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The popularity of the series has been sustained by successful movie adaptations, but the settings and characters are at their best in book form. We've created a set of the novels, published by Scholastic, that features a custom jacket design featuring an archer in profile. This book set is a great way to introduce a reader to the series, or give an existing fan a collectible edition of these gripping stories. Already own the books? Check out our Jackets Only Option! The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins SKU: SCHG3 Weight: 4.0 lb Width: 4.25 inches x Height: 9 inches x Depth: 6 inches To start things off right, a quote from Hunger Games. "The girl's scream. Had it been her last?" Context: Katniss has been confronted with a girl who had her tongue cut off as punishment and remembers seeing her years later and in the present, Katniss wonders: "The girl's scream. Had it been her last?" Because people without tongues apparently can't scream. We'll get back to this and wha To start things off right, a quote from Hunger Games. "The girl's scream. Had it been her last?" Context: Katniss has been confronted with a girl who had her tongue cut off as punishment and remembers seeing her years earlier just as she was caught. According to memory, as the girl was dragged away, she screamed. Now years later and in the present, Katniss wonders: "The girl's scream. Had it been her last?" Because people without tongues apparently can't scream. We'll get back to this and what it tells us about Suzanne Collins. To start things another way, I'll admit this: I had no interest in Hunger Games until, upon hearing someone actually describe it, I thought: "Holy smokemonsters. That sounds like an American rip-off of Battle Royale was this Japanese movie (adapted from a book I haven't read yet—Christmas, anyone?) in which the government, for inexplicable reasons, takes a class of thirty highscoolers every year and dumps them in this jungle-y arena and demands they fight to the death with a single victor remaining in three days lest the explosive collars they all wear be detonating, rendering no survivors. I mean, what's not to love, right? So Suzanne Collins basically takes this idea and expands it and tries to give the story a more plausible explanation. (In the movie, the Japanese government televises the BR in order to, get this, quell youth violence in the country. I know, right?) Hunger Games takes place in a post-apocalyptic North America. There is the ruling State, the Capitol, and there are the thirteen vanquished American colonies districts (or twelve since one has been destroyed). For the last seventy-four years, the Capitol has demanded the sacrifice of a teenage girl from each district to remind the districts annually of how miserably their rebellion failed and to keep them mindful of how absolutely the Capitol rules every aspect of their lives. I don't know, but this strikes me as being only slightly more sensible than the Battle Royale justification. Apparently government officials in the future are as dumb as they are today. In any case, the beauty is that these two sacrifices from each of their lives. I don't know, but this strikes me as dumb as they are today. In any case, the beauty is that these two sacrifices from each of their lives. I don't know, but this strikes me as dumb as they are today. In any case, the beauty is that these two sacrifices from each of their lives. I don't know, but this strikes me as dumb as they are today. In any case, the beauty is that these two sacrifices from each of the twelve remaining districts are not just killed outright, like on an altar atop a stone ziggurat Aztec-style. No, that would be too easy. Instead, they fight in televised survival games (inexplicably called the Hunger Games). These are wildly popular (like I'm told Survivor or American Idol used to be), especially with the Capitol crowd and contestants take on a form of celebrity and their stylists are princes and princesses among men. [art by the stupendous Vera Brosgol] So Hunger Games is the story of Katniss and Peeta, * two sacrifices from District 12. District 12 is the loser District. Katniss is a hunter (advantage) and Peeta is a baker's son (disadvantage). And since Peets has had a massive, sad, stalker-crush on Kats since they were, like, five, he is determined to keep her alive forever. Interesting dynamic when, Highlander-style, there can be only one. This is basically the same thing that I finished the whole thing in about nine days. (And by "about nine days.) As demonstrated in the above, the writing's not fantastic by any stretch. Collins suffers from a typical need to over-dramatize, to the point where irrational things are treated sensibly. But (!) it's still a league-and-a-half better than Twilight, not that there isn't much that isn't better written than Meyer's delicious collection of vampire doggerel. I only compare them because they both occupy that meta-genre of light, compulsive reads that others may better know as Summer Reading. And yet, here we are in December! Regardless, I was several nights up far past my bedtime letting Collins plot have its way with me. And for the most part, I really enjoyed the experience. There were very few lulls, most of which occurred in the first fifteen percent of books two and three as they tried to recover from the burst of excitement that capped off the immediate predecessor. The mediocre writing is entirely forgivable simply because the books not about that. Hunger Games is almost pure plot, so that's really all we should be expecting from it. Still, there were two major difficulties I ran into while reading. The first is that the narration's kind of a cheat. Collins tells her story in the first-person present, meaning that we are supposedly getting new information at the same rate as Katniss is. Yet, the things this (largely clueless) girl chooses to report lead one to believe that she has future knowledge. She drops a ton of hints about the importance of the mockingjay pin, and won't stop narrating about how the bird or its image is showing up everywhere. As a reader, we pick up that this is massively significant (because she beats us over the head with it), but since Katniss in the present she's narrating doesn't realize that, there's no reason for her to continue to point it out. That would be like you telling me about your day and stopping every five minutes to remind me that you're wearing your Chuck Taylor's and then after three months of this, Chuck Taylor's suddenly become sentient, rebel against humanity, and then install you as their king. Unlikely, at best. So narrator-Katniss knows everything while narrated-Katniss doesn't. It's a poor choice. Collins almost certainly chose the first-person present because it builds tension (FPpresent is a standard usage in thrillers), but she wanted to be able to use things like heavy foreshadowing, which can only honestly be done in first-person past tense or in the third person. With FPpast, you're almost assured that the present tense can deliver. Third person stories leave any character open to plot-driven dismissal, but they lack the immediacy and intimacy of the first-person. The second is less tangible but perhaps the more serious offense. At this point, things may get vaguely spoiler-y so those who haven't read the books yet may wish to skip the following paragraphs and just end the review here. So then, in comics, a trend has been noticed. It's been going as Women-in-Refrigerators syndrome for lack of a more exciting term. Essentially, it describes authors' propensity to abusively use female character in superheroland because you'll inevitably wind up raped, maimed, tortured (in a sexy way!), accidentally killed off, murdered, or dismembered and stuffed into a refrigerator just like Green Lanterns girlfriend was—all for the sake of motivating the male lead in some direction or other. Of course, in the male-dominated world of the superhero, female associations are one of the hero's greatest weaknesses and the best way to really stick it to him. Since the lead of Hunger Games is a teenage female, in order to commit a similar abuse, Collins can't just use other male and female associations to give Katniss the gut-wrenching motivation she needs. So then, what is frail in comparison to a teenage girl. Children. Specifically, little, sweet girls. Collins uses little girls twice (once in Book One and once in Book One and once in Book Three) to give her protagonist a human side that is otherwise unseen. Collins realizes that her hero is just a little too cold and too distant and so she must find a way to get the reader to sympathize with her. She puts forth a sweet little girl whom you'll come to find endearing and wise and beautiful and in need of protection from the dirty, cruel world that Collins has crafted and, of course, what's more painful than watching that little girl be destroyed for the sake of a melodramatic tug at one's heartstrings. Kat cries and does something heartfelt and we think of her as human again. At least for a little while. And then we realize that this was the entire purpose for this character in the scope of Collins story and then we feel abused. These were never meant to be character; they were always only a means to humanizing a character that Collins didn't have the chops to humanize in a more talented way. I was a bit grumpy when Collins used the tactic in Book One, but when it reared up again in Book Three, the books became thoroughly diminished in my eyes. I felt abused by Collins' contrivances. For this reason, I lower what would have been (meta-genre in mind) a four-star book series down to three. It's still good and worth the read (unless you have more important stuff on deck), but Collins disrespect for both her characters and her readers lessens their value. *note: Suzanne Collins should not be allowed to name anything. Not books, not characters, and certainly not real-life children. The one bit of silver lining here is that thankfully, this almost assures us that in four years we won't be babysitting a gaggle of brats named Peeta—apparently Bella was uncommonly common after the Twilight wave surged. ...more

