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LENS 4

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Critical LENS

In Suzanne Collins’s novel *The Hunger Games*, a lot of attention is paid to the power of the media. The government of Panem constantly uses the media to reassert their control over the country’s twelve districts. The actual Hunger Games themselves are shown on their television station for all the country to see. The games are then re-run over time so that the government can remind the different districts that the government can make you do what it wants. When speaking about the government, the protagonist Katniss Everdeen says, “Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. ‘Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do’”(19).

The government also uses the media to convince the districts that they want their competitors to fight and win. Katniss tells us, “All year, the Capitol will show the winning districts gifts of grain and oil and even delicacies like sugar while the rest of us battle starvation” (19). Even if a contestant doesn’t want to kill others in order to save his or her own life, they have been forced to think that the welfare of their entire district lies on his or her shoulders; this makes the people want to compete well in the games. If a competitor were to choose to stand up to the Capitol by not fighting, he or she would know that it is more than his or her own life at risk.

When Katniss becomes a competitor in the games, she begins to use the media to her advantage. She begins to do certain things in order to garner the support of the country. When Katniss worries about Peeta surviving his injuries, she thinks, “I’ve got to give the audience something more to care about. Star-crossed lovers desperate to get home together” (261). Knowing that the media and its followers want interesting stories, she pretends to be in love with her fellow competitor Peeta in order to get things that she needs, such as medicine.

The best example of Katniss using the media for her own gain comes at the very end of the competition. As soon as Katniss and Peeta are the only ones left, the Capitol retracts their initial ruling that both members of a district can survive. Fortunately, at that moment Katniss thinks, “We both know that they have to have a victor” (344). If there is no winner, the Capitol would be seen as not having control over the competitors. So, in an act of defiance done to save both of their lives, Katniss convinces Peeta to eat poisonous berries. Luckily, the Gamemakers intervene before they swallow the berries because they could not let the media get hold of such a story. The media has saved their lives yet again.

In conclusion, Suzanne Collins portrays the media as being very influential towards society. Even though this is a fictional story, I think the idea of an all-powerful media used for personal purposes is one that could apply to today’s society. I think this may be Collins’s way of reminding readers that the media is not objective and that there is usually a personal agenda behind its products. In order to fight the influence of the media, we must first accept that it is trying to assert its influence over us; this is what Collins shows us in *The Hunger Games*.