sees the faces of the dead, including her own father.

When Katniss awakes, she finds that the rebels have won the war, and President Snow has been defeated. Katniss goes to visit Snow in jail, remembering that she is to kill him. In prison, Snow tells Katniss that, contrary to what she thinks, he's not responsible for Primrose's death. On the contrary, he says, President Coin bombed citizens of the Capitol in a clever attempt to turn Snow's own people against him. Snow adds that Katniss has been a decoy: by sending Katniss all over Panem,

Coin distracted Snow and made him waste his resources trying to kill her. This has made it easy for Coin to win the war. Katniss remembers the double bomb that Gale and Beetee showed her, and realizes that Snow is probably telling the truth.

Soon afterward, Katniss is informed that she is to execute Snow before a huge audience of people. Before the execution ceremony, Coin—now the president of all of Panem—holds a meeting of the remaining Hunger Games competitors. Coin proposes that the Hunger Games be banned forever, but that first, one final Hunger Games be held for the citizens of the Capitol, who have previously been exempted from the vicious tradition. Peeta votes against the idea, but the other competitors, including Katniss and Haymitch, support it.

As the execution ceremony begins, Katniss realizes that Snow has been telling her the truth about President Coin: Coin was responsible for Prim's death. Katniss steps up to perform her role of executing Snow, but instead aims higher and shoots Coin with her **arrow**. Katniss is imprisoned for her crime, but Haymitch and Plutarch are able to “get her off” by arguing that she's been traumatized by her experiences in war. When she is freed, Plutarch explains that Commander Paylor is the new president of Panem, and that he and Gale have been given powerful roles in the new regime.

Katniss ends up with Peeta. Peeta sympathizes with Katniss's pain and trauma, and is, she now realizes, very patient and gentle, in stark contrast to Gale. In the novel's epilogue, set twenty years later, it's revealed that the Hunger Games have been banned, and Katniss and Peeta have become legendary heroes, thanks largely to Plutarch's influence. Together, they have two children. Katniss still has nightmares about war and violence, but she's happy to be with Peeta.

way, she turns her back on the cycle of violence, bloodshed, and revenge celebrated by Coin and the other rebels.

Peeta Mellark – Peeta Mellark, a handsome, charismatic victor in the Hunger Games, faces more than one kind of torture in *Mockingjay*. To begin with, he is apprehended by the government and tortured, based on the assumption that he and his friends are rebel agents, working to kill President Coriolanus Snow. He's forced to appear on television and deliver discouraging messages to Katniss and the rebel alliance—a job that he clearly despises. After the rebels free Peeta from captivity, it's revealed that he's been conditioned to regard Katniss as an enemy. Thus, for the remainder of the novel, he must struggle to recover his old feelings of love and affection for Katniss. Although Peeta is frequently a danger to Katniss and to the other rebel soldiers, he shows many signs of his old charisma and nobility, staying calm in the face of danger long after his peers have become paralyzed by fear. In the end, Katniss “chooses” to love Peeta because Peeta embodies mercy, justice, love, and peace.

Gale Hawthorne – A friend of Katniss Everdeen and a fellow resident of District 12, Gale undergoes arguably the most shocking transformation in *Mockingjay*. Though he's known Katniss for her entire life, he displays subtle signs of moving away from her, even as he continues to love her—both romantically and as a friend. It is Gale who callously proposes that the rebels **bomb** a civilian area in District 2, reasoning that the government has already bombed his own home—a rationale that horrifies Katniss. In the end, Gale represents a harsh, vindictive mindset that Katniss finds attractive, but ultimately can't embrace. While Katniss settles down with Peeta, a far gentler person, Gale takes a prestigious job in the rebels' new government, indicating that his talents for cold, almost inhuman decision-making will serve him well.

Haymitch Abernathy – The former champion of the Hunger Games, a member of the rebel alliance, and Peeta and Katniss's mentor, Haymitch is a crafty, intelligent, and often deeply cynical man. He blames Katniss for abandoning Peeta in the Hunger Games arena, a decision that leads to Peeta's torture and imprisonment by the government. Nevertheless, he helps Katniss film propaganda videos for the rebel alliance, displaying an impressive level of knowledge and insight into Katniss's personality. Haymitch can be harsh—at the end of the novel, he votes for a final Hunger Games between the children of the rebels' enemies, even though he knows firsthand how devastating such an event would be. In the end, Haymitch's alcoholism and depression prevent him from being at the center of either the rebel alliance or the rebels' new government.

President Alma Coin – The leader of District 13, President Alma Coin cooperates closely with Katniss Everdeen for most of the novel and Katniss seems to trust Coin based on the idea of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” – if Coin is working



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Katniss Everdeen – A strong, resourceful, and principled young woman who is the protagonist of *Mockingjay* and the other books of the Hunger Games Trilogy. In this novel, Katniss Everdeen struggles with her role as the **Mockingjay**—the symbol and mascot of the rebel cause. She agrees to take up the role, not only because she hates President Coriolanus Snow, the leader of the government of Panem, but also because she wants to protect her friends and family, and so uses her position to bargain for their safety. As Katniss proceeds with her duties as Mockingjay—visiting the districts of Panem, making propaganda videos, etc.—she comes to a number of disturbing conclusions about the leaders of the rebellion: that they are using her just as Snow did, and are just as power-hungry as Snow himself. Ultimately, Katniss rejects the Mockingjay role that the rebels have designed for her, and she kills Coin and retreats from the public sphere for good. In this

against Snow, then Katniss is on Coin's side. Nevertheless, as the novel progresses the reader and Katniss come to recognize that Coin embodies many of the qualities that Katniss despised in President Snow. Like Snow, Coin is more than willing to execute those who disagree with her or break the draconian rules of life in District 13. Like Snow, she understands the importance of propaganda, and thus enlists Katniss's help in filming a series of videos designed to inspire the rebellion against Snow's government. Her manipulations—both of Katniss and of President Snow—result in a victory for the rebels—yet it seems that the government Coin plans to establish may be superficially different than Snow's, but is no less corrupt or immoral than its predecessor. In general, Collins suggests that Coin's brutality and cruelty at least equals Snow's—in fact, the novel suggests, she and Snow are just two sides of the same "Coin."

President Coriolanus Snow – The tyrannical leader of the government of Panem, President Coriolanus Snow appears in only a few chapters of *Mockingjay*. Nevertheless, his influence can be felt on every page of the novel: it is he who bombs rebel hospitals and orders military strikes on Katniss's new home in District 13. In one of the key passages in the novel, Snow reveals to Katniss that it was President Alma Coin, the leader of the rebel alliance, who murdered Katniss's sister Prim with a double bomb. Also in this passage, Snow reveals the truth about Katniss's role as the **Mockingjay**: she's been a decoy, designed to distract Snow from his own people and make him waste his resources trying to kill her. Ultimately, Snow isn't a sympathetic character in the least—he's a mass murderer—but he displays more intelligence and insight than any other character in the book. As he likes to say, he "tells the truth"—and this is what makes him so frightening.

Plutarch Heavensbee – Plutarch Heavensbee is a double agent who seemed to be working for the government headed by President Coriolanus Snow, but in actuality is loyal to the rebels. A former resident of the Capitol of Panem (and Head Gamemaker of the Hunger Games), Plutarch is used to a pampered, luxurious life, and he finds it difficult to adjust to the spartan lifestyle common in District 13. Although Plutarch proves himself highly useful to the rebel cause many times—stealing government information that allows a rebel team to infiltrate the Capitol, for instance—Katniss believes that Plutarch is expendable to the rebel cause, and warns him that President Alma Coin won't hesitate to kill him if the need arises.

Effie Trinket – An employee of the Capitol, the superficial but sympathetic woman Effie Trinket was Katniss Everdeen's personal escort during both the Hunger Games and the subsequent Victory Tour. She's seen toward the end of *Mockingjay*, helping Katniss prepare for her upcoming "execution ceremony," in which Katniss is supposed to kill President Coriolanus Snow.

Finnick Odair – A young, beautiful, and intelligent champion of the Hunger Games, who competed in the 75th Hunger Games alongside Katniss. Finnick Odair is a rebel who gladly films propaganda and participates in dangerous rebel missions. His experiences in the Hunger Games have traumatized him greatly, and he suffers from being separated from his love, Annie Cresta. Although the rebels rescue Annie from the government, and Finnick and Annie eventually marry, Finnick dies during a mission to the Capitol.

Primrose (Prim) 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](#). Katniss spends time with Primrose (Prim) in a bomb shelter while the government is bombing District 13. Here, Prim proves herself to be intelligent and insightful, pointing out that President Coriolanus Snow is using Peeta to manipulate Katniss. Prim's death by a double bomb devastates Katniss and plays a major role in her actions in the final three chapters of the book.

Johanna Mason – A young, intelligent champion of the Hunger Games, Johanna was arrested by the government after failing to escape from the Hunger Games arena at the end of [Catching Fire](#). After the rebels free her from prison, she's shown to be deeply traumatized by her time in the arena and by her subsequent imprisonment and torture. Ultimately, she fails to qualify for the rebels' mission to the Capitol: war and violence have hurt her too much.

Beetee – A brilliant rebel and former Hunger Games competitor, Beetee uses his scientific training to design various deadly weapons for the rebel alliance, including flaming arrows and **double bombs**. While Katniss doesn't get much insight into Beetee's thoughts or his consciousness, he seems to have no qualms about designing technology that will be used to kill innocent civilians.

Cressida – The head of the TV crew that's assigned to film Katniss's propaganda videos. Cressida is a talented director with a keen eye for useful footage. Her desire to film Katniss in action is so great that she lies about Katniss's plan to kill Coriolanus Snow in the hopes that Katniss will act heroically on camera.

Tigris – A resident of the Capitol who is sympathetic to the rebel cause, Tigris used to be a designer for the Hunger Games. However, she was banned from the profession because she received too many surgeries—now, her face looks like a tiger's. Tigris helps Katniss and the other rebels by giving them food and shelter, telling them where President Coriolanus Snow lives, and supplying them with warm clothing.

Delly – A young woman from District 12 who manages to escape and make it to District 13. She is very positive and kind, and serves an important role in helping Peeta to recover from the torture and conditioning he endured at the Capitol. Delly also is a member of the mission to infiltrate the Capitol later in

the book. She survives the mission.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Greasy Sae – A resident of District 12 who moves to District 13 after the government bombs District 12.

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. After being brought to District 13 to take care of Katniss, Venia is imprisoned and starved for stealing bread.

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. After being brought to District 13 to take care of Katniss, Octavia is imprisoned and starved for stealing bread.

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. After being brought to District 13 to take care of Katniss, Flavius is imprisoned and starved for stealing bread.

Cinna – Katniss’s stylist and friend. While Cinna never speaks in *Mockingjay*, and is mentioned only a handful of times, he sends Katniss’s old prep team to District 13 to attend to her needs.

Caesar Flickerman – The vain, superficial TV personality tasked with interviewing the contestants in the Hunger Games, Caesar Flickerman is a political puppet. In *Mockingjay*, he’s seen interviewing Peeta about his opinions on the rebel alliance, essentially prompting Peeta to spout government propaganda.

Enobaria – A former Hunger Games competitor and rebel who is arrested by the government. Enobaria survives the war between the rebels and the government, and ultimately votes for one final Hunger Games competition between the children of the rebels’ enemies.

Annie Cresta – A mentally unstable woman, beloved of Finnick Odair, Annie Cresta is kidnaped by the government in the hopes of weakening Finnick by filling him with despair. The rebels later free Annie from prison, and she marries Finnick shortly before his death.

Katniss’s mother – Katniss’s mother appears in *Mockingjay* only briefly, but it’s shown that she’s been very useful to the rebel cause as a nurse and a healer.

Messalla – Cressida’s assistant.

Commander Paylor – A strong, clear-headed rebel leader in District 8 who ultimately ascends to become president of Panem after the rebels defeat President Coriolanus Snow, and after Katniss kills President Alma Coin.

Boggs – A rebel soldier and Coin’s assistant. Boggs is a principled man who is protective of Katniss and is less

bloodthirsty than many of the other rebels.

Jackson – A rebel soldier who is second in command to Boggs during the mission to the Capitol.

Pollux – A member of Cressida’s TV crew.

Soldier York – The rebel soldier who trains Katniss for her mission to the Capitol.

Fulvia Cardew – Plutarch Heavensbee’s assistant, and an important part of the team responsible for producing Katniss’s propaganda footage.



THEMES

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



REVOLUTION AND ITS PROBLEMS

The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan argued that there was a contradiction built into the word “revolution.” A political revolution, in the minds of most, is a sudden, monumental change—a great leap forward. At the same time, “revolution” can also mean a complete, 360-degree turn, right back to one’s original position. Thus Lacan concluded that revolutions don’t always lead to the great changes they promise. Often, things just stay the same. Or as the band The Who put it, “Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.”

In *Mockingjay*, Suzanne Collins slowly reveals the depressing possibility that the rebel cause fighting against the Capitol isn’t at all morally superior to the *status quo* government headed by President Snow. The president of the rebel alliance, Alma Coin, orders her own people to be imprisoned and tortured, or to go off and be killed in battle. Moreover, she treats Katniss almost exactly as President Snow treated her—as a mascot to be used to further her own cause. Thus, she manipulates Katniss into playing the part of the “Mockingjay”—going around Panem, supporting rebel armies, and filming propaganda—by appealing to Katniss’s feelings for her loved ones (Peeta, her mother and sister), just as Snow manipulated Katniss into traveling around Panem in support of Snow’s regime. In all, Coin’s rebel cause isn’t tremendously different from Snow’s tyrannical government—as Collins wittily suggests, the rebels and the government of Panem are merely two sides of the same “Coin.” During a television interview with Caesar Flickerman, Peeta claims that the war between the rebels and the government of Panem is pointless—no actual progress will come from it, meaning that its results will be only violence, destruction, and death. It’s difficult to tell if Peeta is saying this because the

government is pressuring him to do so, or because he sincerely believes it. In the same way, it's difficult to tell if Collins believes her own words—is a violent rebellion ever justified, or will it merely be “revolution” back to where we started from?

At the end of *Mockingjay*, the rebel uprising has resulted in a new form of government – one that Katniss has ensured neither Snow nor Coin will lead. This new government is vaguely described as being “democratic,” but Collins doesn't give many other details about how this new government works, or, crucially, if it's more or less just than President Snow's. She makes it clear that one concrete change has been enacted, however: the Hunger Games have been banned. Nevertheless, Collins also indicates that the new government has only banned the Hunger Games because it's a savvy political move. Collins acknowledges that revolution can sometimes result in “moral” progress, but she also makes it clear that moral progress isn't always enacted for moral reasons. The goal of a government is to stay in power. If staying in power requires violating human rights, so be it. If it involves honoring human rights, all the better. On this frustrating, surprisingly adult note of compromise and disillusionment, Collins ends the Hunger Games trilogy.



THE POWER AND DANGER OF SYMBOLS

From the very beginning of *Mockingjay*, it's made clear that symbols are of the utmost importance in the war between the government of Panem and the rebel alliance. The leader of the rebels, President Alma Coin, asks Katniss to play the part of Mockingjay: to be the embodiment of the rebels' energy, courage, and desire for change.

When Katniss agrees to do so, it becomes clear that the Mockingjay is a key part of the rebel war effort. Katniss visits the various districts of Panem, and her presence by itself is enough to persuade the rebels to fight harder. When she visits a rebel hospital, she takes on an almost Christ-like aspect—it's as if the aura of the Mockingjay symbol is so powerful that Katniss has the ability to heal the sick. Rebels use television to broadcast Katniss's performances as the Mockingjay across Panem, thereby using a symbol to inspire millions of people to join the rebel cause.

The greatest power of symbols, Collins suggests, is that they act as a kind of placebo. Katniss, by herself, is a young, self-admittedly awkward woman. Yet when she assumes the guise of the Mockingjay, the people of Panem worship her. Katniss herself is the same person in either case. But because other people associate the Mockingjay with courage, energy, and rebellion, Katniss *does*, in fact, take on great majesty. A symbol is powerful, in short, because people agree that it represents something greater than what it literally is.

Symbols inspire people to do all sorts of virtuous and

impressive things. And yet, symbols can be twisted and manipulated, as well. At the end of *Mockingjay*, it becomes clear how thoroughly President Coin has manipulated the power of symbols. By sending Katniss throughout Panem, she encourages the people of the districts to fight the government, and usually to die. At the same, she subtly encourages President Snow to spend huge resources trying to kill Katniss, thereby neglecting the rest of Panem and weakening his own government. The end result is that Snow's regime collapses from the inside, the districts of Panem rise up against the Capitol, and (most diabolically) Panem is left so weak that Coin can easily “swoop in” and seize control of the country. Coin has, in essence, used the power of symbols to misdirect her enemies and weaken her rivals, ensuring victory. Ironically, Katniss—the Mockingjay herself—had no idea that Coin was using her in this way.

In the end, Collins suggests, symbols are neither purely “good” nor “bad.” They are, rather, powerful tools that can be used for any number of different purposes. Because Katniss is deeply uncomfortable with the notion that symbols can be used to send people to their deaths, she ultimately gives up her duties as Mockingjay, abandoning the world of symbols for good.



ROLE-PLAYING, AUTHENTICITY, TELEVISION, AND THE SELF

In *Catching Fire*, the prequel to *Mockingjay*, Katniss is forced to “perform” before all of Panem.

Embarking on her Victory Tour, she's instructed to make a few speeches, smile and wave, and honor the rules of the government headed by President Snow.

In *Mockingjay*, Katniss, now working with a rebel alliance trying to bring down Snow's government, is given a subtly different kind of script to follow. Just as before, a huge TV crew follows Katniss as she goes through Panem visiting the citizens of each district, and just as before, the purpose of the crew's footage is to build support for a political group (in this case, the rebel alliance) by treating Katniss as its mascot, the Mockingjay.

When the TV crew's footage is judged to be awkward and unconvincing, the rebels tell Katniss that she must “improvise” for the camera. Instead of following a pre-approved script, she is to follow her instincts and “be herself.” This suggests some important questions—what happens when improvisation becomes, in essence, part of the script? It is really possible to “be yourself” when the cameras are rolling?

For much of *Mockingjay*, Katniss blurs the distinction between “being herself” and performing for the camera. As she tours Panem, visiting the wounded and the sick, she shows genuine, unscripted compassion for others—compassion that translates into very effective footage for her TV crew. But there are also times when Katniss seems to lose sight of the difference between performance and improvisation. After she shoots

down an enemy hovercraft in District 8, she is surprised to “find herself” making a bold speech about the rebellion, which inspires hundreds of people to shout and cheer. Just because this speech is improvised doesn’t mean that Katniss is being herself. On the contrary, she’s finding it harder to tell the difference between TV and reality—in short, she’s *becoming* the Mockingjay, the fictional role the rebels have designed for her. In a world where everything is filmed, and where the characters spend huge chunks of time watching propaganda on television, it’s not easy to be one’s “true” self—people are always performing for a camera.

Although she poses some troubling questions with regards to sincerity, performance, and reality, Collins steers Katniss toward the optimistic conclusion that it *is*, in fact, possible to move past the demands of the camera and be “true” to oneself. At the climax of *Mockingjay*, Katniss is instructed to kill President Snow in front of an audience of millions. In essence, Katniss is placed in front of a camera and told to be herself—to satisfy her desire for revenge and kill her enemy. Yet instead of following her directions, Katniss shoots President Alma Coin, the very person who organized this public execution in the first place.

Through Katniss’s action, the novel suggests that in a modern world, in which there are cameras and mass media at every turn, it is difficult but possible to be true to oneself. People must question the mass media and think critically about sources of power in society. Most importantly, they must ask themselves, “which of my desires are truly my own, and which have been passed on to me by other people?” When Katniss asks herself this question, she realizes that the rebel alliance—that Alma Coin—has craftily manipulating her thoughts and feelings, pushing her to crave revenge on President Snow all as part of Coin’s own larger effort to seize power. By declining to “play along” any more, she not only throws out the script; she throws away the camera, too.



COMPASSION, CALLOUSNESS, AND REVENGE

In *Mockingjay*, even more overtly than in [Catching Fire](#) or [The Hunger Games](#), Collins writes about the conflict between compassion and callousness, or, in a slightly different sense, between forgiveness and revenge.

The rebel alliance headed by President Coin commits numerous war crimes in its haste to defeat the government of President Snow: it bombs civilians, imprisons its own people, and even commits atrocities that it then tries to pin on Snow. At many times, the only moral justification that the characters supply for such acts is revenge. When the rebels are debating whether or not to bomb District 2, Gale argues that government already blew up District 12—therefore, the rebels are justified in responding in kind.

The moral problem with Gale and the rebels’ “eye-for-an-eye” philosophy, however, is that immoral actions always lead to more immoral actions: one war crime must always be balanced out with another. Katniss Everdeen struggles with the “eye-for-an-eye” philosophy throughout *Mockingjay*. As a result of her experiences in the Hunger Games and in battle, she’s lost much of her compassion for others—indeed, she seriously contemplates killing Peeta, one her closest friends, because he could compromise the success of her mission. Katniss craves revenge—the ultimate “eye-for-an-eye”—against President Snow: she wants to kill him because he killed her friends and blew up her home, District 12. Violence and bloodshed have trained Katniss to think in terms of revenge—that every act of violence must be responded to with another act of violence.

At the end of the novel, Katniss is in an ideal position to enact her revenge on Snow: she’s supposed to shoot him with an arrow, watched by millions of eager spectators. To everyone’s surprise, however, Katniss instead shoots President Alma Coin, the power-hungry leader of the rebel alliance. Katniss gives up her chance for personal revenge, favoring instead an ideal of justice that resists the sort of ultimate power Coin seeks to hold. Similarly, she refuses to support a further installment of the Hunger Games, Games which would be designed to “balance out” the government’s abuse of the districts of Panem.

Katniss ultimately recognizes that injustice can’t be canceled out with more injustice. Shooting Snow or supporting a new Hunger Games won’t relieve her of the sadness of losing her family and friends in battle, or of having to compete in the original Hunger Games. Even after Snow died, her pain and trauma would remain intact—there is, in short, no “quick fix” for injustice.

This certainly doesn’t mean that Katniss forgives Snow for his war crimes, or that she renounces violence altogether (quite the contrary, since she shoots Coin—who is, in her opinion, an equally evil leader). Rather, it suggests that Katniss has recognized the limitations of the “eye-for-an-eye” doctrine, and has rejected the moral callousness her friend Gale has acquired during the war. Implicitly, she trades callousness for compassion, or at least the promise of compassion. In the epilogue to the novel, set 20 years later, we see Katniss playing with her children and embracing her husband, Peeta. Revenge and moral callousness are seductive solutions to the world’s evils, Collins concludes, but in the end they’re always unsatisfying. The better, and much more challenging, solution is to embrace love and compassion.



TRAUMA AND LOVE

As the Hunger Games trilogy moves to its conclusion, Katniss struggles with more and more traumatic experiences. In *Mockingjay* alone, she witnesses her own sister being killed by a bomb, and her close friends having their legs blown off and their faces melted. How

does Katniss—and, for that matter, the other characters in *Mockingjay* who lose loved ones—cope with trauma?

In general, the characters who experience the greatest trauma—those who lose loved ones to war and violence—respond by turning to their other loved ones for support and understanding. Throughout the *Hunger Games* trilogy Katniss grapples with loss, and turns to her two closest friends, Gale and Peeta, for help. In [Catching Fire](#), Peeta's ability to empathize with the pain Katniss has experienced in the Hunger Games kindles their romance. Similarly, in *Mockingjay*, the death of Katniss's sister Primrose—to which Gale reacts with callousness and Peeta reacts with grief and sympathy—pushes Katniss to “choose” Peeta over Gale.

It's possible to see Katniss's feelings for Peeta and Gale as shallow and selfish, as if these young men were only tools for mitigating her pain—and this is the interpretation of Katniss's feelings Gale ultimately subscribes to. When discussing Katniss with Peeta, Gale says that she turns to whichever one of them “she thinks she can't survive without.” Gale is suggesting that Katniss doesn't respect either of them as people: her first response is always to think of herself and her own survival.

What Gale fails to understand (and what ultimately distances him from Katniss) is that self-interest and compassion don't have to be mutually exclusive. Gale isn't entirely wrong to say that Katniss turns to him to alleviate her pain, but this isn't necessarily, or isn't exclusively, a selfish behavior. To take the inverse example: Gale, it's often pointed out in *Mockingjay*, doesn't value his own life at all—he's perfectly willing to sacrifice himself for the good of the rebel alliance. And yet Gale's selflessness doesn't translate into any compassion for other people—on the contrary, he thinks that he's perfectly justified in taking other people's lives *because* he feels no hesitation in laying down his own.

Just as selflessness doesn't necessarily equate to compassion, Katniss's self-interest doesn't necessarily mean that she doesn't care about other people. This becomes clear at the end of *Mockingjay*, as Katniss begins to fall in love with Peeta. She simultaneously loves herself and sincerely cares about Peeta. In no small part, she feels this way because Peeta understands what she's been going through. He too has competed in the Hunger Games and experienced torture and manipulation from the government, so in Peeta, Katniss has a friend who helps her cope with her trauma, and whom she helps to cope with his own, similar trauma.

In the epilogue, Collins reveals that Katniss and Peeta marry, have children, and continue to love one another. She also makes it clear that neither Katniss nor Peeta can ever entirely forget their traumas—they'll always suffer nightmares about “the old days.” It is precisely *because* trauma never fully goes away that love and friendship are such important antidotes to it. Katniss and Peeta will never overcome their own memories, and thus

they must remain together, helping both themselves and each other to cope with tragedy.



SYMBOLS

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



MOCKINGJAY

As in [Catching Fire](#), in *Mockingjay* the **mockingjay** bird is an important symbol of Katniss Everdeen's conflicted nature, and her complicated roles in the wars between the rebels and the Capitol. Mockingjays are the descendants of genetically-engineered jabberjays (birds designed to be spies for the government) and true mockingbirds, and so they are resourceful, independent survivors who are, in a way, products of the government's tyranny—like Katniss herself. As Katniss takes on a more important role as a Panem celebrity and symbol for rebellion (in the first two books of the trilogy), she is increasingly associated with mockingjays—from their whistle, which she uses during the Hunger Games, to the dresses designed for her by Cinna. In *Mockingjay*, Katniss agrees to become the symbolic figure of “the Mockingjay” for the rebel alliance headed by President Alma Coin. In this role, Katniss aims to be an inspiration for those who oppose the government headed by President Snow, inspiring them to rise up against tyranny. Katniss is highly successful in her capacity as Mockingjay: when she travels to the rebel districts, her presence immediately inspires rebel forces. Indeed, when she visits a hospital, her aura is so strong that it makes some of the patients feel better. Ultimately the Mockingjay is something like a symbol of a symbol—in other words, by studying what the Mockingjay “does” in the novel, we can understand how symbols themselves work—how they influence people, and what their limitations are.



ROSES

President Snow sends **roses** to Katniss at several points in the novel—most shockingly, just after he orders her home, District 12, to be bombed. Because roses are typically a sign of affection and love, Snow's message—that is, the juxtaposition of roses and violence—is far more appalling than violence by itself could ever be. This kind of juxtaposition is typical of the government's political “style”: during the Hunger Games, for instance, the government combines entertainment and pleasure with violence. In general, then, roses symbolize the government at its gaudiest and most terrifying.



ARROW

At the end of *Mockingjay*, when the government headed by President Snow has been defeated, Katniss is invited to shoot Snow with an **arrow** given to her by the new leader, President Coin. Just as she's about to carry out her duties and execute Snow, Katniss turns and shoots Coin (with whom she's become greatly disillusioned), killing her instantly. The arrow sums up Katniss's dilemma as *Mockingjay*: she's forced to stick to a script—in this case, she's supposed to use her arrow to kill Snow, according to Coin's wishes. At the same time, an arrow is a weapon, and the only one who can control a weapon is the person who carries it. Thus, the arrow represents Katniss's potential for going "off-script," disobeying authorities, and using her considerable talents for her own purposes.



THE DOUBLE BOMB

The **double bomb** that kills Katniss Everdeen's sister, Primrose, was designed by two rebels: Beetee and Gale, Katniss's lifelong friend. Previously, Gale had explained that the double bombs are designed to appeal to mankind's weakness for compassion. The first round of bombs, he goes on, is brutal, but the second round, which goes off shortly after the first—once a large crowd of sympathetic helpers show up—is far deadlier. Setting aside the double bombs' obvious links to tragedy, betrayal, and the way they represent the rebels' willingness to be just as bloody and underhanded as Snow in achieving their aims, they're also an apt metaphor for Katniss's state of mind throughout *Mockingjay*. The first "round" of pain that Katniss experiences is physical in nature: wounds she sustains during the Hunger Games themselves, rebel battles, the destruction of District 12, etc. The "second round" of devastation is always more painful for Katniss, however, because it appeals to her innate sense of compassion, rather than her body. Katniss is more pained by guilt than by her physical wounds—after the Hunger Games, for instance, Katniss is more upset at having abandoned Peeta to be kidnapped than at having hurt her arm.



THE HANGING TREE

Katniss sings a song called "The Hanging Tree" about a man who has been hanged. In the song he calls out for his lover, still alive, to "flee," but in the end, it becomes clear that he's asking her to die along with him, hanging from a tree. Although Katniss has known this song for many years—her dead father taught it to her—it takes on new meanings as she becomes older, more mature, and more traumatized by the violence she's witnessed in the Hunger Games. The Hanging Tree itself, a symbol of the eerie peacefulness of death, becomes increasingly appealing to

her—she wishes she could escape from her duties and obligations to the rebel cause, and be "at peace." This doesn't mean that Katniss is suicidal, exactly. Rather, the tree encapsulates both pain and peace—in this way, it represents a kind of "compromise state." Because of the trauma Katniss has accumulated, to be both peaceful and wounded is the best she can hope for.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scholastic Press edition of *Mockingjay* published in 2014.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ I use a technique one of the doctors suggested. I start with the simplest things I know to be true and work toward the more complicated. The list begins to roll in my head... My name is Katniss Everdeen. I am seventeen years old. My home is District 12. I was in the Hunger Games. I escaped. The Capitol hates me. Peeta was taken prisoner. He is thought to be dead. Most likely he is dead. It is probably best if he is dead...

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Peeta Mellark

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis



The third book of the Hunger Games trilogy shows Katniss Everdeen coping with trauma, paranoia, anxiety, and many other psychological problems. She's experienced brutal violence, and even witnessed some of her friends being killed in front of her. So one of the major questions of the novel is: how does (or doesn't) Katniss cope with her trauma?


In this quotation, Katniss shows us one way she's been coached to deal with her pain: listing the things she knows to be true. Such a technique helps Katniss in a number of different ways. First, it helps her distinguish between government propaganda and reality: while the difference might seem perfectly clear to readers, distinguishing between propaganda and truth is especially important for Katniss because she lives in a society where the government is constantly altering reality. Katniss's coping technique is also useful because it shows mental health and maturation as a progression from simple to complex: Katniss begins by listing simple truths, then uses this simple truths to reach a kind of "truce" with more traumatic

realities. It's also worth noting that this quotation is a way for Collins to deliver some exposition: Katniss is coping with trauma, but she's also cluing in first-time readers to the events of the previous two books in the Hunger Games trilogy.

☝ No one will fully understand—how it's not just a flower, not even just President Snow's flower, but a promise of revenge—because no one else sat in the study with him when he threatened me before the Victory Tour. Positioned on my dresser, that white-as-snow rose is a personal message to me. It speaks of unfinished business. It whispers, I can find you. I can reach you. Perhaps I am watching you now.

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

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

Shortly before the beginning of the novel, Katniss's hometown, District 12, is bombed by the Panem government headed by President Snow in retaliation for Katniss's acts of rebellion. When Katniss walks through the ashes of her town, she's surprised to find a rose in the remains of her house. Although there's no message attached to the rose, Katniss has no doubt about who placed it there, or what it means: she's positive that President Snow sent the rose to remind Katniss that he's watching her at all times, and will try to hunt her down and kill her.

It is interesting that we're not told if Katniss is correct in her interpretation of the rose. Her thought process seems reasonable—President Snow is famous for waging psychological warfare on his enemies. And yet Katniss has been wrong before when she tries to interpret ambiguous symbols (in the prequel to *Mockingjay*, she completely misinterpreted Plutarch Heavensbee's watch, a "symbol" that helped to save her life). We're reminded that signs and symbols—of which the rose is certainly an example—can never be understood with complete certainty. In the end, the quotation says as much about Katniss's current state of mind as it does about President Snow. Whether Snow placed the rose in District 12 or not, Katniss has become paranoid, frightened, and constantly anxious, haunted by

her traumatic past.

Chapter 3 Quotes

☝ "It's just...Peeta. I'm afraid if we do win, the rebels will execute him as a traitor."

Prim thinks this over. "Katniss, I don't think you understand how important you are to the cause. Important people usually get what they want. If you want to keep Peeta safe from the rebels, you can."

Related Characters: Primrose (Prim) Everdeen, Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Peeta Mellark

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 34

Explanation and Analysis

Katniss Everdeen's friend (and sometimes boyfriend) Peeta Mellark has been kidnapped by the Panem government in retaliation for Katniss's decision to join a group of rebels. Katniss tells Primrose, her little sister, that she's afraid that Peeta will be killed if the rebels win the war with the Capitol, since the Capitol has forced or brainwashed Peeta into making a series of anti-rebel propaganda videos. Although Prim is much younger than Katniss, she's remarkably perceptive—arguably more so than Katniss. Prim correctly points out that Katniss will be able to use her influence to keep Peeta alive.

Prim's argument is both wise and naive at the same time. She sees that Peeta will be kept alive because of his relationship to Katniss, but she wrongly assumes that Katniss has genuine power over the rebel leadership. The reality, Katniss later realizes, is that the rebels will keep Peeta alive, but not out of respect for Katniss—on the contrary, they'll keep him so that they have a way of controlling Katniss. Just like the Capitol itself, the rebels will try to manipulate Katniss into obedience. The fact that Katniss hasn't considered the rebels' course of action suggests that she still believes that the rebels are very different from the government of Panem, when in reality they're virtually the same. Furthermore, Katniss's unawareness that Peeta will be kept alive proves that she's also unaware of the extent of her own importance to the rebels.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☛ "Punishing my prep team's a warning," I tell her. "Not just to me. But to you, too. About who's really in control and what happens if she's not obeyed. If you had any delusions about having power, I'd let them go now. Apparently, a Capitol pedigree is no protection here. Maybe it's even a liability."

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Flavius, Octavia, Venia

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 50


Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after Katniss arrives at the rebel base, ruled over by President Alma Coin, she discovers that her prep team (i.e., the people who do her makeup, hair, etc.) has been imprisoned, supposedly to punish them for stealing food. Although Katniss is able to use her friendships with Plutarch and other important officials to free her prep team, the incident sends her a clear message. As Katniss explains in the quotation, Coin wants to let Katniss know that she (Coin) is in charge. Sending Katniss's friends to prison at the drop of a hat is a not-so-subtle reminder that Coin could do the same to Katniss if she wanted; her power over the rebel base is virtually absolute.

In a broader sense, Coin's actions start to suggest to Katniss that the rebel alliance against the current government of Panem isn't really that different from the government itself. Where the Capitol, headed by President Snow, tried to blackmail Katniss into obedience by threatening her friends and family, Coin proves that she's willing to do exactly the same. And whereas the Panem government exploited the people of District 12, throwing them in jail for no discernible reason, Coin's rebel alliance reverses Snow's actions by punishing former residents of the Capitol, such as Katniss's prep team. Coin's rebel alliance is opposite and yet also identical to Snow's.

☛ The president allows a few moments of unrest, and then continues in her brisk fashion. Only now the words coming out of her mouth are news to me. "But in return for this unprecedented request, Soldier Everdeen has promised to devote herself to our cause. It follows that any deviance from her mission, in either motive or deed, will be viewed as a break in this agreement. The immunity would be terminated and the fate of the four victors determined by the law of District Thirteen. As would her own. Thank you." In other words, I step out of line and we're all dead.

Related Characters: President Alma Coin, Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Peeta Mellark

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis


Katniss has used her influence and power to strike up a bargain with President Alma Coin: Coin will spare the lives of Katniss's friends (including Peeta), in return for which Katniss will devote herself to the rebel cause. Katniss must earn her friends' lives by making propaganda videos and speaking out in favor of the rebels. Here, Coin confirms the bargain by announcing it to the rebels under her control: if Katniss breaks her promise, everyone in the alliance will know about it (and the same is true of Coin).

Coin's agreement with Katniss tells us a lot about Coin's personality, and about the style of government she favors. Much like her rival, President Snow, Coin wants to use Katniss as a political puppet—a famous, instantly recognizable symbol who can be manipulated to suit the needs of the rebel alliance. And much as President Snow pressured Katniss into obedience by threatening to hurt her friends, Alma Coin is now implicitly threatening Katniss in precisely the same way—a threat that Katniss understands perfectly.

Chapter 5 Quotes

☛ And now Coin, with her fistful of precious nukes and her well-oiled machine of a district, finding it's even harder to groom a Mockingjay than to catch one. But she has been the quickest to determine that I have an agenda of my own and am therefore not to be trusted. She has been the first to publicly brand me as a threat.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), President Alma Coin

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

Katniss considers the agreement she's just struck up with President Coin, according to which Katniss will take part in the rebels' propaganda campaign, in return for Coin's protection of her loved ones (such as Peeta). Although Katniss proposes this agreement in order to protect the people she cares about, Coin tries to persuade her people

that Katniss is a potential threat to the safety of the rebel alliance: i.e., because of Katniss's ties to the government of Panem, she can't entirely be trusted.


As the quotation makes very clear, Coin takes steps to paint Katniss as untrustworthy because she understands that Katniss's interests don't align with the rebels' on all issues—for example, Katniss wants to protect Peeta, whereas most of the rebels want him dead. Coin's steps to "brand" Katniss a threat—essentially, to control the "public relations" side of their agreement—shows us that Coin is a worthy opponent for Katniss. As much as President Snow or Katniss herself, Coin understands the importance of public perception, and she maintains power by controlling how her people perceive her, her allies, and her enemies.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☝☝ Haymitch holds up the notepad. "So, the question is, what do all of these have in common?"
"They were Katniss's," says Gale quietly. "No one told her what to do or say."

"Unscripted, yes!" says Beetee. He reaches over and pats my hand. "So we should just leave you alone, right?"
People laugh. I even smile a little.

Related Characters: Gale Hawthorne, Beetee, Haymitch Abernathy, Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

As Katniss prepares to begin her propaganda campaign on behalf of the rebel alliance, she brainstorms with her friends, such as Haymitch and Plutarch, about the best way to strengthen the rebels. Haymitch's conclusion is that Katniss is always at her best when she's improvising. Although Katniss is used to being filmed, she's not actually very good at acting, and there's a part of her that acts more instinctively, without any regard for the camera or the script.

The irony of Katniss's propaganda campaign for the rebels—an irony which Beetee touches upon in the quotation—is that she's being *ordered* to improvise in front of a camera—improvisation *is* the script. Although Katniss has excelled at improvising and acting "naturally" in the past, now her improvisations can no longer be, strictly speaking, "natural." The only way for Katniss to be truly natural is to turn the cameras off—and as Beetee implies, this simply

isn't possible. In all, Katniss's propaganda campaign is paradoxical at its very heart: she must improvise, but also partially plan out and censor her improvisation.

Chapter 7 Quotes



☝☝ "Katniss?" a voice croaks out from my left, breaking apart from the general din. "Katniss?" A hand reaches for me out of the haze. I cling to it for support.

Attached to the hand is a young woman with an injured leg. Blood has seeped through the heavy bandages, which are crawling with flies. Her face reflects her pain, but something else, too, something that seems completely incongruous with her situation. "Is it really you?"

"Yeah, it's me," I get out.

Joy. That's the expression on her face. At the sound of my voice, it brightens, erases the suffering momentarily.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 89


Explanation and Analysis


In this quotation, Katniss arrives at a scene of mass carnage: the rebels in Panem are rising up against the powerful, militaristic Panem government, and they're being punished for their uprising. Rebels lie on the ground, bleeding and crying out in pain. When Katniss arrives on the scene—being filmed for propaganda purposes—she's amazed to find that her mere presence on the scene can inspire people and make them stronger in the most literal of ways. In this scene, where Katniss acts as a kind of Christ-figure, a few seconds of her time helps a wounded young woman re-energize in the midst of battle.

Katniss's behavior during the battle scene reinforces an important point: the power of symbols. At their best, as in this quotation, Katniss's status as a renowned celebrity is a powerful force for good. She's a symbol as well as a person: her status as a rebel and a Hunger Games victor inspires people throughout the nation to rebel against the government. Interestingly, Katniss does almost nothing in this quotation: it is the young woman's *ideas* of what Katniss stands for, not Katniss herself, that brings joy. All powerful symbols work this way: by themselves, a cross, a flag, or a star are nothing important, but because of the powerful associations they inspire in people, they can bring energy, joy, and hope.

●● I used to think the murderer was the creepiest guy imaginable. Now, with a couple of trips to the Hunger Games under my belt, I decide not to judge him without knowing more details. Maybe his lover was already sentenced to death and he was trying to make it easier. To let her know he'd be waiting. Or maybe he thought the place he was leaving her was really worse than death. Didn't I want to kill Peeta with that syringe to save him from the Capitol? Was that really my only option? Probably not, but I couldn't think of another at the time.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Peeta Mellark

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

During the filming of one of her propaganda videos for the rebels, Katniss recalls a song she learned as a small child. In the song, a murderer calls out to his lover, asking her to join his side; ultimately, we realize that the man is dead, and wants his lover to join him in the afterlife. Although Katniss has known the song for many years, she begins to consider what it means and finds associations between the lyrics and her own life.

It's not clear whether Katniss associates herself with the murderer or the lover, but it's obvious that she sees a deep similarity between her relationship with Peeta—her lover, currently captured by the government—and the murderer's relationship with his lover. Like the murderer, Katniss (and for that matter, Peeta) is both romantic and deeply selfish. Much as the murderer wants his lover to join him in death, Katniss wants Peeta to "join her" in her state of misery and trauma, even if Peeta is better off in another state of mind. Coping with trauma, as Katniss has been attempting to do for some time now, can be challenging and often rather selfish: one wants a friend with whom to share the burden of pain. Katniss, who's witnessed murder and carnage, feels a deep bond of trust and intimacy with Peeta, because he's one of the few people who knows what she's going through.

Chapter 10 Quotes

●● "If you panic, it could spread like wildfire," explains Plutarch. I just stare at him. "Fire is catching, so to speak," he continues, as if I'm being slow on the uptake. "Why don't I just pretend I'm on camera, Plutarch?" I ask. "Yes! Perfect. One is always much braver with an audience," he says.

Related Characters: Plutarch Heavensbee, Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 140

Explanation and Analysis

Katniss and Plutarch have returned to the rebel base, knowing that President Snow is about to bomb them. Katniss is ordered to run to her bunker underground, but Plutarch gives her special instructions not to panic: because everyone pays attention to her, her panic would spread throughout the rebel base almost immediately. When Katniss sarcastically asks if she should pretend she's on camera, Plutarch seems not to get the joke at all—he agrees that Katniss should act like she's being filmed.

This quotation shows Katniss struggling with the demands of being a symbol and a role model for thousands of people. She clearly resents the fact that even in the midst of a bombing she can't be herself; i.e., she has to be acting at all times. And perhaps because he's spent most of his life directing people on how to behave for an audience, Plutarch seems totally unsympathetic to Katniss's anxieties about being a role model. As far as he's concerned, playing for the audience isn't a burden at all; on the contrary, Katniss acts like a better person when she feels like she has an audience.

Chapter 11 Quotes

●● "Maybe this realization on my part is all Snow needs. Thinking that Peeta was in his possession and being tortured for rebel information was bad. But thinking that he's being tortured specifically to incapacitate me is unendurable. And it's under the weight of this revelation that I truly begin to break.

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

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 154

Explanation and Analysis


Katniss knows that President Snow has kidnapped Peeta in order to control Katniss—Snow knows very well that Katniss has feelings for Peeta, and will do almost anything to keep Peeta safe. President Snow also knows that the best way to control Katniss is to keep Peeta alive; this way, he can threaten and pressure Katniss into obeying him. Even though Katniss knows exactly what President Snow is trying to do to her, her awareness of the matter changes nothing. Her emotional bond with Peeta is too strong, to the point where, even when she's fully conscious that she's being manipulated, she'll still obey Snow.

The quotation illustrates the emotional and psychological turmoil that Katniss goes through during the novel. As a major figure—indeed, a symbol—of the fight against the government, Katniss is a visible target for her opponents. A naturally compassionate, guilt-ridden person, Katniss blames herself for her friends' suffering, since the only reason her friends are being attacked and tortured is because of her fame. In short, the quotation shows Katniss cracking under the pressure of being a symbol of the rebellion.

Chapter 13 Quotes

☝☝ "Of course, we'll try, Prim," says Beetee. "It's just, we don't know to what degree we'll succeed. If any. My guess is that fearful events are the hardest to root out. They're the ones we naturally remember the best, after all."

Related Characters: Beetee, Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Primrose (Prim) Everdeen

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 182

Explanation and Analysis

The rebels succeed in rescuing Peeta from his prison in the Panem government. But even after Peeta is returned to his friends and family, he's traumatized by his time in prison, and the government has even conditioned him to attack Katniss. Although Beetee, a trained scientist, believes that it's possible to "de-condition" Peeta to regard Katniss as a friend once again, he admits that de-conditioning is extremely difficult, since Peeta has been brainwashed to respond to any frightening or anxiety-inducing events.

Beetee's words are important because they confirm the psychological harm Katniss has experienced in the past year and a half. After witnessing death and destruction in and

outside the Hunger Games, Katniss knows very well that it's difficult, if not impossible, to forget fear. As strange as it sounds, human beings are hard-wired to remember trauma—seemingly the events they'd want to forget immediately—very clearly.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☝☝ It's only now that he's been corrupted that I can fully appreciate the real Peeta. Even more than I would've if he'd died. The kindness, the steadiness, the warmth that had an unexpected heat behind it. Outside of Prim, my mother, and Gale, how many people in the world love me unconditionally?

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Gale Hawthorne, Katniss's mother, Primrose (Prim) Everdeen, Peeta Mellark

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis



Peeta—previously one of Katniss's closest confidants and friends—has now been conditioned to kill Katniss, thanks to the government of Panem. Ironically, Peeta's murderousness new "self" helps Katniss appreciate his old personality even more: she's been so used to having Peeta to talk to about her trauma that his sudden change of character immediately registers.

As Katniss experiences more and more traumatic events—the deaths of children, the bombings of entire districts, etc.—it becomes increasingly important for her to talk to people who have experienced the same events. Peeta was one of Katniss's most important friends, in large part because he knew what Katniss was going through. Now that he's been programmed to hate Katniss, Katniss has no choice but to cope with tragedy on her own. As Snow surely intended, conditioning Peeta has wounded Katniss more deeply than a bomb or bullet ever could.

Chapter 15 Quotes

☝☝ I know there are a couple of huge screens here on the square. I saw them on the Victory Tour. It might work, if I were good at this sort of thing. Which I'm not. They tried to feed me lines in those early experiments with the propos, too, and it was a flop.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 213

Explanation and Analysis

Katniss and her propaganda team travel to a faraway district of Panem, where they try to convince government soldiers to surrender, while also inciting the people to rise up against the government. Katniss knows from experience that she's not a compelling figure when she's reading from a script; she's at her best when she's improvising, relying on her instincts and speaking from the heart. In her current situation, then, Katniss is unlikely to be an interesting speaker: she has a clear, predetermined mission, and she's been carefully coached on what to say by her propaganda team.



The fact that Katniss is no good at "sticking to the script" suggests that she has a problem with obeying authority: she has an easier time listening to her own instincts than she does listening to other people. Katniss's inability to follow orders convincingly makes her a liability to the rebel alliance, and yet it *also* makes her a huge asset to the rebels. When she's improvising, Katniss is a compelling and magnetic personality, a living symbol of hope and rebellion. The rebels' challenge, then, is to encourage Katniss to improvise, hoping that they'll be able to "spin" her behavior to support their political cause.

Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ "Always."

In the twilight of morphling, Peeta whispers the word and I go searching for him. It's a gauzy, violet-tinted world, with no hard edges, and many places to hide. I push through cloudbanks, follow faint tracks, catch the scent of cinnamon, of dill. Once I feel his hand on my cheek and try to trap it, but it dissolves like mist through my fingers.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Peeta Mellark

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 218

Explanation and Analysis

After being shot by an angry dissident, Katniss is rushed to the hospital in the rebel base and treated with strong painkillers. As she hallucinates and dreams, Katniss imagines herself talking to Peeta. In her dream, Peeta says

the word "Always."

Katniss's hallucination tells us a lot about her state of mind. Clearly, she's still attracted to Peeta, in spite of the fact that he's been programmed to kill her; the sentimental tone and romantic imagery of the quotation (the violet-tinted world, for instance) clearly suggest romantic attraction and emotional closeness. At the same time, Katniss has a hard time imagining herself in a happy relationship with Peeta—even in her own imagination, she can't conceive of a world where their love doesn't "dissolve."

Chapter 17 Quotes

☝☝ We spend a couple of hours quizzing each other on military terms. I visit my mother and Prim for a while. When I'm back in my compartment, showered, staring into the darkness, I finally ask, "Johanna, could you really hear him screaming?" "That was part of it," she says. "Like the jabberjays in the arena. Only it was real. And it didn't stop after an hour. Tick, tock." "Tick, tock," I whisper back. Roses. Wolf mutts. Tributes. Frosted dolphins. Friends. Mockingjays. Stylists. Me. Everything screams in my dreams tonight.

Related Characters: Johanna Mason, Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Primrose (Prim) Everdeen, Katniss's mother, Peeta Mellark

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 245

Explanation and Analysis

Johanna and Katniss prepare for their mission into the Capitol. To prepare for the mission, they're exposed to psychological stimuli designed to make them frightened and anxious (in another rather heartless move by the rebels). In the quotation, Johanna and Katniss discuss their hallucinations, referencing their common experiences in the Hunger Games. Katniss's depiction of her nightmares illustrates the irrational nature of trauma. There's no rhyme or reason in her recollections of violence: her flashbacks can't be rationalized or understood, just experienced again and again and again.



The passage shows Katniss bonding with a friend over trauma, pain, and fear. In part, Katniss is bonding with Johanna, a woman whom she never liked much, because Peeta isn't available for her. Katniss needs someone to talk to—preferably someone who understands the traumatic flashbacks she's been experiencing. Johanna, who's witnessed just as much violence as Katniss, is a natural



choice.

Chapter 18 Quotes

☝☝ I don't think they quite know what to do with the three of us, particularly me. I have my Mockingjay outfit with me, but I've only been taped in my uniform. Sometimes I use a gun, sometimes they ask me to shoot with my bow and arrows. It's as if they don't want to entirely lose the Mockingjay, but they want to downgrade my role to foot soldier. Since I don't care, it's amusing rather than upsetting to imagine the arguments going on back in 13.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 260

Explanation and Analysis

Katniss has been recruited for a top-secret mission to the Capitol of Panem, where the rebels are planning to overthrow President Snow. At first, Katniss was forbidden to participate in the mission. Now, however, she's convinced her superiors that she'd be a valuable addition to the team. Nevertheless, it's clear that Katniss's commanders don't really know what to do with her. They don't know if she should be a propaganda star (stay out of danger and try to inspire rebels across Panem) or a legitimate soldier (face real danger and risk her life).


The rebels' confusion about how to use Katniss on the mission reminds us that, for the majority of her time with the rebels, Katniss wasn't a proper soldier at all. She walked through battle-torn districts, and even saw some active combat, but her purpose was never to fire a gun or kill her opponents. Katniss was always more valuable as a symbol of the rebel cause. A foot soldier can kill only a few enemies, but a symbol can inspire thousands of new allies at once.

Chapter 19 Quotes

☝☝ "Sometime in the near future, this war will be resolved. A new leader will be chosen," says Boggs. I roll my eyes. "Boggs, no one thinks I'm going to be the leader." "No. They don't," he agrees. "But you'll throw support to someone. Would it be President Coin? Or someone else?" "I don't know. I've never thought about it," I say. "If your immediate answer isn't Coin, then you're a threat. You're the face of the rebellion. You may have more influence than any other single person," says Boggs. "Outwardly, the most you've ever done is tolerated her."

Related Characters: Boggs, Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 264

Explanation and Analysis

Boggs, one of the rebel soldiers who's commanding Katniss on her mission to the Capitol, offers some advice about the future of the rebel alliance. As he explains to Katniss, President Coin will try to maintain her power after defeating President Snow; she'll try to become the leader of the new government. In order to gain power, Coin will have to eliminate her rivals and, even more importantly, people like Katniss who don't particularly like her.

The fact that Katniss hasn't thought about the future of the rebel alliance—who will be the leader of the new government, for example—reminds us that she's still incredibly modest and naive about her own power as a symbol of the rebel cause. Katniss has been a celebrity for over a year now, but she's still not entirely used to this role. As a result, she's genuinely puzzled when Boggs tells her that she has more influence than almost anyone else in Panem. In general, Katniss conforms to one of the classic heroic archetypes: the "reluctant leader"; i.e., a heroine who doesn't know her own strength.

Chapter 20 Quotes

☝☝ "Don't trust them. Don't go back. Kill Peeta. Do what you came to do." What did he mean? Don't trust who? The rebels? Coin? The people looking at me right now? I won't go back, but he must know I can't just fire a bullet through Peeta's head. Can I? Should I? Did Boggs guess that what I really came to do is desert and kill Snow on my own? I can't work all of this out now, so I just decide to carry out the first two orders: to not trust anyone and to move deeper into the Capitol. But how can I justify this? Make them let me keep the Holo?

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

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 282

Explanation and Analysis

During the course of the rebel mission to infiltrate the Capitol, Boggs is killed by a bomb. His dying words, delivered to Katniss, are the ones related in this quotation. As might be expected, Katniss immediately decides not to follow Boggs's advice to kill Peeta—she still loves and values Peeta too much. Katniss is puzzled about what Boggs meant by "don't trust them," however—who is the "them" she isn't supposed to trust?

Katniss's confusion about the meaning of Boggs's dying words reminds us that Katniss doesn't really know who her own friends are. As the novel moves on, it becomes increasingly obvious that the people Katniss trusts, including Coin and Plutarch, have been manipulating her for their own ends. Even Gale, Katniss's lifelong friend, can't be totally trusted anymore, since he often callously ignores the value of human life. Katniss is a puppet, being cynically moved around Panem for the good of her supposed allies. It's a mark of how thoroughly Katniss has been manipulated that the "them" in Boggs's sentence could refer to dozens of people, both enemies and apparent allies.

Chapter 21 Quotes

☝☝ I'd certainly simplify the problem of dealing with his homicidal episodes. I don't know if it's the pods, or the fear, or watching Boggs die, but I feel the arena all around me. It's as if I've never left, really. Once again I'm battling not only for my own survival but for Peeta's as well. How satisfying, how entertaining it would be for Snow to have me kill him. To have Peeta's death on my conscience for whatever is left of my life. "It's not about you," I say. "We're on a mission. And you're necessary to it." I look to the rest of the group. "Think we might find some food here?"

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

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 291

Explanation and Analysis

For not the first time in the novel, Katniss feels that she's being pulled back into the Hunger Games. This feeling demonstrates the extent of her trauma. Katniss has witnessed a lot of violence in this novel (not to mention its two prequels), and as Beetee says, frightening events are the hardest to forget. As a result, any new frights or surprises "trigger" flashbacks for Katniss—one death inevitably reminds her of all the deaths she's seen.

Part of Katniss's psychological torture stems from the fact that she knows very well that people are *trying* to torture her psychologically. Here, she's fully aware that Snow wants to weaken her by burdening her with the guilt of being responsible for Peeta's life. And yet Katniss's awareness of Snow's plan does nothing to make the plan less effective: she knows exactly how Snow is planning to torture her, and this makes her torture even worse. Despite this, she doesn't give in—she still clings to her compassion and humanity even in the face of such great horror, and she still refuses to kill Peeta.

Chapter 22 Quotes

☝☝ "Can't help him!" Peeta starts shoving people forward. "Can't!" Amazingly, he's the only one still functional enough to get us moving. I don't know why he's in control, when he should be flipping out and bashing my brains in, but that could happen any second. At the pressure of his hand against my shoulder, I turn away from the grisly thing that was Messalla; I make my feet go forward, fast, so fast that I can barely skid to a stop before the next intersection.

Related Characters: Peeta Mellark, Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Messalla

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 308

Explanation and Analysis


As they draw closer to the Capitol, Katniss and the rest of her team are ambushed by an army of mutts (genetically-bred government warriors). To Katniss's great surprise, however, Peeta (who's previously been conditioned to attack Katniss at the smallest psychological provocation) isn't "set off" by the ambush. On the contrary, Peeta and Peeta alone remains calm in the midst of the crisis. The quotation is important because it suggests that trauma need not be psychologically crippling. Sometimes, the people who've endured the most trauma, such as Peeta and Katniss, are the calmest and most "put together" in times of danger. For an emotionally scarred warrior like Peeta, a

surprise attack by mutts is the norm; barely even a surprise at all. Peeta's reaction to the attack also reminds Katniss of why she loves Peeta (when he's acting like his true self): they've been through the same traumas in the Hunger Games. Katniss, herself a role model for thousands, looks to Peeta as a role model for how to deal with pain and move forward.

Chapter 23 Quotes

☝☝ Everything about the situation screams trap. I have a moment of panic and find myself turning to Tigris, searching those tawny eyes. Why is she doing this? She's no Cinna, someone willing to sacrifice herself for others. This woman was the embodiment of Capitol shallowness. She was one of the stars of the Hunger Games until...until she wasn't. So is that it, then? Bitterness? Hatred? Revenge? Actually, I'm comforted by the idea. A need for revenge can burn long and hot. Especially if every glance in a mirror reinforces it.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Cinna, Tigris

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 320

Explanation and Analysis

Once they arrive in the Capitol, the team of rebel warriors (including both Peeta and Katniss) are protected by a woman named Tigris, who despises the government of Panem for ostracizing her for her elaborate plastic surgeries. Although elaborate plastic surgeries are popular in the Capitol, Tigris has "gone too far" in altering her own appearance: she's "more Catholic than the Pope"—more superficial than the Capitol.


In an unusual sense, Tigris and Katniss are kindred spirits. Tigris has been a Capitol insider, yet she secretly despises the Capitol for its cruelty and hypocrisy. By the same token, Katniss has been a Capitol star ever since she won the Hunger Games: she's met many government leaders, and been to several government cocktail parties and banquets. And yet, of course, Katniss still hates the Capitol for forcing her to fight to save her own life—she feels a constant need for revenge against Snow and his colleagues. Katniss immediately sympathizes with Tigris, and is comforted to know that Tigris has a motive to not betray the rebels: Katniss recognizes hatred when she sees it.

Chapter 24 Quotes

☝☝ First I get a glimpse of the blond braid down her back. Then, as she yanks off her coat to cover a wailing child, I notice the duck tail formed by her untucked shirt. I have the same reaction I did the day Effie Trinket called her name at the reaping. At least, I must go limp, because I find myself at the base of the flagpole, unable to account for the last few seconds. Then I am pushing through the crowd, just as I did before. Trying to shout her name above the roar. I'm almost there, almost to the barricade, when I think she hears me. Because for just a moment, she catches sight of me, her lips form my name. And that's when the rest of the parachutes go off.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker), Effie Trinket, Primrose (Prim) Everdeen

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 347

Explanation and Analysis



Katniss manages to sneak into the center of the Capitol. Just as she's about to arrive at President Snow's mansion, airplanes drop bombs on the rioting people of the Capitol. To Katniss's amazement, one of the people marching through the streets of the Capitol is Katniss's own younger sister, Primrose. Katniss watches in horror as Prim walks to the site of a bombing, hoping to help some of the survivors. Katniss recognizes, too late, that the bomb is actually a double-bomb, designed to kill the first responders to the catastrophe. The double-bomb was designed by Katniss's supposed allies in the rebel alliance—but now it's being used to kill Katniss's family members. In the most striking way, then, the quotation reminds us (and Katniss) that Katniss's supposed friends among the rebels weren't really her friends at all.

The quotation describes arguably the most traumatizing event in the novel: the death of Katniss's own sister, before Katniss's very eyes. The entire passage has a tone of utter futility. Katniss knows that Prim is about to be killed, tries to save her, and fails. In this sense, the quotation is a forecast of the trauma Katniss will be dealing with for the rest of her life: she'll always blame herself for failing to protect her family, and her mind will replay over and over the image of her sister being killed.

Chapter 25 Quotes

☞ Deep in the water, I'm deserted by all. There's only the sound of my breathing, the enormous effort it takes to draw the water in, push it out of my lungs. I want to stop, I try to hold my breath, but the sea forces its way in and out against my will. "Let me die. Let me follow the others," I beg whatever holds me here. There's no response.

Related Characters: Katniss Everdeen (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 349

Explanation and Analysis

Moments after witnessing the death of her own sister, Primrose, Katniss goes through all the symptoms of trauma. She's experienced so much pain that her only response is to crave her own death: she'd rather feel nothing at all than feel the mixture of guilt, pain, and loss that's currently crippling her. By the same token, Katniss feels a deep sense of loneliness: even though she's actually surrounded by friends and allies (doctors who are operating on her in the hospital, well-wishers, etc.), she feels that she's alone, that all the people she loved have died or deserted her. There are few people in the world who would understand what Katniss is going through; for this reason, she believes that she's all alone in the world, metaphorically "drowning" in suffering.

Chapter 26 Quotes

☞ "I brought you this." Gale holds up a sheath. When I take it, I notice it holds a single, ordinary arrow.

"It's supposed to be symbolic. You firing the last shot of the war."

"What if I miss?" I say. "Does Coin retrieve it and bring it back to me? Or just shoot Snow through the head herself?"

"You won't miss." Gale adjusts the sheath on my shoulder. We stand there, face-to-face, not meeting each other's eyes.

"You didn't come see me in the hospital."



He doesn't answer, so finally I just say it.

"Was it your bomb?"

"I don't know. Neither does Beetee," he says. "Does it matter? You'll always be thinking about it."

Related Characters: Gale Hawthorne, Katniss Everdeen (speaker), President Coriolanus Snow, President Alma Coin, Beetee

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 366-367

Explanation and Analysis

In this tense scene, Katniss reunites with her childhood friend Gale, who presents her with an arrow. Katniss is supposed to use the arrow to execute President Snow, the leader of the former government of Panem. By firing the shot, Katniss is supposed to officially end the rebels' war with Snow, ushering in a new government headed by President Alma Coin. Although Gale has known Katniss for almost her entire life, there's no trace of intimacy in his interaction with her now. On the contrary, he acts like a messenger, delivering information to Katniss on behalf of his real allies, the rebels. Gale's behavior reflects his shifting allegiances: although he's always been loyal to Katniss in the fact, he's moved away from his old friend in order to become more powerful in the growing rebel government.



The ultimate example of Gale's shifting allegiances, which Katniss alludes to in this quotation, is the bomb he may or may not have sent to the Capitol—the bomb that killed Katniss's little sister, Prim. Gale doesn't know whether or not he sent the bomb that killed Prim. But whether or not Gale personally sent the bomb, the message is clear: Gale has become hopelessly divided from Katniss. He has chosen the rebels over Katniss, and Prim's death will always be an unbridgeable chasm between the two former friends. This moment also marks the breaking of the "love triangle" between Katniss, Peeta and Gale. Where Gale turns his back on his old friend, Peeta intuitively understands Katniss's pain, and tries to help her.

Chapter 27 Quotes

☞ Peeta and I grow back together. There are still moments when he clutches the back of a chair and hangs on until the flashbacks are over. I wake screaming from nightmares of mutts and lost children. But his arms are there to comfort me. And eventually his lips. On the night I feel that thing again, the hunger that overtook me on the beach, I know this would have happened anyway. That what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that. So after, when he whispers, "You love me. Real or not real?" I tell him, "Real."

Related Characters: Peeta Mellark, Katniss Everdeen

(speaker), Gale Hawthorne

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 388

Explanation and Analysis

In the last passages of the Hunger Games Trilogy, Katniss informs us that she truly falls in love with and spends the rest of her life with Peeta. (In this passage, she vaguely describes the first time they have sex.) Katniss chooses to marry Peeta because they have so much in common: even if Katniss hasn't known Peeta for as long as she's known Gale (the other vertex of the "love triangle"), Peeta intuitively understands the person Katniss has become—a traumatized, emotionally scarred woman—and he has the

compassion, empathy, and common experience to help her. Katniss's parting thoughts about Peeta suggest that she's turned her back on the principle of "an eye for an eye." For months, she believed that her trauma would go away if she could avenge her loved ones' deaths. But as the novel comes to an end, Katniss comes to realize that revenge solves nothing—she'll always feel the pain of her sister's death, no matter who she kills.

For his part, Peeta also finds a true partner in Katniss, and they "grow together." The final lines of this passage recall the game Peeta used to play after he was brainwashed by the Capitol: a game to clarify what is and isn't "real." Now that game becomes a romantic line for Peeta, but it also suggests that Katniss is the central aspect of his new life and reality: he needs her as much as she needs 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 Everdeen stands in the ruins of her old home, District 12. Only a month ago, she thinks, the Capitol—the government and ruling class of Panem, the nation in which she lives—blew up a huge chunk of District 12 with a firebomb. The only remaining part of District 12 is the Victor’s Village, the area in which the winners of the “Hunger Games” reside.

Katniss is standing with Plutarch Heavensbee, the former lead gamemaker of the Hunger Games, who has pretended to be working for the government, but in actuality is a rebel and ally of Katniss. Katniss and Plutarch have journeyed to District 13, a rebel stronghold—however, Katniss insisted on visiting the ruins of District 12, despite the fact that the government is looking for her.

Katniss remembers being in the hospital only a few weeks ago. A doctor gave her a technique for coping with grief and anxiety: make a list of the things she knows to be true. Katniss thinks the following: her name is Katniss Everdeen; she is 17, she lived in District 12; she competed in the Hunger Games; she escaped from the Games; the Capitol views her as an enemy; her dear friend Peeta was captured by the government, and he may be dead.

As Katniss thinks about Peeta, her best friend, Gale, calls her over the headset she’s wearing. Gale asks Katniss if she’s all right. Katniss insists that she is, even as she stares at dead bodies lying on the ground. She believes that she is responsible for these people’s deaths. She remembers the words Coriolanus Snow, the president of the government in the Capitol, told her: “you have provided a spark that, left unattended, may grow to an inferno that destroys Panem.” Looking around, Katniss concludes that Snow was right.

Katniss remembers the lives Gale saved recently. Gale had been toying with the idea of leading the people of District 12 against the government. After Katniss escaped from the Hunger Games, however, District 12’s electricity was cut off, and planes flew in to bomb the area. Gale, thinking quickly, led as many people as he could to the Meadow, an open plain where the bombers wouldn’t think to strike. Gale was able to save many people, including his mother, Katniss’s mother, and Katniss’s sister, Primrose (Prim).

We begin en medias res—in the middle of the action. We’re not told who Katniss is, or what District 12 means—Collins assumes that we’ve read the first two books in the Hunger Games trilogy, so all this is familiar territory.



There’s a lot of information in these opening sections, and it is only clarified later. For the time being, Collins establishes the basic contrast between two sides: the government, which organizes an event called the Hunger Games, and the rebels, with whom Katniss seems to be working.



Here, more overtly than in the two earlier Hunger Games novels, Katniss is dealing with trauma. The horrific bombing of District 12 is almost unbelievable for Katniss—she feels like she’s walking through a dream—yet she’s learned coping techniques that help her keep a grasp on reality. This “technique” also gives Collins a chance for some basic exposition.



Katniss grapples with feelings of enormous guilt. While she didn’t bomb District 12 herself, her recklessness—at least in her mind—was directly responsible for the event. As a young woman, Katniss confronts more challenges than most grown adults do. While she mostly succeeds in coping with these challenges, there are times when she retreats into childish, immature behaviors—in this case, blaming herself for others’ misdeeds.



Even in the midst of a huge tragedy, Katniss is capable of seeing the “brighter side” of things: her friend Gale was able to save some, if not all, of the people of District 12. Gale seems like a resourceful and intelligent character, capable of thinking quickly even in the midst of a crisis—and those familiar with the trilogy know that he is part of a love triangle with Katniss herself, so it is significant that they are working together at the start of this novel.



After Gale saved people from District 12, he led them away from the ruins of their old home. Using his skills as a hunter and a pathfinder, he led them toward District 13—a place that the government had falsely claimed to be uninhabitable, but which Gale correctly guessed was a rebel stronghold. After only a few days of navigating, Gale and his companions were picked up by a mysterious swarm of hoverplanes (essentially, helicopters) and flown to District 13. Katniss later learned that the inhabitants of District 13 took in Gale and his friends because they needed new people for breeding purposes. Katniss, too, has made her way to District 13. She notes that people in District 13 are trained and educated, and those over the age of 14 are entered into the military. Katniss doesn't mind these measures, since she and her friends are cared for.

Katniss wanders through District 12, and various people waiting in a hovercraft give her directions via her headset. These people include Plutarch, Plutarch's assistant Fulvia Cardew, and Alma Coin, the president of District 13. Coin is about fifty years old, with straight hair and grey eyes. Coin and the other rebels want Katniss to be a symbol of the rebellion against the Capitol. Now that most of the districts in Panem are openly at war with the government, Coin wants Katniss to make speeches inciting the people to fight, and encouraging rebels to persevere in their struggle. Katniss knows that her speeches will be carefully prepared for her, and that her public appearances will be orchestrated by Coin, Plutarch, and the other rebel leaders. The pin she used to wear, the **mockingjay**, has become a symbol of the revolution. Katniss is reminded, unpleasantly, of the Hunger Games themselves, in which she was often forced to follow a precise script. Yesterday, Katniss overheard Coin saying that the rebels should have rescued Peeta instead of Katniss—he would have been a better figurehead.

As Katniss walks through her old home, she notices Buttercup, Prim's beloved cat. Quickly, she calls Buttercup and carries her away from the house. Gale tells her that she needs to leave District 12 before she's discovered. As Katniss turns to leave she notices a small white **rose** lying on her dresser. She realizes that this rose—clearly placed here only a few days ago—must have been left by President Snow. Katniss leaves her house, and finds a hovercraft waiting for her. Gale appears at the door of the hovercraft and helps Katniss inside. When Gale asks Katniss if she's all right, Katniss replies that she's fine, but she can't stop thinking about the white rose, which was clearly sending a message: Snow can reach her, and may even be watching her right now.

Katniss is content to have a place to live, but already something feels wrong: it seems barbaric that the leaders of District 13 would force 14-year-olds to fight in the military, even if soldiers are necessary to win the war effort. Like the government of the Capitol, the rebel alliance forces young people to fight in battles with which they don't have any personal connection. In this way, Collins suggests a more complicated point than the one she seemed to be making at first: in spite of their differences, the government of the Capitol and the rebel alliance are eerily similar in many ways.



In this long, expository section, Collins fills in many of the gaps in our knowledge of the war, District 13, and the characters. We meet Plutarch and Coin, two importance characters in the story. Perhaps most importantly, we learn that the rebel alliance, like the government it's fighting, is a large, well-organized force with a president. Their identical titles encourage us to immediately see the similarities between Coin and Snow, the president of the Capitol. Like Snow, Coin wants Katniss to be a figurehead for her side—to follow scripts, smile and wave, etc. Even President Coin's last name is a not-so-subtle clue about her relationship to Snow: they're on opposing sides in battle, but they are, ultimately, two sides of the same tyrannical "coin."



At the end of the first chapter, we're given another one of the ambiguous symbols that abound in the Hunger Games books. The white rose seems to have been placed in Katniss's home by Coriolanus Snow, but it's impossible to know this for a fact. Whether Snow placed the rose there or not, it's clear that he's skilled at manipulating other people: he's intimidated Katniss so thoroughly that she thinks he's constantly watching her. Snow is a masterful manipulator and a skilled politician.



CHAPTER 2

Katniss and Gale are standing in their hovercraft, flying away from District 12, back to District 13. As Gale watches the expression in Katniss's eyes, he tells her that he understands why she had to go back. They hold hands, and Katniss senses "a part of District 12" that the government was unable to destroy.

Over the course of the next hour, the hovercraft flies toward District 13. Katniss notes that District 13 is no livelier than 12 at first sight: there's rubble everywhere. 75 years ago, there was a nuclear war between District 13 and the Capitol, which supposedly destroyed 13. In reality, the people of District 13 simply moved underground and continued to develop nuclear technology. District 13 and the Capitol reached an uneasy truce: 13 would "pretend" to have been destroyed, and in exchange the Capitol wouldn't fire any more nuclear missiles at it.

In District 13, the citizens live underground and must adhere to a rigorous schedule that's tattooed onto everyone's arm at the beginning of each day. (At the end of each day, the tattoo is "washed" off.) Citizens must never waste food or time—Katniss once saw Fulvia crumble up a piece of paper and then endure harsh looks from everyone around her. Katniss notes with pleasure that rebels from the wealthy Capitol, Fulvia included, have a hard time fitting in in District 13.

Katniss and Gale return to District 13 and walk to visit Katniss's mother and sister, who are stationed in their rooms for "reflection"—a half hour of free time for all citizens before dinner. Prim is delighted to see that Katniss has retrieved Buttercup from District 12. They are about to go to dinner when Gale receives a message on his "communicuff," a special watch granted to important rebels. He and Katniss are being summoned to Command—the rebel meeting room.

In the second book of the Hunger Games, [Catching Fire](#), Katniss became much closer with Peeta because of their shared trauma in the Hunger Games. Here, she grows closer with Gale for markedly similar reasons: they share the trauma of the destruction of their lifelong home.



Collins supplies us with some much-needed expository information about Districts 12 and 13. District 13's compromise with the Capitol, according to which 13 would "play dead," seems like an unusual way to end the war, particularly considering that District 13 had plenty of nuclear missiles of its own—unless both sides were trying to avoid "mutually assured destruction," as in the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.



We're given a brief, informative picture of life in District 13. To begin with, it's strictly, even dictatorially regimented. The tattooing of dates on people's forearms recalls—perhaps explicitly—the imagery of the Holocaust, during which prisoners had numbers tattooed on their arms. Yet Katniss doesn't seem to grasp how dangerous this kind of tyranny can be—in fact, she enjoys it, because it punishes the weak and lazy more than it punishes her.



The half hour of reflection the citizens of District 13 are granted every day only underscores how little freedom they really have: literally one forty-eighth of their day! Similarly, the communicuff that Gale wears, while useful and impressive, underscores the constant specter of surveillance in District 13, reminding us of the similar surveillance state of the Capitol.



Katniss and Gale walk to Command. There, Gale is prevented from walking any further. Katniss walks inside, and is surprised to find Plutarch, Coin, and the other leaders, staring at a television. The screen shows an interview between Peeta and Caesar Flickerman, the Capitol's resident reporter and interviewer. Peeta informs Flickerman of his actions during the final day of the Hunger Games. As part of the Hunger Games, Peeta was forced to compete against representatives from other districts of Panem, as well as Katniss, his wife (in the media's version of their lives, but not reality) and fellow representative from District 12. Knowing that there could be only one victor, Peeta endeavored to sacrifice himself for Katniss's sake. As Katniss watches, she remembers Peeta last interview with Flickerman. Leading up to the Games, Peeta appeared with Flickerman and, in a bid to increase sympathy for Katniss and save her life, falsely claimed that Katniss was pregnant with his child.

Peeta continues describing the final moments of the Hunger Games. Katniss fired an **arrow** at the force field trapping the competitors in the vast arena of the Games. Flickerman suggests to Peeta that Katniss was working with the rebels—a suggestion that Peeta angrily negates. He and Katniss, he insists, had no idea of the rebels' plan to free Katniss from the area. (In actuality, he and Katniss had not been informed of the plan so that they would have plausible deniability if one of them was captured.) Caesar asks Peeta about Haymitch Abernathy, the former victor who mentored Katniss and Peeta. Peeta doesn't say whether Haymitch was a part of the rebels' plan or not. (Katniss has learned that Haymitch was, in fact, a rebel, though Peeta is legitimately unsure of this.) This reminds Katniss that Haymitch is currently going through alcohol withdrawal in District 13: he's been quarantined until he's beaten his addiction.

Flickerman's interview with Peeta concludes with Peeta tiredly asking for a cease-fire between rebels and government troops, on the grounds that more war could result in the annihilation of all of Panem. With this, he's taken back to his prison cell, and the regular television programming continues.

Much of the impact of this scene is lost on readers if they haven't read the previous two books of the Hunger Games (Collins tries to supply some background information, but it's just not the same). Peeta was once a skillful politician who could chat and banter with Flickerman before the Hunger Games to get audiences on his side. It's both heartbreaking and deeply confusing, then, to see him back on television. Since Peeta was always good-natured and could be friendly with people he despised (like Flickerman), it's difficult to tell if he's appearing now out of actual support for the government, or because he's being coerced.



In the previous volume of the Hunger Games, Haymitch, one of the masterminds behind the rebel alliance, explained that neither Katniss nor Peeta could have knowledge of the rebels' plan to free them from the Hunger Games, this would give them plausible deniability if they were captured by the Capitol. Here, we see that he was right not to tell them: Peeta can angrily deny that he and Katniss knew anything about the rebels, and his denial is taken seriously, both by Flickerman and, presumably, by the millions of people watching the interview. Haymitch remains a fascinating character—in spite of his enormous strength and intelligence, he struggles with one of the most common and debilitating human problems: alcohol addiction.



It's doubly unclear how we should interpret Peeta's conclusion. First, it's not clear if his statement is wrong at all, as the rebels often seem just as bloodthirsty as the Capitol. Second, we don't know if Peeta is saying these things of his own volition, or because he's being pressured (or even tortured) into saying them.



Katniss is secretly overjoyed to know that Peeta is still alive—nevertheless, she senses that the rebel leaders regard Peeta as a traitor to the rebels for demanding a cease-fire. She leaves before the leaders can say anything about Peeta. In the hallway outside Command, she finds Gale, who's been given a bloody nose for trying to come inside Command. Katniss is instantly grateful for Gale's presence, which is comforting to her. When Katniss tells Gale that Peeta is alive, Gale suggests that Peeta has made a deal with the government: he'll advocate a cease-fire, in return for which he'll be allowed to present Katniss as innocent, rather than a rebel.

Gale asks Katniss what she's going to do. Katniss thinks of the destruction in District 12, and remembers shooting an **arrow** at the force field during the Hunger Games. She did so, she recalls, because she hated "the enemy"—the Gamemakers and Capitol officials who design the sadistic Games every year. As she thinks about all of this, she tells Gale, "I'm going to be the **Mockingjay**."

CHAPTER 3

Katniss has returned to her family's underground home in District 13. It is late at night, and Katniss's mother and her sister Primrose are both asleep. Katniss gets out of bed and surveys her possessions: plain, grey clothes, and the **mockingjay** pin her mother gave her, which she wore during the Hunger Games. As Katniss stares, her mother wakes up and asks her what she's doing. Katniss tells her that she's planning to be the Mockingjay—to be the symbol of the rebel alliance.

Katniss's mother asks Katniss why she's agreed to be the **Mockingjay**. Katniss explains that the rebels have mostly been good to her—they've saved her life and helped her and her family. Katniss's sister, Primrose, points out that Katniss has huge "bargaining power" with Coin and the other rebel leaders. Katniss should hold a public meeting with the leadership, she goes on, in order to ensure that they will keep their promises.

The next morning, Katniss encounters Gale at breakfast. Katniss tells Gale that she's planning on assuming the role of **Mockingjay**, with a few conditions, which she's written on a piece of paper. Gale suggests that one of these conditions be that they're allowed to hunt above ground, just as they've always done in District 12. Katniss likes this suggestion, and also plans to make Buttercup's presence another condition. She prepares to meet the rebel leaders in Command.

Gale's bloody nose is another, albeit relatively mild, reminder that District 13 is a harsh, repressive society that doesn't tolerate disobedience of any kind. It's interesting to note that it's Gale, not Katniss, who proposes that Peeta is trying to protect Katniss. Gale is clearly jealous of Katniss's relationship with Peeta, but he's also insightful and clear-headed enough to talk about it frankly, and draw the obvious conclusion that Peeta is trying to help Katniss—not the Capitol, which he hates.



Previously, Katniss was told to remember the "real enemy"—which at the time meant the Capitol, not the Hunger Games competitors. Yet now she should perhaps take that advice again, and look more closely at President Coin and the rebel alliance. For now, however, we have no real evidence of District 13 committing any atrocities, and Katniss knows that Snow's is a tyrannical regime that must be overthrown—so she decides to help Coin.



Katniss's relationship with her mother is often strained in the earlier books, but here she seems to trust her mother with personal, sensitive information. The presence of the mockingjay pin, a gift from Katniss's mother, reminds us that Katniss's mother, while she doesn't have many "lines" in these stories, is still an important influence on Katniss's personality.



Here, Katniss seems weirdly naïve about her power in the District 13 government—it hadn't occurred to her that she could use her influence to bargain for, essentially, whatever she wanted. In general, Katniss is an interesting combination of experience and innocence. She can be mature and insightful, but also innocent and unsure of herself—to the point that it sometimes seems unrealistic.



Katniss's list of suggestions is hilariously uncontroversial—especially in bargaining over a cat. Even after Katniss's mother talks to her, Katniss doesn't understand the power she has. This is part of what is supposed to make Katniss sympathetic and charming to readers: she wields great power, but is also modest and naïve enough not to realize it.



Katniss and Gale walk to Command. Gale is reluctant to accompany Katniss, but she insists that his presence will send a clear message to the rebel leaders: Katniss has conditions. As she waits to meet with the leaders, Katniss performs her “relaxation exercise,” telling herself that her name is Katniss Everdeen, her friend Peeta is alive, and he’s a traitor, but she must keep Peeta alive. Just as she’s about to enter Command, Katniss realizes that she should be asking for much more from the rebel leaders. Almost without realizing it, she writes another condition on her list—“I kill Snow.”

Katniss meets with Plutarch and Coin, and tells them that she’s prepared to be the **Mockingjay**, with a few conditions. Her first condition is that Buttercup be allowed to stay—this the leaders readily accept. Her second condition, that she be allowed to hunt above ground with Gale, causes Plutarch some concern, but Coin eventually agrees to it. The third condition is that Gale assist Katniss whenever she needs him. Coin matter-of-factly asks Katniss if she wants to present Gale as her new lover. This shocks Katniss, but before she can respond, Plutarch suggests that the rebel leaders “continue the current romance” between Katniss and Peeta, and pretend that Gale is Katniss’s cousin. This is exactly the tactic that Capitol reporters used with Gale when Katniss and Peeta were pretending to be in love with one another.

Katniss is surprised with Plutarch and Coin’s willingness to manipulate her public appearance, but since they’ve agreed to allow Gale to assist her, she moves on to her next condition. Katniss asks that Peeta, along with two other rebels in the government’s control, Enobaria and Johanna, be pardoned if the rebels win the war with the Capitol. Coin flatly rejects this condition—she insists that Peeta and the others will be tried as war criminals. Katniss fires back that the government has clearly pressured Peeta into demanding a cease-fire—he isn’t a war criminal at all. Coin reluctantly agrees with Katniss’s request: Peeta will be granted a full pardon for his interview with Flickerman. Katniss’s final request is that she be allowed to kill President Snow. Coin smiles grimly at this, and tells Katniss that they’ll have to “flip for it.” Katniss grins and replies, “Fair enough.” With this, Coin leaves Katniss and Gale with Plutarch and his assistant, Fulvia.

In spite of the naiveté she’s shown in recent chapters, Katniss then exhibits some political savvy by bringing Gale into the room for negotiations. This, combined with the almost unconscious way she proposes killing President Snow, suggests that Katniss is wiser than she seems: she knows exactly what she wants to do, and just has to work up the courage to do it.



Here, we’re given more signs that President Coin and President Snow are similar kinds of leaders. Just as Snow and the Capitol leaders tried to present Katniss and Gale as cousins, focusing the public’s attention on Peeta instead, Coin now proposes that they continue this façade of Katniss being Peeta’s wife and Gale’s cousin. While Coin’s decision could be rationalized on the grounds that they need to make Katniss seem as admirable as possible to win the war effort and rid Panem of the tyrannical Capitol, it’s easy enough to see the logical flaw in this argument. In fighting Snow, Coin is becoming just as manipulative, untrustworthy, and tyrannical as he was.



Coin’s reluctance to pardon Peeta is troubling and puzzling for a number of reasons. It seems utterly uncontroversial that Peeta is being tortured into demanding a ceasefire: in fact, Plutarch, one of the rebel leaders, would know first-hand how dishonest the Capitol’s broadcasting policies can be. Yet neither Plutarch nor Coin speaks up to defend Peeta. This suggests that they want to uphold District 13’s strict code of justice—where no disobedience or treachery is tolerated—but in the light of the novel’s conclusion, it also hints at future power struggles. Coin might already be thinking of mitigating Peeta’s power, which could be a threat to her own rule.



Plutarch proceeds with briefing Katniss on her duties as **Mockingjay**. He shows Katniss a small sketchbook, full of designs for elaborate dresses. Katniss recognizes the work of her friend and stylist, Cinna, who she'd last seen being brutally beaten by a group of Peacekeepers (government soldiers). Plutarch informs Katniss that she will be part of a series of propaganda pieces that will be illegally broadcast onto every television in Panem. Beetee, an intelligent rebel who competed in the Hunger Games alongside Katniss, has hacked the television networks.

Fulvia and Plutarch continue to “prep” Katniss for her duties. Fulvia tells Katniss and Gale to follow her, and she and Plutarch lead them to an elevator, which takes them deep underground. Plutarch consults his notes, and confirms that they're headed for Room 3908. When they reach this room, Plutarch is surprised to find an armed guard, who informs the group that they must leave. Gale and Katniss hear a muffled cry from behind the guard. Nodding at Gale to show that she has the same idea, Katniss drops Cinna's notebook on the ground. When the guard bends down to pick it up, Katniss jumps past him and opens door 3908. She is shocked to find, naked and bruised, the prep team from the Capitol that had dressed her during the Hunger Games.

CHAPTER 4

Katniss looks at the “unwashed bodies” of her prep team: Flavius, Venia, and Octavia. Flavius, Venia, and Octavia have “done” Katniss's makeup throughout her two Hunger Games. Katniss gently approaches Venia and asks her what's happened. Venia explains that “they” took them from the Capitol on the night that Katniss broke out of the Hunger Games. She adds that Cinna, Katniss's loyal friend, requested that they be taken to District 13. Katniss is enormously confused—she finds it hard to believe that Cinna, who's always been kind and gentle to her, would mistreat his own coworkers. Even Fulvia and Plutarch seem confused.

The guard explains to Katniss that Venia, Octavia, and Flavius have been imprisoned for stealing food. They were warned not to take food, and continued to do so. Nevertheless, Katniss yells at the guard to release the prep team. Plutarch urges him to do so as well, adding that he'll take full responsibility. The guard releases Venia, Octavia, and Flavius, and they limp out of their cell.

In this section, we see the rebels' organization and bureaucracy at its strongest. There is something both impressive and horrifying, for instance, about the fact that the rebels are using Cinna's old sketches on Katniss, even though Cinna himself has been horribly beaten, and may even be dead. Even after individual people are captured by the government, the rebels' plans inexorably go on.



So far, we haven't seen any evidence of serious abuse or tyranny in District 13—yes, we've seen Gale with a bloody nose, but this only hinted at possible brutality in the regime. Now, it becomes clear that the soldiers of District 13 are as callous and harsh as the Peacekeepers of the Capitol. Thus, Collins ends the chapter on a depressing note: evidently, Katniss has allied herself with a group of people who aren't particularly better than the group (the Capitol government) that she's chosen to oppose.



In this expository section, Collins finds a clever way to illustrate Katniss's moral dilemma. She's just aligned herself with the rebels, only to find that they might not be much better than the Capitol itself. In essence, she's forced to grapple with the fact that her friends aren't as friendly as she thought. Collins illustrates Katniss's new moral dilemma by describing her conflicted thoughts about Cinna: she's newly suspicious of her once-trusted friends.



The efficiency and speed of District 13, which Katniss had admired only a few pages ago, now seems terrifying and harsh to her. At the same time, we see that there are ways around the brutality of the district—but only for people with some kind of power or privilege, like Katniss and her friends.



Katniss leads Venia, Octavia, and Flavius to District 13's hospital, and calls her mother, who is a skillful nurse. Katniss's mother is welcomed into the hospital, where she examines the prep team and concludes that they'll be all right. Meanwhile, Fulvia and Plutarch arrive at the hospital. Katniss points out that Coin is sending a message to all of them: comply with the rules of District 13, or face the consequences. Fulvia and Plutarch point out that they're too important to the rebel cause to be punished in such a way, but Katniss responds that leaders, like Hunger Games contestants, are important—until they're not.

Katniss leaves the hospital, remembering the terms of her contract—she's entitled to go hunting with Gale above ground. They proceed by elevator to the surface of the Earth, armed with bows and **arrows** they've been issued by the district. At the surface, there are wild animals, such as turkeys and rabbits. As they hunt, Gale asks Katniss why she cares about her prep team so much—after all, their job was to make her look pretty before she was murdered. Katniss angrily defends her team, arguing that she'll defend anyone who's tortured for stealing bread. At the same time, Katniss can't help but feel that Gale has a point—her prep team never seemed to mind that Katniss was going to almost certain death.

Katniss and Gale return from their hunt with a large number of kills. They take their food to Greasy Sae, an old resident of District 12 whom Gale managed to save. Sae takes their meat and promises to cook a good meal with it. Afterwards, Gale and Katniss make their way to the Collective, a huge hall where a meeting is about to occur. Gale points out the scar marks on the people's faces, reminding Katniss that there was a pox epidemic in District 13 long ago.

Among the crowd of people waiting in the Collective, Katniss spots her friend Finnick Odair, another contestant in the previous Games. Finnick, who seems frustrated and exhausted, explains to Katniss that he's worried his old friend and lover, Annie Cresta, will say something that could be construed as treasonous. Katniss runs to the front of the Collective, where Coin is about to speak, and tells her that she needs Coin to put Annie Cresta's name on the "immunity list." Coin nods but says that this is unnecessary—the mentally ill (like Annie) aren't punished for treason.

Katniss goes back and forth between seeming exceptionally insightful and exceptionally naïve. Here, she's at her most insightful, pointing out a fact that both Plutarch and Fulvia couldn't see: Coin will get rid of them if she has to, without any remorse whatsoever. Katniss is predisposed to see through this veneer of acceptance and friendship because she experienced something similar during the Hunger Games—developing friendships and alliances, and then seeing them fall apart as soon as fortunes change.



After the heady politics and crafty maneuvering of the previous sections, it's refreshing to see Katniss and Gale doing the same thing they've done together for years: hunting. We're reminded again that Katniss seems to be faced with a choice between her feelings for Gale and her feelings for Peeta. Here, we're given a major piece of information about Gale's personality: he's a little more callous and coolly logical than we'd thought. Thus, he doesn't think Katniss owes her prep team any leave or loyalty, since they never gave her much.



The presence of Greasy Sae, who also appeared in the previous two novels, reminds us that not everything has changed—there are a few vestiges of Katniss and Gale's old life in District 12. This also tells us a great deal about Katniss's feelings for Gale—she likes to be with him because he represents the "old days," before she had to face the responsibility of being a warrior and a leader.



Collins moves back and forth between descriptions of Katniss's intelligence and her naiveté. Here, she's back to the latter: it seems very clumsy of Katniss to be tacking on new demands only a few moments before President Coin is to make her speech to the people of District 13. Finnick was part of the rebellion before Katniss was, yet he too seems frustrated with the harshness of District 13's rules.



Coin tells Katniss that she's about to announce that Katniss will be the **mockingjay**. Katniss, getting the message, runs away from the Collective. As she leaves, she hears Coin telling the crowd that Katniss has agreed to be mockingjay, on the condition that Peeta, Johanna, Annie, and Enobaria are granted immunity. Boos and jeers greet this news, and Katniss realizes that the people of District 13 wanted Peeta punished for his treason. She also realizes that she's under a strict contract of loyalty and cooperation with Coin—if she “steps out of line,” she and her friends are as good as dead.

In strictly political terms, Coin's speech is brilliant. It unites Coin's regime with Katniss's reputation as a leader and an iconoclast, while also creating a distance between Katniss and the people of District 13—in essence, Katniss is both a figurehead and a “fall-guy.” This is diabolically clever on Coin's part, as she is using Katniss in the present while protecting herself from Katniss in the future. It will now be difficult for Katniss to seize political power from Coin—as she'll always be the one who pardoned traitors.



CHAPTER 5

Katniss walks away from the Collective, thinking that she has yet another strong opponent to contend with: first the Gamemakers, then President Snow, now President Coin. Coin has nuclear missiles and a vast army of soldiers—in many ways, she's the same as Snow.

Here Collins almost makes her “Coin” pun explicit. Coin and Snow are alike—they're both bloodthirsty, remorseless, manipulative leaders. They are, in short, two sides of the same “Coin.”



The next morning, Katniss wakes up and finds that her prep team, along with Fulvia, has arrived to dress her and prepare her for her duties as **mockingjay**. Katniss takes a bath, and Fulvia orders the prep team to smooth her skin and wax her body. Katniss notices that Octavia has changed utterly—she's now quiet, thin, and forlorn-looking.

There's something poignant about the way Octavia and the other members of the prep team go about their duties—making Katniss look as pretty and healthy as possible—when they've clearly suffered major threats to their own well-being. Their superficial Capitol work now seems more weighty.



Katniss eats breakfast with her prep team, along with Gale. The food is disgusting, like most of the food in District 13, but it's also nutritious and nourishing. Yesterday, Gale and Katniss had argued about Katniss's decision to grant Peeta immunity. Gale argued that Katniss didn't know if Peeta—or, for that matter, Johanna or Enobaria—were really loyal to the Capitol or not. As they eat breakfast now, Gale tries to make conversation, but Katniss can tell that he's still irritated with her—and she's irritated with him.

Gale shows his pragmatic, cold side once again. He can't understand how Katniss can trust that Peeta is really loyal to the rebels, given what he's said on television. In a sense, Gale fits in perfectly with the leadership of District 13—he's harsh and a little insensitive, but also logical and efficient. Despite their arguing, Katniss seems not to take Gale's statements too seriously—she may be letting her memories of the “old Gale” affect her interactions with the “new Gale” in the present.



At lunch, Gale and Katniss are scheduled to go see Beetee. They're directed to the “special defense” room, where Beetee greets them by showing them a swarm of hummingbirds he's captured from the surface. He asks Katniss about Finnick. Katniss, remembering the look of sadness on Finnick's face yesterday, tells Beetee that Finnick is “going through a lot.” Beetee nods, and mentions that he's built a new trident for Finnick to use as a weapon.

As in the previous volume of [The Hunger Games](#), it's unclear how we're to interpret Beetee as a character. Here Beetee seems somewhat sympathetic to Finnick's mental struggles, but he also thinks that combat and new weaponry will make Finnick feel better, even though it's clear that violence was what disturbed Finnick so greatly in the first place. It may just be that Beetee understands science very well, and human emotion not at all.



Beetee leads Gale and Katniss to the weapons he's been designing. He presents Katniss with a lethal-looking bow and **arrow**, fitted with scopes and gadgetry—the bow, he explains, is voice-activated. He also shows Gale guns, which he'll need as a member of Katniss's "entourage."

Katniss and Gale proceed from Beetee's workstation to a room on a higher floor, where the prep team goes to work dressing Katniss. Afterwards, she's led to an enormous soundstage, where Plutarch is waiting, along with Fulvia and Finnick Odair. Katniss notices a television screen, showing a strong, beautiful-looking woman who she doesn't recognize. Fulvia instructs Katniss to say the line, "People of Panem, we fight, we dare, we end our hunger for justice!" Katniss obliges, and delivers the line into a microphone. There is a painful silence—then, out of nowhere, the laughter of Katniss's old mentor, Haymitch, fills the studio.

CHAPTER 6

Katniss has just heard Haymitch's voice coming from the studio where she's been recording slogans for the rebel cause. The last time Katniss saw Haymitch, she was so angry with him for abandoning Peeta in the Hunger Games that she scratched his face. Hearing his voice, she leaves the studio immediately.

The narrative jumps ahead one day. Katniss explains that it takes Haymitch an entire morning to convince the rebel leaders that Katniss isn't fit to be **Mockingjay**. Katniss privately agrees with Haymitch—she was only capable of making grand speeches and "working" crowds earlier because she had Peeta to help her.

Katniss explains how Haymitch convinced the rebel leaders of Katniss's limitations. Katniss enters Command, along with Plutarch, Fulvia, Gale, and her prep team. She's surprised to see Haymitch, along with a few people from District 12, including Greasy Sae. This is the first time Katniss has been in Haymitch's presence, she realizes, since she scratched his face. Haymitch begins the meeting by showing everyone footage of Katniss in the studio the previous day. She seems stiff and awkward.

Beetee is the "Armorer" of District 13. It's left for us to decide whether he has any guilt or compunction about designing these weapons, which will undoubtedly be used to hurt people, including those with no particularly allegiance to President Snow.



On Katniss's first attempt at being a figurehead—a living symbol—she fails completely. The task of looking calm and collected is too much for her, even if she's good at feeling calm and collected in tense situations. This reinforces a point that's been made several times before: Katniss is a good Hunger Games competitor and a brave young woman, but she's not a particularly good speaker or a charismatic leader.



Given the usual "cliffhanger" tension at the ending of the previous chapter, we naturally expect there to be a confrontation between Katniss and Haymitch at this point. But this scene is delayed, as Katniss merely leaves.



For all his gruffness and occasional heartlessness, Haymitch knows Katniss better than almost anyone else. He's worked with her since the beginning, and knows that public speaking isn't one of her strong points.



Here we're again deprived of a full confrontation between Katniss and Haymitch. Katniss thinks about clawing Haymitch's face, but she doesn't say anything to him, and in return he seems almost oblivious to her presence. He probably senses her anger, but feels that there are more important matters to attend to before a personal squabble.



Haymitch asks the rebel leaders to name a single time when Katniss inspired them. Before too long, they come up with examples: when she volunteered to take her sister's place in her first Hunger Games; when she mourned the death of Rue, a contestant in the first Hunger Games; when she saved Peeta's life. Gale realizes what Haymitch is getting at—Katniss is at her most charismatic when she goes off-script.

Haymitch proposes that the best way for the rebels to make use of Katniss is for them to send Katniss “out in the field and keep the cameras rolling.” Plutarch seconds this idea, reasoning that they can spread word that Katniss, who is supposedly pregnant with Peeta's child, has had a miscarriage. Coin seems to like the idea of sending Katniss out into danger, but only a small amount of danger. She suggests sending Katniss, accompanied by bodyguards, into District 8, which has been experiencing riots. There, Katniss can “test” her charisma, with a camera crew filming her actions.

With most of the rebel leaders convinced of Haymitch's plan, Haymitch turns to Katniss herself. Katniss can't prevent herself from saying what she's been thinking all along: she's furious with Haymitch for letting Peeta be captured. Haymitch replies that he can't believe Katniss let Peeta out of her sight on the night they broke out of the arena. Katniss knew Haymitch would say this—she's been feeling guilty about this very mistake for the past few weeks. Haymitch reminds Katniss that he's still her mentor, and Katniss doesn't reply. She leaves the room immediately.

Katniss goes to her room, where she washes the makeup off her body. Shortly thereafter, Beetee arrives with armor, which she'll wear during her time “in the field.” He also supplies her with special **arrows**, some of which are explosive. Boggs, Coin's strong, muscular assistant, enters the room, accompanied by Finnick. Beetee tells Finnick that he's to have a new trident—this seems to cheer Finnick up almost immediately, and Katniss recognizes the same energy and enthusiasm in him that she first noticed at the Hunger Games.

Boggs leads Katniss to a fleet of hovercrafts. Katniss notices that Boggs seems good-natured, even if he's also very loyal to Coin. She's infuriated, however, to see all the hovercrafts—their existence means that District 13 had the ability to protect the other districts of Panem, and chose not to do so.

Haymitch again shows his great understanding of Katniss's strengths and weaknesses. Negligent though he might be, he's something of a father figure to Katniss—a former competitor in the Hunger Games who understands what Katniss was going through before, during, and after the competition.



Haymitch's idea seems almost suicidal, as actual battlegrounds never remain “on-script”, and yet it also makes sense. It's absolutely true, based on the previous two novels of the trilogy, that Katniss is at her best in crisis (and is also extremely lucky). Thus, the rebel alliance has a definite interest in putting Katniss into danger. Coin is also thinking rather heartlessly again, probably assuming that even if Katniss is killed, she'll at least be a martyr for the cause and then no future threat to Coin.



Here, Collins finally gives us the personal confrontation between Katniss and Haymitch that she's been putting off, and yet again it is cut short by Katniss leaving. Both characters are extremely blunt and stubborn, which means that they fight often but also understand each other. We're reminded of another dimension of Katniss's guilt—not only has she let rebels die on her behalf, but she also left her good friend and love interest, Peeta, to be imprisoned following the Hunger Games.



Previously, it had seemed a little insensitive that Beetee would think a mere trident could cheer up Finnick. Yet here, it turns out that he was right all along: Finnick really does want to get back into “the thick of it” and fight the government. This is rather depressing, though: like Katniss, Finnick is so used to combat at this point that he can't really live without it—he only knows how to fight violence with more violence.



Katniss is cooperating with District 13 for now, yet she doesn't see the world in the same black and white terms as President Coin or Gale. Katniss is starting to see the “gray areas” both between the Capitol and District 13, and between good and evil, heroism and villainy.



Plutarch briefs Katniss, who's accompanied by Gale, on her mission. There are multiple wars going on between the Capitol and the 12 districts, with the exception of District 2. While there are some rebels in District 2, conditions are better, and the majority of people are loyal to the government—in fact, they even train and supply the Peacekeepers (government soldiers) that are sent throughout the rest of Panem. The rebels plan to take over the 11 rebel districts, ultimately claiming District 2 and the Capitol as well. Gale asks what kind of government the rebels will install to replace the current one. Plutarch replies that there will be a system of representative democracy, in which each District has a leader who participates in a centralized government. Katniss finds this kind of government superior to President Snow's.

Gale's question about District 13's future government is a good one—so good that one wonders why Katniss didn't think to ask it before. Gale may be a little too cold and calculating in his reasoning, but he also has a way of getting to the point quickly. We learn here that District 13 plans to install a democracy—technically a representative democracy, or republic—in Panem. While democracy isn't inherently good, it is clearly better than the dictatorship and surveillance state Snow has set up in Panem.



Plutarch wishes Katniss good luck on her mission. Before he returns to the rebel stronghold, he points out a small pocket on Katniss's shoulder. This pocket, he explains, contains "nightlock," a powerful poison that he instructs Katniss to take if she's apprehended by the government. He notes that these pills have been dubbed "nightlock" in honor of Katniss's threat to poison herself with nightlock berries in her first Hunger Games.

The chapter ends on a mixed note. The nightlock poison capsules are both an homage to Katniss's fame and prestige in the rebel community and a reminder that Katniss is ultimately expendable to the rebels—if she's arrested by the Capitol, she needs to kill herself immediately rather than give away their secrets.



CHAPTER 7

Katniss, Boggs, and Gale fly away from District 13 in a hovercraft, headed for District 8. Their TV crew includes Cressida, the director, and Messalla, her assistant.

Katniss embarks on her "tour" of the districts, much as she embarked on her previous "Victory Tour" in Catching Fire. This symmetry reiterates how similar the Capitol and the rebel alliance really are.



The hovercraft arrives in District 8. Katniss and her crew disembark, noticing immediately that there are wounded people everywhere. Boggs points Katniss to a woman named Commander Paylor, who is probably in her early thirties. Boggs tells Paylor that Katniss has suffered a miscarriage, but insisted on seeing the wounded in District 8.

We see how easily the rebel alliance has embraced the Capitol-sponsored lie that Katniss was pregnant—they've had to make up an additional lie to explain away the first one. It's not clear if Paylor is convinced by this lie or not.



Gale points out that it's a bad idea to assemble the wounded in one place—any contagious diseases would spread almost instantly. Paylor firmly replies that she agrees with Gale, but has no other option for keeping everyone safe—at least none that President Coin would support. She leads the group inside a nearby building, where Katniss is terrified to see a vast room of wounded and suffering people. Katniss holds Gale's hand very tightly.

Again Gale shows his perceptiveness, and Paylor is revealed to also be rational and calm in her thinking—she doesn't let emotions cloud her judgment. This is clearly the kind of personality the rebels value. We are again reminded of the "love triangle" continuing amidst all this war and intrigue.



As Katniss walks through the room, the patients cry out her name with joy and love. Some of them grab her hands, as if she has the power to heal their diseases. After a considerable amount of this, Katniss walks out of the hospital. Gale praises her for her inspirational manner. Boggs explains that Katniss will be doing a great deal of this, as there are wounded people throughout the districts who idolize Katniss.

Katniss's behavior in the hospital wards has overtones of Christian imagery—she's like a Christ-figure, walking among the lepers and healing them. Katniss's only "miracles" are her abilities to inspire hope and gratitude in other people—and yet sometimes this (a kind of placebo) is just as effective as real medical care.



Suddenly, there's a loud sound and a shaking in the ground—the Capitol is bombing District 8. Katniss hears a voice in her ear: Haymitch is communicating with her via earpiece. Haymitch explains that she mustn't be spotted, and that the rebels will retrieve her as soon as they can. Plutarch tells Katniss that there is a small blue house with a bunker, not too far away. Katniss refuses to run for safety. Instead, she rips the earpiece out of her ear and prepares to defend the hospital.

Katniss goes "off-script" for the first time since her mission began. This brings up a rather interesting conundrum: is her going off-script part of the script now? In other words, did Haymitch expect Katniss to throw away her earpiece and do something "heroic" for the cameras, or was he actually expecting her to follow orders and return to the hovercraft? These scenes start to raise complicated questions about authenticity.



Katniss prepares to fight the Capitol's hovercrafts. Paylor, impressed with her courage, advises her to use her flaming **arrows**. Together, Katniss and Gale fire at a "V" of hovercrafts. Katniss succeeds in setting fire to the leading hovercraft's wing, causing the "V" to lose formation. As another wave of hovercrafts approaches, Gale and Katniss switch to explosive arrows, and manage to shoot down several of the hovercrafts. Those remaining fly away, having done considerable damage to the hospital.

Katniss and Gale put Beetee's weaponry to use—for the time being, Katniss still assumes that the Capitol is the enemy to be destroyed, and the rebels are to be helped. It's also worth noting that Katniss and Gale are shooting at hovercrafts, presumably identical to those that bombed District 12. Thus, there's a strong element of revenge in their defense of District 8.



Katniss races toward the hospital, closely followed by her TV crew. Inside, she finds chaos: the bombings have killed many patients. Cressida quietly asks Katniss if she'd like to say anything—to her own surprise, Katniss answers that she would. She proudly tells the patients that President Snow can torture and hurt the people of District 8, but he'll never stop the people's rebellion. She points to the hovercraft she's shot down, and yells, "Fire is catching!" The people cheer, and Cressida yells, "Cut!"

At moments like this, it's impossible for us to tell—and impossible for Katniss to tell—if what we're seeing is "real" or "just TV." In other words, we can't be sure if Katniss was able to make a speech to District 8 because it came naturally to her or if she is just getting better at performing. The line between television and reality is blurring—Katniss is becoming the Mockingjay, to the point that when she is "being herself," sometimes she is still acting as a figurehead and symbol.



CHAPTER 8

Katniss has just shot down a Capitol hovercraft and delivered a stirring speech for the District 8 hospital. Katniss's hovercraft arrives and picks her up, along with her crew. Katniss is enormously tired from her fighting and speaking, and she falls asleep in the hovercraft before anyone can talk to her.

Katniss's work for the rebel alliance is strenuous, as evidenced by her physical weariness after the battle. In spite of the apparent glamor of her profession—she is on TV all the time, after all—Katniss has an extremely tough job.



When Katniss wakes up, she is back in the District 13 hospital, and her mother is looking at her. Katniss's mother explains that she wasn't informed that Katniss was going out on a mission. Katniss feels guilty for not saying goodbye to her family. She also realizes that she's sustained shrapnel injuries from the bombing, and possibly a concussion. Finally, Katniss realizes that she and Gale will be punished for violating the rebels' orders in District 8.

Katniss's mother leaves, and guards wheel Katniss to Command, where she finds Coin, Plutarch, Gale, Fulvia, Cressida, Haymitch, and Boggs. Katniss notices that Boggs has broken his nose in the explosions in District 8. Coin explains to Katniss that the rebels have hijacked the Capitol's TV networks and are broadcasting footage of Katniss's heroism. Coin shows Katniss the footage, and Katniss is amazed to see herself, speaking bravely in the District 8 hospital. The phrase, "If we burn, you burn with us," which is based on Katniss's speech, then appears on the screen—and so is seen by most of the population of Panem.

Having broadcast hugely successful propaganda throughout Panem, the rebels clap. Coin congratulates Katniss on her heroism, but informs her that she risked her life in order to fight. Plutarch points out that the rebels will never get good footage if Katniss goes into a bunker every time there's an attack. Katniss agrees with Plutarch, adding that it feels good to "do something for a change." Cressida tells the group that she's gotten more excellent footage of Katniss at the hospital, which she'll broadcast soon.

The guards wheel Katniss back to her room, where she dozes off. Before too long, she wakes up, to find Haymitch standing over her. Haymitch dangles Katniss's earpiece and reminds her that she is supposed to wear it at all times. He threatens to surgically implant an earpiece on her skull if she disobeys him again—reluctantly, Katniss agrees to wear the earpiece at all times. She notes that neither Haymitch nor Plutarch said anything to Coin about Katniss's disobedience in District 8—Coin thinks that Katniss was following orders when she defended the hospital.

While Katniss broke away from her mission in the interest of helping the people of District 8 (and also perhaps playing her role as stubborn hero), she didn't do so because she thought President Coin would treat her leniently—she recognizes that Coin could have her killed at any time. Katniss's work as the Mockingjay starts distancing her from her family.



Boggs's broken nose echoes Gale's earlier in the book. This encourages us to view Boggs similarly to Gale—with sympathy and respect, but also some wariness because of his devotion to Coin and the harsh rebel regime. The disconnect between Katniss's TV personality and Katniss's "real" personality comes into focus in this section—even Katniss herself can't believe that she's the brave person speaking to a crowd of applauding people—and yet Katniss was "being herself" when she delivered the speech.



Coin still doesn't understand that Katniss disobeyed Haymitch and Plutarch to defend the people of District 8—Coin thinks that she was ordered to act as she did. This suggests Coin's indifference to placing Katniss in danger, but also implies that Katniss might have been playing into Coin, Haymitch, and Plutarch's script precisely by going "off-script" as she did.



Haymitch shows his darker side here, as he threatens Katniss—perhaps half-jokingly, but also graphically and with some sinister weight behind his threat. His insistence that Katniss keep her earpiece is also a reminder of just how much of a political "puppet" she is at this point, as the rebels want to stay in control of her every move. Despite this, Haymitch doesn't betray Katniss's disobedience to Coin—perhaps out of concern for Katniss, or perhaps because it wasn't unexpected disobedience at all.



Late in the day, Finnick arrives in Katniss's wing of the hospital. Finnick has been suffering from mental relapses to his time in the Hunger Games, and he's very unstable as he talks to Katniss. Together, they watch the television, and are surprised to find that the Capitol is showing a new interview between Caesar Flickerman and Peeta. Katniss notes with horror that Peeta is gaunt and tired-looking, even if the TV producers have tried to make him look healthy.

Flickerman asks Peeta what he thinks of Katniss's actions in District 8. Peeta replies that the rebels are using Katniss to "whip up" uprisings in the districts, and she probably doesn't know what she's doing. When Flickerman asks Peeta if there's anything he'd like to tell Katniss, Peeta asks Katniss if she really trusts the people she's working with. He encourages Katniss to use her influence to stop the war, rather than encouraging it. With this, the screen goes black.

Katniss is shocked and surprised by Peeta's interview—it seems that he's cooperating with the Capitol. At the same time, she acknowledges that he has a point—Katniss doesn't trust Coin, Plutarch, Haymitch, or any of the other rebel leaders. Hurriedly, Finnick turns off the television. He and Katniss must pretend that they didn't see Peeta's interview at all, he explains. A moment later, rebel officials enter the hospital. Tactfully, Finnick brings up Katniss's TV appearances, but not Peeta's. In response, the officials don't mention Peeta at all.

CHAPTER 9

It's the night after Peeta's interview with Flickerman, and Katniss finds it impossible to sleep in her hospital bed. The next morning she's released from the hospital. That same day, she's given permission to walk into the woods with Finnick. They take the opportunity to discuss Peeta's broadcast without being observed. Neither Finnick nor Katniss is sure what to make of the interview, but they're more surprised that the rebel leaders haven't brought it up to her.

After talking with Finnick, Katniss returns to her housing and eats dinner with Gale. He doesn't mention Peeta at all. Katniss worries that her actions as the **Mockingjay** have made President Snow even less likely to trust Peeta—he may even be torturing Peeta for information in between interviews.

Katniss sees through the veneer of makeup and recognizes that Peeta is gaunt and tired, as if the government is hurting him. Yet it's also entirely possible that the government made Peeta look both like he's been tortured and like they've tried to hide that—sending a subtle message to Katniss that they're hurting her friend, while showing the rest of Panem a "healthy," government-supporting Peeta.



Once again, it's difficult to separate the parts of Peeta's interview that have clearly been dictated by the government, and the parts that Peeta sincerely believes. It's plausible, for instance, that Peeta really believes that the war with the Capitol is bloody and ultimately useless, as this point isn't out of line with what we've learned about Coin.



Katniss is as confused by Peeta's interview as we are—for the time being, it's impossible to tell if Peeta is being his "real" self or not. In this way Katniss and Peeta appear as opposing figureheads for the two sides, both of them being manipulated and also trying to avoid manipulation in their own way. As with Katniss as the Mockingjay, it is difficult to know where the "real" Peeta begins and the TV version ends.



This isn't the first time in the Hunger Games trilogy that Katniss has had trouble sleeping. Evidently, she continues to struggle with the pain and trauma she's experienced, like the destruction of District 12. It's notable that the rebel leaders don't bring up Peeta to Katniss, as the political games and deceptions continue.



Katniss feels an acute sense of guilt—by now a familiar feeling for her—when she realizes that her actions have caused great harm to others. A major part of Katniss's growing maturity stems from her realization that her actions have consequences—not only for herself, but for her friends.



The next morning, Katniss encounters Gale during “Production,” the time when Katniss is supposed to be working on propaganda videos with her TV crew. Katniss realizes that she’s furious with Gale for not mentioning Peeta’s interview to her—she knows that he’s seen it, and is trying to hide it from her. Angrily, Katniss confronts Gale about this, and he reluctantly admits that he saw Peeta’s interview, and adds that he was wrong not to tell Katniss. As Katniss and Gale argue about Peeta, Boggs and Cressida walk in. Boggs informs them that they’ll be filmed traveling to the remains of District 12 and discussing the Capitol’s brutality.

Katniss and Gale travel to District 12 by hovercraft, surrounded by their team. As they land in the Meadow, Katniss notices that Haymitch isn’t present, and Plutarch informs her that Haymitch has been struggling with his alcoholism once again.

Katniss walks through District 12, lost for words. Gale is similarly disgusted and shocked by what he sees: dead bodies, decaying buildings, and more. At lunch, the group notices a group of **mockingjays**—singing birds. Obeying the TV crew’s promptings, Katniss begins to sing with the birds. First, she sings the four notes sung by Rue, a contestant in Katniss’s first Hunger Games whom she failed to protect from harm. Suddenly, she switches songs. Katniss sings “**The Hanging Tree**,” which the government has banned for its “subversive” lyrics.

“**The Hanging Tree**” is about a man who kills three people and is then hanged for his crimes. The man calls out from the grave for his love, begging her to “swing” beside him on the tree. Though at first the man seems to be telling his love to “flee” to safety, it becomes clear that he’s referring to the safety of death. As Katniss sings this song for the **mockingjays**, she thinks about learning it as a child, when her father was still alive. As a child, she thought the song was “creepy,” but now she has a hard time judging the man in the song, who asks his lover to die alongside him. As Katniss finishes her singing, the TV crew yells, “Cut!” and the group claps.

The group proceeds through the ruins of District 12. As they move on, Katniss worries that she’s losing her bond of trust and affection with Gale—by failing to mention Peeta, he broke her trust. Nevertheless, Katniss resolves to continue being friends with Gale, as she can’t afford to lose someone so important to her at such a crucial time.

The love triangle between Katniss, Gale, and Peeta takes on another variation here, as Gale conceals information about Peeta from Katniss—restricting Katniss’s knowledge about a person she cares for. Were he being perfectly honest with himself, Gale would have realized that Katniss deserved to have as much information about Peeta about possible. Instead, spurred on by jealousy (and perhaps rebel politics as well), Gale conceals the information.



Haymitch has struggled with drinking at many points in the novel. Here, it becomes clear that his weakness for alcohol also affects his political position with the rebels—he’s not taken as seriously or given as much responsibility because of it.



It’s not clear if these actions of Katniss’s are totally improvised, totally scripted, or somewhere in between. Her decision to sing about Rue seems perfectly sincere, at least, as we’ve seen Katniss struggle with memories of Rue throughout the first two novels. The song “The Hanging Tree” is a symbol of defiance simply because the government has banned it, and yet it also calls to mind (whether Collins intended it or not) real-world instances of institutionalized oppression like those Collins portrays in Panem—in this case, the lynching of black Americans in the Jim Crow South.



Now that Katniss has less clear notions of good, evil, right, and wrong, the song doesn’t seem creepy so much as an accurate recreation of her own state of mind. Katniss is afraid of death, but in a sense, she welcomes it as a relief from her responsibility, pain, and trauma. There is something disgusting about the way the TV crew yells “Cut!” as soon as Katniss has finished her song—the public nature of television disrupts the quiet, highly intimate scene in which Katniss is singing—and yet she is clearly singing for the cameras as well as for herself.



Katniss’s relationship with Gale has changed considerably in recent months. Though they’ve known each other for their entire lives, they’re now growing apart—both because of Gale’s new harshness, and because of Katniss’s many traumatic experiences that she shares only with Peeta.



Katniss and Gale walk to Katniss's former house. Inside, Gale points to the kitchen, and notes that Katniss once kissed him there. Katniss is surprised that Gale, who was under heavy painkillers at the time, remembers this. Gale begins to cry, saying that, like the man in the song, he's still waiting for "an answer" from Katniss. In response, Katniss kisses him. Gale tells Katniss that the only way to make her love him is for him to be in pain. With this, he leaves the house.

Katniss's behavior toward Gale is highly conflicted—on one hand, she loves him and always has, but on the other, she's angry with him for betraying her trust. In a sense, the kiss between Gale and Katniss is both the culmination and the end of their romantic relationship. Gale recognizes that Katniss's feelings for him often stem from sympathy, not genuine love.



The remainder of the group's mission to District 12 proceeds uneventfully. When they return to District 13, Katniss goes to her room. Just as she's preparing to relax, Boggs calls to tell her to come to Command—there is a meeting. In Command, Katniss finds the rebel leaders watching another interview with Peeta. Peeta is standing with President Snow, explaining to a huge crowd that a cease-fire between the two sides of the war is imperative. Suddenly, the interview switches to footage of Katniss in District 12—Beetee has hacked the Capitol networks once again. The footage then changes to an interview with Finnick, in which he talks about Rue's death. The rebel leaders watch all this, delighted that their own propaganda is interfering with the government's propaganda.

In response to every piece of government propaganda—that is, fictional storytelling designed to inspire a particular political point of view—the rebels air propaganda of their own. Indeed, "fighting fire with fire" could be the motto of the rebel alliance. President Coin seems to believe that everything she does—torturing, killing, imprisoning, etc.—is justified on the grounds that the Capitol is doing the same things. The problem with this reasoning, though, is that the rebels lose any sense of a moral high ground in the war—the Capital is evil and corrupt, but the rebels now offer an alternative that is no better.



The television switches back to Peeta, who's still standing with Snow. Peeta is asked if he has any words for Katniss. In response, Peeta tells Katniss that "this will end" in death and destruction. Then he says that all those living in District 13 will be "dead by morning." Katniss sees Peeta's face contorting with pain as he speaks these words. Suddenly, on live television, Snow cries, "End it!" Peacekeepers rush up to Peeta and hit him on the head. Katniss—and everyone else in Panem watching television—sees Peeta's blood "splattering" on the ground.

It seems that here Peeta has "broken through" his torture—instead of sticking to the script, he yells out that the Capitol is going to bomb District 13 in the morning. Much like Katniss, Peeta struggles with being manipulated as a propaganda piece—he's told to "behave," but he manages to break away from his instructions at the crucial time. This cements the relationship between Peeta and Katniss: they're dealing with the same challenges, and in much the same way.



CHAPTER 10

Katniss has just seen Peeta being savagely beaten on live television. The rebel leaders sitting around her are more concerned about what Peeta has said: "dead by morning." Haymitch yells out his theory of what's happened: Peeta has tried to signal Katniss that everyone in District 13 will be attacked. In response, Snow must have ordered that Peeta be silenced. Katniss agrees with Haymitch, and urges Coin to prepare the people of District 13 for the impending attack.

For all his flaws, Haymitch is cleverer and more insightful than any of the other rebels when it comes to interpreting Peeta's behavior. In part this is because Haymitch knows Peeta better than Coin and Plutarch do, but Haymitch is also genuinely better at reading people than they are—alcoholism aside, he's a valuable addition to the rebel alliance.



In response to Haymitch and Katniss's urgings, Coin agrees to put District 13 in a "Level Five" lockdown. Katniss, along with the other rebel leaders and the entire District 13 population, head deeper into the ground, away from any bombs. Plutarch instructs Katniss to stay as calm as possible—if she panics, everyone around her will panic, too. Katniss finds a huge bunker area, with housing reserved for her and her friends and family. Katniss is told to wait in her bunker for further instructions, and she assumes that her mother and Prim are on their way. Shortly thereafter they both arrive, along with Buttercup.

A short while after Katniss's family arrives in the bunker, Katniss hears a sudden "thud"—a bomb has been dropped. The bomb could be nuclear or non-nuclear—in either event, Katniss worries, it may be a while before she's allowed to leave her bunker. At the same time, Katniss is grateful to have this time to spend with her sister. Since her first Hunger Games, Katniss hasn't been spending much time with Prim.

Katniss talks with Prim. Prim asks Katniss how she's "managing," and Katniss, eager to have someone to talk to, tells Prim about Peeta. When Katniss has finished, Prim replies that President Snow won't kill Peeta—without Peeta, Snow will have no way to manipulate Katniss. Katniss realizes that Prim is exactly right: Katniss's connections to Gale, Peeta, and her family put her at a considerable disadvantage. Katniss asks Prim what Snow will do to Peeta, and Prim replies, "Whatever it takes to break you."

CHAPTER 11

For the next three days, Katniss and her family live in their bunker, thereby avoiding any bombings from the Capitol. During this time, Katniss wonders how President Snow will try to manipulate her in the future. With Peeta alive, Katniss realizes, President Snow has an invaluable tool for making Katniss obey him. Furthermore, the knowledge that Peeta is being tortured because of her makes Katniss weak and incapable of following her duties as **Mockingjay**.

Katniss walks through the bunker to the adjacent room, which belongs to Finnick Odair. She tells him her theory about Peeta. Finnick realizes that Snow is probably trying something similar with Annie, one of the only people he cares about. By keeping Annie alive, Snow can virtually incapacitate Finnick, weakening his concentration and his loyalty to the rebels.

Here, we see the "bright side" of the efficiency and occasional tyranny of President Coin's regime in District 13: when there's a crisis, she knows how to mobilize her entire constituency immediately. When there's news of a bombing, everyone is safely in underground bunkers within hours.



Prim's role in the Hunger Games is easy to forget, but as Katniss reminds us in this scene, there would be no Hunger Games novels without her—if Katniss hadn't volunteered to take her place in the first novel, Katniss wouldn't be the mockingjay now.



Insight comes from unlikely people in this chapter. First Haymitch points out the truth about Peeta, and then Prim, who rarely says anything, points out the harsh truth about Snow. This reinforces Katniss's sense of guilt, as well as her bond with Peeta, because everything she does affects Peeta's life. There is something both romantic and deeply horrific about this fact.



Katniss, it's been noted many times, is a highly resourceful young woman. This means that she'll take full advantage of any resource she's given—and here she takes full advantage of time. She uses her time in the bunker to plan her strategy and reassess her relationships with her friends, allies, and enemies.



Like countless villains in books and movies, President Snow uses heroes' love and affection against them. It's important that Katniss understand this point, as by recognizing Snow's strategy, she can develop a strategy of her own in response.



Later in the day, Boggs calls Katniss and Finnick to the bunker's Command room. The rebel leaders inform Katniss that she is to wear her **Mockingjay** suit, go to the remains of District 13, and gather propaganda footage. Katniss "suits up," accompanied by her usual entourage, including Boggs, Gale, and the TV crew. She returns to District 13, which she finds in ruins. She also notices a huge pile of white and red **roses**, which she assumes is an ironic gift from President Snow, matching the rose in the remains of District 12. Katniss finds it suddenly difficult to be the Mockingjay, because any act of heroism she performs will only result in more torture and punishment for Peeta.

The TV crew notices that Katniss seems stiff and uncomfortable, in contrast to her earlier "performances" as the **Mockingjay**. Finnick explains that Katniss knows that Snow is using Peeta to blackmail her. Katniss begins to sob—suddenly, someone (it's not revealed who) injects Katniss with a sedative, and she spends the next 24 hours asleep.

When Katniss awakes from her sedative-fueled sleep, she finds Haymitch standing before her. Haymitch explains that Plutarch has decided to put together a crew to rescue Peeta from the Capitol. The volunteers for this dangerous mission include Boggs, and—much to Katniss's displeasure—Gale.

CHAPTER 12

Having just learned from Haymitch that Gale has volunteered to rescue Peeta from the Capitol, Katniss is terrified that she'll lose both of her close friends at once. She begs Haymitch to let her join the mission, but Haymitch reveals that it's already left—Katniss is simply too valuable to send out into danger. Haymitch promises to give Katniss "something to do."

Haymitch proposes that Katniss help create a decoy that will distract the government's attention from the rescue mission. Katniss proposes that they shoot propaganda in which she appears defiant and brave—exactly the opposite of the way Snow wants her to feel. Cressida agrees, and the two of them begin shooting short interviews in which Katniss talks about Peeta. In one of these interviews, Katniss sarcastically thanks President Snow for encouraging her to declare her freedom—to separate from the authority of the Capitol.

As in [Catching Fire](#), here Katniss must confront a host of ambiguous symbols. There's no way to tell where the roses come from, and Katniss must interpret the sign to the best of her abilities. We also see an example of the effectiveness of Snow's strategy: by keeping Peeta alive and reminding Katniss of his total power over Peeta's life, he debilitates Katniss almost completely.



The connection between Finnick and Katniss is almost as close as that between Katniss and Peeta—Finnick understands that Katniss is going through the pain of guilt, knowing full well that anything she does to oppose the government will translate into pain inflicted on Peeta.



Katniss is annoyed with Gale for volunteering to save Peeta, seemingly because she doesn't want too much connection between her two romantic interests, but also because she doesn't want to lose both of them at once—as is possible on such a dangerous mission.



The dismissive way that Haymitch mentions giving Katniss "something to do" reminds us that, in his eyes, Katniss is still rather weak and immature. This contrasts markedly with Haymitch's apparent respect for Peeta, which seems to imply some sexist assumptions on his part.



Although she recognizes that Snow's strategy is working—by keeping Peeta alive, he is weakening her—Katniss is sensible enough to realize that she must pretend that it isn't working at all. Katniss is getting a better understanding of propaganda: she knows that Beetee's footage can sway the districts of Panem against the authority of Snow, and also send a message to Snow himself.



Finnick accompanies Katniss in creating propaganda videos. In one of these, he accuses President Snow of rising to power by poisoning his rivals. Afterwards, Katniss asks Haymitch about his own relationship with Snow. Haymitch reveals that Snow murdered his entire family after Haymitch won the Hunger Games by breaking the rules—in this way, Snow sent a clear message that the rules of the Games were inviolable.

It's left up to us to decide whether to believe this propaganda or not. Haymitch is probably telling the truth—and this adds another tragic, complicating aspect to his character. Finnick's stories, on the other hand, are harder to gauge. He may be inventing rumors, thinking that they'll detract from Snow's credibility—but it's also important to remember that he was a favorite in the Capitol, a "playboy" who probably had access to all the dirty secrets about those in power.



Katniss knows that the rescue mission will return—whether successfully or not—in the near future. A few days after recording her propaganda videos, the rescue mission arrives back at District 13. Alerted by communicuff, Katniss rushes to the hospital wing, where Haymitch tells Katniss that the mission managed to free everyone except for Enobaria. Katniss finds Johanna Mason, covered in wounds. Katniss notes, sadly, that Johanna has also been tortured because of Katniss. Katniss next hears shouts of “Finnick”—Annie has been freed from her prison. Finally, Katniss sees Peeta, lying in a hospital bed. She's overjoyed to see him, even though he's clearly in poor health. When Peeta sees Katniss, he climbs out of bed—to the surprise of his doctors—and walks toward Katniss. He pulls her close and suddenly puts his hands around her throat, choking her.

This section jumps ahead very quickly, and one gets the sense that there's a huge chunk of plot missing with Peeta's rescue from the Capitol—but Katniss isn't involved, so she cannot relay the action in her first-person narrative. Nevertheless, Collins moves on with the same themes she's been establishing thus far: Katniss feels incredible guilt at having endangered Peeta, and she even learns that her actions have caused Johanna to be tortured as well. Peeta's sudden attack on Katniss is a major twist in the novel, as what should be a relief and a happy reunion turns into only more suffering and confusion.



CHAPTER 13

Katniss has been confined to the hospital following Peeta's sudden, unexpected attempt to strangle her. It was Boggs, Katniss thinks, who saved her life by knocking Peeta out before he could do any permanent damage. As a result, Katniss suffers from a sore throat, but no damage to her voice.

Katniss gets closer to Boggs, since he essentially saves her life by knocking out Peeta. We've been thinking that Katniss and Peeta are meant for one another, since they've endured the same hardships, but now Collins throws in another painful complication.



While Katniss lies in the hospital, Beetee approaches her, apologizing for her near brush with death. He explains that Peeta has been subjected to a horrible form of torture in which he's been conditioned to fear the things he loves most—above all, Katniss. Katniss frantically asks Beetee if there's a way to reverse the effects of this torture. Plutarch answers that there is no precedent for doing so.

In this expository section, Collins outlines the basic problem with Peeta, which Katniss will struggle with for the rest of the novel: Peeta has been trained to hate the things he loves most, and especially Katniss. While Peeta debuted in the Hunger Games as a strong and charismatic competitor, he's since become increasingly weak: first he lost a limb, and now he's losing his sense of reality.



For the next several days, Prim and Katniss's mother take care of her in the hospital, feeding her soft foods and talking with her. Beetee and Gale visit her, showing them weapons that they've been collaborating on. One weapon appeals to a basic human weakness: compassion. It consists of **two bombs**: when the first bomb goes off, people rush in to help wounded—and then the second, more powerful bomb detonates. Katniss is discharged from the hospital with instructions to speak as little as possible, as she needs to rest her voice.

Shortly after Katniss is discharged from the hospital, Haymitch visits her in her home, and suggests that they use a novel strategy to communicate with Peeta. There is a young woman named Delly, a childhood friend of both Katniss and Peeta, who managed to escape from District 12 before it was bombed. If Delly talks to Peeta, Haymitch suggests, Peeta won't be afraid of her—there's no way the government will have bothered to condition him against her. Katniss agrees to try Haymitch's idea. They summon Delly, who's extremely kind and pleasant to talk to, and ask her to try talking to Peeta.

Delly goes to the hospital, where Peeta is staying, while Haymitch and Katniss watch from behind an observation window where they can't be seen. Delly greets Peeta warmly, and for a time, they talk with each other pleasantly, reminiscing about old times. Suddenly, Peeta shouts that District 12 burned down because of Katniss. Delly begins to cry, and she tries to explain that Katniss isn't to blame at all. Peeta yells that Katniss is a dangerous woman and a "stinking mutt." Delly leaves the hospital in tears.

Having heard Peeta scream about her, Katniss feels both furious and guilty. While she realizes that Peeta has been cruelly turned against her, she also wonders if she is partly to blame for the destruction of her home. She turns to Haymitch and begs him to send her to the Capitol to confront President Snow. When Haymitch refuses on the grounds that the Capitol is far too dangerous, Katniss asks to be sent to District 2.

CHAPTER 14

Katniss and her team have just arrived in District 2, a mountainous area dotted with small villages. In District 2, Peacekeepers are hired and trained, then sent throughout Panem. The people of District 2 train to be Peacekeepers because they see the job as a step up in their careers—a chance to travel and explore. District 2 also produces a large amount of Panem's stone—indeed, stonecutters were the initiators of the recent riots in District 2. For the next two weeks, Katniss visits hospitals, spends time with rebel leaders, and generally acts as a symbol of the resistance to the Capitol.

It's unnerving to see Beetee and Gale manipulating human compassion so soon after Collins has revealed that Peeta has been conditioned to hate the things he loves. Like the Capitol's torturers, the scientists of District 13 are manipulating the human "weakness" of compassion. This reiterates the "fight fire with fire" approach that District 13 has adopted for itself: for every injustice from the Capitol, the rebels fire back with one of their own.



It is Haymitch, not Coin, who suggests that the rebels respond to Peeta by trying to cure him, rather than by building another weapon to unleash upon the Capitol. This is the case partly because Haymitch loves and respects Peeta (more than he does Katniss), but it's also because Haymitch is something of an outsider in the rebel alliance. He doesn't always obey Coin's orders, and even questions them when they're too harsh.



Collins illustrates the full extent of the problem—not only does Peeta feel a physical desire to attack Katniss, but in his mind he truly believes that Katniss is to blame for all the evils of Panem. As in Peeta's interviews with Flickerman, there is a disturbingly truthful side to the government propaganda Peeta has been conditioned to repeat—in a way, Katniss is responsible for a lot of pain and trouble.



In this section, Collins sets up the basic plot outline for the rest of the novel. Katniss will physically get closer and closer to the Capitol: first the outer districts, then District 2, then the Capitol itself. The novel now seems to be building up to a personal confrontation between Katniss and President Snow.



District 2 encompasses the paradox of Panem itself: parts of it are loyal to the current government, and parts are highly rebellious. Katniss now seems so proficient at being a symbol of the rebel cause that she doesn't linger anymore on explanations of her visits to hospitals—it's understood that this is what the Mockingjay does, and thus Collins doesn't dwell on them.



As Katniss proceeds with her mission, she's informed of Peeta's rehabilitation. Very slowly, he's being trained to fight his conditioning. Plutarch tells Katniss that Prim came up with the idea of conditioning Peeta in the opposite direction: giving him calming drugs like morphling whenever Katniss is brought up. This measure has mixed success—it makes Peeta extremely confused, but also mitigates his fear. Katniss realizes how innately good the “real” Peeta must be, because only a very good person could be so thoroughly addled by conditioning.

Katniss walks through District 2 with Gale. Gale tells Katniss that he is no longer jealous of Peeta—on the contrary, he feels sorry for Peeta for everything he's gone through. As he explains this, Gale kisses Katniss, and Katniss, in spite of her feelings for Peeta, kisses him back. Together, they reminisce about their shared memories, going back to their childhoods.

The next morning, Katniss attends a rebel meeting in which the rebels discuss their plans to overtake a vast Capitol stronghold in District 2, the “Nut”—a large, steep mountain. A former tribute (competitor in the Hunger Games) named Lyme outlines the plan, which involves seizing the Nut's entrance in a sudden surprise attack. As the rebels argue, Gale impatiently weighs in: the easiest thing to do would be to blow up the entrance, even if it means murdering dozens of people. Katniss is surprised with this sudden display of aggression from her friend.

CHAPTER 15

Gale has just proposed that the rebels bomb the Nut, thereby rendering it easy to enter, while also killing many from the Capitol. Some of the rebels appear interested in Gale's plan, while others look disgusted by it. Beetee is the first to speak—he points out that many of the people in the Nut are citizens of district 2, who have no direct allegiance to the government at all. Gale shoots down this objection on the grounds that bombing the Nut would be fitting “payback” for the government's bombing of District 12. Katniss objects strongly to Gale—innocent lives must not be harmed, she argues. Gale insists that if he were a rebel spy, he'd want the rebels to blow up the Nut. Katniss knows that Gale is telling the truth—he'd gladly lay down his life for the rebels—but she also thinks he's harsh to demand the same sacrifice of others.

We see slow, steady progress in Peeta, paralleling the slow, steady progress with which the novel seems to be building up to a confrontation between Katniss and Snow. Previously Collins had warned against the addictive, escapist influence of morphling, which seems basically the same as morphine. Now, however, morphling seems like the only option left to Peeta, reiterating the “lose-lose” dilemma of the rebel cause.



Katniss's kiss with Gale reflects the distance between Katniss and Peeta that has arisen in only a few pages. Whereas before she loved Peeta, sympathized with him, and wanted to see him again, she now fears him and knows that it will be some time (if ever) before she speaks to him as a friend again.



Gale's personality comes out strongly in this closing section: he's unafraid of making difficult moral choices, to an extent that Katniss finds inconceivable. It would seem more likely that Katniss, with her experiences in the Hunger Games, would be the one to propose morally dubious, “tough” courses of action, but in fact she retains more compassion than Gale, despite her greater trauma.



Here, it becomes clear that Gale's split-second proposal to bomb the Nut was far more than a passing idea—it was a reflection of his newer, harsher outlook on life. Gale feels little to no compunction in killing innocent people, since he feels no hesitation in giving up his own life for the right cause. This illustrates how easily bravery and compassion for a cause can devolve into brutality and callousness toward human life—because one doesn't value one's own life (often a sign of bravery and self-sacrifice), one doesn't value other lives, either.



The next person to respond to Gale’s suggestion is Boggs, who tries to reach a compromise. The rebels could cause an avalanche around the Nut, allowing some of the people inside to leave the area. Beetee seems to like this idea, and he proposes that the rebel leaders talk to President Coin. While they do so, Katniss and Gale are sent outside—during this time, they go hunting.

Boggs is more reasonable than Gale on this issue, reflecting the closeness that has arisen between Katniss and Boggs in recent chapters. There’s a slightly unpleasant reminder that Katniss and Gale are still, in the eyes of the rebels, children—they’re not allowed to be in the room while the “adults” discuss their next course of action.



“A decision is made” to cause an avalanche around the Nut, thereby allowing some of the people inside to run away before the rebels close in. The next day, a group of rebel hovercrafts shoots at the Nut, causing a huge portion of the building to collapse. An avalanche of debris slides down the mountain, and hundreds of citizens of District 2 try to run out of the mess, screaming. Katniss finds that she can’t stop thinking about her father’s death in a mining accident. She wonders, “What did we just do?”

Katniss possesses the kind of compassion that, it now seems, is utterly foreign to Gale. Her compassion here is based in a sense of empathy, having lost her own father in a similar “accident” early in life. In a way, this scene is emblematic of Katniss’s behavior throughout the novels—she often seems to agree to things, and then feel remorse for her actions only when it’s too late.



Katniss approaches Boggs and asks him what their next step will be. She asks if it would be possible to rescue some of the people running away from the debris. Boggs replies that there’s no time for this. As Katniss tries to reason with Boggs, she hears a voice in her earpiece—it is Haymitch. Haymitch tells Katniss that Peeta has made a great leap forward in his rehabilitation—he’s been exposed to footage of Katniss singing “**The Hanging Tree**” and shown no signs of anger or fear. This reminds Katniss of her father once again, as he was the one who taught her the song.

The two dominant storylines of the novel—Katniss’s relationship with Peeta, and the rebels’ war with the government—blend together in this brief section. Katniss’s relationship with her father has never been entirely explained to us, but it’s been suggested that Haymitch is a kind of replacement father-figure to her. Haymitch clearly has many flaws, but at least he’s always there for Katniss.



Haymitch next tells Katniss that she needs to make a speech, immediately. Katniss must go to the Justice Building and announce that the Capitol has been driven out of District Two. This might convince the Capitol forces to surrender on the spot. Even as Haymitch says all this, Katniss rushes to the Justice Building. She runs into a wounded man who seems to have come from the Nut. He pulls a gun on her, and demands to know why he shouldn’t shoot her immediately. Katniss replies that she and the man are even—District 2 helped blow up District 12, and now Katniss and the rebels have returned the favor.

Here our impressions of Katniss change subtly. In the past, Katniss has always been the last to support the “fight fire with fire” mindset embraced by Coin, and yet here she parrots this kind of reasoning in a time of crisis, even if only to save herself from death. It’s notable that the gun threatening her is wielded not by a Capitol soldier, but by a fellow member of the oppressed class—whom the rebels are supposed to be allied with.



Katniss goes on reasoning with the wounded man. She tells him that Districts 12 and 2 have no reason to fight, other than the reasons the government has given them. Katniss turns to see that a crowd has gathered around the two of them. She calls out for all people to join the rebels and oppose the government. Suddenly, Katniss sees herself “get shot on television.”

There’s an intriguing ambiguity in the final words of this section, as Katniss sees herself “get shot on television.” This is a kind of pun, since Katniss is always being “shot” by the cameras of the TV crew. Furthermore, it’s interesting that Katniss “sees” herself being shot—it’s as if she’s so used to being filmed now that she’s always seeing herself through the lens of a camera and the public’s eye, rather than actually experiencing things in real time.



CHAPTER 16

The chapter begins with Peeta saying the word, “Always.” Katniss searches for Peeta—but it’s not revealed when or where. Gradually, it becomes clear that Katniss is hallucinating. She wakes up to find herself in a hospital bed back in District 13. Katniss remembers what happened to her after the wounded man threatened her. A figure in the crowd fired a gun at her, and the pain was so intense that Katniss almost blacked out. She’s been under the influence of morphling for some time now.

Katniss sees the figure of Johanna Mason standing over her. The last time Katniss interacted with Johanna, Johanna was cutting a tracking device out of Katniss’s arm. Johanna now removes the morphling drip from Katniss’s arm—she warns Katniss of turning out to be a morphling addict. As Katniss wakes up, she notices that Johanna looks healthier than the last time she saw her. Johanna informs Katniss that the bullet never hit Katniss’s body—the armor she was wearing protected her, and the bullet only bruised her.

Johanna departs, and Katniss turns to see that Gale is standing near her bed. Gale is glad to see Katniss, but Katniss immediately brings up the attack on District 2, suggesting that it was immoral to endanger so many innocent lives. Gale points out that the rebels have only done the same thing that he and Katniss did in District 8 when they shot helicopters out of the sky. Katniss doesn’t have a good response to this, but she continues to look on the attack with skepticism.

Over the next few weeks Katniss goes through a slow rehabilitation, in which she’s weaned off morphling and made to walk, slowly, around the hospital. One day, Plutarch visits her and mentions the phrase “panem et circenses,” which means “Bread and circuses” in Latin. Plutarch explains that governments have long tried to control their people by giving them entertainment—in this way, the people are too distracted to rebel. Plutarch also tells Katniss that Finnick and Annie are to be married soon, and Katniss is genuinely happy about this.

Katniss has now regressed to morphling, the same drug that her mother once warned her of becoming addicted to—although her mother had no choice in the matter. We’re also reminded of the morphling addicts that Katniss saw at the previous Hunger Games. Most generally, this brief section reminds us that Katniss is still coping with a large amount of pain—not only her physical pain, but also the trauma of the Hunger Games.



In Katniss can’t help thinking about her last interaction with Johanna in the Hunger Games arena, in which Johanna seemed to be killing her, but in actuality was trying to save her life. Johanna seems unambiguously good and sensitive to Katniss’s condition in this scene, while still retaining her blunt and straightforward personality.



Gale’s defense of the rebels’ brutality in District 2 is the “fight fire with fire” ideology in a nutshell. He seems surprisingly unconcerned with the lives of the people of District 2, even though he himself saved hundreds of people from District 12. In a sense, every tragedy can teach two lessons: one about compassion and forgiveness, and the other about hatred and revenge. Gale seems to have learned the latter lesson.



Here, we learn where the name “Panem” comes from in the first place. We’re also reminded of how heavily Classical culture influences these books—not only are many characters named after famous Romans and Greeks, but the basic theme of the trilogy, “bread and circuses,” is a Latin phrase. Metaphorically, “circuses” can refer to any number of shallow, escapist entertainments, from the Hunger Games to morphling.



Finnick and Annie are married shortly after Plutarch's visit. The wedding is small but joyful, and Katniss lends Annie a dress from her Victory Tour. Plutarch privately tells Katniss that the wedding will be useful propaganda, though he prefers Katniss's style of improvisation and entertainment.

This section contrasts the sincere pleasure of Finnick and Annie's marriage with the coldness and cynicism of propaganda. Plutarch can't help but praise the wedding on the grounds that it's good propaganda, even while it's an event of real joy for the couple. It's as if the rebel leaders (like those in the Capitol) are so used to thinking of things as media spectacles that they can't experience reality normally anymore.



Shortly after the wedding, Katniss visits Peeta in his cell, where he's being slowly trained to fight his fear of Katniss. When Katniss enters his cell, she sees that he's been forcibly restrained. Peeta greets Katniss, but she hears an "edge" in it. He tells Katniss that he's been conditioned to fear the things he loved—and based on his reaction to Katniss, he must have loved her once. He asks if Katniss ever loved him, and Katniss isn't sure how to answer. Performance was such an integral part of her relationship with Peeta that she's unsure how much of her affection for him was real. Peeta asks Katniss, a little angrily, if she loves Gale. Again, Katniss doesn't know how to reply, and she walks out of the room. Peeta sees her for who she really is, Katniss realizes—a distrustful, manipulative woman.

Peeta is making some progress with his conditioning, but he's still a long way from behaving "normally" around Katniss, or anyone else, for that matter. Part of the reason that his progress is hindered is that Katniss herself doesn't have a good answer for all of his arguments—she really does believe that she is responsible for the deaths of thousands of people, and she is still conflicted in her feelings for Peeta and Gale. There's hope, however, in the fact that Peeta recognizes, however abstractly, that he used to love Katniss, and is able to feel jealousy about Gale.



CHAPTER 17

The chapter begins with Katniss describing herself as being "blindsided" by news Haymitch has given her. She runs to Command, where she finds the rebel leaders conversing. Haymitch has told Katniss that she's not going to the Capitol as a part of the rebels' upcoming mission. Coin is the first to reply to this sudden outburst—Katniss is too important to the rebels' cause, she explains, to sacrifice her life. Thus, Katniss can come to the Capitol after it's secured, and contribute to propaganda. Nevertheless, Katniss insists, she has to fight the Capitol—she has a personal vendetta with President Snow. Reluctantly, Coin says that the mission leaves in three weeks, and if Katniss recovers sufficiently in this time (her ribs are still horribly bruised), there's a chance that she'll be able to join.

Here We begin in medias res—in the middle of the action—much as we began the novel itself. Katniss is still eager to help the rebels even if it means putting herself in danger, so she's furious that she's not included in the mission to the Capitol. Coin's insistence that Katniss is too valuable to the rebel cause, followed by her decision to allow Katniss to join if she's healed enough in three weeks, seems like a suspiciously rapid reversal of opinion. One wonders if there's something else she's not telling Katniss.



Having learned from President Coin that she needs to heal in the next three weeks, Katniss meets up with a resident trainer, Soldier York, who informs her that she'll need at least a month to recover from her wounds. There's a way to speed up the process of recovery, York continues, but it involves considerable pain. Katniss accepts this, and decides to undergo the sped-up treatment. In the District 13 hospital, she endures painful injections in her chest. Johanna, who is also healing in the hospital, is going through morphling withdrawal. Nevertheless, when Katniss tells her about the mission to the Capitol, Johanna also resolves to join it.

Katniss and Johanna display considerable bravery in this section. Katniss knows the dangers of rapid surgery, having lived with her mother, a skilled nurse, for most of her life. Yet she agrees to a risky surgery on the grounds that she'll be able to visit the Capitol and kill Snow. This reminds us that there is something self-hating about her actions—she partly wants to suffer in order to kill Snow as a way of atoning and punishing herself for her actions in the Hunger Games.



Johanna and Katniss spend the next weeks training rigorously. They lift weights and practice their aim, talking with each other about the other contestants in the most recent Hunger Games. Peeta, they agree, is getting better and overcoming his government conditioning. They're joined by other mission participants, including Finnick, Annie, and Delly. Katniss is happy to see that Finnick is calmer and more stable than he has been in some time, inspired by Annie's return. Katniss learns that Delly has been important in Peeta's recovery—her kindness and positivity are so great that they help fight his fear.

One night, the trainees, including Finnick, Gale, Katniss, Johanna, and Delly, have dinner with Peeta. Peeta is improving, but he still requires a guard's supervision to spend time with his friends, as there's always the danger that he could suffer a relapse. Katniss notices that Peeta is gentler and more peaceful than he's appeared in some time, though she also notes a slight "edge" in his voice. At one point during the meal, Peeta asks if Katniss and Gale are still a couple, and Katniss notices his hands shaking. Johanna distracts Peeta by calling him an "evil mutt," and Katniss and Gale leave the table. After returning to her room, Katniss learns from Johanna that Peeta's meal ended when he began yelling at himself, "like he was two people." Katniss is greatly distressed by this news, and spends the entire night dreaming about her horrific experiences at the Hunger Games.

CHAPTER 18

In the days following her meal with Peeta, Katniss devotes herself to training for her mission to the Capitol. She learns military tactics, and practices operating various weapons, including guns and futuristic cannons. The TV crew films her training.

At the end of her training, Katniss must face an obstacle course that is designed, she's informed, to target her own weaknesses. The course involves Katniss "shooting" Peacekeepers, and culminates with her receiving an order to hold her fire immediately. The rebel leaders believe that Katniss's biggest weakness is her inability to follow orders. In this case, however, Katniss follows the order, passing her test.

It's unclear what the relationship between Delly and Peeta is, but there's a small possibility that Delly is drawing Peeta away from Katniss—that is, replacing Peeta's hatred for Katniss with love for Delly, instead of love for Katniss. This creates some tension in the coming chapters, and reminds us that, even though Katniss has hardly made up her mind about Peeta, she still considers him her love interest, no one else's.



Peeta yells at himself as if he's two people at the same time—and indeed, he is: the old Peeta, who loved Katniss, and the conditioned Peeta, who's been tortured by the government to hate Katniss. It's no coincidence that the news of Peeta's distress triggers a "relapse" in Katniss's nightmares, which she also experienced in the previous book. Where before Katniss could rid herself of these nightmares by sleeping with Peeta, now she has no one to turn to—neither Peeta nor Gale.



Even at her most personal, Katniss is always on television. She's become so used to being filmed that she's started to forget that there's a difference between her TV personality and her "real" self.



There's a marked conflict between Katniss's ability to follow orders and her propensity to disobey them. This conflict is particularly troublesome to the rebels, because they recognize that Katniss is at her best when she is, in fact, disobeying others. Katniss is a difficult person to control, either for the rebels or for the government.



Katniss, Finnick, and Gale are summoned to Command, where Plutarch shows them what they'll face in the Capitol. Surrounding the Peacekeepers' barracks, there is a complicated maze of booby traps and elaborate challenges designed to kill or trap anyone who tries to make his way through. Before leaving the Capitol, Plutarch stole a holograph of the plans for this area, meaning that he'll be able to direct Katniss through it. Katniss realizes that she'll be participating in another version of the Hunger Games: an elaborate series of challenges. She's eager to participate this time, however, because President Snow will, in essence, be a competitor along with her.

Katniss is assigned her position in the upcoming mission to the Capitol. She will be paired with Boggs, whom she likes. Finnick, whom she'll be working with closely as well, tells her that Johanna will not be coming on the mission. In the obstacle course, Johanna's challenge was to survive a course flooded with water—a gruesome reference to the water torture she endured at the Capitol. Instead of continuing to work her way through the obstacle course, Johanna cowered from the water and began to scream. Knowing that Johanna had experienced too much trauma to be an asset to the team, Boggs cut her from the mission. With the young victors prepared to fight, Haymitch and Beetee—who will manage their progress from District 13—wish them good luck. Katniss and Finnick admit to each other that they haven't told their families what they'll be doing on their mission—they've only said that they're "going away" for a while.

The mission leaves District 13 and heads for the Capitol. Outside the Capitol, there is a huge field of "pods"—essentially mines, which may or may not contain elaborate booby traps. Katniss and other soldiers shoot as many pods as they can, disabling them. Instead of exclusively aiming for the pods they know to be booby-trapped, the soldiers aim for many different pods. If they only targeted the pods they know to be dangerous, the Capitol would realize that Plutarch has the holographic plans to the area. One soldier shoots at a pod that releases a hail of metal darts, one of which kills her instantly.

As the days go on, Katniss feels bored—she has very little to do. She begins planning to break off from the rest of her group. There is a device called the Holo—a complicated electronic map of the Capitol, including details about the "pods" that are located in the different areas of the city. Boggs controls the Holo, and if anyone in his squad, including Katniss, repeats the word "nightlock" three times, the Holo will explode. Katniss decides to find a way to steal the Holo from Boggs, break off from his group, and go into the city in search of President Snow.

Each of the three novels in the trilogy concerns a Hunger Games competition of some kind. In this, the final book of the series, the competition is more abstract: there is a kind of deadly obstacle course in which Katniss must participate along with her fellow tributes, but it is not an official "Hunger Games." The stakes are higher now, however, as Snow is as much at risk of losing his life as is Katniss herself. There is a pleasurable balance to this plot construction.



We're reminded, once again, of the marked similarity between the methods of the Capitol and those of the rebel alliance. Just as the Hunger Games consisted of a series of elaborate, sadistic obstacles, so the rebels' training challenge consists of a sadistic obstacle that the soldier must fight. Johanna's failure to brave the obstacle course isn't so much an indication of her weakness as it is a verification that the rebels and the Capitol aren't as different as they'd like to pretend.



Even in the midst of battle, the soldiers of the rebel alliance recognize that they're being watched, and that they must project a certain "image." Thus, they're aware that they must not appear to know which pods are "duds" and which are dangerous, since this will confirm that Plutarch has stolen the plans to the Capitol. Collins also uses this opportunity to illustrate the stakes of the soldiers' mission: even though the soldiers know which pods are dangerous, this knowledge by itself isn't always enough to save lives.



It's a little amusing that Katniss feels bored in the midst of so much danger—it's as if she's been through so much that she's measuring everything against the Hunger Games. There's also a serious point here, though: Katniss has come of age in the Hunger Games, and so the Games are an essential part of her personality and her worldview.



As Katniss plans to steal the Holo, she's surprised to find that Peeta has arrived outside the Capitol, sent by President Coin herself. Katniss wonders why Coin would send Peeta into battle when he's clearly not ready yet. Katniss wonders if Coin wants her dead.

Katniss isn't afraid of recognizing the harsh truth: she sees right away that Coin doesn't have any reason to keep her alive, and thus might have sent Peeta to kill her.



CHAPTER 19

Peeta has just joined Katniss's mission, stationed outside the Capitol. Boggs, the leader of Katniss's branch of the mission, is furious with this news—he assigns soldiers to watch Peeta around the clock, in case Peeta shows any residual signs of aggression to Katniss or the rebels. One day, shortly after Peeta's arrival, Katniss points out to Boggs that Coin clearly wants her dead. Boggs doesn't disagree, and he says that Coin is looking to consolidate her power. Katniss, a charismatic leader, would be a major threat to Coin after the Capitol is defeated. Boggs assures Katniss that he'll defend her at all costs.

The new friendship between Boggs and Katniss seems mostly based on Boggs's loyalty to higher ideals that aren't always embodied by the rebels. While Boggs is Coin's assistant, he's not afraid to help Katniss even if this conflicts with Coin's wishes. This reminds us that it's possible to disobey Coin's orders, and, more implicitly, that "I was only following orders" isn't a convincing excuse for anything. One can disobey unreasonable orders, as Boggs implies that he'll do.



At dinner, Gale asks Katniss if she's prepared to kill Peeta in the event that he attacks her again. He adds that he knows Katniss is planning to leave the army soon, and offers to join her, hinting that he'll reveal her plans to Boggs unless she agrees. Katniss, amused, tells Gale that they must leave soon.

In spite of the distance that's grown between Katniss and Gale, they still understand one another almost intuitively. They have years and years of information about one another to work with—as a result, they can usually predict each other's behavior.



At midnight, Katniss is required to take watch outside the rebels' camp. She's joined, to her surprise, by Peeta. Peeta tells Katniss that he doesn't know who to trust anymore—in response, Finnick walks out from behind the trees. He has been watching Peeta to make sure he doesn't attack Katniss again. Finnick assures Peeta that he's among friends: Peeta's actions have saved many lives in District 13, an act of bravery the rebels will never forget. Peeta seems to accept this information, and Finnick leaves him to speak with Katniss.

Finnick demonstrates that he's a good, loyal friend. In the previous book, he saved Peeta's life on more than one occasion, but he only did so, it was ultimately revealed, because he wanted to keep Katniss on his side. Here, halfway through the third volume of the Hunger Games trilogy, we see that Finnick is genuinely loyal to Peeta—he respects him for his bravery, and considers him a friend.



The next morning, Katniss, Gale, and Finnick shoot at a nearby building, filmed by the TV crew for propaganda purposes. Afterwards, Katniss sees that Jackson, a rebel soldier, has been playing a game with Peeta called "Real or Not Real." In this game, Peeta names something he remembers, and Jackson tells him if it's real or not real (that is, artificially implanted by Capitol torturers). Katniss realizes that she should be playing this game with Peeta, since she knows him better than almost anyone.

There's an interesting symmetry in the way that Jackson plays a game with Peeta to undo the damage the Capitol has done. Peeta was first involved with the Capitol via the Hunger Games, and now a different kind of "game" is used to save him from the Capitol's manipulations. Jackson's game will reappear many times in the novel.



The next afternoon, the mission is summoned to film a complicated propaganda scene. Katniss and her fellow soldiers will shoot at a large, smoking building, and the TV crew will add in sound effects—mostly gunfire—later. Katniss and Gale run toward a Pod, which, Plutarch has ascertained, will shoot bullets when it's triggered. The team shoots at the Pod, and it fires bullets everywhere as the team dives for cover. After the Pod has deactivated, Boggs walks toward it, laughing and smiling. As he walks closer, he accidentally activates a bomb that blows off his legs.

CHAPTER 20

Katniss watches, horrified, as a bomb blows off Boggs's legs. Jackson yells for the group to retreat. Suddenly, Katniss hears a yell: she turns and sees Peeta running toward her. The noise and confusion have retriggered his Capitol conditioning, meaning that he is trying to attack Katniss. The other soldiers try to restrain Peeta, but in the struggle he pushes one of them into a nearby explosive pod, killing him instantly. Eventually, the remaining soldiers succeed in knocking Peeta out.

As the soldiers try to carry Peeta away, Katniss, Jackson, and the others stagger toward a nearby building. Katniss passes Boggs, who is dying. He passes her the Holo containing the information on all the Pods. Before he dies, he whispers, "Don't trust them. Don't go back. Kill Peeta. Do what you came to do."

Inside the nearby building, Jackson, Boggs's second-in-command, orders Katniss to give her the Holo. Katniss refuses—she needs the Holo to leave the group and find Snow. She lies to Jackson and says that President Coin has sent her on a mission to assassinate Snow. Jackson says that she doesn't believe Katniss, and demands the Holo. Unexpectedly, Cressida speaks out—she says that Katniss is telling the truth. Coin sent Peeta to Katniss, Cressida explains, because Peeta knows where Snow's personal residence is—he can lead Katniss there and help kill the leader of the Capitol. Katniss has no idea why Cressida is lying on her behalf. In addition, she's still puzzling over Boggs's final words to her.

Collins, as usual, closes the chapter with some kind of shocking revelation or action. This one is especially poignant because of its sudden violence and because Katniss has built up a friendship with Boggs in the last hundred pages. It seems like every time Katniss becomes friendly with someone, that person endures a sudden, brutal punishment of some kind.



The fact that Boggs's death triggers Peeta to try to attack Katniss again reminds us that Boggs and Peeta are alike in many ways: both their lives have been endangered precisely because of Katniss's actions. That Peeta kills someone in this scene is horrifying, but it also cements the bond between Katniss and Peeta: they've both caused other people to die for reasons that were ostensibly beyond their control—and yet also preventable.



Boggs's words are ambiguous—it's unclear who the "them" refers to, or why Boggs thinks Katniss needs to kill Peeta. But it seems clear enough that Boggs wants Katniss to kill Snow—and he also seems to be warning her not to trust Coin.



It's darkly humorous that Cressida speaks out in favor of Katniss in this moment. Katniss is puzzled as to why Cressida would take her side, but the answer is obvious: Cressida wants Katniss to supply her with great television, and the only way to get it is to put Katniss's life in danger. It's doubly impressive that Cressida works Peeta's presence into her lie—evidently, years of practice making propaganda has familiarized her with the finer points of telling convincing lies.



Jackson reluctantly agrees to follow Katniss's lead and head toward President Snow. Finnick, Gale, and the rest of the team (including Cressida's TV crew) resolve to follow. A few members of the team, including Pollux, a young citizen of District 13, carry Peeta, who is still knocked out. They set out toward the center of the Capitol. As they move, they hear the sounds of explosions in the distance. Suddenly, Gale notices a television screen in a nearby building. The screen shows the entire team, walking through the streets. A reporter says that Katniss and her followers have died in an explosion. This relieves Gale, as it means that the Capitol won't be expecting Katniss.

Katniss asks the group what to do next. To her surprise, the answer comes from Peeta, who has just regained consciousness. He whispers, "Our next move...is to kill me."

Katniss now has a huge advantage: Snow thinks she's dead. It's hard to underestimate this when one considers how heavily Snow has based his strategy of attack on Katniss's existence: broadcasting interviews with Peeta, attacking Katniss's home, etc. Katniss may be able to enter Snow's home unnoticed, now that Panem's eyes are no longer focused on her.



Peeta is noble enough to recognize that in all practicality, he should be dead—he's too dangerous to Katniss to be near her at such a crucial time. Typically, Collins reveals this "twist" in a dramatic cliffhanger.



CHAPTER 21

Peeta has just requested that the mission kill him. He's a danger to Katniss, he argues, and should be "taken care of" immediately—he's already caused the death of a rebel soldier. Katniss insists that Peeta must stay alive, and that he's important to their mission's success.

The group takes up shelter in an abandoned apartment building. There they find food and water, and everyone has dinner. The soldiers are leery of Peeta. He is handcuffed, and at least three soldiers are required to watch him at all times. There is a television in the apartment, and later in the night the group sees President Coin speaking, having hijacked the Capitol's TV station once again. Coin eulogizes Katniss and reaffirms her status as a symbol of the rebellion, "dead or alive."

The next day, the group plans its next move, consulting the Holo for help. Finnick and Gale agree that, since the area above ground is highly dangerous, the best course of action is to proceed underground through mines and tunnels. Peeta again insists that he should be shot, as he's a danger to the mission. While Jackson wants to take Peeta along, Katniss is tempted to kill him, but she can't force herself to murder her friend.

While it's refreshing to hear Katniss telling Peeta that he deserves to live, it's a little disheartening to hear her rationalize her decision in such bloodless terms: she's suggesting that, if Peeta becomes useless to the mission, then he does indeed have no reason to stay alive.



This is a disturbing moment, if only because it proves that Coin doesn't need Katniss alive—Katniss is just as good a symbol for the rebel cause dead as she is alive. Indeed, Katniss is in many ways better for the rebels as a martyr—so much love and support has been built up around her that her death can only serve to turn more of the districts against Snow—and her death would remove her as a future rival for Coin.



Again, Collins's description of Katniss's decision to spare Peeta's life is quite chilling: Katniss spares Peeta's life on the grounds that she's friends with him, but she seems almost annoyed with herself for being incapable of giving the "necessary" order. We're reminded of how thoroughly the Hunger Games have affected Katniss.



The group decides to travel through the vast network of tunnels beneath the Capitol. Pollux explains that his brother worked in the tunnels for many years. Peeta finds this news very encouraging, and Katniss notices a brief “flash” of his former self. Together, the group moves through the tunnels quickly, heading for the center of the Capitol where President Snow lives.

This expository section sets the scene for many of the ensuing chapters, and presents us with a tense, claustrophobic environment, full of sudden surprises—similar to the Hunger Games arenas of the past two novels.



Katniss notices that Peeta is having trouble proceeding through the tunnel, due to his conditioning and the injuries he’s sustained in the previous few days. She offers him food and water, and he is touched. He asks Katniss if it is “real or not real” that she’s protecting him, and she insists that it is real. Shortly afterwards, they hear a “hissing” sound in the distance. Throughout the tunnels, Katniss realizes, the word “Katniss” is echoing.

Katniss and Peeta seem to be recovering together. Just as Peeta is gradually learning to love Katniss once again, Katniss is learning to love Peeta independently of the government’s propaganda, and apart from the sociopathic coldness she’s acquired while competing in the Hunger Games.



CHAPTER 22

Katniss hears her name echoing through the tunnels underneath the Capitol. She realizes what has happened: Snow has realized that Katniss is, in fact, alive, and probably underneath his city. Katniss is afraid that the sound of her name will retrigger Peeta, but to her surprise, he isn’t hostile at all. Instead, he urges Katniss to leave the tunnels as soon as possible. Katniss suggests that she split from the rest of the group, as she’d planned to do several days earlier. Gale and the other members of the mission, however, refuse to abandon Katniss.

Snow proves himself to be a master of theater as well as a talented tactician: he knows exactly what will disturb Katniss most. In the face of such chilling horror, however, it’s inspiring to see the mission members stick together. Gale and Peeta refuse to abandon Katniss in the middle of the tunnels.



The group notices that the whispers of “Katniss” are getting louder. They run away from the sound, toward an area that, according to the Holo, contains a dangerous Pod called “Meat grinder.” As they walk through this area, Finnick pulls Katniss aside, a split-second before he’s captured in a beam of light and killed. The beam then captures Messalla and melts the flesh off of his body. At the same time, a manhole opens above the tunnel, and Katniss sees a squad of “mutt” (mutant) soldiers with long reptilian tails. The mutts fire guns at Katniss and her team. Jackson stays behind to fight the mutts, while Gale, Peeta, and Katniss run away. Katniss notes, impressed, that Peeta seems to be the calmest and most self-controlled member of their mission.

Finnick dies only weeks after marrying the love of his life, Annie Cresta. Collins dispatches with his body in a shocking way: he’s melted. At the same time, there is a kind of victory in the fact that he did get to marry his love, even as Collins makes it clear that love does not in any way offer automatic happy endings. Finnick also clearly recognizes Katniss’s importance as a symbol beyond his own, sacrificing himself for her. It’s also in this section that Collins exposes us to more futuristic terrors like those in the Hunger Games arenas: half-human, half-reptilian monsters sent by Snow to kill Katniss. A major turning point in the chapter comes when Katniss notices that Peeta is the calmest one among them—in all his conditioning and de-conditioning he has seemingly lost the need to panic in a crisis.



Katniss, Gale, Peeta, and Cressida run away from the mutts through the tunnels. They find a ladder leading up toward the ground. Katniss climbs it and helps the others up. Gale, who's been grazed in the neck by a mutt's bullet, tells Katniss that no one else has survived the mutts' attack. Katniss throws the Holo back down the ladder and says "nightlock" three times, triggering the Holo to explode and kill the mutts. Overcome with fear and anxiety, Katniss kisses Peeta on the mouth. To her relief, Peeta kisses her back, and whispers that he's not going to let Snow kill her.

The group proceeds through the tunnels, no longer pursued by mutts. They come to another ladder, which leads to the street outside a huge Capitol house. Katniss runs to the door of the house, where there is a well-dressed woman. The woman recognizes Katniss and is about to call for help when Katniss shoots her in the heart.

CHAPTER 23

Katniss has just killed a wealthy Capitol resident. This person was about to cry out for help when she saw Katniss, and Katniss didn't want to alert others to her presence. In the woman's house, the team finds clothes and makeup. Gale, Cressida, and Pollux change clothes, and Peeta and Katniss use the makeup to disguise their faces.

The group sets out through the Capitol. There are loud sirens and news bulletins calling for Katniss's immediate arrest—the news that she died has been overturned. Cressida takes the group to a store owned by her friend Tigris. Tigris, like many residents of the Capitol, has paid for elaborate surgeries to make her face look feline. When they arrive, Katniss senses a trap. Then she recalls that Tigris used to be a successful stylist for tributes of the Hunger Games, and later Snow fired her for having too many surgeries. Katniss tells Tigris that she plans to kill Snow personally, and in response, Tigris seems to smile.

Tigris helps the group take care of Gale's neck injury. As Peeta and Katniss care for him, Peeta recalls Katniss risking her life to find him medicine in the first Hunger Games. Katniss feels relieved that Peeta is remembering their friendship, but she's equally distressed that so many of her friends have died on a mission that she invented on the spot. Her plans to kill President Snow seem foolish now, as there's no way of telling where Snow is.

Peeta's renewed affections for Katniss come on the heels of a number of other recent "milestones"—his calmness during the attack, his noble request that he be killed, and even his brief relapse after Boggs's death. Even so, it's impressive to see him telling Katniss that he'll protect her from Snow at all costs. In a sense, we're back in the Hunger Games, with Peeta being fiercely loyal and affectionate to Katniss.



Collins juxtaposes a scene of surprising warmth—Peeta promising to protect Katniss—with a scene of sudden brutality. Katniss is the protagonist of the book, but there are many times—like now—when her behavior is shockingly callous to readers.



Throughout the Hunger Games trilogy, Katniss has used disguises and false appearances to save her life. It's only appropriate, then, that she should do so one more time, concealing her appearance with the same makeup once used to emphasize her celebrity status.



It was a huge advantage that Snow believed Katniss to be dead, and now we're informed that Katniss no longer has that helpful anonymity. Collins reminds us of Tigris, the designer who was cast out of her career for altering her face too many times, and who was mentioned in an earlier book. It's suggested that there is something self-defeating about the Capitol's emphasis on appearances and surgery—over time, such changes become too grotesque even for the artificial people of the Capitol.



At many points Katniss makes plans and then realizes that her plans are useless and naive. Katniss has long wanted to shoot Snow, but now she has no idea how she'll go about accomplishing this goal. It's telling that Katniss realizes all this after tending to Gale—she sees that she must be more careful with her plans, as they endanger her closest friends.



Katniss spends the night at Tigris's home, trying and failing to fall asleep. Racked with guilt, she tells her team that she's been lying: she was given no instructions to kill President Snow. To Katniss's surprise, Gale isn't surprised by this news at all. He insists that everyone knew Katniss was lying: she clearly wanted to kill Snow all along, and wanted an excuse to do it. Jackson agreed to Katniss's plan because Jackson trusted Boggs. Peeta agrees with Gale, and points out that Tigris's shop is only five blocks from Snow's mansion—they can find a way to break inside and kill Snow.

There's something darkly humorous about how easily Gale sees through Katniss's lie. She's become so used to lying "for the camera" that she forgets that there are people, like Gale, who know her well enough to see through her acting. Only a few chapters before the end of the novel, Katniss is being childish and immature again—it's the other members of her team, like Gale and Tigris, who display the most poise and ingenuity here.



Katniss, invigorated by her team's support, spends the rest of the day trying, unsuccessfully, to think of a plan to infiltrate Snow's mansion. At the end of the day, she overhears a conversation between Peeta and Gale. They are talking about Katniss. Peeta insists that Katniss loves Gale, while Gale is convinced that Katniss loves Peeta. Gale ruefully points out that they have bigger problems to worry about than which one of them Katniss will choose in the end. Peeta wonders how Katniss will make up her mind, and Gale responds that Katniss will choose whomever "she thinks she can't survive without."

Gale's statement is rude, shocking, and, it must be said, somewhat true: Katniss does seem to be bouncing back and forth between Gale and Peeta, depending on which one of them is either in pain or capable of mitigating her own pain. They are each important to different parts of Katniss's past and future, and so in choosing between them she is, in a way, deciding more than just which boy she likes the most.



CHAPTER 24

Katniss is shocked and hurt by what she's just heard Gale tell Peeta about her. Gale has implied that Katniss acts out of cold calculation, not love, and yet Katniss wonders if Gale might not have a point—she really does put her own survival first and foremost.

Just as Peeta's accusations that Katniss was responsible District 12's bombing hurt Katniss because she believed them, so Gale's statement is especially hurtful because Katniss can see the truth in it.



The next morning, Katniss is still thinking about Gale's words. Nevertheless, she's distracted by Beetee's latest "hijack"—he's aired a broadcast on Capitol TV about how the rebels are currently marching to the Capitol, and will probably arrive very soon.

Even as Katniss's plan to kill Snow falls apart, the machinery of the rebel cause moves on: Beetee is still in charge of propaganda, and seems to be doing an excellent job of getting the rebel message out.



Katniss looks outside and notices a huge group of refugees from the other districts who have come to the Capitol in search of food and shelter. As she stares, Tigris volunteers to scope out the area around President Snow's mansion. She leaves the shop for a long time, and the group is worried that she's been arrested. But after six or six hours, she returns with hot food, which Katniss and her friends eagerly eat. Over dinner, they watch television, which is showing footage of Capitol residents taking in refugees from other parts of Panem.

The television footage that Katniss and her friends watch here is clearly designed to build support for the Capitol by presenting it as compassionate and friendly to all districts. Evidently, Snow is trying to sway his districts on the grounds that the government will treat people better than the rebels will—but it may be too late, as before now he has focused all his attention on Katniss.



The next day, Tigris equips Katniss and the rest of the mission with elaborate clothes that conceal their weapons—bows and **arrows**. Peeta praises her designs, and Tigris blushes with pride. The group thanks Tigris and leaves her shop. It's extremely cold outside and they're grateful to be wearing such well-made clothing.

As the group walks through the street, shouts break out. Katniss realizes that the rebels have arrived at the Capitol and begun fighting the Peacekeepers there. Nevertheless, she doesn't join the fight, knowing that she needs to appear to be a civilian for long enough to approach Snow's mansion. Suddenly, Katniss hears gunshots nearby—there is a massive riot, and Peacekeepers have been summoned to suppress it. In the confusion, Katniss loses sight of Peeta, Cressida, and Pollux. She and Gale run away from the riot.

Gale and Katniss run toward President Snow's mansion. There is another gunshot, and Katniss and Gale see that they've unwittingly run toward another group of Peacekeepers, who open fire on both of them. Katniss and Gale get separated, and Katniss turns to see that the Peacekeepers have apprehended Gale. He mouths something to Katniss, which she's unable to interpret. Only when she's run away from the Peacekeepers does she realize that Gale had mouthed "shoot me"—he recognizes that the government will torture him to find out what he knows about the rebellion.

As Katniss weeps for Gale, she hears cries of, "The rebels!" and realizes that they've broken through the Peacekeepers' forces. She looks up to see a Capitol hovercraft dropping parachutes onto the crowd. Children run toward the parachutes, eager for care and nourishment—only to find that the parachutes contain **bombs**. The bombs detonate, killing thousands. Almost immediately a wave of sympathetic people and experienced medics rush in to take care of the children. Katniss realizes that one of the sympathetic people is Prim, her own sister. Then she watches, horrified, as a second, more powerful bomb goes off, killing everyone nearby.

CHAPTER 25

Katniss feels that she is "on fire." She's in tremendous agony, both physical and psychological, following the bombing in the refugee area of the Capitol. She wishes she could die, but knows that she'll be condemned to live in misery, having witnessed her own sister's death. She passes out.

Tigris plays a crucial part in Katniss's mission, though it seems that Tigris acts more out of bitterness than compassion. It's no coincidence, however, that the only person in the Capitol to help Katniss is herself a social outcast. Most of the time, the Capitol breeds shallow, superficial people who are unwilling to see injustice because their own lives are so luxurious.



Katniss becomes separated from her fellow soldiers. The future arc of the plot now seems clear: it's time for Katniss to go out on her own, find Snow, and kill him. Collins is, in short, setting us up for a big climax in the Capitol.



In this important moment, we see that Gale really is willing to give up his life if he thinks it will help the rebel cause. Previously, Gale had justified his callousness on the grounds that he's equally unconcerned with his own life, but here he backs up his words with action. He may be cold and unfeeling, but at least he's not a hypocrite.



The spectacle of the two bombs is eerily familiar, as Collins set it up with Beetee's explanation many chapters ago. It's also worth recognizing how thoroughly Collins has dashed our expectations. We'd assumed that she was building up to a big climax in which Katniss would find and kill President Snow. Instead, we're given a shocking, unexpected scene in which Katniss accumulates new traumas, a beloved character is killed—Prim, who started the plot of the first novel—and President Snow is still alive and well.



Fire imagery has been an important part of the Hunger Games books. In this opening section, Collins extends the metaphor to make a point: the life of the mockingjay, that symbol of "catching fire" for the rebel cause, is also immensely painful—fire hurts.



Katniss regains consciousness in a Capitol hospital. She becomes aware of doctors operating on her, and running constant tests on her body. A little later, she sees Haymitch walking by her bed, smiling, followed by Cinna, Delly, and, bizarrely, her own father, who is singing “[The Hanging Tree](#).” President Coin visits Katniss and assures her “I’ve captured President Snow for you.” This satisfies Katniss, as she feels she needs to avenge her sister’s death immediately.

This section parallels the end of [Catching Fire](#), in which Katniss wakes up in a hospital, unsure of what has happened. For the time being, Katniss is in much the same state of mind she’s been in for the last hundred pages: she wants to kill Snow at all costs—now more than ever, since she wants to avenge her sister. It’s as if the government has finally succeeded in what they’ve been trying to do since the start of the trilogy, when Effie Trinket read the names of the District 12 tributes—kill Prim.



A little later, Katniss finds herself in a room with food. She seems to be recovering, though she’s still only dimly aware of her surroundings. A messenger informs her that President Snow has been arrested by the victorious rebels, tried and convicted of treason, and sentenced to death.

In contrast to the “messiness” of the events of the previous chapters, the news of Snow’s capture comes extremely quickly: it’s as if District 13 has accomplished its mission with an air of inevitability.



Katniss slowly recovers from the injuries she sustained during the explosion. She prepares to confront Snow. She travels to a nearby jail, guarded by soldiers from District 8. Paylor, who now commands all of District 8, allows Katniss to come inside—Coin has publicly ordered that Katniss is to visit Snow, and later execute him herself.

Katniss has spent a large chunk of this novel in various hospitals, and this reminds us that she’s never had time to entirely heal from her experiences in the Hunger Games. She keeps sustaining new injuries, both mental and physical, that send her back to where she started.



Inside the prison, Katniss finds Snow sitting in a cell, looking surprisingly calm. He tells Katniss that he’s been hoping he’d get a chance to see Katniss one more time. Katniss notices that there is a bed of red [roses](#) in his cell, whose color contrasts with Snow’s sickly, almost green skin. She also considers the fact that she has “trespassed” into Snow’s new “home,” much as he entered her home a year ago.

Once again, Collins is setting us up for an, elegant, satisfying finale, in which the narrative has come “full circle.” As Katniss notes—this would be an ideal note on which to end the war and Snow’s life.



Snow tells Katniss that he’s very sorry about her sister. Katniss is hurt and a little confused—it makes no sense that Snow would be apologizing for this. Snow urges Katniss to look at the facts: a hovercraft [bombed](#) a huge crowd of children, many of whom were Capitol citizens. If Snow himself had had access to a hovercraft, he would have used it to escape. The order to bomb the civilians, he maintains, must have come from Coin, not from him. By making it appear that Snow would attack his own people, Coin brilliantly stripped Snow of the Capitol civilians’ allegiance. Snow points out that the bombing aired live, surely the result of Plutarch’s careful planning.

Although Snow is certainly an untrustworthy and villainous figure, his logic is impeccable in this section: we’ve already seen that Coin is capable of great cruelty and brutality if she thinks it will help her gain power, and we’ve learned that Plutarch excels at propaganda. When we’re weighing Snow’s words to Katniss, we must ask, “who benefits from the bombing, and who doesn’t?” The answer fits Snow’s argument: Coin benefits enormously, and Snow doesn’t at all.



Snow concludes his explanation, urging Katniss to see Coin's "genius." From the beginning, it was District 13 that first rebelled against the Capitol. Later, District 13, led by Coin, encouraged the other districts to fight with the Capitol, weakening themselves enormously. Finally, Coin tricked Snow into devoting far too much time and attention to fighting Katniss, the **Mockingjay**. Katniss remembers the weapon she discussed with Gale and Beetee: it consisted of **two bombs**, and was designed to appeal to people's compassion. Katniss, shaking with surprise and anger, tells Snow that she doesn't believe him. Snow laughs and tells Katniss, "I thought we had agreed not to lie to each other."

Katniss has often failed to see the "big picture"—in [Catching Fire](#), for instance, she failed to recognize the "real enemy" until the penultimate chapter of the book, when she fired her arrow at the Hunger Games force field. Here, Katniss finally sees the big picture of the war between the Capitol and District 13: Coin used Katniss to distract Snow, not just to inspire the rebels. This discovery is paired with a more intimate, horrifying realization: Katniss recognizes that Beetee and Gale designed the bombs that killed Prim.



CHAPTER 26

Katniss leaves Snow's cell and walks out of the jail, thinking about everything she's just learned. It's possible that Snow was lying, and the Capitol **bombed** its own citizens to distract the rebels. It's also possible that the rebels bombed the Capitol, pretending to be Capitol soldiers. Whichever version of this story is the truth, Katniss realizes, Snow was right about one thing: Coin has manipulated Snow and the districts into warring with one another, allowing District 13 to seize power quickly and easily at the proper time.

Katniss isn't foolish enough to believe Snow without any evidence: the problem is that she has just enough evidence to see that Snow must be telling the truth. The darker implication of Snow's argument is that Coin wanted the other districts to be as weak as possible: this is part of the reason that District 13 has been laying dormant for so many years. By letting the districts do Coin's dirty work for her, Coin was able to swoop in and claim power without any further fighting.



Katniss remembers that Coin sent Peeta to accompany Katniss into battle, knowing that this decision would endanger Katniss. She also must have sent Prim to fight, though Prim was only 13 years old. Too many of Katniss's friends have died, she thinks to herself: Finnick, Boggs, Prim, Cinna, etc. She wonders where Gale is now—the last time she saw him, he was being dragged away by Capitol guards.

Katniss realizes that Coin has murdered as many of her friends as has Snow—they really are alike. It's important that Katniss's mind jumps to Gale for the first time, it would seem, since they became separated. Katniss has been too busy thinking about revenge against Snow—revenge that now doesn't seem so satisfying and clear-cut.



A few days pass, and it's announced that Snow is to be publicly executed. Katniss's old prep team, including Octavia, Flavius, and Venia, arrive at Katniss's new Capitol home to dress her for the execution. Effie Trinket, an old Hunger Games organizer, is also present. Venia whispers that Haymitch and Plutarch had to fight with Coin to keep her alive. Gale arrives at Katniss's house, and shows her a single **arrow**, with which she's supposed to kill Snow and end the war. Katniss asks Gale about the **bomb** that killed her sister. Gale quietly says that nothing he says will make Katniss feel better. With this, he leaves.

The single arrow that Katniss holds symbolizes her greatest strength and her greatest weakness. She's a strong, resourceful young woman, but she's also a pawn and a weapon, whether for the Capitol or for the rebels. This is confirmed by the presence of Effie Trinket, previously an organizer for the Hunger Games—it would seem that nothing has changed under the new regime. Gale's apparent indifference to Prim's death signals the principle difference between him and Peeta, now that the trilogy draws to a close—Gale is fundamentally a callous person who is willing to commit evil acts "for the greater good," while Peeta is a sensitive, empathetic person who doesn't believe that the ends justify the means.



The execution ceremony begins. Katniss is present, along with the surviving Hunger Games participants: Enobaria, Johanna, Beetee, Annie, Haymitch, and Peeta. Beetee explains that the Hunger Games competitors were, for the most part, killed off: all those the rebels suspected of being loyal to the Capitol were murdered, while the Capitol had already killed those suspected of being rebels.

Coin arrives at the ceremony. She mentions to Katniss that many rebels are calling for the murder of all Capitol citizens, a proposal that Coin has rejected on the grounds that they need people for repopulation. Coin suggests to Katniss and her fellow Hunger Games competitors that they punish the Capitol by forcing their children to compete in a final Hunger Games. Peeta angrily opposes this idea, calling it cruel. Annie agrees with Peeta, as does Beetee. Johanna and Enobaria vote for the Games, reasoning that it will give the Capitol “a taste of its own medicine.” The vote comes down to Haymitch and Katniss. Katniss votes for the Hunger Games, “for Prim,” and Haymitch agrees with her. Thus, the vote passes, and Coin announces that the Hunger Games will be carried out soon.

The execution ceremony proceeds, with President Coin presiding. Katniss goes through the ceremony as if she’s sleepwalking. At the end of the ceremony, she is meant to fire an **arrow** at Snow. Just before she’s about to shoot him, she realizes that he was telling the truth. Snow coughs, and Katniss notices that he coughs up blood. Suddenly, she turns and fires her arrow at President Coin. Coin collapses and falls—Katniss has killed the rebel leader.

CHAPTER 27

Katniss has just shot President Coin. Snow, who was supposed to be her victim, can only laugh. He coughs up blood and bends over, choking. Katniss, knowing that she’ll surely be punished for murdering Coin, turns to the pocket on her shoulder—which contains a poisonous pill—and tries to bite into it. Before she can, however, Peeta’s hand blocks her—“I can’t let you go,” he tells her.

There’s great pathos in the fact that the Hunger Games tributes were the most heavily devastated demographic of Panem: they’ve been forced to fight with one another against their wills, but then they’re blamed for the conflict above all other citizens. They are, above all, victims of their own prestige—their fame makes it impossible for them to escape some kind of punishment, whether by the rebels or the government.



Coin is cold and rational, much like Gale—she wants Capitol officials dead, but also wants to repopulate Panem. This is also Collins’s way of showing us that very little will change in Panem under President Coin. There will still be cruel, corrupt people in power who place little value on human lives. In many ways, Peeta was right when Flickerman interviewed him—the only real change that will come of the war between the rebels and the government is the loss of many lives in combat. Tyranny itself will not go away, only change its name from “Snow” to “Coin.”



Collins runs through the ceremony quickly, preventing us from savoring any details of a fundamentally bloodthirsty, sensationalist event. This is entirely intentional, as Collins wants us to see such ceremonies for what they really are: a glamorization of murder, whether the murder of Hunger Games tributes or of corrupt politicians. The death of President Coin comes as a surprise—Collins’ great “twist” of the trilogy’s finale—and is a final act of agency on Katniss’s part. She has been a pawn for both Snow and Coin, but part of her power as a symbol is her danger, as represented by the arrow she wields. In this moment Katniss the symbol again becomes Katniss the person, a warrior fighting independently for what she thinks is right.



Coriolanus Snow has been totally defeated, but at least he helps bring down his enemy with him. He can only laugh at the gruesome irony of Katniss killing Coin with the arrow Coin gave her. Surprisingly, we identify with Snow here: we, too, must laugh at the dark, bitter irony.



Guards seize Katniss and roughly take her to her home, where she's blindfolded and handcuffed. The hours drag on, and Katniss wonders why she hasn't been executed for her act of treason. It occurs to her that the new government might not kill her after all—perhaps they'll try to torture her instead, or “remake” her into a more loyal figurehead. She resolves to kill herself before obeying the government ever again.

A few days later, Haymitch visits Katniss, who is still under house arrest. Haymitch explains that Katniss's trial is over. He takes her into a hovercraft, where Plutarch is sitting, looking very happy. On the hovercraft, Haymitch explains that Katniss's assassination of Coin caused chaos. Coin died, and Snow did, too, though it's unclear if he choked on his own blood or if he was crushed in the ensuing crowd. In an emergency election, Paylor became the president, and shortly thereafter, a trial was held for Katniss. The defense successfully presented Katniss as a traumatized, borderline-insane warrior, who shouldn't be punished any further. Plutarch has been appointed the new government's Head of Communications. He explains that he'll use his power to ensure that people “forgive and forget” Katniss's crime.

The hovercraft is taking Katniss and Haymitch back to District 12. Haymitch explains that the government has no place for him, either, so he's being sent back to his old home. He informs Katniss that her mother has moved to District 4 to work in a hospital, and she wants to talk to Katniss as soon as she's ready. In the meantime, Haymitch is to be Katniss's guardian.

The hovercraft arrives in District 12, and Haymitch and Katniss return to the large houses that have been built for them. The next few days are slow and uneventful. Then Peeta returns to District 12. He explains that the government wants nothing more to do with him, and adds that Gale has gotten a “fancy job” in District 2.

In this brief section, Katniss reveals what she's learned in the last few pages: to be a symbol and figurehead means abandoning one's instincts, one's compassion, and one's freedom. While she began this novel by agreeing to be the Mockingjay for Coin, Katniss now sees the error of her ways.



Collins has a dark sense of humor, and the manner in which she describes Snow's death is a perfect example. Katniss has been planning to kill Snow throughout the novel, but after giving up the chance to kill him in front of thousands of people, she now suffers the indignity not only of not being the one to kill him, but also of not knowing exactly how he died. Collins hasn't given us much information about Paylor, so it's left up to us to conclude (optimistically) that she will be better than Snow or Coin, or (pessimistically) that she, too, will be corrupted by power. It's notable that Plutarch saves Katniss by again designing an “image” for her, albeit an image of insanity. Propaganda got Katniss into this mess—it's only fair that propaganda should get her out. Haymitch and Plutarch were clearly not big supporters of Coin either.



The fact that there is no place for Haymitch in the new government is a bad sign. Haymitch, in spite of his flaws, understood both Katniss and Peeta, and was crucial to the success of the rebel cause. By expelling Haymitch, the government loses a sympathetic leader and its one link to Katniss.



In this short section, Collins “wraps up” the story of one of her most important characters, Gale, on a very dark note. Gale has shown himself to be cold and capable of murder, and it's telling that the new government gives him a “fancy job.” This suggests that Gale's callousness will fit in with the new government's style, while at the same time ending the “love-triangle” aspect of the plot for good.



The weather has grown warm again, and Katniss notes, bitterly, that the “old Katniss” would have loved to go hunting. Now that she and Peeta can live in District 12 in peace, they “learn to keep busy together.” Katniss begins hunting again, and Peeta pursues his love of baking. Together, they help cure one another of their nightmares and traumas—Peeta has flashbacks to his torture, and Katniss still remembers the sight of her sister dying. Katniss realizes that she doesn’t love Gale, and that his passion and energy are, deep down, motivated by hatred. Instead, she needs gentleness and goodness—and these, Peeta can provide her. One day, he asks her, “You love me. Real or not real?” She replies, “Real.”

It’s as if Katniss has been so active for the last two years of her life that she hasn’t had a moment to study herself and reflect on how much she’s changed—until now. The major takeaway of her self-analysis is that she’s been deeply traumatized by her experiences in the last two years, both in the Hunger Games and in the war. It’s only fair, then, that she ends up with Peeta, rather than Gale. At times, Katniss has shown signs of callousness and also fiery anger—like Gale—but ultimately, it becomes clear that Katniss needs someone who is gentle and compassionate, and someone who has dealt with the same kind of traumas that she has while keeping his humanity. With Peeta, Katniss finds someone who understands her pain and can help her live with this pain. They are both broken by trauma, but they start growing whole together. Katniss is often seen as a feminist hero, but it has also always seemed inevitable that she would end up with either Gale or Peeta—implying that having a love interest is an inherent part of being a female protagonist. Now that conflict is finally decided, as she (rather anti-climactically) ends up with Peeta.



EPILOGUE

The epilogue takes place twenty years after the events of the last chapter. Under the new government, headed by Paylor, the Hunger Games have been abolished. Katniss and Peeta have two young children: one boy and one girl. In school, they learn about their parents’ heroism.

It’s a relief to find that the Hunger Games have been abolished, and this suggests that the successors to Coriolanus Snow have been more humane presidents, in this aspect at least. It’s jarring to see Katniss as a middle-aged woman, but also refreshing, since we see that she has a good life with Peeta and no longer has to experience so much violence and suffering.



Katniss watches her children playing, and thinks, a little sadly, that they have no idea they’re playing in the same area where President Snow once ordered mass killings. Katniss still has nightmares about the events of the Hunger Games, and the deaths of her loved ones. To console herself, she spends time with Peeta, who is sympathetic and supportive, and privately she makes a list of every good act she’s witnessed. Making this list is a tiresome game for Katniss, but, she concludes, “there are much worse games to play.”

Katniss’s reaction to her children isn’t only one of sadness: she’s also somewhat jealous of them. It’s a beautiful thing, she thinks, to be ignorant of pain and trauma—to be a “blank slate,” much as Katniss herself was before she went off to the Hunger Games. Katniss ultimately lives a life based on a kind of weary compromise: she’ll never entirely escape her trauma and sadness, but she’s lucky to have friends and family who understand her trauma and help her deal with it as best she can—and she now has, at least, a sense of peace and hope for the future.





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