

This extract has been taken from “The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins. In the novel, the Hunger Games are an annual televised event where the ruthless Capitol randomly selects one boy and one girl, each between the ages of 12 and 18 from each of the twelve districts, pitting them against each other in a game of survival where they are forced to fight one another to the death. In this section of the novel, the 74th Hunger Games is about to begin. The story is told from the point of view of Katniss, the female contestant from District 12.

1 Sixty seconds. That's how long we're required to stand on our metal circles before the sound
2 of a gong releases us. Step off before the minute is up, and land mines blow your legs off.
3 Sixty seconds to take in the ring of tributes all equidistant from the Cornucopia, a giant
4 golden horn shaped like a cone with a curved tail, the mouth of which is at least twenty feet
5 high, spilling over with the things that will give us life here in the arena. Food, containers of
6 water, weapons, medicine, garments, fire starters. Strewn around the Cornucopia are other
7 supplies, their value decreasing the farther they are from the horn. For instance, only a few
8 steps from my feet lies a three-foot square of plastic. Certainly it could be of some use in a
9 downpour. But there in the mouth, I can see a tent pack that would protect from almost any
10 sort of weather. If I had the guts to go in and fight for it against the other twenty-three
11 tributes. Which I have been instructed not to do.

12 We're on a flat, open stretch of ground. A plain of hard-packed dirt. Behind the tributes
13 across from me, I can see nothing, indicating either a steep downward slope or even a cliff.
14 To my right lies a lake. To my left and back, sparse piney woods. This is where Haymitch
15 would want me to go. Immediately.

16 I hear his instructions in my head. "Just clear out, put as much distance as you can between
17 yourselves and the others, and find a source of water."

18 But it's tempting, so tempting, when I see the bounty waiting there before me. And I know
19 that if I don't get it, someone else will. That the Career Tributes who survive the bloodbath
20 will divide up most of these life-sustaining spoils. Something catches my eye. There, resting
21 on a mound of blanket rolls, is a silver sheath of arrows and a bow, already strung, just
22 waiting to be engaged. *That's mine, I think. It's meant for me.*

23 I'm fast. I can sprint faster than any of the girls in our school, although a couple can beat me
24 in distance races. But this forty-yard length, this is what I am built for. I know I can get it, I
25 know I can reach it first, but then the question is how quickly can I get out of there? By the
26 time I've scrambled up the packs and grabbed the weapons, others will have reached the
27 horn, and one or two I might be able to pick off, but say there's a dozen, at that close range,
28 they could take me down with the spears and the clubs. Or their own powerful fists. Still, I
29 won't be the only target. I'm betting many of the other tributes would pass up a smaller girl,
30 even one who scored an eleven in training, to take out their more fierce adversaries.

31 Haymitch has never seen me run. Maybe if he had he'd tell me to go for it. Get the weapon.
32 Since that's the very weapon that might be my salvation. And I only see one bow in that
33 whole pile. I know the minute must be almost up and will have to decide what my strategy
34 will be and I find myself positioning my feet to run, not away into the surrounding forests but
35 toward the pile, toward the bow. When suddenly I notice Peeta, he's about five tributes to
36 my right, quite a fair distance, still I can tell he's looking at me and I think he might be shaking
37 his head. But the sun's in my eyes, and while I'm puzzling over it the gong rings out.

This extract has been taken from “The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins. In the novel, the Hunger Games are an annual televised event where the ruthless Capitol randomly selects one boy and one girl, each between the ages of 12 and 18 from each of the twelve districts, pitting them against each other in a game of survival where they are forced to fight one another to the death. In this section of the novel, the 74th Hunger Games is about to begin. The story is told from the point of view of Katniss, the female contestant from District 12.

38 And I've missed it! I've missed my chance! Because those extra couple of seconds I've lost by
39 not being ready are enough to change my mind about going in. My feet shuffle for a moment,
40 confused at the direction my brain wants to take and then I lunge forward, scoop up the
41 sheet of plastic and a loaf of bread. The pickings are so small and I'm so angry with Peeta for
42 distracting me that I sprint in twenty yards to retrieve a bright orange backpack that could
43 hold anything because I can't stand leaving with virtually nothing.

44 A boy, I think from District 9, reaches the pack at the same time I do and for a brief time we
45 grapple for it and then he coughs, splattering my face with blood. I stagger back, repulsed by
46 the warm, sticky spray. Then the boy slips to the ground. That's when I see the knife in his
47 back. Already other tributes have reached the Cornucopia and are spreading out to attack.
48 Yes, the girl from District 2, ten yards away, running toward me, one hand clutching a half-
49 dozen knives. I've seen her throw in training. She never misses. And I'm her next target.

50 All the general fear I've been feeling condenses into an immediate fear of this girl, this
51 predator who might kill me in seconds. Adrenaline shoots through me and I sling the pack
52 over one shoulder and run full-speed for the woods. I can hear the blade whistling toward me
53 and reflexively hike the pack up to protect my head. The blade lodges in the pack. Both straps
54 on my shoulders now, I make for the trees. Somehow I know the girl will not pursue me. That
55 she'll be drawn back into the Cornucopia before all the good stuff is gone. A grin crosses my
56 face. *Thanks for the knife*, I think.