

The image features the Mockingjay pin, a central symbol from the Hunger Games series. The pin is a stylized bird with its wings spread, perched on a circular target with a crosshair. The background is a vibrant, fiery orange and yellow, suggesting a scene of destruction or conflict. The pin is rendered in a dark, metallic, textured style.

THE HUNGER GAMES:

CATCHING FIRE
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

A LESSON PLAN FOR HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

The Hunger Games: Catching Fire for Social Justice

HOPE IS STRONGER THAN FEAR

Introduction

The Center for Healthy Teen Relationships, an initiative of the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual Domestic Violence, is committed to creating Compassionate Communities that empower everyone to thrive and be their best selves by achieving justice, equity, and respect for all girls and women, boys and men. In that spirit, we offer the following lesson plan ideas based on The Hunger Games: Catching Fire.

The Hunger Games: Catching Fire is the second in the best-selling series by Suzanne Collins, and a highly-anticipated movie set for release on November 22, 2013.

Building on both the immense popularity of the Hunger Games trilogy (outselling the Harry Potter series) and the first Hunger Games film, Catching Fire will be a cultural phenomenon among young people, and a unique opportunity to engage students in critical conversations about the power of social activism to make a difference in the world.

Movements to challenge injustice can begin when fundamental wrongs are identified and people organize to challenge power holders, institutions, and society's norms. A shared passion for promoting new visions of a better world can transform the way we view our roles in society, our values and priorities, and ultimately the structure of our society and communities.

The theme of Hunger Games: Catching Fire is two-fold:

1. Encouraging young people to share a vision of hope, and a sense of responsibility for social justice, is critical to our future society's well-being.
2. Mobilizing youths' energy and commitment is essential to achieving a more peaceful world.

The following lesson plans were designed as a jumping-off place for engaging young people in critical conversations and reflections based on these themes. We hope you will be inspired to use them as a means for empowering your students to see themselves as vital, necessary actors in their communities.

We all face challenges when we commit to justice, equality and hope. Thank you for teaching young people that hope can conquer fear, and that they have the power to shape their lives and their communities for the better.



CATCHING FIRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A LESSON PLAN FOR HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

Overview of Catching Fire

The Hunger Games series is set in North America after a long string of natural disasters. Encroaching ocean tides have changed the face of the continent, and wars have led to widespread political restructuring. Mexico, the United States, and Canada have been replaced by a new country called Panem. The ruling elite of Panem live luxuriously in the Capitol, a city west of the Rocky Mountains. Panem's other inhabitants struggle to exist in the Capitol's thirteen surrounding districts. Citizens in Districts 1 through 12 live in service to the Capitol, and those in District 13 are believed to have been wiped out, because they rebelled against Panem's government.

Life in the districts is focused purely on survival. Each district has a specific industry that makes it useful to the Capitol, and the livelihood of the district's people depends on their ability to work in that industry. Citizens have little knowledge of what goes on in neighboring districts, and cruelly enforced laws ensure their dependence on the Capitol for food and supplies.

Katniss, the hero of The Hunger Games, is a sixteen-year-old girl who lives in District 12. In this district, once called Appalachia and now nicknamed "The Seam," coal mining is the industry; however, Katniss makes her living as an outlaw. She provides for her family by hunting wild game outside district boundaries and selling it on the Black Market—that is, until she's caught up in the Capitol's most insidious strategy for terrorizing the districts.

Every year, the Capitol forces districts to participate in a televised event called The Hunger Games. The Games commemorate the Dark Days, a period of rebellion that ended with the destruction of District 13. They celebrate the Capitol's complete control over the districts, and they continue a punishment that has been passed down for seventy-four years. Each district must provide two tributes, one boy and one girl, to fight to the death in an arena match. Out of twenty-four tributes, only one survives.

Tributes for the Hunger Games are determined through a drawing of names, called The Reaping. Katniss becomes a tribute by volunteering; she takes her sister's place after her sister's name is drawn. Katniss competes in the Games

alongside Peeta, the male tribute from her district. The two become the first joint victors in the Games, when a concocted budding romance between them captures the hearts of some viewers in the Capitol. Katniss and Peeta make a suicide pact, so they won't have to fight each other, and Game organizers are forced to declare them both winners to avoid audience disapproval.

Catching Fire picks up where The Hunger Games left off. Katniss' victory in the arena has made her a celebrity, but this carries a tremendous weight. In Catching Fire, Katniss and Peeta return to the Capitol as victors, and are subjected to participation in a "victory tour" of Panem. President Snow visits Katniss in District 12 after her victory and threatens her with the consequences of inciting further rebellion. Once home, Katniss also encounters two runaways from District 8 who tell her of other rebellions and their belief that District 13, thought to have been demolished, still exists. With the upcoming Hunger Games being the 75th anniversary of the original Hunger Games, it is then announced that previous victors will be forced to re-compete, an event known as the Quarter Quell. Once again in the arena, Katniss and Peeta soon realize that specific dangers are triggered each hour. They form an alliance with other past victors and decide to create a trap to eliminate two contenders, using the electricity from the arena's force field. Katniss directs the lightning rod, and the shock of the blast knocks her out. When she awakens, she is on her way to District 13. It is then revealed to her that there was a plan among most of the tributes to break out of the arena. They succeeded in escaping, but Peeta was captured by the Capitol. Gale, Katniss's best friend from District 12, tells her that, in retaliation, District 12 was bombed and destroyed but her family escaped.

Catching Fire and Social Justice

In Catching Fire, we get a deeper understanding of the ways of the Capitol and how important it is to the leaders of Panem to ensure no uprisings and rebellions. We learn about the lengths to which President Snow is willing to go, changing the rules of the Hunger Games and instilling fear into the hearts of the citizens of the districts as he goes, in order to protect his position of power. In this book, we also witness an awakening: Katniss learns that

she is the symbol of brewing revolution. She must come to terms with what this means, and whether and how she can protect her family and friends. Ultimately, the novel is about Katniss deepening her understanding of responsibility to her community and country as she embarks on a journey to do the right thing.

Through a discussion of *Catching Fire*'s characters, plot, and setting, high-school students will identify differences between just and unjust societies. The overall goal of this lesson is to teach students to think about social justice and human rights, and the social structures that either protect or continue to foster inequality within our societies.

Encourage young people to speak their mind about unjust acts and acknowledge that while speaking up may feel risky, the large majority of what they feel, do, or say is settling and motivational. Katniss realized that the Hunger Games were inhumane and by being herself and engaging in meaningful and challenging tasks, she realized that she was not alone and that other people feel that same way about the Capitol. The citizens of the districts needed someone to validate their feelings about the oppressive government and someone to model behavior in response to the oppression. Let students know that our perspectives and views on the world are socially and culturally constructed.

Using methods that encourage students to compare and contrast our society to Panem, and to question and discuss issues of power and violence, students will ultimately be asked to consider what they can do to create more equity and justice.

Learning Objectives

- Develop an understanding of social justice and institutional power.
- Understand concepts of human rights, civil rights, and political resistance.
- Identify aspects of social injustice and oppression issues at play in *Catching Fire*.
- Consider aspects of social injustice and oppression in our society.
- Learn about efforts to address injustice in our society.
- Strengthen analytical, and critical thinking, and literacy skills.

Materials Needed (for all activities)

- Flip Chart and Markers (Activities 1 and 2)
- APPENDIX A - Social Justice Terms and Definitions (For instructor use.)

- APPENDIX B - Key Social Justice Themes (For instructor use.)
- APPENDIX C – Catch Fire: Social Justice in YOUR World (Handout)
- APPENDIX D – Bibliography and Additional Resources (For instructor use.)
- APPENDIX E – Evaluation (For instructor use.)

Estimated Time

- Activity #1- Social Justice in Panem --- 30 min
- Activity #2- Social Justice in the US --- 30 min
- Optional Activity #3 and #4- Research Activity as a supplement to Activities #1 and #2. --- Overnight homework assignment, or 1-hour research assignment, with access to the Internet or art supplies

Common Core State Standards

9th – 12th Grade

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4/11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5/11-12.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

LESSON PLAN ACTIVITIES

Activity #1 – Social Justice in Panem

Using commonly recognized characters and plot lines from *Catching Fire*, students will be able to identify social justice themes, and begin to relate those themes to their own lives and communities. Ask the following questions:

1. What is happening in Panem when the book or movie starts? Why does President Snow come to Katniss' house at the beginning of the book or movie to intimidate her?

Key Points: He comes to her house to scare her, and let her know that if she continues to challenge the Capitol, he will kill her family and loved ones. He does this because Katniss' refusal to play by the rules at the end of the first book (threatening to eat the poisonous berries, denying the Capitol a victor) has incited uprisings in the districts. Knowing that she is a symbol of resistance in the Districts and a beacon of hope, he does not want Katniss' example to fuel further unrest.

2. Why are the district residents of Panem rising up against the Capitol? What are their lives like?

Key Points: Steer the discussion toward the concept of 'rights.' The residents of Panem lack some basic rights, including the right to free speech, the right to move from place to place, the right to work where and how they chose, to be free from violence, etc. They are oppressed and exploited by the Capitol to produce things in their districts, and their lives are closely controlled by the Capitol – the Hunger Games are a perfect example of their lack of control – the consequences of refusing to follow the Capitol's rules are severe and violent.

Discuss the significance of hunger in the books. Why the series is titled "The Hunger Games?" Why is the second in the series called "Catching Fire"? Why is that important?

What are the lives of the citizens of the district like? What rights do people have? What does oppression (the mistreatment or exploitation) demonstrated by Panem as the dominant group in society over the citizens of the districts look like, feel like and sound like? List the student responses on a piece of paper and post on the wall. Draw out the following concepts: 1. Hunger; 2. Ordinary "district" citizens versus "capitol" elites, and 3. Use of Violence. These themes will re-emerge in Activity 2.

See APPENDIX B for quotes and discussion points from the text, which demonstrate these issues. With more time, these can serve as discussion starters with the students broken into small groups.

3. How are violence and threats used to oppress the people of Panem?

4. What do you think "social justice" means? How would you describe a socially just society? Write their answers to each question on flip-chart paper, and post on the wall.

Key Points: There is not one correct answer to this, but here is a working definition: Social justice is justice exercised within a society. A socially just society values human rights, as well as recognizing the dignity of every human being. Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities.

Activity #2- Social Justice in the United States

Having discussed the fictional country of Panem, the students will begin to be comfortable questioning and discussing concepts of oppression and social justice. In this activity, they will begin to understand how these concepts apply to their lives and their communities. See APPENDIX B for some points. Post a blank piece of flip-chart paper next to the one about Panem and write their answers to the following questions:

1. Take a look at the list (responses to question 2 above) of conditions in Panem. Are there similar problems in our own society? What examples of injustice or oppression do you see in our world?

2. What are examples of social justice in your life and community?

3. When/Why/How does Katniss recognize her role in achieving social justice for her family and country?

4. What do people do to address social justice issues like hunger, economic injustice and violence in our communities today? Can you describe any activities you or your family has been involved in to promote social justice? Think about activities at school, place of worship, or in your community.

Optional Activity #3 – Catch Fire: Social Justice in YOUR World

This activity asks students to research issues relating to power and privilege, and how these issues impact people's lives in their neighborhoods, communities, and region. They can report back to their peers on political rulings that have impacted human rights locally, nationally and abroad. This activity provides students an opportunity to identify groups of people living under conditions of injustice or oppression and to explore the impact of that on their safety, health, and well-being.

Give the students APPENDIX C and ask them to fill it out and be prepared to share their findings with the rest of the group.

Optional Activity #4 – Catching Fire: Symbols of Social Justice Movements

Students who are creative and like an artistic challenge can research symbols of other social justice causes like the Mockingjay image of the pin Katniss wore that became a symbol for the rebellion or the hand gesture as part of the rebellion in *Catching Fire*.

Ask students to discuss or write about the role of images in social justice movements. Students can also design a symbol for the social justice movement they most want to make a difference in.

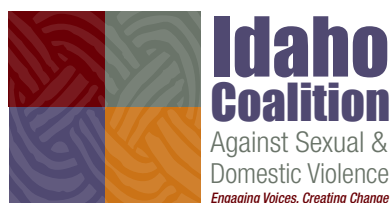
Closure to Lesson

Suzanne Collins's *Catching Fire* illustrates issues of oppression and injustice affecting young people in a fictional country. This lesson plan provides an opportunity for students to understand oppression and how violence and threats are used to control people in an unjust society. By identifying examples of injustice and oppression and of social justice initiatives in their own communities, students become more aware and motivated to create a more just and equitable society. For more resources, please see APPENDIX D.

For more information, contact the Center for Healthy Teen Relationships, an initiative of the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence contact kelly@engagingvoices.org or brandy@engagingvoices.org.

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For more information on the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence or the Center for Healthy Teen Relationships go to www.engagingvoices.org.



APPENDIX A

Social Justice Working Terms and Definitions for Instructor

Dominant/Privileged/Agent group: Members that are granted benefits or social rewards (e.g., money, status, fame) that provide them with the power to create and shape social norms that separate them from other disadvantaged groups. Individuals that are in dominant/privileged groups are often granted these benefits either through birth or acquisition and either knowingly or unknowingly exploit their privilege over less fortunate groups.

Empowerment: an interactive process that encourages, motivates, and inspires individuals to take action and become involved in making a difference about an issue they define as important.

Features of Oppression: Oppression occurs when members of the dominant group use their privilege to exercise power, control, and authority to mistreat or exploit less dominant groups or individuals.

- Pervasiveness: Oppression exists throughout our environment and continues to foster social inequalities based off of personal biases, bigotry, and social prejudice.
- Restricting: Oppression places severe restrictions on a person or group's abilities or opportunities to succeed and create equality with dominate groups.
- Hierarchical: Oppression occurs when dominant groups utilize their privilege to benefit, often unknowingly, to further separate themselves from the less fortunate/ dominant groups

- Complex, multiple, cross-cutting relationships: Power and privilege are relative and group memberships vary, often resulting in experiences of privilege or disadvantage in different contexts. For example, a female African American executive of an organization may experience the benefits of the status and economic success, but still may experience disadvantage by not experiencing the same outcomes of a white, male executive.
- Internalized: Oppressive beliefs are internalized by victims as well as benefactors. Because oppression is so pervasive, individuals in both dominant and less fortunate groups internalize the inequality as the norm. The oppressor doesn't have to exert any more pressure, because we now do it to ourselves and each other. Divide and conquer works.

Social Group memberships: Individuals identify themselves as someone who belongs to a certain group (either dominant or target group), as a result of shared beliefs or values. identity based groups that one belongs to that may be a part of the dominant or the target group.

Social Justice: Describes the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunism to ensure that all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure.

Social Power: Access to resources that enhance one's chances of getting what one needs or influencing others in order to lead a safe, productive, fulfilling life.

Subordinated/Targeted group: less fortunate groups that are exploited and victimized in a variety of ways by the oppressor and the oppressor's system or institutions.

APPENDIX B

Catching Fire for Social Justice — Key Social Justice Themes

Hunger

The overabundance of food and people's wastefulness are especially clear in *Catching Fire* in which it is revealed that citizens of the Capitol drink a liquid that makes them throw up, effectively emptying their bellies, so that they can continue to gorge on delicacies provided at a feast. As Katniss witnesses this spectacle, she thinks, "all I can think of is the emaciated bodies of the children on our kitchen table as my mother prescribes what the parents can't give. More food" (p. 80). The irony of starving children lying on the kitchen table, a place associated with bounty and reserved for meals, is not lost on the reader and adds to the horror of the image while magnifying the wastefulness of the Capitol.

Suzanne Collins revealed in an interview, "the sociopolitical overtones of *The Hunger Games* were very intentionally created to characterize current and past world events, including the use of hunger as a weapon to control populations" (Blasingame & Collins, 2009, p. 726). If we look at patterns of wastefulness in the United States, we are more closely associated with the Capitol, the bad guys, than with the districts. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2012), in 2010 approximately 34 million tons of food was thrown away.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2000), 792 million people worldwide, and 20% of the population in developing countries, suffer from chronic food deficits. In 2004, Timothy Jones, an anthropologist, concluded a 10-year study that showed that an average individual U.S. household wastes 14% of food purchases (William Reed Business Media, Nov. 25, 2004), supporting our nickname as the "throw-away generation." The USDA reports that more than one in five children in the United States are living in a food insecure household or a household where the members are unable to consistently access the adequate amount of nutritious food necessary for a healthy life. Households with children experience food insecurity at significantly higher rates than the population. This is seen in the most recent report from USDA regarding food insecurity which showed that 20% of households with children are characterized as food insecure versus less than 15% of all households (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2011).

Involuntary Labor and Economic Injustice

After Gale is found hunting in the woods to supplement his poor wages, he is brutally whipped for the crime. This brutality keeps the population dependent on the mines for its sole means of survival.

Brutality is further highlighted when Katniss meets two runaways from District 8 named Bonnie and Twill. Katniss describes District 8 as a "place stinking of industrial fumes, the people housed in run-down tenements" (p. 142). Bonnie and Twill tell Katniss of the uprising in their district, giving an account of how citizens were required to work in factories, make goods for the Capitol, and live in squalor. When the workers rebelled, "there was a lockdown. No food, no coal, everyone forbidden to leave their homes. The only time the television showed anything but static was when suspected instigators were hanged in the square. Then one night, as the whole district was on the brink of starvation, came the order to return to business as usual." (p. 145)

In real life, the situation is similar for many victims. The International Labor Organization (as cited by the U.S. Department of State, 2006) reported that at least 12.3 million people around the world are trapped in various forms of forced labor, from sweatshops to farm work. Approximately \$20 billion in wages is stolen from these workers, leaving them in debt bondage or poverty. More than 16 million children in the United States – 23% of all children – live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level – \$23,550 a year for a family of four¹. Research shows that, on average, families need an income of about twice that level to cover basic expenses². Using this standard, 45% of children live in low-income families.

Violence

Forcing children into violent situations that require them to kill or be killed is the major theme of *The Hunger Games* series. As punishment for the districts' rebellion to the Capitol's rule, the Capitol created the Hunger Games to remind the districts of its power. Katniss describes the games in this way:

"Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch—this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion. Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's

¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013). Kids Count Data Book. Baltimore: MD. Retrieved from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/files/2013KIDSCOUNTDataBook.pdf>
² Addy, S., Engelhardt, W. & Skinner, C. (2013). Basic facts about low-income children: Children under 18 years, 2011. National Center for Children in Poverty. Retrieved from http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1074.html.

nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you.” (The Hunger Games, p.76)

In *Catching Fire*, Annie, Finnick’s wife and a former tribute, illustrates the lasting emotional, mental, and social effects of witnessing and participating in violence. Because she saw the beheading of District 4’s male tribute she cannot stand arguing, loud noises, or any talk that references violence or the Hunger Games. Her tragic past experience has debilitated her capacity to function in a “normal” community. Annie’s response is not unusual for anyone who is exposed to violence – from children and young people to adults who are exposed to domestic violence or are in abusive relationships or sexually assaulted – to have a response like post-traumatic stress disorder or experience other harmful effects.

As demonstrated by many of the victors, who turn to alcohol and drug abuse (Haymitch and the morphlings), it’s clear that their experience as tributes in the Hunger Games left them afflicted with emotional scars that will be prevalent throughout their adult lives. Witnessing the impact of the games on the tributes impacts life throughout the districts and ultimately sown the seeds of fear in the hearts of many.

In real life, at some time during adolescence, most youth will have their first dating or intimate relationship and some will have many, learning and experimenting with new roles of boyfriend and girlfriend. Of these, nearly 1 in 10 will experience physical violence from a dating partner and 1 in 12 will be forced to have sex against their will.³ Even more pervasive is digital abuse, with 41% of youth experiencing some form of hurtful or controlling behavior online, through social media outlets and electronic text.⁴ The consequences of victimization can be serious and long term. Teens that experience dating violence are at increased risk for substance abuse, depression, poor school performance, suicidal ideation, risky sexual behavior, and future victimization.⁵

More recently, a November 2011 report from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control found that 1 in 5 women and nearly 1 in 7 men who experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, first experienced some form of violence between 11 and 17 years of age (2011, p. 49). Almost half of all female victims who have been raped experienced their first rape before age 18 (30% between 11 and 17) (CDC, 2011).

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, MMWR/June 8, 2012/ Vol. 61/ No. 4

4 Associated Press and MTV. 2011. AP-MTV Digital Abuse Study. Available at <http://www.athinline.org>

5 Exner-Cortens D, Eckenrode J, Rothman E. 2013. Longitudinal Associations Between Dating Violence Victimization and Adverse Childhood Experiences. *Pediatrics*. 131(1):71-78. Banyard VL, Cross C. 2008. Consequences of Teen Dating Violence: Understanding Intervening Variables in Ecological Context. *Violence Against Women*. 14:998-1013, Silverman, J, Raj A, et al. 2001. Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality. *JAMA*. 286:572-579. Available at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/286/5/572>

APPENDIX C

Catch Fire: Social Justice in YOUR World

Now, it's time to take what you learned about social justice and apply it to your life and community. Answer the following questions and be prepared to share your findings with the group.

Social Justice Issue:

<p>Choose one of the social justice issues discussed in the class. Choose one that you are most interested in learning more about (i.e. hunger, poverty, and violence).</p>	<p>Provide a detailed description of the issue you've chosen.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Who does it affect?2. Where does it happen?3. Why is it a problem?
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Research your issue:

<p>What are some organizations working on this issue around the country? Look up their websites and list 3-4 organizations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.
<p>What do they do?</p>	<p>Describe their work:</p>
<p>Are there any organizations in your town/city working on this issue?</p>	<p>List them here:</p>

Reflection - Answer each of the following prompts:

This makes me think

This makes me feel

I feel this way because....

Action Plan:

Think about ideas you have that would make a difference in your school or community. If you were to create an action plan to implement your ideas, who would you contact? What would you do?

What kinds of things have other people done to help bring about change?

List three things I can do to address this problem? Brainstorm some ideas: