

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Literature for children and young adults always had a special place in the history of literature in English language. British authors started writing novels for children and teenagers not long after the formal invention of the literary genre Novel possibly by Henry Fielding in the eighteenth century. The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes published in 1765 by John Newbery is widely considered as the first novel for children. For his work, John Newbery is also known as the Father of Children's Literature and there is an award in his name called the John Newbery Medal, awarded to an American writer of children's literature every year by the Association for Library Service to Children, a subdivision of the American Library Association. From the first work for children in English literature, the genre flourished rapidly and contributed numerous classics to the field of literature. A separate subgenre for the young adults or teenagers was properly recognized and marketed as the young adult literature separated children's literature from the adolescent literature at least for the publishers and the critics. Now the classification ranges from books for children between ages five to eighteen because of the difference in reading interests and habits.

Even though children's literature and the literature for young adults were highly popular in the western countries and especially the English speaking countries, the genres achieved popularity in India definitely with the publication of the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling between 1997 and 2007. The film adaptations of the series starting from 2001 also played a massive role in converting the franchise to a worldwide sensation. I

was in lower primary school when the first novel in the series was published and the last film in the Harry Potter film series was released when I was in college. The actors who play the characters of Harry Potter and his friends are almost of my age group. So, I was a part of the generation which celebrated the peak of young adult literature and this is reflected in all my works.

Moving on to the primary texts of this thesis, *The Hunger Games* was first published in the year 2008 and it is about the sixteen year old teenage protagonist Katniss Everdeen. This is my exact same age when the novel was released and the novel is also targeted at the teenagers. Many critics are of the opinion that *The Hunger Games* resurrected the field of young adult literature and the YA literature in general. The novel's film adaptation was released in March 2012 and it reached more audience around the world and received international recognition. *Divergent* was first published in 2011 following the young adult dystopian trend initiated by *The Hunger Games* trilogy. The movie adaptation of *Divergent* was released in 2014 and it helped in the worldwide recognition and in increasing the sales of the book series.

When the most of these novels were first published, I was also a young adult or a teenager like the protagonists in these works. The film adaptations of *Harry Potter*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner*, *I am Number Four*, *The Twilight Saga*, *Percy Jackson*, and *Divergent* played an important role in leading me to this project. I was much thrilled when one of my favourite directors, Steven Spielberg, adapted the YA dystopian novel *Ready Player One* into a film. Also, there are a number of TV shows like *Teen Wolf*, *The 100*, *Riverdale*, and *13 Reasons Why* with characters

and actors almost my same age and this strongly influenced me in my academic and entertainment life.

Before moving on to the impact of The Hunger Games and Divergent trilogies on popular culture, we can have a look at how the Harry Potter franchise influenced the popular culture around the world in different ways. First of all, all the novels in the Harry Potter series were adapted into movies between 2001 and 2011. All the movies were highly successful at the box office both in North America and worldwide. At that same time, live action film versions of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings trilogy directed by Peter Jackson was also released between 2001 and 2003, again turning out to be highly profitable. The third film in the series, The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) went on to win eleven awards at the seventy sixth Academy Awards in 2004. This stupendous success of the children's and young adult novel adaptations made way for the adaptation of more novels belonging to the same genre. The Chronicles of Narnia (2005-2010), The Twilight Saga (2008-2012), and Percy Jackson & the Olympians (2010 – 2013) followed suit. In short, The Lord of the Rings and the Harry Potter film series paved the way for the adaptations of almost all the popular children's and adolescent literature in English language and even other languages like Inkheart (2008), the film adaptation of Cornelia Funke's German novel Inkheart or Tintenherz (2003).

Continuing with the influence of the Harry Potter series on popular culture, the books were translated into more than sixty four languages including the Indian languages Hindi, Telugu, and Tamil. Rowling and the series also instrumental in the formation of a type of music called the "Wizrock". The novel and the film series also produced a huge amount of merchandise including the replicas of the magical assets like hats, broomsticks

and wands, common merchandise like mugs, stickers, t-shirts, colouring books and a long list of other items. A newly discovered Dinosaur species from the United States was given the name *Dracorex Hogwartsia* in honour of J.K. Rowling and Harry Potter (Gunelius 10). Rowling found the “Wizarding World” (previously known as Pottermore) to deal with all the official business regarding the Harry Potter franchise. Wizarding World is also the name of the fictional universe which consists of the Harry Potter series and the Fantastic Beasts series. Fantastic Beasts is the prequel series of the Harry Potter series and is produced and co-written by Rowling. The film series consist of three films, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016), *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* (2018), and the final film of the series *Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore* was released in April this year (2022). Finally, new editions of all the books in the series were released in accordance with the twentieth anniversary of the first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* in 2017. The twenty fifth anniversary edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* was released this year in 2022. All these facts are included in the conclusion part because both the *Hunger Games* and *Divergent* series followed the same strategy in dealing with pop culture.

In the case of *The Hunger Games series*, the books have been translated in to more than fifty languages so far including the prequel of the series, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* published in May 2020. The book series had a sale of more than a hundred million copies and this is a remarkable achievement for a series that was published within the past fifteen years. By 2014, more than sixty five million copies of the first three books were sold in North America alone. *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* which was released after a gap of ten years after Collins’ last novel *Mockingjay*,

had a sale of more than half million copies in its first week of release and sold almost three hundred thousand copies in second week.

Film adaptations of The Hunger Games series were released between 2012 and 2015. The last book *Mockingjay* was divided into two parts and released as two movies in 2014 and 2015. The four films in total collected almost three billion US dollars at the box office and are among the top grossing movie franchises of all time, ranked at number 21 according to the latest box office collections list. The movie franchise was extremely successful and this is why the prequel novel *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is also being adapted into a film next year. This film is going to be released in November 2023. In the case of India and Kerala, *The Hunger Games* (2012) had a limited release outside North America and was screened only in a few theatres in India. It was not released in Kerala and Thrissur because I had noticed the Hollywood films released in Kerala at that time. But from the second film *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, all the films in the series received wide release in India and were release in theatres of Kerala. This in my own way proves that the film series and the books slowly attained popularity worldwide.

The Hunger Games franchise also inspired several attractions on different parts of the world in association with the film distributors Lionsgate Entertainment Corporation. These attractions and exhibitions include The Hunger Games: The Exhibition located at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, United States; Panem Aerial Tour, Capitol Bullet Train, and Effie Meet and Greet at the Motiongate Theme park in Dubai, and the Hunger Games Mockingjay Flight Rebel Escape as a part of the Lionsgate Entertainment World in Zhuhai Hengqin, China. The Hunger Games Exhibition was originally conceived as an exhibition touring around the world and the crew visited places around the globe

including Australia and Singapore. The exhibition is still active at the MGM Grand and they are currently celebrating the tenth anniversary of The Hunger Games film with an art competition for the high school students of Clark County School District in Las Vegas, Nevada. Attractions in the exhibition also include the largest interactive touch screen in the world (included in the Guinness Book of World Records), Office of President Snow (An important character in the novels and the film series), an interactive map of Panem (futuristic fictional North America in the series), Dystopian costumes from the film series, Hall of Justice, and the Tribute Train. This exhibition's specialties also include a retail shop with collectible items, an interactive control table for the game makers, and galleries with pictures of District 13. All these attractions provide excellently immersive and entertaining experiences to the children and the adults.

The series went on to create a wide variety of editions both in the United States and in different countries like Australia, the UK and even India. Film tie in editions of all the books were published in correspondence with the releases of the three films. Scholastic published the special editions of the trilogy in 2018. Tenth anniversary editions of The Hunger Games series were released as a box set in 2018 to celebrate the magnificent success of the novel series all over the world. The audiobook of The Hunger Games novel narrated by the actress Carolyn McCormick was first released in 2009. The complete audiobook of the trilogy narrated again by Carolyn McCormick was released in October 2015. A special edition of The Hunger Games trilogy audiobook read by the actress Tatiana Maslany and published by Scholastic Audio was released in 2019. The audiobook version of the prequel The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes read by Santino Fontana and published by Scholastic Audio was released in May 2020.

The Hunger Games series also inspired several spoof literature and films. The list includes *The Hunger Pains: A Parody* by The Harvard Lampoon, *The Hunger but Mainly Death Games: A Parody* written by John Bailey Owen and Aaron Geary under the pseudonym Bratniss Everclean (a mock name for the Hunger Games' protagonist, Katniss Everdeen), *The Humping Games: A Parody* written by Jack Gallow, and the films *The Hungover Games* directed by Josh Stolberg and *The Starving Games* directed by Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer. The spoofs or parodies of The Hunger Games also include the play *Dystopia! The Hungry Maze Game of Divergent Death* written by Don Zolidis and the comic book "Hunger Games: Parody - The Starvation Games Starring Jennifer Lawrence!" written by an anonymous author using the name The Parody Brothers.

The novel series claimed a large number of awards and honours within North America and from different parts of the world. Most important and relevant awards secured by the series include the Golden Duck Award in the Young Adult Fiction Category (Hal Clement Award), California Young Reader Medal, Children's and Young Adult Bloggers' Literary Awards (Cybils Awards) in the category of fantasy and science fiction, West Australian Young Readers' Book Award for Older Readers, Sakura Medal for Middle School Book, the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award, Premio El Templo de las Mil Puertas, Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis for Preis der Jugendjury, and the Prix Et-lisez-moi for The Hunger Games, the Goodreads Choice Award for Favorite Young Adult series and book, Best Books for Young Adults list inclusion by the American Library Association, Hal Clement Award (Golden Duck Award for Young Adult), Teen Choice Book of the Year, Soaring Eagle Book Award for, and the Indies

Choice Book Award in YA category for *Catching Fire* and the Favorite Book and Young Adult Fantasy awards at the Goodreads Choice Awards (2010), Notable Books of the Year by New York Times [2010], Best Book of the Year selected by the magazine Publishers Weekly (2010), Barnes & Noble Best Teen Books of 2010, Best Young Adult Book of the Year by Kirkus, and nominations for the prestigious Locus and Nebula Awards for the novel *Mockingjay*. This long list provides more than enough proof about the reception of *The Hunger Games* trilogy by the book critics and the readers.

The franchise also played a key role in the development of a few Virtual Reality experiences and video games. *The Hunger Games - Virtual Reality Experience* is the 360 degree immersive VR experience developed by the collaboration between Lionsgate Studios, Animation and Graphics Designers Reel FX and Samsung. *The Hunger Games: Girl on Fire* was an exclusive game designed for the iPhones. *The Hunger Games Adventures* was a game released on Facebook and developed by the video game developers Funtactix. It was made available for the android and iOS based mobile phones and devices. This game was also released on the same day of the release of *The Hunger Games* movie in 2012. *Hunger Games: Catching Fire - Panem Run* released in 2013 is another mobile game based on the novel and film series. The mobile game is based on *Catching Fire* and it was developed by Reliance Games. Most probably the last video game based on the series is *The Hunger Games: Panem Rising*. The game was developed by Kabam Beijing Studios for the iOS platforms. It was released in 2014 as a part of the promotion of the film *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 1*.

The merchandise and collectible items based on *The Hunger Games* series have become a part of the global popular culture. Many of these items including the pendants,

action figures and pins are of high demand and people still purchase these items from online stores even in India. Members of the Facebook group called The Hunger Games: Official Fan Group usually post pictures of the merchandise based on The Hunger Games they purchase online and their collection of artifacts. The series is still actively discussed in various forums and fan groups on the internet like The Hunger Games: Official Fan Group, The Official Hunger Games Group, The Hunger Games Fan Page, The Hunger Games Fan Club, The Hunger Games Addicts, and the THG Fansite on YouTube.

It can be argued that the most relevant contributions of The Hunger Games series are the influence of the series on real life problems like the Food and Hunger Campaign and the Myanmar and Thailand protests. When the first film in the series *The Hunger Games* was released, the film's team along with Suzanne Collins joined hands with the World Food Programme and Feeding America in support of the awareness campaign about hunger around the world and the importance of donating money for a good cause. They developed a special website wfp.org/hungergames for the promotion of the film and in support of the Feeding America campaign. The website included a public service announcement with the actors of the film and a quiz for the awareness about the campaigns and hunger problems worldwide, and a link to make donations for the cause.

Another significant achievement of the novel and film series is that these have had a symbolic role to play in the recent protests against totalitarian governments around the world. Protestors in Myanmar borrowed the salute using three fingers from The Hunger Games movies as a symbol of protest against their authoritarian and oppressive government. The symbol was first used probably in an Asian country in Thailand; people used the same gesture in solidarity with the protestors against the military coup in 2014.

The themes of censorship and oppression which are prevalent in the novels and the movies turned out to be real in the case of the Thailand protests as it was reported that more than seven people were arrested for anti-governmental activities. CBS reported that protesters in Hong Kong also used the Hunger Games gesture to protest against the totalitarian Chinese government who constantly tries to take control of Hong Kong. China even tries to censor Google and Internet usage within the country.

Citing another real life example, Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart reported on protests in Baltimore, Maryland on 27 April 2015. The protests were organised by local communities in response to the death of Freddie Grey on 19 April 2015, a week after he sustained severe spinal injuries during an arrest and subsequent transportation by Baltimore Police. To satirise the media's apparent indifference to the events in Baltimore in favour of a night of self-congratulatory entertainment, *The Daily Show* segment featured "senior civil unrest correspondent" Jessica Williams dressed as the character Effie Trinket from director Gary Ross's 2012 film adaptation of *The Hunger Games*. By explicitly comparing racialised police violence with Collins's dystopian novel, Williams' skit narrated an important point about the lived experience of Black Americans in the here and now: Black Americans live in dystopian times. All these real life incidents explicitly demonstrate the relevance *The Hunger Games* series in particular and dystopian literature and films in general.

Moving onto the *Divergent* Franchise, the novel series was released during the peak time of young adult dystopian novels. Several other acclaimed novel series like *Delirium* and *Legend* were published almost at the same time as the *Divergent* series. But *Divergent* series was highly popular like *The Hunger Games* series and *The Maze Runner*

series and this led to the adaptation of all these novels into feature films. Just like *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent* was also translated into more than fifty languages. According to the publisher HarperCollins, more than thirty five million copies of the series were sold globally. The book is published in all English speaking countries along with India.

Because of the huge success and extreme popularity of the *Divergent* series, Veronica Roth carried on with her career in writing and she continues to write dystopian and science fiction novels to the date. Roth penned a number of acclaimed novels after the *Divergent* series including *Carve the Mark*, *The Fates Divide*, *Chosen Ones*, *Poster Girl*, and *Arch-Conspirator*.

All the three novels in the series were adopted into films between 2014 and 2017. The film trilogy collected more than seven hundred and sixty five million US dollars at the worldwide box office. All the three films were widely released in India and were also screened in theatres of Kerala and Thrissur to the best of my knowledge. Even though the films were not that much well received as compared to the novels, these helped the novels to reach a worldwide audience and high circulation within North America and English speaking countries.

Divergent series also served as the inspiration for a variety of attractions and events following the path of *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games* series. “The Dauntless Fear Simulator” located in the Lionsgate Entertainment World in China is a great example. This is a virtual reality experience that enables fans of the series to experience the fear test taken by the Dauntless faction members in real life. Another attraction inside the Lionsgate Entertainment World based on the *Divergent* series is the “Chasm

Climbing Course” which also tests the strength and fears of the participants by asking them to climb suspended bridges and walls. University of Missouri organized a free outdoor screening of the film *Insurgent* in 2015 shortly after the film’s theatrical release. This must be due to the educational and entertainment aspects of the film series.

The second and third films in the series inspired the development of Virtual Reality games based on the series. The VR experience focusing on the *Insurgent* film and novel is titled *The Divergent Series: Insurgent – Shatter Reality*. This VR video game features many of the cast members from the film including Kate Winslet and Miles Teller. The VR video game based on the *Allegiant* movie is titled *The Divergent Series: Allegiant VR Experience*. The *Allegiant* VR game features the entire lead cast from the movie including Shailene Woodley and Theo James. *Divergent* series also inspired the development two other video games: *LEGO Divergent Series: The Video Game* and *Divergent Mobile Game*.

The awards and honours received by the *Divergent* series are also indicative of its relevance and acceptance in popular culture. *Divergent* novel won the awards like the Goodreads Award for the Favorite Book, Choice Award in the category of YA Science Fiction and Fantasy by Goodreads, Georgia Peach Book Award, Soaring Eagle Book Award, Isinglass Teen Read Award for Grades 6-8, Gateway Readers Award in the High School category, Green Mountain Book Award for Grades 9-12, Connecticut Nutmeg Children’s Book Award, Evergreen Teen Book Award, Sakura Medal (selected by the students from international schools in Japan each year), California Young Readers Medal in the category of YA novels, The Magnolia Award for readers for grades 6-8, and the Grand Canyon Reader Award in the Teen category. *Insurgent* won the Goodreads Choice

Award in the category Goodreads Author for Veronica Roth, Goodreads Choice Award in the category of Young Adult Fantasy, and the RT Reviewers Choice Award in the Young Adult Futuristic Fiction category. *Allegiant* was the winner of the Children's Book Council (CBC) Teen Book of the Year 2014. The novel also secured the 2013 Choice Award for Young Adult Fantasy awarded by Goodreads.

Just like The Hunger Games series, *Divergent* series also culminated in releasing different editions of the novels in different countries and on special occasions. Separate editions of the series are published in the countries like The UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and India. Harper Collins also released a special collector's edition of all the books in the series. Film tie in editions of all the books were published in correspondence with the releases of the three films. Tenth Anniversary editions of the books including *Four: A Divergent Collection* were published in June 2021 to celebrate the success and demand of the series. Harper Collins published the audiobook versions of *Divergent* and *Insurgent* narrated by Emma Galvin in December 2012. Audiobook version of *Allegiant* narrated by Emma Galvin and Aaron Stanford was published by Harper Collins in October 2013. All these audiobooks are available for download and still being purchased from Audible, Google Play Books, and audiobooks.com.

The merchandise based on *Divergent* series was popular at the time of the film releases and many of these are still available to purchase online. The products inspired by the series include bookmarks, colouring books, laptop skins, mobile phone covers, toys, stickers, action figures, magnets, pendants and calendars. Calendars based on the *Divergent* series deserve special mention here because *Divergent's* physical calendar for this year 2022 is available online.

Lauren Levitt from the Department of Communication at Tulane University in the United States says that the online fan forums and other discussions on the *Divergent* series lead to a healthy debate on political consciousness and the relevance of contemporary dystopian fiction in the facilitation of arguments and counter arguments about the political systems and the sociopolitical issues we face today and those issues we may have to face in the future. She also argues that “cultivating democratic values in young people and teaching them political skills could empower them to take advantage of the political opportunities offered by young adult dystopian texts and fandoms”.

From what we have seen from the evidence here, *Divergent* series has been highly influential in all the ways a bestselling novel series is expected to be. After *The Hunger Games* series, it is the most successful and popular young adult dystopian/ post-apocalyptic franchise with a female lead. Veronica Roth also inspired several young writers and women novelists to take creative writing more seriously with her success. The franchise still remains as relevant in popular culture as more works from Veronica Roth and the adaptations of her works like *Chosen Ones* are on their way. The series continues to be globally popular as the books, films, and the merchandise are still at large on websites and shopping sites including the market of India.

In conclusion of the thesis, the franchises of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* cleared a path for the young adult novels and dystopian novels to be adapted and recognized even more than what was already there. Young Adult dystopian and science fiction novels from the twenty first century adapted into films after the release of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* series include *The Maze Runner series* (2014-2018) based on the books by James Dashner, *The Girl with All the Gifts* (2016) based on the novel by

Mike Carey, *The 5th Wave* (2016) based on the novel by Rick Yancey, *The Circle* (2017) based on the novel by Dave Eggers, *The Darkest Minds* (2018) based on the novel by Alexandra Bracken, and *Ready Player One* (2018) directed by the infamous Steven Spielberg based on the novel by Ernest Cline. The list also includes *The Host* (2013) based on the novel by Stephenie Meyer, *Mortal Engines* (2018) based on the novel series by Philip Reeve, and *Chaos Walking* (2021) based on the novel series by Patrick Ness. *The 100* novel series by Kass Morgan was adapted into a TV series of the same title spanning seven seasons and hundred episodes from 2014 to 2020.

The film series in particular and young adult dystopias in general played a crucial role in reviving old dystopian and young adult dystopian/ science fiction works. *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017 – present) based on the Atwood novel, and the adaptation of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (2020) reintroduced the classics as TV shows. Because of the renewed interest in young adult dystopias, science fiction, and fantasy, old classics in this category were adapted into feature films for the first time at the same time as the new young adult adaptations. Classic works of young adult literature from the twentieth century adapted into films include *Ender's Game* (2013) based on the novel by Orson Scott Card, *The Giver* (2014) based on the novel by Lois Lowry, and *A Wrinkle in Time* (2018) adapted from the novel by Madeleine L'Engle.

The books also inspired the writing of young adult dystopian books by the coloured and indigenous authors. Cherie Dimaline, an indigenous writer from the Métis Nation of Ontario wrote two young adult dystopian novels with aboriginal characters. The first YA dystopian novel by Cherie Dimaline is *The Marrow Thieves* published in 2017. The book won several important awards like the Governor General's Award for

English-language children's literature, the 2017 Kirkus Prize in the young adult literature category, and the 2018 Sunburst Award for young adult fiction. Dimaline published the sequel to *The Marrow Thieves*, titled *Hunting by Stars* in 2021. Coloured author Jael Richardson wrote her first novel *Gutter Child: A Novel* in 2021 also following this trend.

The popularity of young adult literature with dystopian, science fiction, and fantasy tropes still continues as it is evident from the long list of films and TV shows that are released recently and going to be released in the future. The most recent young adult films and TV series released include *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* (2016), *Artemis Fowl* (2020), *Shadow and Bone* (2021), and *His Dark Materials* (2019 – present). The young adult adaptations awaiting release include the Disney Plus series *Percy Jackson*, *Ready Player One's* sequel *Ready Player Two*, season 2 of *Shadow and Bone* and the prequel to *The Hunger Games*, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*. Original TV shows for young adults like *Stranger Things* and YA comic book adaptations like the *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* are also highly popular among the audience of all ages. All of these information leads to the proper conclusion of my thesis: young adult literature and media are still highly popular among the public and the dystopian, science fiction, and fantasy genres are the most popular genres among these.

As a last note, several totalitarian governments around the world tried to censor the *Hunger Games* books, movies and films with similar themes. Internet censorship is a global threat to human rights and economic opportunity. In this world of post-truth, propaganda, constant surveillance, and socio – political unrest, young adult dystopian works stand out because of their visionary themes of politics, democracy, individuality, and freedom.