

***The Hunger Games* Essay Topics**

All academic essays require a thesis statement. Consider these examples:

Write about how a symbol works throughout the text.

NOT a thesis statement: Three characters are named after plants and plants are symbols in this book.

This falls into the “true fact” category. To be effective here, you need to explain why/how this matters.

YES a thesis statement: In Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games*, characters are named for plants, which becomes a stand-in for personality traits and clues the reader in on ways to interpret events.

Write about how a theme works throughout the text.

NOT a thesis statement: Hunger is a theme in this book.

This idea falls into the “so what” category—who cares? why does it matter?

YES a thesis statement: In Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games*, the characters who have experienced starvation and poverty in their lives have many advantages in the arena.

Write about a character and say something interesting about them.

NOT a thesis statement: Peeta is kind.

Peeta is kind = true fact. Why and how does it matter that Peeta is kind?

YES a thesis statement: Peeta Melark’s kindness is a real danger to heroine Katniss Everdeen, and is one of the main antagonists in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games*.

You are welcome to make your own topic. However, here are some starting places.

- The study questions might be good starting places for finding essay topics.
- Maslow’s Hierarchy can go a long way to help us understand the events in this book. How?
- There are tons of places to do psychoanalysis and feminist and Marxist theory here.
- Katniss has a tragic flaw. What is it and how does it work?
- As we’ve briefly discussed, this book *does not* glorify death, even though many who would ban it think it does. How/Why?
- There is a distinct struggle between the individual and society in this novel. How does that play out and which side wins, if there is any winning at all?

- In *The Hunger Games*, the people of Panem continue old traditions even though they know they are unjust. Why do they continue to participate in something they know to be wrong? How does this relate to our own society today? What parallels and connections can you make?
- *The Hunger Games* shows that television plays a very important role in society. Discuss how the televised games were received in the Capitol as compared to the Districts. How did people's actions change because they were going to be on TV? What connections can you draw to our own current "reality television" craze?
- The Capitol uses many methods to "control" the people of Panem. How does this control work?
- What about symbols? Gah, there are so many in this book. Which ones are important? How do they work?
- How are fences, walls, barriers used in the novel and to what effect?
- How is this story a bildungsroman, or how is it not one? A bildungsroman is type of text where the protagonist is initiated into adulthood through education or experience by a period of growth and often by a process of disillusionment. Understanding comes after the dropping of preconceptions, a destruction of a false sense of security, or in some way the loss of innocence. Some of the shifts that take place in these texts are:
 - struggle between socialization (society) and individualization (self)
 - ignorance to knowledge
 - innocence to experience
 - false view of world to corrected view
 - idealism to realism
- The teenage years are a time when young people develop hormonally and expend a lot of energy thinking about/having/avoiding sex. In the world of *The Hunger Games*, though, this doesn't appear to be the case. Katniss is largely oblivious to her own romantic entanglements, and her relationships with both Peeta and Gale are very chaste. Even within the arena, where social norms are suspended, author Suzanne Collins has replaced sex with violence and aggression, so that the plot consists of teens killing one another rather than sexually interacting with each other. In your interpretation of the text, is this true and, if yes, what is the reader understand about the relationship between sex and violence as presented in this book?
- The Capitol has many methods, as Gale would say, "of inflicting misery," and we learn about them throughout the book. Explain the role governmental control plays in this novel. Consider the methods the Capitol use to control the population and how/why these are effective/ineffective.
- Katniss and Peeta, the female and male protagonists of *The Hunger Games*, reverse traditional masculine and feminine gender roles, with her out in the woods as a hunter and him at home baking in the kitchen; likewise, Peeta later spends much of their time together wounded and helpless in their cave while she protects and provides for him. To what extent does Peeta's symbolic emasculation work with or against the dystopic view Suzanne Collins presents?
- In dystopian literature, society—culture—is the antagonist. How is this true in *The Hunger Games*?