

Social Values as Magnets of The Hunger Games: a Sociological Approach

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Abstract

Literature is part of human's life. Literature and humans are inseparable since one may influence the other. A writer can refer to a certain current issue as an inspiration for his work as a work itself can be inspiring its readers. Therefore, enjoying literature can be a mean to expand imagination that is to let readers or audience imagine and compare the imaginary story with the real life and to gain some moral lessons, insights, and experiences through it. *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins is a novel worth considering since it has been in USA Today and Publishers Weekly bestseller lists consistently and sold into 56 territories in 51 languages. The plot of *The Hunger Games* (2008) is quite simple. It tells readers about a 'life or death' competition among young representatives of twelve districts to entertain people of the capitol and to get better life support and respect for the winner. The changing of rules and situations of the games cannot be separated from the characters presented in the story, which can also be defined as the changing of social values of what considered to be important or not in a society. The social values refer here are values or Americans since the setting is a country that rises up out the ashes of a place that was once called North America. A sociological approach will be best used to analyze these social values.

Keywords: moral lesson, insights, society, social values, sociological approach

Introduction

With the rapid changes in the social environment, it is imperative for scholars and practitioners to keep a close watch on the changing values. *The Nature of Human Values* defines values as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state" (Rokeach, 1973). When a choice is tied to a value, that choice becomes more attractive to people who share that value (Kahle, 1983). For example, people who value fun and enjoyment in life may want a cup of coffee for its rich taste, whereas people who value a sense of accomplishment may wish to use coffee as a mild stimulant. People who value warm relationships with others may want a cup of coffee to share a social ritual. A continuous understanding of the constant shifts and changes of values over time can give insights into individuals and society.

Lukacs, as quoted by O' Brien (1968) mentioned that since human nature is not finally separable from social reality, each native detail will be significant to the extent that it expresses the dialectic between man as individual and man as a social being. It is these tensions and contradictions both within the individuals and underlying the individual's relation to his fellow human beings—all of which tension increase in intensity with the evolution of capitalism—that must form the subject matter of contemporary realism. Lukacs viewed the aesthetics as culturally relative phenomena that is dependent on the nature and constellation of social forces, at any given period in a society's development, and the artist's involvement in this milieu. In addition the modes and means of conceptualizing 'the social reality' one view as being dependent on particular literary tradition existing in a society. It's the artist's understanding of these, his philosophical and historical analysis of these forces, which determines what and how the art produces. The means by which the literary critics/ sociologists can analyze literature is to use the dialectics to understand the relation between past, present, and future, and the manners in which these are characterized in typical situations and characters. The novelists develop these situations in fiction by sharing and experiencing the 'life' and evolution of the society they live in. These situations are presented as changed with the forces of change at a particular time. (O' Brien: 1968).

The Hunger Games (2008) offers readers a quite common theme of a life survival. The story was started from the day of the reaping in District 12, one of the defeated districts under Panem, to choose two tributes as the district representative to join the Hunger Games held in the Capitol. Twelve to eighteen years olds are herded into ropes areas marked off by ages. A teenage became eligible for the reaping the day he or she turned twelve. What made it seemed to be a good opportunity to be the candidates of the games were the possibility to add their names more times in exchange for tesserae which was worth a meager year's supply of oil and grain for one person. And since starvation was not an uncommon fate in District 12, especially for families who had older people who were no longer able to work, or ones with too many children to feed, or others who got injured in mine, having the tesserae seemed to be the promising way to help supporting goods for the families in returned to face the possibility of a family member loss. The reaping began with the history of Panem, a country used to be called North America. After all the disasters, the droughts, the storms, the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts war managed. It was after the Dark Days that was the uprising of the districts against the Capitol in which the twelve districts were defeated and the last district was obliterated, was the Hunger Games started as a yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated. The twenty tributes, a boy and a girl from each district, were first imprisoned for weeks and then

force to fight to the death with the last tribute standing won. The games itself were considered as a festivity, a sporting event pitting every district against the others. Only the tribute who had skills and were favored by the sponsors of the rich Capitol people seemed to have chance to win the game and received a life of ease back home showering with prizes, largely consisting of food for the districts.

The plot of *The Hunger Games* (2008) is quite simple. The conflicts are clearly shown and the ending is quite predictable. It was Katniss Evergreen, a sixteen years old girl from the weakest district of District 12, together with a boy named Peeta Mellark won the hearts of the Capitol people as a star crossed lovers and became the first winners or just a winner after 74 years of the games. The way the writer highlighted the soft, trivial, indeed substantial issues of love, trust, togetherness, and respect in contrast to the brutal games of murdering had become crucial as a magnet for gaining readers' interests to read the novel. It is interesting to conduct an analysis to know what values considered important for nowadays people. The rising of these values in the novel had whined the readers of the hope of the existence of the values in real life which has currently declined in society, especially in America. The list of values (LOV) was administered in a national survey in 2007 to monitor social values across key demographic variables in the United States (Kahle, 1983). The list of values consisted of self respect, warm relationships with others (to have close companionships and intimate friendship), sense of accomplishment (to succeed at what you want to do), self-fulfillment (to find peace of mind and make the best use of your talents), and sense of belongings (to be accepted and needed by family, friends, and community). Taking the responsibility of the eldest of a fatherless family, Katniss volunteered herself to take her sister's place to be the tribute of the games and getting rid of her minding her own safety only, she took risk of saving her friend and gained a huge accomplishments for her, her friend, family, and people. Consciously or not, the writer's idea to cover these values in the story of *The Hunger Games* (2008) leads the success of the novel. It is challenging to analyze the reflections of American values considered important from *The Hunger Games* (2008).

Literature provides a mirror to the age. The conception of the mirror then, must be treated with great care in the sociological analysis of literature. Great writers do not set out simply to depict the social words in largely descriptive terms it must be suggested that the writer by definition has more critical task of setting his characters in motion within artificially contrived situations to seek their own private 'destiny' to discover values and meanings in the social world. For society is more than an assemble of social institutions that make up social structure: it contains both norms, the standards of behavior which individuals come to accept as right ways of acting and judging, as well as values which are consciously formulated and which people strive to realize socially. An approach of sociological would best suit the need for the analysis of social values which drive readers favor *The Hunger Games*. Sociological Criticism "examines literature in the cultural, economic and political context in which it is written or received," exploring the relationships between the artist and society. Sometimes it examines the artist's society to better understand the author's literary works; other times, it may examine the representation of such societal elements within the literature itself. (1)

Analysis

Of all the values, "self-respect" remained the most important value to Americans. Its importance had increased consistently over the last 30 years, with the largest jump in the last two decades, from 21.1 percent (1976) to 23.0 percent (1986) to 28.5 percent (2007). There was a

dramatic increase (from 1976 to 2007) in the percentage of people younger than 30 (+12.3 percent), 30 to 39 (+10.2 percent), and people older than 60 (+7.9 percent) who ranked "self-respect" as the most important value.

The oppose parties of the novel were the Capitol against the districts. As the Capitol wanted to make sure that there would be no more rebellions from the districts that The Treaty of Treason was made as new laws to guarantee peace and The Hunger Games was conducted as a reminder of the Capitol power over the districts. Taking the kids from the districts, forcing them to kill one another while people including family were watching had been ways the Capitol's use to remind defeated people of the districts how totally they were at the Capitol's mercy and how little they would stand of surviving another rebellion, "*Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen (The Hunger Games, p. 22).*" Self-respect which means to gain respects and recognition as well as to be admired by other has become the first shot of stirring the readers' interest. Collins tried to oppose the powerful party represented by the Capitol that tries to maintain its power by humiliating and oppressing the districts people through life scarification of their children in a game and the least powerful party of the districts who wished to win to get recognition from the Capitol thus resulted in prizes to support the winning district welfare. Self-respect was also shown in the competition among the victors. The tributes from Districts 1, 2, and 4 were called the Careers for they were trained since they were young to face the games and surely the winner usually came from one of these districts. Other tributes from the rest districts were not even trained yet they had to suffer from the daily needs lack in their districts. It was obvious that sponsors of the games would like to bet for the strongest tributes from either district 1, 2, or 4. When the winner of the game was from District 12, the story seemed to be different. The least like district became the most favorite one, even the winning tributes turned to be so popular that their private lives were public consumptions. The self respects shown in *The Hunger Games* were not delivered instantly. The respects got by Katniss as the main female character and Peeta as the male main character were gotten from physical appearance, courage, performance, skills, and attitudes.

Since the preparation of the games, Katniss and Peeta were exposed to spectacular appearance to get the attention of the Capitol people. They were dressed and made up in unique sensational costumes covered by a synthetic fire that would lit a flame which gave an idea of beauty and danger. This costume attracted attention from the people and they had their hearts fall in this couple. Through this notification, it is obvious that Collins would like to remind readers that respects could be gained from physical appearance. Beautiful appearance until today still becomes a magnet for people to lay their honor to. People's respect grows first of all from what they see, in this case appearance, before others that follow. Admiration goes later after likeness. Katniss and Peeta's decision to hold their hands while having a parade showed their courage and remains fiend in this battle. Whereas other tributes considered everyone else to be their enemy, Katniss and Peeta bravely showed friendship above the others. It is another value which delivers respect. Defending something right and pure among the selfish lives in the society surely gained respects and gives a hope that there are still people who care about these kinds of values apart from profit or fake glory. The next respect was shown by Katniss and Peeta from their performance. There was another stage of preparation of the games when all tributes were gathered to practice together. In what they called training, the tributes tried to get allies for the fight in the real arena. In order to get capable allies, each one showed his or her best skills. Katniss' ability to shoot with a bow and arrows and Peeta's mastery of camouflage and strength

became an advantage to get respects from other tributes even the Careers ones. These abilities were also liked by the Gamemakers who gave them high scores which meant greater possibilities to get sponsors.

“It’s an excellent shooting. I turn to the Gamemakers. A few are nodding approval, but the majority of them are fixated on a roast pig that has just arrived at their banquet table.”

“Suddenly I am furious, that with my life on the line, they don’t even have the decency to pay attention to me. That I am being upstaged by a dead pig. My heart starts to pound, I can feel my face burning. Without thinking, I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Gamemaker’s table. I hear shouts of alarm as people stumble back. The arrow skewers the apple in the pig’s mouth and pins it to the wall behind it. Everyone stared at me in disbelief.”

(The Hunger Games (2008), p. 124)

“The career tributes naturally get in the eight to ten range...then they’re flashing the number eleven on the screen...everybody is slapping my back and cheering and congratulating me. (The Hunger Games (2008), p. 131-132)

In this picture, it is clear that respects were born from admiring one’s skills or abilities. This becomes readers’ interest to notice that one value which is highly respected is skills. Katniss was first underestimated since she came from a uncountable district which seldom presented winners but then she won attention and respect from the Gamemakers for she was able to show her skills well. Nowadays, recognitions of one’s skills seemed to be neglected since people often use their power and money to maintain a position. No matter how good you are if you have no or just little power, your talents or skills probably would bring you nowhere. However, this event lights a spark of hope about gaining respects from something in oneself.

The next thing added to gaining self-respect is attitude. In this novel, Collins presented Katniss and Peeta as characters with high attitudes. Katniss, a sister who volunteered as tribute to take her sister’s place, played her role as a noble tribute who care for another tribute from another district by making her alley though the girl, Rue, was just a little one and she gave respect to her when she was dying by giving her a pleasant time approaching her death (she sang for her that made her last minutes peaceful and she covered her body with flowers to give her a good funeral: these had never been done before) and Peeta, a baker boy who kept on protecting Katniss, making sure she could make it and returned home safely without considering his own safety. Their attitude stole people hearts that they, both people of the Capitol and people in all districts, fell after them. Their positive attitude also became the answer for the readers’ thirst to seek for few possibilities that such things might be easily found in present times. When literature is called as a mirror of society then literature can give us something to learn about life. It can be used to portray all the things that occur in reality. There are fictions, which are made, based on true story and have a close relation with reality. Besides, there are also fictions that tell us about love, war, poverty, and all the things that we can actually seen in the real world. Pickering and Hoepfer (1969:11) say that fiction is the relationship between the created world of the given work and the real world art objective experience.

The next value which is idolized by people is security that is to be safe and protected from misfortunes and attacks. Since the beginning of the story, Collins wanted to give clear picture of the characteristics of Katniss. Having no father to support the family, Katniss took her role as the head of the family. Her mother was somehow shocked of losing her husband did

nothing but mourning all times leaving her responsibility of her two daughters, Katniss and Prim. Katniss made sure that her family safe by taking risks of hunting and trading in the Hob, a black market in District 12 though she was still a teenager. In the world where security gets lessen and lessen since people easily risk others to get their own safety, Katniss' deeds to maintain her family safely was impressive. Security which was shown by Katniss looked sincere and she showed it many times to many people, both friends and enemies. She gave feeling of security to the dying Peeta.

“My heart drops into my stomach. It’s worse, much worse. There’s no more pus in evidence, but the swelling has increased and the tight shiny skin is inflamed. Then I see the red streaks starting to crawl up his leg. Blood poisoning. Unchecked. It will kill him for sure.”

....

“Well, there’s more swelling, but the pus is gone,” I say in unsteady voice.

“I know what blood poisoning is, Katniss,” says Peeta. “Even if my mother isn’t a healer.”

“You’ve just going to have to outlast the others, Peeta. They’ll cure it back at the Capitol when we win,” I say.

(The Hunger Games (2008), p. 322-323)

Katniss gave a secure feeling to Peeta, making sure that everything would be better. However, she did not only pouring Peeta with empty words of fake security. She later risked her life to join the offered feast to get Peeta’s medicine though it was surely endangered her life. Katniss presented security not in theories like what people commonly do to only comfort the others. She did more than it that is by making sure that other people are safe. This has been a good model for readers to learn about security from the character in a literary work. To her enemy, Cato, who wanted her life badly, Katniss showed a mercy of security at his final stage of his life that was when his body was torn apart by the mutants. Instead of letting him suffer, she ended his life to release his misery.

“The next hours are the worst in my life, which, if you think about it, is saying something. The cold would be torture enough, but the real nightmare is listening to Cato, moaning, begging and finally just whimpering as the mutts work away with him. After a very short time, I don’t care who he is or what he’s done, all I want is for his suffering to end.” (The Hunger Games (2008), p. 412)

The example set here was a better understanding of security that is not only thinking for one’s own safety but making sure that others are protected as well. This phenomenon presented in the novel ceases away the individualism of thinking only himself. It gives hopes of true security as it is dreamed by people in real lives.

The next value presented by *The Hunger Games* (2008) is warm relationships with the others. Thinking only the good of oneself would be acceptable for people who live in poor districts of Panem as it was described vividly in the novel. Having not enough meals, limited access of medicine, minimum electricity made people care for nobody but himself. Let alone having times for social lives, the relationship among neighbors would be dull and cold. However, Suzanne Collins in her novel viewed things differently. She still showed the warm relationship as something prestigious in social relationships. The initial event showing warm relationship was shown by some people in District 12 who were willing to cooperate to each other. First person

that Katniss trusted was Gale, a boy two years older than her. Gale was her hunting partner who taught her hunting techniques like setting spare and targeting animals. He was the one to back up Katniss and promised her to take care for Katniss' family, the time Katniss volunteered to be the tribute. Like Katniss, Gale lost his father and he too had to be the head of his family providing food for his mother and siblings. Still he made a promise to Katniss to care for Katniss' mom and sister which meant more hard works for him. Sincere friendship like this created warm relationship no matter how worse the condition is. Gale was not the only one. Collins presented an atmosphere of a good relationship by describing the first meeting of Katniss and Peeta. Starved in the middle of the rain, Katniss got help from Peeta, a baker boy who burnt a loaf of bread to be thrown to Katniss though he was scolded by his mother for doing so.

“In his arm, he carried two large loaves of bread that must have fallen into the fire because the crusts were scorched black.”

His mother was yelling, “Feed it to the pig, you stupid creature! Why not? No one descent would buy burned bread!” (*The Hunger Games* (2008), p.36)

The boy never even glanced my way, but I was watching him. Because of the bread, because of the red weal that stood out on his cheekbone. What had she hit him with? My parents never hit us. I couldn't even imagine it. The boy took one look back at the bakery as if checking that the coast was clear, then his attention back on the pig, he threw a loaf of bread in my direction. The second quickly followed, and he sloshed back in the bakery, closing the kitchen door tightly behind him.

Did he mean for me to have them? He must have. (*The Hunger Games* (2008), p. 36-37)

The senses of sympathy and empathy for the needy were shown in the novel and it became a shot to answer the real conditions of cold relationships recently. Reading this novel, readers are exposed to feel the warm relationships among humans. Collins presented in a clever way how this basic value is declining and therefore reading things like this creating a hunger of having some gain in real life.

The context of having warm relationships is covering a truly friendship. In this novel, it is shown by many characters in their relations with Katniss, those are Haymitch Abernathy, a previous victor who turned to be Katniss' mentor, Effie Trinket who taught Katniss well about manners, Cinna who was Katniss' stylist, the Avox girl who comforted her with her presence and sincere helps, Thresh who gave Katniss second chance of life as his way of returning Katniss' kindness to Rue, a girl from his district. The final true friendship was between Peeta and Katniss who protected each other to survive in the game. To help both Katniss and Peeta, Haymitch left his habit of drinking alcohol and concentrated more on helping Katniss and Peeta by getting sponsors for them. Effie had her own way of helping Katniss to have better manner so that she could win the hearts of the Capitol people though she knew for sure that there was no guarantee that she would win the game. Cinna did his best as Katniss' stylist to make her look her best in every performance so that she could be remembered by audience and got their attention. The Avox girl did not take revenge toward Katniss who did nothing when she was caught and made into a slave in the Capitol. Instead, she helped Katniss and comforted her to face the game. Thresh was supposed to be Katniss' rival since they were enemies in the arena. But remembering that Katniss treated Rue well while she was dying, Thresh decided to pay her kindness by giving her an opportunity to escape from the danger. Peeta offered Katniss a true

friendship since the beginning of the game by declaring his love to her and made them a star crossed lovers, the way they got better chance to survive and won the game. This was not a fake one, since he tried his best to make sure that Katniss would be the one who came home safely.

The repetitions of warm relationship shown in this novel give a fresh perspective of the importance of having good relationships among humans. *The Hunger Games* (2008) reminds readers the importance of having warm relationships with others when time to socialize is currently limited due to the busy schedule one has for his own business. If in a situation of life and death people can still be friends, then in less fatal situations people actually can do better if they came to the realization of the importance of having warm relationship and true friendship.

The next inspiring value of life which also inspires readers is self accomplishment. Self accomplishment is defined as an effort to succeed at what you want to do. In *The Hunger Games* (2008), the possibility to win the games goes to tributes from District 1, 2, or 4 since they had been prepared to face the games in their early year. Winning the game became impossible for tributes from other districts since they were less prepared and hence they suffered from daily difficulties of daily needs fulfillment. Katniss' victory seemed to be impossible for many reasons. First, she was just a sixteen years old girl. Second, she had no proper training of the games. Third, she put little interest to pay attention the previous games. Forth, her mentor seemed to get drunk most of the times that he seemed conscious once for a while to give brief instructions. Fifth, she had no ally at the early time of the games that meant she needed to guard herself without anyone's help. And finally, she was too stubborn to depend on others and relied only her own strength. Apart from all these impossible conditions, she succeeded to win the game. And what made the victory even more valuable was her success to go against the rule set by the Capitol to have a single winner, she made Peeta another winner so in the history of the games, District 12 had two victors at a time.

"I spread out my fingers, and the dark berries glisten in the sun. I give Peeta's hand one last squeeze as a signal, as a goodbye, and we began counting...It's too late to change my mind. I lift my hand to my mouth, taking one last look at the world. The berries have just passed my lips when the trumpets began to glare. The frantic voice of Claudius Templesmith shouts above them."

"Stop! Stop! Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to present the victors of the Seventy Fourth Hunger Games, Katniss Evergreen and Peeta Mellark! I give you- the tributes of District Twelve!" (*The Hunger Games* (2008), p. 418-419).

Her accomplishment was not simply winning the *game* but a symbol of rebellion toward the Capitol. Her brave action resulted on the applause from the districts but the anger from the President Snow who was threatened by the rebellions of the districts.

"Listen up. You're in trouble. Word is the Capitol's furious about you showing them up in the arena. The one thing they can't stand is being laughed at, and, and they're the joke of Panem," says Haymitch. (*The Hunger Games* (2008), p. 433).

A fair game is hardly found in the real life. People are in hunger to see and experience a fair accomplishment like the one Katniss showed readers in the 74th Hunger Games. Katniss is like a black horse of the games. She won the games with her own efforts and did not let the world dictated her, though her achievement might endanger her life. This has become an inspiration for the readers to learn from Katniss' spirit to gain her success. Reading this, readers are forced to struggle for their life accomplishments apart from all the obstacles and weaknesses

which may block their ways. The victory is not simply a victory of defeating the evil party but more to be a proof of one's achievements. It's not an instant one, but a process passing hardships and challenges. It is just the same like the ones experience in life.

The next social issue gaining readers' interest is self-fulfillment. Self fulfillment refers to having a peaceful mind to make use of your talents. Katniss learnt hunting from her late father. She was 11 years old when the mine where his father worked was exploded and took his life. Katniss then had to be the main source for her family to stay alive and continue living. She knew that her only chance was to go to the wood and started a game of animals and wild plants like berries to be sold in the black market, the Hob, to get barter for fulfilling her needs. Katniss was not a type of a person who satisfied easily with what she thought she was good at. Started to be a single hunter, she received an offer from a friend, Gale, to have the game together and noticed that Gale was good at snaring the animals, Katniss allowed herself to learn this skill from him. All the skills she learnt sharpened her talents in using tools like bow and arrow, knife, and string which later was proven useable to defend herself in the arena of the battle of the Hunger Game. Her skills were noticeable and made people respect her.

"She's excellent," says Peeta. "My father buys her squirrels. He always comments on how the arrow never pierces the body. She hits every one in the eye. It's the same with the rabbits she sells the butcher. She can even brings down deer."

This assessment of my skills from Peeta takes me totally by surprise. First, that he ever noticed. Second, that he is talking me up. (The Hunger Games (2008), p. 109).

Improving self-fulfillment as it was done by Katniss set a fine example to readers on how to improve theirs. The story of the novel has inspired the readers a lot of the importance of recognizing their own power or talents and make use of them maximally to get the best results in their life. It is a reminder that success does not usually comes in an instant way but a process to sharpen one's skills and talents is required to present the highest self-fulfillment. Katniss' efforts to endure herself in many difficulties and restore her life may also be a model for readers to have faith in themselves to keep on moving on no matter how bad their conditions may be. This social value which perhaps has been ignored due to the competitions and hardships in life can be visualized through the story of *The Hunger Games*. Another hunger has been fed.

The next value comes after self-fulfillment is sense of belonging that is a feeling to be accepted and needed by family, friends, and community. At the beginning of the story, Katniss was just probably one of the girls of the community of District 12. Not wanting to be noticeable, she tried not to attract attention by tending to be alone and avoiding talking any issues like the Hunger Games. She had nobody to rely on, except her broken mother and her little sister, and perhaps the only partner she had to hunt in the forest. The story changed the time the reaping day begun, especially the time she volunteered to take her sister's place. This seldom happened. Even Peeta, the other tribute from District 12, who had two older brothers, had nobody to stand for him. "*Family devotion only goes so far for most people on reaping day. What I did was the radical thing.*" (The Hunger Games (2008), p. 31). Katniss' deed for her sister arose public sympathy. A strong family bond had been shown here.

"Then something unexpected happens. At least I don't expect it because I don't think of District 12 as a place that cares about me. But a shift has occurred since I stepped up to take Prim's place, and know it seems I have become someone

precious. At first one, and then another, then almost every member of the crowd touches the three middle fingers on their left hand to their lips and hold it out to me. It is an old and rarely used gesture of our district, occasionally seen at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration, it means goodbye to someone you love.” (The Hunger Games (2008), p. 29).

From only a family belonging, Katniss has become a society belonging. The sense of solidarity and owning have grown after realizing that there is still somebody put aside her own life as an exchange for somebody else’s life. The selfish feeling which jailed people due to self-safety has been broken by Katniss. The character of Katniss is described beautifully by Suzanne Collins. Katniss’ other controversial action was her closeness to another tribute. Katniss gave a sincere and huge respect toward her enemy’s death. Instead of thinking that other tributes were enemies and thus must be killed, Katniss often thought that all tributes were actually victims of the games played by the Capitol. There was no victory after finishing others’ lives.

“ I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is part of every tribute they can’t own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I..... I gather up an armful and come back to Rue’s side. Slowly, one stem at a time, I decorate her body in the flowers. Covering the ugly wound. Wreathing her face. Weaving her hair with bright colors.”

“Bye, Rue,” I whisper. I press the three middle fingers of my left hands against my lips and hold them out in her direction. Then I walked away without looking back. (The Hunger Games (2008), p.287)

For long, the games were deadly games. No other thing but self-survival was the top goal. What Katniss did gave a new perception on humanity, a sense of belonging. And this is paid off. This little thing triggered an emotion, a feeling of togetherness among the districts.

“I opened the parachute and find a small loaf of bread. It’s not the fine white Capitol stuff. It’s made of dark ration grain and shaped in crescent..... This bread came from District 11. I cautiously lift the still-warm loaf. What must it have cost the people of District 11, who can’t even feed themselves? How many would have had to do without to scrape up a coin to put in the collection for this one loaf? What whatever reason, this is a first. A district gift to a tribute who’s not your own.

I lift my face and step into the last falling rays of sunlight. ‘Many thanks to people of District Eleven’ I say. I want them to know I know where it came from. That the full value of their gift has been recognized.” (The Hunger Games (2008), p. 288-289).

Sense of belonging is created but born. Siblings are bound by blood bond. But even so, they can be in a fight which ruins the bond. On the other hand, two persons who are not tied in blood bond can share the family feeling very strong. This is a social value which many people lack of. The demands of being the best or the top of other make people’s individuality sore high. The main concern is one’s life, if not the family. One often feels

rejected, isolated, and even expelled from the society. The story of Hunger Games reminds readers the importance of sense of belonging, feeling to be accepted by people around us, no matter who they are. Sense of belonging can be built by many reasons, like a feeling of solidarity, sympathy, empathy, togetherness, compatriot, and kinship. Being parts of the game which risked of losing lives of the family member who became the tribute, Katniss showed a great sympathy to the death of a little girl in this brutal games, which merely just a part of entertainment for the stronger party. Katniss showed friendship and solidarity and it leads to togetherness or belongings in a wider community. In an individualistic society, a sense of belonging might be hard to find. This phenomenon in the story triggered readers to own this value in the real life.

Closing

Literature can be said as reflections of human life. It reflects how humans socialize, act, and react toward something. As in *The Hunger Games*, the social values presented become the magnets for readers to read it. Using a sociological approach, the novel can be analyzed deeply, thus reminds readers that despite the brutality of the war of competitions, where people try to kill each other, there are still some people who are rich and aware of the social values like *self respect* (to be proud of oneself and confident with who you are ; to be admired by others and to get recognition), *security* (to be safe and protected from misfortunes and attacks), *warm relationships with others* (to have close companionships and intimate friendship), *sense of accomplishment* (to succeed at what you want to do), *self-fulfillment* (to find peace of mind and make the best use of your talents), and *sense of belongings* (to be accepted and needed by family, friends, and community) and this becomes hopes for readers to promote the almost-gone values in real life.

Note:

- (1) (<http://home.olemiss.edu/~egjbp/spring97/litcrit.html>).

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