“In The Hunger Games trilogy of books, the Mockingjay pin stands emblematic of the movement to survive and defeat the oppressive government of Panem. In a broader sense, the trilogy stands as the best representative of the Young Adult literary phenomenon that has attracted both young readers and adults by the droves. A dystopian survival story which violently pits children against each other for the entertainment of the elite, the popular books have generated abundant and vibrant discourse among scholars of various backgrounds. Critical Insights: The Hunger Games Trilogy presents some of this scholarship in its essays addressing elements as diverse as Machiavelli, Appalachia, gender, PTSD, and horror.

Four essays make up the Critical Context section which provides background discussion of the trilogy’s critical reception, literary influences, and more. Lana A. Whited (“Dystopian Copycat or YA Lit on Fire?”) ponders the series’ fervent critical reception in the wake of a surge of reader interest in dystopian literature after 9/11. And in “Rebelling against the Rebellion: Frustrating Readerly Desire in Suzanne Collins’ Mockingjay,” Jackie C. Horne contrasts reader hopes with those of reviewers in terms of the final book’s narrative arc.

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The 10 essays in the Critical Readings section explore diverse topics which confirm the trilogy’s relevance to high school and university classroom discussion. Rebecca Sutherland Borah analyzes the most stand-out aspects of the story—fear and terror—in her essay titled “Game Macabre: Fear as an Essential Element in The Hunger Games.” Elizabeth Baird Hardy draws a bold line between Appalachian culture and Katniss’ home district in “Where You Can Starve to Death in Safety”: Appalachia and The Hunger Games.” And “Labyrinthine Challenges and Degenerate Strategies in The Hunger Games” delves into a connection between contemporary gaming culture and the seditious strategies employed by the tributes in their quest for survival and, ultimately, revolution.

Additional material includes chapters on Suzanne Collins’ background, a chronology of Suzanne Collins’ life, a list of her works (including song lyrics and teleplays), a bibliography, and an index. Recommended to high school and academic libraries.”

—ARBA Staff Reviewer