

Student NH

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Hope Through the Darkness

Nothing compares to watching your helpless children, starving and defenseless, being taken by the government for the purpose to play a piece in their sadistic games. Nothing compares to watching your child die on mandatory national television knowing you can not do anything for them. For entertainment, they are being murdered. For those in the Capitol to laugh and bid, they are forced to meet the end of their life. Unfortunately, these exact events are displayed majorly throughout the Hunger Games series by Suzanne Collins. Undeniably, the series expresses distaste for not only humanity and chivalry but also the repulsiveness of a totalitarian society. The citizens in Panem, the country in which the Hunger Games takes place, are constantly faced with unjust morals, exclusion from the capital, unfair education, unbearable fear, and are far too dependent on the Capitol. Visibly, Panem is a model for a worse future filled with blood and indecency that rivals against a need for survival. It is better to live in Yemen than in Suzanne Collins', *The Hunger Games* trilogy, because of their morals, ostracism, education, fear, and dependence.

Panem's morals are significantly below the ideals Yemen upholds in their country. To start, The Hunger Games series conveys an avaricious government from the very beginning of the books, when Katniss, the protagonist, learns the Capitol restricts a district from eating any of the crops they work all day to retrieve. "“Oh, no, we're not allowed to eat the crops,”" (Collins 202) says Rue, a 12-year-old tribute from District 11, manufacturers of agricultural products, in

the first book, *The Hunger Games*. “They [The Peacekeepers] whip you and make everyone else watch,” (202). This establishes the graspy, power-hungry individuals who rule the country, seizing the commodities from the districts to take into their own hands. Additionally, not only does the Capitol apprehend these exports, but they also force their citizens to work non-stop to generate them as well. In fact, District 11, “employs” children as young as 12 and, even, as young as five to work for the Capitol (203). The only district in Panem that does not condemn child labor is District 12, as they start forcing citizens to work at age 18. Not only this, but there are numerous other factors that fabricate Panem’s unjust morals.

Several continuing elements also leave *The Hunger Games* trilogy below Yemen concerning the two countries principles. Lastly, the Panem Capitol impels young, guiltless children to fight for their lives. The deadly Hunger Games took place to remind those of the time of revolution and how the Capitol is far superior and more powerful than the districts. To make this even worse, Capitol members watch these games for entertainment, bidding on who will come out alive and who will have the most gruesome death. However, some may argue that although the Panem government forces the Hunger Games upon its citizens, even more children are sent to fight in the Yemen war, being taken from their families (NBCNews). Believingly so, this argument can be quieted by the knowledge that every child sent to fight in the war in Yemen is willing and chooses to represent their country. To expand, these patriotic children are not put on the battlefield but only help in defenses isolated from the fighting. Nabil Mashushi, a Yemeni, from the documentary, *Inside The World’s Worst Humanitarian Crisis*, specifies ““We do not have underage fighters. The children there were residents and migrants, but they are not part of our fighting forces.”” Morals are a very important distinction between the two countries, but ostracism should also be recognised.

Ostracism, the exclusion from a society or group, in Panem is contrastingly different than in Yemen, undoubtingly making Yemen a better society to reside in. To begin, in the totalitarian society of the Hunger Games series, documents and videos of uprisings are never, under any circumstances, shown to the citizens in the districts. If the revolts are shown to the people of Panem, the action is punishable by death. In the second book of the series, *Catching Fire*, Katniss is wandering the mayor's halls when she stumbles upon his office, watching the screen when an update on District 8 shows. "Instinctively I know this is not for my eyes but something intended only for the mayor. I should go. Quickly," (89) Katniss rallies in her head, knowing she could be severely punished for viewing this uprising now erupting in District 8. Yemen, in spite of that, has papers and, possibly, the internet to share the news regarding their country. In the TedTalk, "See Yemen Through My Eyes," spoken by Nadia Al-Sakkaf, an editor for the newspaper YemenTimes, announces, "It is important for independent media to have a voice." These ways to share the knowledge of the country bridges the gap between divided citizens. Moreover, the dictatorship of Panem does not allow for people to have their own free choice and provides no say in what goes on in their districts. Regarding ostracism, there are various other aspects contributing to Panem's prejudiced exclusion against its citizens.

To pursue with, *The Hunger Games* society falls greatly underneath Yemen concerning the rejection of their subjects. Finally, the Capitol excludes many when it comes to providing, training, and favoritism, especially considering higher class and wealthy districts. Most communities, like Katniss', face deadly poverty, limitations, and are excluded from all other regions. This is represented in *The Hunger Games* when Katniss explains the Career Tributes, "...the kids from the wealthier districts, the volunteers, the ones who had been fed and trained throughout their lives for this moment," (94). On the other hand, some may disagree and say that

although *The Hunger Games* does not show uprisings in other districts, it is superior that way because it prevents fear and better controls the country (Forbes). Yet, to give the citizens a way of freedom, the knowledge of what is happening in the districts should be accessible and will provide new inspiration about what would be best for the country. More so, as with ostracism, the education in Yemen is significantly better than that in the Hunger Games society.

The education system in the Hunger Games series is in horrible condition compared to Yemen. First off, in the books, the government only teaches students the lessons they must know in order to fulfill their district's duties. For instance, in *Catching Fire*, Katniss mentions a tribute from a previous Games receiving a gift in the arena. "District 4's industry is fishing. He'd been on boats his whole life. The trident was a natural, deadly extension of his arm. He wove a net out of some kind of vine that he found, used it to entangle his opponents so he could spear them with the trident, and within a matter of days the crown was his," (209). Outside of the knowledge needed to complete the responsibility of the district, the citizens in the Hunger Games society are hardly taught anything else. Secondly, in Yemen, even through destruction, the war has introduced creativity. "The war has brought talent. Yemenis are using cartoons, art, paintings, and comics to tell the world and each other about what's going on," says Nadia Al-Sakkaf in "See Yemen Through My Eyes." Regardless of the conflict happening in Yemen at the moment, the citizens are using this time to be expressive and learning of new, intellectual ways to carry on their movement. However, these are not the only features that differentiate Panem's education from that in Yemen.

Several other points can be made about *The Hunger Games*' schooling system that clearly mark Yemen as more luring. Thirdly, in addition to learning more creative ways to move a point across, Yemenis have taught themselves to share hope, have better character, and to join

together as a country. As shown in the TedTalk done by Aliaf Alwazir, titled “The Other Side of Yemen’s War,” Alwazir states that the war was one of the best times of her life, as ““People from all different backgrounds, were filled with hope and love and vibrancy.”” Contradicting this claim, some may dispute that the Hunger Games has more wealth to provide for materials, equipment, and supplies for the students to get a better education (BestNotes). While that is true, Panem is not as rich as Yemen in influence, culture, and hope. No matter how many materials are provided, the supplies will do nothing good if they are not used to teach about all subjects. Along with education being a major factor to take into consideration, the fear of both countries also weigh in.

The unbearable fear citizens of Panem have to face everyday is another reason why Yemen would provide for a better life. Foremost, in Panem, parents are constantly scared that their children will be selected to participate in the Hunger Games. This horror goes so far that some have committed themselves to never having children to save them from having to live in their society. In *The Hunger Games*, in a conversation Katniss has with Gale, her best friend, she says ““I never want to have kids,”” (9), to which Gale responds with ““I might. If I didn’t live here,”” (9). This reveals the major reason behind not wanting children: the community is too poor, too rigid, and, if the child were to be reaped, too torturous to watch them die on live broadcasting. Furthermore, each citizen is faced with the persistent distress to always do what is asked of them. The Capitol punishes anyone who misbehaves and, will threaten to murder your family for crimes opposing the Capitol. In *Catching Fire*, when President Snow confronts Katniss about her disappearances with Gale, Snow threatens, ““Speak, Miss Everdeen. Him I can easily kill off if we don’t come to a happy resolution,”” (24). The power the government holds also suffocates the wealthier citizens such as victors, survivors of previous Games. In the third

book in the series, *Mockingjay*, Finnick Odair, the victor of the 65th Hunger Games, states “If a victor is considered desirable, the president gives them as a reward or allows people to buy them for an exorbitant amount of money. If you refuse, he kills someone you love. So you do it,” (178). Unfortunately, these components are not merely enough to communicate the entirety of *The Hunger Games*’ fear they inflict upon their citizens everyday.

Advancing, Panem’s government has even more horrendous acts imposed onto the district people. Last, the people of Panem are subject to immense fear because of the power the government holds. At any time, the Capitol could rain air strikes and explosives down onto the district, exactly the ending District 12 faced in *Catching Fire* after Katniss defies the Capitol (391). On the other hand, some may argue that Yemen is also threatened by their opposers, the Houthis, with air strikes, land mines, snipers, and mortars (BBCNews). Contrastingly, Houthi strikes are consistent and happen almost every day, knowing which part of the country they are aiming to hit. This way, Yemenis can ensure no one is in the vicinity of the attacks. In Panem, when and where the Capitol assaults is unknown and is unwittingly going to cause more damage. Going along with fear, another factor that shines light on which country would be better to live in is their dependence.

The dependence, or reliance, Panem gives way to whether or not *The Hunger Games* society would be good to live in. To begin, Panem is quite unstable, as they rely on the districts for all resources. In fact, Katniss recognises this weakness in *Mockingjay*, saying ““President Snow once admitted to me that the Capitol was fragile. At the time, I didn’t know what he meant. It was hard to see clearly because I was so afraid. Now I’m not. The Capitol’s fragile because it depends on the districts for everything. Food, energy, and even the Peacekeepers that police us,”” (169). As seen, the Capitol is far too unstable to support a whole country properly, as

one single act of rebellion can collapse the entire system. In addition, even though Yemen can and has been surviving without resources sent from foreign countries, Yemenis receive aid from America. The assistance includes more than \$561 million to support the country (U.S. Department of State). With vehicles, weapons, and hope, they can live independently without too much influence from outside territory. Although, these acts are hardly enough to represent all of the distinctions between Yemen's dependence and that of Panem.

Continuing on, there is much further polarity contrasting the two countries, regarding their dependence. Lastly, the districts in Panem count on the government too much for all needed living necessities. The Capitol barely pays workers to do the jobs they are forced to fulfill and does not give nearly enough food and water for the entire population of each district. In fact, within the documentary, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, it argues that cities require an ample supply of food, and thus are dependent on agriculture. Lamentably, only one district in *The Hunger Games* is able to provide crops, leaving all others without ways to produce nourishment. In these conditions, Katniss is forced to hunt illegally to support her family and enter her name 15 more times than mandatory, 20 times total, into the selection for the Games to receive tesserae. "Each tessera is worth a meager year's supply of grain and oil for one person," (13) informs Katniss in the first book, *The Hunger Games*. In this case, the government is forcing young children to either not have enough food to keep your family full or giving yourself a higher chance of entering the deadly arena to save those you love. Although, some people will say that *The Hunger Games'* system is controlled well with the districts relying on the government and the government relying on the districts (Shmoop). However, this sets up for great disaster because if just one simple factor was out of place, the whole system would collapse. The dependence of the two countries provides a clearer reason why Yemen would make for a better life.

Yemen would provide for a much better life than the totalitarian society of The Hunger Games series because of morals, ostracism, education, fear, and dependence. The unjust ideals of The Hunger Games society are displayed as the Capitol forces child labor among the citizens, while also taking the goods the districts work hard to produce. These starving children, parents not able to provide for a thriving life, are then reaped to determine which will fight to the death among 23 unfortunate others. To add on, the communities in Panem are greatly excluded from decision making and the knowledge of what events are happening in the other sectors. Clearly, the Capitol favors certain districts and gives them an unfair advantage and provides them with more nourishment. Moreover, education in Panem only teaches students the lessons needed to complete their district's assigned duties, without the influence of culture, art, and hope. Subsequently, Panem's constant fear of the government and the power they hold significantly suffocates all who live under their control. With no voice, no vigor, and no say, there can not be a future for those in Panem. Finally, In the Hunger Games series, the government and the districts rely on each other far too much to provide for a stable system. However, in Yemen, there is hope for new, prosperous ways. Ways to regain and rebuild what was lost in their towns, homes, and hearts. The Yemeni revolution is not centered on violence and destruction but, beyond that, there has been a path, once crowded with weeds of blindness, paved to make way for creativity, love, compassion, and inspiration.

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