



# THE HUNGER GAMES: DISCUSSION GUIDE #1



## CHAPTERS 1-2

### Comprehension:

- Describe the place where Katniss lives. Where is it located and what is it like?

Katniss lives in District Twelve in an area called the Seam where most of the people are coal miners. It's near the Meadow, the fence, and the woods. The Seam is covered in coal dust, with run-down buildings. People in District Twelve rarely have enough to eat.

- What illegal activity does Katniss participate in? Why does she do this if it's illegal?

Katniss goes to the woods outside the fence surrounding District Twelve to hunt for food to feed her family and trade at the black market in town. She has to do this because her family wouldn't have enough money or food otherwise.

- What is the Hob? Why does Katniss go there?

The Hob is the black market in District Twelve where people can trade items. Katniss goes there to trade game that she's killed for other items that she can't get by hunting or foraging.

- Explain how the reaping system works and why it's inherently unfair.

The reaping is an annual lottery where two names are randomly drawn to select the two tributes from each district who will participate in the Hunger Games. All children ages 12–18 who live in the districts have their names automatically entered every year (once at 12, twice at 13, and so on). But a person can opt to enter their name more in exchange for tesserae, which provides grain and oil for one person for a year, and the entries are cumulative. This puts poor people at a disadvantage because they will have to enter their names more times in order to get food, which wealthier people don't need to do.

- What are the Hunger Games and what is their purpose?

The Hunger Games is an annual competition where one boy and one girl from each of the twelve districts of Panem are sent to fight to the death in an arena. It's a punishment devised after the Dark Days when the districts rebelled against the Capitol, and it's meant to keep the districts from trying to rebel again.

- Discuss what happens at the reaping. Why is this unusual?

Prim's name is drawn, which is unusual because she just turned twelve and only has her name in the drawing once. Katniss then volunteers to take her place, which is unusual because no one in District Twelve ever volunteers for the Hunger Games. The crowd doesn't applaud when Effie Trinket introduces Katniss as the female tribute. Instead, they give Katniss a three-finger salute, which is an old gesture of respect and admiration. This is unusual because the crowd's silence and the collective gesture are forms of defiance against the Capitol.



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## CHAPTERS 1-2

- What is the dynamic between Katniss and Peeta? Why does Katniss wish Peeta's name hadn't been chosen? Katniss and Peeta attend school together, but they aren't friends or neighbors, and they have never even spoken. But Katniss remembers how Peeta saved her and her family from starvation. Katniss wishes that Peeta's name hadn't been selected because she feels like she owes him a debt for throwing bread to her when she was starving five years ago. Because he saved her life then, she worries she won't be able to kill him in the Hunger Games.

### Analysis:

- "And who hasn't broken the law? I could be shot on a daily basis for hunting, but the appetites of those in charge protect me." What does this quote from Chapter 1 tell you about the citizens and the Peacekeepers in District Twelve?  
This quote indicates that, even though the laws of Panem are strict and the punishments are harsh, most people in District Twelve have broken a law at one point or another and not gotten punished for it. Even though they're better off than most of the citizens in District Twelve, the Peacekeepers there are also hungry, so they are willing to buy fresh meat that Katniss and others trade at the Hob. This means they turn a blind eye to the illegal activity required to get the meat.
- Explain the purpose of the flashback in Chapter 2. What does it tell you about the characters?  
The flashback gives readers a glimpse into Katniss's past and helps us understand why Katniss doesn't want Peeta at the Hunger Games with her. We learn about the hardships Katniss went through after her father died in the mines and how she took over as the provider for her family because her mother went into a deep depression. We also learn about Peeta burning the loaves of bread, getting punished for it, and tossing the loaves to Katniss. This shows us that Peeta is kind, caring, and generous.
- What clues so far in the story indicate that Panem is a dystopian society?  
The history of Panem given in Chapter 1 tells the story of the fall of North America due to disasters and wars. Then came the Dark Days of the rebellion, which resulted in the Treaty of Treason and the Hunger Games, where children are sent to fight to the death on television. The Capitol is an example of a totalitarian government and the people in the districts live in constant fear with little to no choice over their lives. Most citizens never have enough to eat, there is extreme poverty and inequality, and the punishments for breaking laws are extremely harsh.

### Personal:

- What other stories does the setting of *The Hunger Games* remind you of? Share any books, movies, shows, or games that remind you of Panem or District Twelve. **Student answers will vary.**



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## CHAPTERS 3-4

### Comprehension:

- Who comes to visit Katniss after the reaping? What does each person do or say to Katniss?

Katniss's mom and sister visit her first. Katniss's mom assures her that she won't "go away" like last time and that she'll take care of Prim. Prim makes Katniss swear to try to win the games and come home. Peeta's father visits Katniss next, gives her cookies, and tells her that he'll make sure Prim is eating. Madge visits next and gives Katniss her gold pin to wear into the arena. Then Gale visits and tries to encourage her to win the games. He promises to look after Katniss's mother and sister.

- What are Katniss's instructions for her mother and Prim? How will Katniss's mother and Prim survive when Katniss is away?

Katniss tells Prim not to take any tesserae. Between selling Prim's goat's milk and cheese, income from their mother's apothecary business, and fresh game from Gale, Katniss says they should have enough food and money to survive.

- Describe the relationship between Katniss and Gale. Give text evidence to support your answer.

Katniss and Gale are best friends who hunt together most days in the woods. They trust and understand each other, and they both help take care of their families. Katniss knows Gale better than anyone else. When he visits her after the reaping, she admits, "Maybe there is nothing romantic between us, but when he opens his arms, I don't hesitate to go into them." Katniss trusts and depends on Gale, begging him to not let her family starve. Gale promises he won't, proving that he cares deeply for Katniss and her family.

- We learn more in Chapter 3 about the location of District Twelve and the Capitol. Where are they each located?

The Capitol was built in a place "once called the Rockies," meaning the Rocky Mountains. District Twelve is located in a region "known as Appalachia," meaning the Appalachian Mountains.

- What is a mockingjay? What is its meaning to Katniss and to the Capitol?

The mockingjay is the bird on the gold pin that Madge gave to Katniss. It reminds Katniss of her father, who was "particularly fond" of them because he would sing songs back and forth with the birds. To the Capitol, mockingjays are "something of a slap in the face" because they are the result of failed *muttations*, jabberjays, breeding with native mockingbirds.

- Describe Haymitch. Who is he and what is he like?

Haymitch is the only living victor from District Twelve and mentor to Katniss and Peeta. He is constantly drunk, sloppy, and rude, but it's his job to try and help Katniss and Peeta in the arena.



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- What advice does Haymitch give to Katniss and Peeta? How did they respond to his advice? What deal do they make?

At first, he tells them simply to “stay alive,” which wasn’t at all helpful or appreciated. Peeta responds by knocking Haymitch’s glass of liquor out of his hand, and Katniss drives a knife into the table between Haymitch’s hand and the bottle. Once Haymitch realizes he has “a pair of fighters this year,” he makes a deal to stay sober enough to actually help them if they don’t interfere with his drinking.

### Analysis:

- In Chapter 3, Katniss indicates that she doesn’t spend much time thinking about the history of Panem. Why doesn’t she care more? How does this attitude help the Capitol?

Katniss doesn’t see the point of learning the truth of Panem’s history because it won’t help her feed her family, which is her biggest and most pressing concern every day. Since most people in the districts are in a similar situation, they’re too focused on trying to survive to question the information that the Capitol gives them. This means they’re less likely to rebel, and the propaganda about the Capitol’s history can continue unchallenged.

- “A kind Peeta Mellark is far more dangerous to me than an unkind one.” What does Katniss mean by this statement? What does that tell you about Katniss as a person?

Katniss is worried that if Peeta is kind, she’ll grow attached to him. This would only make things harder in the Games because only one person can win, meaning she might have to kill him. Katniss sees attachment and kindness as a weakness. She’s very independent and doesn’t like relying on others.

- Explain the following metaphor used in Chapter 4: “The woods became our savior, and each day I went a bit farther into its arms.”

The metaphor means that Katniss and her family were saved from starvation because of the food she was able to collect in the woods. Each day, she ventured deeper in the woods to hunt, fish, or gather eggs or plants. In addition to food for her family to eat, the woods also provided enough food to trade with others in town so that she could get other goods that they couldn’t afford to buy, like soap, milk, and thread.

### Personal:

- On the journey to the Capitol, Katniss has access to luxuries that she’s never experienced before—car and train rides, a hot shower, orange juice, hot chocolate—but these are things that many of us take for granted. What is a simple “luxury” that you would want to share with someone who had never experienced it? **Student answers will vary.**