



**An exploration through a psychoanalytic lens reveals that Suzanne Collins's novel "The Hunger Games" portrays themes of Courage and self-defense.**

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to demonstrate the presence of courage and self-defense as exemplified by the protagonist. The research investigates the influence of courage and self-defense on the main character's personality. By utilizing a psychoanalytic perspective, the analysis focuses on two aspects: firstly, examining the novel's structural components, and secondly, exploring it through the lens of psychoanalysis. This research is descriptive qualitative research. In this method, there are two types of data sources, namely primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is The Hunger Games novel written by Suzanne Collins. Meanwhile, the secondary data source is other materials taken from books, journals, and the internet related to the study. Both of the data are collected through library research and analyzed by descriptive analysis. The analysis leads to the following conclusions. Firstly, through the examination of the novel's structural elements such as character development, setting, plot, point of view, and theme, it becomes evident that these elements are interconnected and contribute to the overall cohesiveness and appeal of the novel. Secondly, adopting a psychoanalytic approach, the analysis suggests that the main character's personality is shaped by three psychological domains: the id, ego, and superego.

**Keywords: Courage, Self-Defense, Psychoanalytic Approach**

**Introduction**

Courage can be defined as the capacity to face and confront fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation. It is a characteristic that resides within the mind and spirit, empowering individuals to overcome perils, hardships, or adversity. Courage is not just an isolated act but rather a way of life. On the other hand, self-defense refers to the actions taken to protect



oneself, one's belongings, or the well-being of others from harm. Almost everyone contemplates the concept of self-defense at some point in their lives. It is the right of individuals to employ reasonable force to safeguard themselves against another person who poses a threat of physical harm.

By examining Suzanne Collins' novel, *The Hunger Games*, the researcher aims to explore the significant roles that courage and self-defense play in shaping human existence. Published in September 2008, *The Hunger Games* swiftly gained critical acclaim and has since become a global phenomenon, with over 18 million copies in print. The novel holds several captivating elements, the first being its characters and their development. The story revolves around the portrayal of courage and self-defense by these characters. Additionally, the novel's theme itself is intriguing as it delves into the experiences of individuals enduring the stark disparities between the affluent and the impoverished, with their suffering exploited as a form of entertainment.

Therefore, the novel promises to provide an inspiring and thought-provoking narrative. As a result, the researcher is driven by this enlightenment to analyze the main character of the novel using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach. This approach aims to delve into the depths of the character's psyche and uncover hidden motivations and psychological processes.

## **1. The Structural Elements of *The Hunger Games* novel: An analysis**

### **a. Character and Characterization in *Huger Games***

The writer distinguished characters into two, namely major and minor characters.

#### **1) Major Character**

##### **a) Katniss Everdeen**

Katniss Everdeen, the central female character and protagonist of the novel, hails from District 12 and assumes the role of the female tribute. She shoulders the responsibility of caring for her family, which includes her mother and younger sister, Prim. Katniss's essential role is to provide sustenance for her family, which she accomplishes through hunting and gathering. Noteworthy is her physical strength and resourcefulness, as she displays a level of maturity well beyond her sixteen years.



So now, at the age of sixteen, my name will be in the reaping twenty times. (THG:13)

Katniss possesses both physical beauty and intelligence, complemented by her distinctive braided hair. Despite her striking appearance, she also hails from a socially disadvantaged background, living in perpetual hunger within the impoverished District she calls home. Katniss resides with her mother and younger sister, Prim. From a moral standpoint, she displays a fiercely protective nature towards Prim, willingly stepping forward as a volunteer in the Hunger Games to ensure her sister's safety. In fact, Katniss assumes greater responsibility than anyone else in providing for her family's well-being, driven by her deep love for them.

“I volunteer!” I gasp. “I volunteer as tribute!” (THG:22)

b) Peeta Mellark

Peeta Mellark, the male tribute from District 12, shares the same age as Katniss Everdeen. In terms of physical appearance, he possesses an average height, blond hair, and captivating blue eyes.

A boy with blond hair peering out from behind his mother's back. I'd seen him at school. He was my year, but I didn't know his name. (THG:29-30)

Socially, Peeta lives with his mother and father. His father runs a bakery company. He lives in a rough, gritty place, it is called Hob.

## 2) Minor Character

a) Effie Trinket

The escort of the tributes from District 12. She is very concerned with appearances and her own career. Physically, she has a scary white grin, pinkish hair, speculated to be a wig, and a spring green suit.

The escort who was responsible for overseeing the tributes from District 12 is highly preoccupied with her own image and professional advancement. Her physical features include a somewhat unsettling wide smile, pinkish hair that is suspected to be a wig, and a distinctive spring-green suit.

b) Gale Hawthorne Katniss's friend and hunting partner.



Gale is undoubtedly the individual with whom Katniss shares the closest bond, being the only person with whom she can truly let her guard down and be her authentic self. In terms of physical appearance, Gale is an attractive young man, boasting a strong physique, straight black hair, olive skin, and piercing gray eyes.

Mentally, hunting is his hobby, and also, he enjoys a good laugh when he is with his best friend, Katniss.

In the woods waits the only person with whom I can be myself. Gale. (THG:6)

## **b. Setting**

### 1) Setting of Place

Numerous locations are featured in The Hunger Games novel, including Panem, the Capitol, District 12, the Justice Building, the arena of the 74th Hunger Games, the Woods, the Train Station, the City Circle, and the Training Center.

### 2) Setting of Time

The Hunger Games novel explores a future society characterized by competition, but it does not explicitly specify the exact timeframe or year in which the story takes place.

## **c. Plot**

The plot of The Hunger Games novel follows a structure comprising of exposition, complication, climax, and resolution.

- 1 Exposition: The story begins by introducing the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, as she witnesses her younger sister being chosen as the district's female tribute for the Hunger Games. Out of concern for her sister, Katniss volunteers to take her place and becomes District 12's female tribute for the 74th Hunger Games
- 2 Complication: On the night before the Games, Katniss experiences intense fear and apprehension about the impending horrors she will face in the arena. Despite her exhaustion, she struggles to fall asleep and continues to imagine the unknown terrain she will encounter.
- 3 Climax: The climax occurs when a significant rule change is announced, revoking the provision that allowed two tributes from the same district to win together.



Consequently, Katniss and Peeta, her fellow tribute, are forced to confront the reality that they must now fight each other to the death.

- 4 Resolution: The resolution unfolds as Katniss takes out a handful of lethal night lock berries and offers some to Peeta. In a desperate act, they threaten to consume the berries simultaneously, choosing death over being manipulated by the Capitol. This defiant gesture aims to ensure there will be no victor in the Games.

#### **d. Point of View**

Upon careful analysis and examination of the novel, it is concluded that The Hunger Games utilizes a first-person narrative perspective. The story is presented through the lens of a participant's point of view, with the narrator actively involved in the events and introducing herself as a character within the story.

#### **e. Theme**

The Hunger Games novel encompasses two central themes. The first theme explores the experiences of an individual navigating the stark inequality between the affluent and the impoverished, highlighting the challenges and disparities within society. The second theme delves into the notion that the suffering endured by the main character becomes a form of entertainment for the privileged and wealthy segments of society.

## **2. Psychoanalytic Analysis of The Hunger Games novel**

### **a. Id**

The id aspect of the main character is demonstrated in a scene where she enters the dining car of the train in the morning and finds her mentor, Haymitch, already drinking. Frustrated by his apparent lack of guidance, Katniss becomes angry and impulsive. In her impatience to obtain information, she reacts aggressively, physically attacking Haymitch by forcefully stabbing her knife into the table, narrowly missing his hand and the liquor bottle.

### **b. Ego**

The ego aspect of the main character comes into play when the situation in the story worsens, and Katniss finds herself needing help from sponsors. In order to secure their support, she reluctantly agrees to follow her mentor's suggestion of playing up a romantic connection and pretending to kiss Peeta, recognizing that it may be necessary for their own survival. From



her own perspective, Katniss believes that this decision is the correct course of action, demonstrating her pragmatic approach to the circumstances at hand.

### **c. Superego**

The superego aspect of the main character is exemplified when Katniss responds to the sound of a girl's scream. Without hesitation, she rushes towards the source of the sound and discovers a young girl named Rue, a fellow competitor, trapped in a net. Just as Katniss frees Rue, she witnesses the boy from District 1 fatally stabbing her with a spear. Demonstrating her compassionate nature and adherence to a higher moral code, Katniss attends to Rue's wounds despite knowing her chances of survival are slim. When Rue passes away, Katniss tenderly adorns her lifeless body with flowers and pays her respects, a gesture traditionally practiced in District 12.

## **3. Courage of the Major Character**

### **a. Physical Courage**

Physical courage refers to the willingness to confront significant risks to life or physical well-being rather than retreating from them. It is a component of overall courage. In The Hunger Games novel, the main character, Katniss Everdeen, clearly exhibits physical courage. After conducting the analysis, the author concludes that the main character's actions require physical courage due to the imminent threats she faces throughout the story.

### **b. Moral Courage**

The author explores Katniss's moral courage in the novel, despite her young age. As the primary provider for her family, Katniss bears the responsibility of ensuring their sustenance. The story primarily revolves around the main character's ability to confront physical challenges that pose harm to her body. However, it is equally significant to note that the narrative also emphasizes the importance of facing mental challenges through acts of moral courage.

### **c. Vital Courage**

According to the analysis, the main character exhibits a significant display of vital courage in the novel when she tends to her own injuries during a battle. It is revealed that Katniss possesses extensive knowledge and experience in the field of medicine, which proves



fortunate as it enables her to effectively treat herself. This acquired expertise plays a crucial role in her survival and ability to persevere throughout the story.

#### **4. Self-Defense of the Major Character**

##### **a. Response-Ability**

In short, The Hunger Games' novel revolves around the theme of "Respond-Ability," particularly embodied by the main character, Katniss Everdeen. The major character demonstrates her ability to respond to challenges by assuming the responsibility of providing for her family and effectively utilizing her hunting skills to address threats and dangers. This theme underscores the protagonist's resilience and resourcefulness in the face of adversity.

##### **b. Motivation**

According to the analysis, the main character in the novel exhibits a significant motivation that drives the narrative forward. Katniss Everdeen's deep care for her family serves as a powerful motivator, compelling her to become increasingly protective and responsible. This motivation influences her actions and decisions throughout the story, emphasizing the central role that familial bonds play in shaping her character's journey.

##### **c. Mental Toughness**

Mental toughness emerges as a crucial element in the main character's portrayal, as she demonstrates a willingness to assist others even when facing personal adversity. Katniss Everdeen, as the primary caretaker of her family, fulfills their needs by engaging in illegal hunting in the woods and extending her assistance to unexpected allies within the Hunger Games arena. This showcases her resilience, resourcefulness, and a strong sense of empathy despite being confronted with challenging circumstances.

##### **d. Self-Esteem**

The main character performs self-esteem. The main character, Katniss Everdeen, has the responsibility to provide for her, herself, and her family's daily needs. And her habit of hunting in the woods of Katniss has a big impact on her in The Hunger Games competition.

#### **D. Conclusion**

After conducting an analysis of the previous chapters, the study draws the following conclusions. Firstly, the structural analysis reveals that The Hunger Games novel effectively



portrays the life of Katniss Everdeen and her courage and self-defense in her environment. The novel encompasses various structural elements that contribute to its compelling narrative, ranging from its background to the narrative elements. The theme of the novel conveys a powerful message, highlighting that revenge is not always a solution to life's problems, especially when it involves one's family or loved ones. The intriguing theme of inequality between the rich and poor, and the suffering experienced as a form of entertainment, captivates the readers. Throughout the story, the major character undergoes internal struggles that shape her character, influenced by both positive and negative factors. The structural analysis underscores the interconnectedness and cohesiveness of the novel's elements, resulting in a compelling and unified narrative.

A psychoanalytic lens applied to Suzanne Collins's "The Hunger Games" unveils profound themes of courage and self-defense. By delving into the characters' psychological motivations, defense mechanisms, and symbolic representations, we gain a deeper understanding of the novel's exploration of human resilience in the face of oppressive systems. "The Hunger Games" serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of courage and the indomitable spirit of individuals fighting for their survival and the defense of others.

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