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*Bildungsroman* of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?”

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## **1. Introduction: *The Hunger Games* from Various Scholarly Angles**

From the 1970s onwards, not only the genre of young adult literature has become increasingly popular (Cart 96), but also a more distinct subgenre, namely dystopian fiction for young adult readers (Ostry and Hintz 1). This latter development is rooted in the huge success Suzanne Collins achieved with the publication of *The Hunger Games* in 2008. Movie adaptations of the books have turned into blockbusters, various other authors published a great number of similar dystopian novels and Collins' trilogy has become a subject of literary and cultural analysis.

In recent years, numerous, highly diverse interpretations of Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* series have been published by scholars all over the world. Mary Pharr for example published a collection of essays on Collins' trilogy, which focuses on a wide range of topics, reaching from historicism, feminism and queer theory to cultural, political, and media studies. Meanwhile, George Dunn, William Irwin and Nicolas Michaud explored the series from a philosophical point of view in the book *The Hunger Games and Philosophy: A Critique of Pure Treason* centering on topics like altruism, moral choice and gender. Then again, Shau Ming Tan in her article "Burn With Us: Sacrificing Childhood in *The Hunger Games*" investigated the series from a completely different perspective, namely in regard to its representation of childhood and violence. Moreover, Angelina Benedetti has analyzed Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy in relation to its success in the article "Not Just for Teens". She examines the possible reasons why sales figure for teen books have been rising in the last decade by relating to bestsellers like Collins' *The Hunger Games* (Benedetti 40).

However, there are also some distinct trends regarding the scholarly interpretation of Collins' trilogy. For example, it is often read as cultural critique or the very reverse of it. On the one hand, for example Shau Ming Tan outlines that *The Hunger Games* "critiques and reflects our own society" (71) and Suzanne Collins herself states in interviews that she intended the series to be a social critique that raises awareness in young readers. She stresses that especially reality TV is questioned in the series:

The Hunger Games is a reality television program. An extreme one, but that's what it is. And while I think some of those shows can succeed on different levels, there's also the voyeuristic thrill, watching people being humiliated or brought to tears or suffering physically. And that's what I find very disturbing. There's this potential for desensitizing the audience so that when they see real tragedy playing out on the news, it doesn't have the impact it should. It all just blurs into one program. And I think it's very important not just for young people, but for adults to make sure they're making the distinction. Because the young soldiers dying in the war in Iraq, it's not going to end at the commercial break. It's not something fabricated, it's not a game. It's your life. (Collins, interview)

Margaret J. Godbey, on the other hand, focuses on the readers' responses to *The Hunger Games* and argues that the series fails to foster critical thinking in its target audience as it is "consumed rapidly without serious thinking". Some teenagers even enact the games or dress up like the citizens of District 1 (16-17). Generally, Godbey outlines that the trilogy rather reinforces the dominant power structure than questioning it (15-18). Marion Lieber and Daniel Zamora, too, criticize *The Hunger Games* series in their article "Rebel Without a Cause" for not addressing contemporary problems caused by capitalism. They suggest that if any revolutionary thoughts are at all evoked in young adults through Collins' series, they will be against monarchy thus empowering capitalism instead of undermining it. Riandji also argues in her article "*The Hunger Games*: Katniss Everdeen's Effort to Gain American Pragmatism Goals in Terms of American Values [sic.]" that the trilogy preserves rather than challenges American values and philosophy. She outlines that the message of the series is "from zero to hero" (Riandji 12): Katniss manifests five central American values, namely "Activity and Work, Efficiency and Practicality, Progress, Freedom and Achievement and Success" (Riandji 12).

Moreover, Collins' trilogy has been explored from a generic point of view. Numerous critics investigated *The Hunger Games* series, partly contradicting one another, as they labeled the trilogy a young adult fiction novel, a dystopia, a romance, a survival story, a science fiction novel or, more recently, a *bildungsroman* (Henthorne, Fentin, Nayar, etc.). For example, Rachel Fentin



argues that the series is a young adult novel as well as a modern dystopia and a *bildungsroman*. Tom Henthorne even goes a step further by adding young adult romance, science fiction and survivor story to the list of possible genres to which *The Hunger Games* might belong (30-37). Mark Fischer, too, sees the series as a dystopia as he compares political aspects in three dystopian thrillers in his article "Precarious Dystopias: *The Hunger Games*, *In Time* and *Never Let Me Go*". Thus, obviously, Collins' novels are anything but easily assignable to a specific genre and it is arguably this diversity that makes the series so intriguing. However, as Culler puts it: "The function of genre conventions is essentially to establish a contract between writer and reader so as to make certain relevant expectations operative, and thus to permit both compliance with and deviation from accepted modes of intelligibility" (147). Therefore, even though Collins' *The Hunger Games* can certainly be assigned to various genres, which is probably also intentional on the authors' part in order to ensure a large readership and high sales figures, it is important to look into each of them separately. By doing so, new angles from which to perceive the series and ways of using it for teaching purposes will arise.

Lately, the focus has shifted to the investigation of *The Hunger Games* series being a *bildungsroman*. Generally, this approach is a productive angle of analysis as it is the only one that centers on the protagonist's development throughout the story. Thereby, a dilemma most young adult readers find themselves in forms a central theme of the trilogy, namely the quest for identity. Adolescents get to face their own character development in a fictional and hyperbolic way while accompanying Katniss on her journey from a comparatively innocent childhood to the cold reality of adult life. As just mentioned, for example Tom Henthorne explores the series from a variety of literary and cultural perspectives in order to identify reasons for its significance and appeal. He declares that it is difficult to determine a genre for Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy and stresses that if it can be read as a *bildungsroman*, it is certainly an unconventional one (35). Rachel Fentin also goes into more detail regarding *The Hunger Games* trilogy as being both a (female) *bildungsroman*, a dystopia and a young adult fiction novel. Moreover, Pramod Nayar focuses on the topic of "Growing Up Different(ly): Space, Community and the Dissensual Bildungsroman in Suzanne Collins' *The*

Hunger Games". She argues that Collins' series is a dissensual *bildungsroman* (Slaughter 181-182) as "social integration here isn't possible because the protagonist is excluded from society and is prevented from attaining personhood". However, many scholars also only touch upon the fact that Collins' series is presumably a *bildungsroman*: For example, Allison Layfield comments in her article "Identity Construction and the Gaze in *The Hunger Games*" that the series does belong to the genre of the *bildungsroman*. In line with this, Janice Bogstad and Jonathan Stephens, center on typical features of young adult literature and, both, briefly mention the relation of this genre to that of the *bildungsroman*. All in all, it certainly seems reasonable to argue that Collins' series in fact is a *bildungsroman* of some sort.

One final angle from which Collins' series has been discussed more recently centers on the series' usefulness for teaching purposes. For example, Judith Painter developed an elaborate lesson plan on "Alliances in *The Hunger Games*" focusing on "the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface and how the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface" (56). A less practice-oriented approach has been developed by Thomas Lucey, Kara Lycke, James Laney and Christopher Connelly on the "Dimensions of Citizenship through the Lens of *The Hunger Games*: Fiction and the Visual and Performing Arts as Springboards for Citizenship Education". Moreover, Amber Simmons, too, developed an interesting idea for classroom usage of the series. She created a lesson plan on how to use *The Hunger Games* series in order to encourage social action in pupils. Generally, it seems that due to its great popularity with adolescents and its multilayered and demanding content Collins' trilogy lends itself to teaching purposes. However, even though there is already a large variety of useful material available, no one has yet merged these last two perspectives: teaching *The Hunger Games* in relation to its *bildungsroman* characteristics.

In line with this, although Henthorne, Stephens, Fentin, Layfield, Nayar, Stephens and Bogstad give – if at all – some, rather cursory, reasons why *The Hunger Games* trilogy is a *bildungsroman*, none of them actually investigates the novels in detail or casts a critical look at the genre itself. First of all, what exactly is a

*bildungsroman*? Are there certain features that a *bildungsroman* needs to incorporate? And which relation has this genre to that of young adult literature? Which particular features (narrative perspective, mode, topical story elements, setting, generic signals, etc.) indicate that Collins' *The Hunger Games* is a *bildungsroman* and which new opportunities might this analysis open up for the usage of the trilogy for teaching purposes? Answering and discussing all of the above questions will be the aim of this thesis. In the next chapter I will present a general outline of the structure of my thesis and briefly examine each section's objective.

## 2. Outline

The goal of this thesis is to analyze in what aspects and to what extent Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* series does belong to the genre of the contemporary *bildungsroman*. To accomplish this, I will analyze Collins' trilogy by means of taking on a structuralist approach to literature in combination with "close reading" (Tyson 141) of all three novels. As a guideline, I will apply Anniken T. Iversen's "Bildungsroman Index (BRI)" (51). Hence, concrete examples taken from *The Hunger Games* will be given to validate all my interpretations and scoring of BRI features. Generally, even though taking a structuralist approach seems somewhat outdated, the investigation of Collins' trilogy in relations to their underlying structure appears to be the most promising method of determining its genre. However, no essentialist model will be proposed but *The Hunger Games* series will be compared to a set of features that are *usually* perceived as marking a *bildungsroman*. No single characteristic of the BRI is obligatory and the *bildungsroman* itself is seen as fluid category. By determining the degree to which this young adult series is a contemporary *bildungsroman* and by investigating its structure on the basis of the BRI, new angles from which to discuss this highly popular young adult trilogy will be opened up. In the last chapter of this thesis, I will therefore briefly look into new possibilities for the classroom usage of the *The Hunger Games* as contemporary *bildungsroman* and suggest some ideas for the practical application of my analysis.

I chose to investigate Collins' *The Hunger Games* novels because of their huge popularity and success both with readers and critics. This series has unleashed a new trend in young adult fiction literature, namely dystopian young adult fiction with numerous authors adopting Collins' concept in the years that followed the publication of the first novel of her trilogy in 2008 (e.g. Veronica Roth' *Divergent* trilogy, Allyson B. Condie's *Matched* series, Wes Ball's *Maze Runner*, etc.). As presented in the introduction, Collins' series not only became enormously famous with readers but also with critics. Out of the variety of angles from which the trilogy has been discussed since, especially the idea that *The Hunger Games* trilogy is "ostensibly a *bildungsroman*" (Shau Ming Tan 56) caught my attention. When I read *The Hunger Games* novels for the first time I was still in my teens

and did not realize the resemblance of the series to classical *bildungsromans*. Only when rereading it I noticed how striking the similarity to some German novels of this genre really is. This is when I decided to make the investigation of Collins' trilogy as *bildungsroman* the goal of my diploma thesis. However, at that point I had no specific ideas yet, which particular features are usually seen as prototypical of the *bildungsroman*. Following up on the history and development of this highly controversial term made me realize that I will have to position myself within this genre dispute before being able to analyze Collins' novels. This is what I will be doing in **Chapter 3** of this thesis.

In Chapter 3a I will present a brief synopsis of different trends in the *bildungsroman* controversy. I will contrast different perceptions on questions like whether the *bildungsroman* is distinctly German, on which works can be seen as a *bildungsroman*, on the question if the *bildungsroman* as such has been extinct since World War One or has become an international genre that is still widely spread and most importantly on how to define the *bildungsroman* (Sammons, Beddow, Jost, Howe, Iversen, etc.). This will then lead me to a brief investigation of the literary term 'genre' itself in Chapter 3b. Here I will argue against an essentialist perception of any genre, outlining that this category is fluid, altering over time and that there is no necessary set of features a text needs to incorporate in order to be assigned to a certain genre. In Chapter 3c I will present an overview of Anniken T. Iversen's Bildungsroman Index (BRI), which I see as the most reasonable and thorough way of analyzing a literary work in regard to it being a *bildungsroman*.

**Chapter 4** will be dedicated to the thorough investigation of Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy as contemporary *bildungsroman*. Here I will apply Iversen's BRI index and analyze Collins' series in detail in regard to 96 possible *bildungsroman* features. This study will be organized into nine general sections in accordance with Iversen's specifications (56-64), namely: narrative perspective and mode; characterization: Katniss Everdeen; characterization: secondary characters and their functions; topical story elements: affecting Katniss Everdeen; topical story elements: affecting secondary characters; setting; plot and structure; generic signals and last but not least theme, subject matter and motifs.

**Chapter 5** will then present the conclusions I draw from the preceding investigation. I will argue that Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* novels are in fact a contemporary *bildungsroman*, which is explicitly directed at for a young adult readership. In line with this, I will outline which aspects of the trilogy are highly prototypical for the genre of the *bildungsroman* and which deviate from what is usually perceived as *bildungsroman*. Moreover, in this chapter, new perspectives from which to interpret and analyze Collins' series will be briefly touched upon and suggestions for further investigation will be made.

Finally, **Chapter 6** will suggest two specific ideas of how to use Collins' trilogy for teaching purposes in regard to their generic affiliation to the genre of the *bildungsroman*: firstly, I will present an English lesson with a speaking and reading focus that centers on the students' expectations regarding the ending of *The Hunger Games*. Thus, students are encouraged to reflect upon their own goals in life and practice stating their opinions as well as giving reasons for them. Secondly, a psychology lesson will be outlined, which focuses on developmental psychology, namely, James Marcia's "identity status paradigm" ("Development and Validation" 551-552). In this lesson, students are encouraged to reflect upon Katniss' development throughout the story and try to assign Marcia's statuses to different phases of it.

Generally, in my thesis, I will be using the German term *bildungsroman* only and no English synonyms (novel of adolescence, novel of development, coming of age novel, etc.). Thus, I want to stress the German origin as well as the ongoing existence of this traditional genre in twenty-first century literature. However, by spelling it in small letters (not *Bildungsroman* as in German) and by using the English plural form (*bildungsromans*) the genre's internationality and fluidity should be foregrounded as well. Furthermore, any risk of misunderstandings can thus be eliminated. Any other German words that will occur in my thesis (e.g. *Bildung*) will be spelled exactly as you do in German.

In a nutshell, the research questions I will focus on in this thesis are:

1. In which aspects and to what degree does Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy belong to the genre of the contemporary *bildungsroman* form- and content wise?
2. How might this research be of relevance for the usage of Collins' series for teaching purposes?

### **3. The *Bildungsroman* and Its Controversies**

There are various, partly opposing, definitions of the literary genre of the *bildungsroman*, each one stressing different aspects. Literary dispute mainly centers on whether the *bildungsroman* is distinctly German, on which works can be seen as *bildungsromans*, on the question if the *bildungsroman* as such has been extinct since World War One or has become an international genre that is still widely spread as well as on the essential features of the genre (Sammons, Beddow, Jost, Howe, Iversen, etc.). They mostly agree insofar as the *bildungsroman* likely has its roots in German literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Moreover, the terms “novel of formation” (Hirsch 296), “coming of age novel” (Millard), “novel of education” (Boyle 173), “novel of youth” (Buckley 13), “novel of adolescence” (Millard), “novel of development” (Bolaki), “novel of initiation” (Buckley vii) or “apprenticeship novel” (Howe 4) are very closely linked to the term “*bildungsroman*” and are sometimes also used synonymously. In order to fully grasp the concept of the *bildungsroman*, a closer look at its roots and evolution needs to be taken as well as on the contentious term ‘genre’ itself. In the following section, I will try to shed some light on the controversies surrounding the *bildungsroman*. I will give a brief synopsis of its history and of its various trends, briefly examining the German, British and American concept of this genre and finally turn to a broader, multi-national notion of the *bildungsroman* that prevails in the twenty-first century (Iversen, Bolaki, Jones etc.).

#### **a. A Brief Synopsis**

The *bildungsroman* has been the subject of debates for more than two centuries. While some scholars (e.g. Sammons) hold the view that this genre existed only for a very brief period of time in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century and actually vanished soon thereafter (“The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists” 32), others claim that in the twentieth and twenty-first century it has become more popular than ever before, spreading all over the world and altering its conventions in the process (Jones, Boes, Millard, Iversen, etc.). For example, Jeffrey L. Sammons and Michael Beddow see the *bildungsroman* as a distinctly German



genre of the eighteenth century. Sammons even states that in the twentieth century critics created a “phantom genre” by applying the term *bildungsroman* to texts in Germany in the nineteenth century, albeit “there is no nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* genre because no major writer after Goethe could envision a social context for *Bildung*” (“The Mystery of the Missing *Bildungsroman*” 20-23). Around the turn of the nineteenth century, the *bildungsroman* became increasingly popular in Germany as an expression of “the essence of German-ness” (Iversen 22). Then, however, critics like Sammons reversed this tendency from the 1960s onwards (Iversen 23). A new trend developed as scholars started to exclude an increasing number of texts from the genre of the *bildungsroman*, finally even questioning the affiliation of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* (Boes 233). This view, which I will come to call a “Germanist Purist” perception of the *bildungsroman* (Iversen 11), however, seems rather outdated as it is very restrictive and most contemporary critics (Iversen, Jones, Bolaki etc.) argue that a variety of *bildungsromans* evolved over the centuries, some of which differ considerably from the ‘original’ (i.e. *Wilhelm Meister*) and that the *bildungsroman* is still widely spread.

It is also still a matter of discussion whether Wilhelm Dilthey or Karl Morgenstern coined the term *bildungsroman* (Gohlman 12). In 1817 Morgenstern already used the term rather freely, for any text that served the purpose of correcting moral behavior, while Dilthey also explored its meaning and its history in *Das Leben des Schleiermachers* in 1870 (Gohlman 12). His definition focuses on the protagonist’s self-development and self-awareness (Hardin xiv). Thus, the term *bildungsroman* only appeared in literary discussion in the nineteenth century, becoming well-known no earlier than the beginning of the twentieth century, while the genre itself had already been a matter of discussion in Germany in the eighteenth century (Iversen 21). To put it differently, the the world *bildungsroman* has been used in retrospect to describe a certain kind of literary texts such as Wieland’s *Agathon* (1767) and Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* (1795) (Millard 2). Most critics (Iversen, Lowe, Millard, etc.) argue that the origins of the *bildungsroman* can be found in the latter, which is usually also referred to as “the prototype of the *Bildungsroman*” (Millard 2).

Another question, and probably the most central one, that has been a subject of debates for over two centuries focuses on how to define the genre of the *bildungsroman*. Various, partly opposing definitions have been generated, many being nation-specific in nature: apart from the traditional German idea of the *bildungsroman*, which I touched upon earlier and will go into more detail on when talking about Iversen's distinction between Germanist and non-Germanist definitions of this genre (11), the French, British and American *bildungsroman* have been discussed by numerous critics. Even though this national perception of the *bildungsroman* is clearly outdated (Moretti 54), it seems reasonable to briefly look into some of these traditions. However, as Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* series itself is an American novel that is set in a dystopian version of the US and takes up the issue of American values and social as well as political circumstances (Riandji), I will only briefly outline the early British and American idea of the *bildungsroman*, thus focusing on the English-language tradition of the genre.

Whenever it comes to the genre of the *bildungsroman* there is controversy. The same is true for the British tradition: generally, the British *bildungsroman* has probably developed from the German *bildungsroman*, borrowing the term but slightly altering its meaning (Iversen 35). Susanne Howe was the first to address the topic of the *bildungsroman* in Britain with her book *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen* (1930), in which she focuses on Victorian *bildungsromans*. She describes how German *bildungsromans*, most importantly Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, influenced British novels. As opposed to Howe, Brigid Lowe, however, points out that English tradition dates back even earlier than the publication of *Wilhelm Meister* (1795), as texts like *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Tom Jones* (1749), *Clarissa* (1748) or *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767) also belong to this genre (405). She outlines that British *bildungsromans* differ in various ways from German ones naming a number of "particularities of the English species" (Lowe 405): as opposed to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, in which the protagonist obtains a large fortune, English *bildungsroman* heroes have to struggle with economic constraints. Moreover, "socio-moral codes" and "rigid nineteenth-century rules of sexual conduct" play an important role in the early English *bildungsroman* (Lowe 405). The protagonists usually start their journey being both poverty-stricken and

under the influence of malevolent parents or family members (Lowe 406). Thus, for example Dorothea Brooke's *Middlemarch*, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* as well as Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* can be seen as typical British *bildungsromans* (Lowe 406). In line with this, Jerome Buckley dedicated his book *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* to the British tradition of the *bildungsroman* and describes it as a broader and less rigid genre than its German counterpart (13). While in Germany different varieties of this genre evolved (*Erziehungsroman*, *Entwicklungsroman*, *Künstlerroman* etc.), in England there were no such distinctions. He declares that in the British *bildungsroman* "the pursuit of self-culture has hardly ever been so deliberate or programmatic, and the process of education [...] has seldom begun or ended with prescribed courses of study" (Buckley 13). Buckley, however, highlights the close relationship between the British *bildungsroman* and the *Künstlerroman* as the hero of the English *bildungsroman* frequently becomes an artist of some sorts in the course of the plot (13). Iversen points out that "by removing the deliberate pursuit of self-culture and emphasizing typical features of the plot, the protagonist, and the function of secondary characters, Buckley has basically cut the bonds with Germany, Goethe and German Romanticism" (27). Thus, generally, the English tradition of the *bildungsroman* is regarded as discrete genre, which differs from the German one in various aspects. Patricia Alden, for example, particularly stresses social mobility as central theme in the English *bildungsroman*. She argues that the tradition of the British *bildungsroman* underwent profound change: in its early form this genre served "the interests of its bourgeois audience" (3) by means of "celebrating the individual's potential for development and by projecting a final harmony between the self and society" thus reassuring a "sunny end to an economic revolution" (Alden 4) however, soon thereafter, due to the political crisis in 1848, the originally "comic form of the Bildungsroman becomes problematic, satiric, or tragic" (Alden 3). All in all, the British tradition of the *bildungsroman* is as widely spread as the German one, but less rigid when it comes to genre boundaries and its themes have changed considerably due to altering social and political circumstances.

Although comparatively few critics address the American tradition of the *bildungsroman* as a distinct form of the *bildungsroman* it is still very deeply rooted and widely spread. American mythologies and ideologies which intertwine with American history are very closely linked to this genre as concepts like ‘innocence’ or ‘individuality’ are central to both American mythology and the genre of the *bildungsroman* (Iversen 99, 140). The *bildungsroman* usually depicts “the tension between individual desire and the demands of socialization” (Bolaki 11) and is often seen as an expression of individualism. In most classic as well as modern texts of this genre the protagonist is capable of developing his or her own identity irrespective of his or her origin (Iversen 141). To put it differently, identity is created through agency and not determined by birth. The very same idea is fundamental for the concept of the American dream, the self-made man or “the myth of American self-realization in the land of opportunity” (Bolaki 21). Stella Bolaki states that Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography constitutes the prototypical American *bildungsroman* as individual agency is its prime focus (21). Other famous American *bildungsromans* are for example J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* or Mark Twains’ *Huckleberry Finn* (Bolaki 25, Iversen 16). The concept of innocence, too, is fundamental to both American identity formation and the genre of the *bildungsroman*. The latter usually depicts the journey of an adolescent from innocence to experience (Iversen 99) and this very path has also symbolically been treaded by America as a nation: “America is the rebellious teenager, impatient with authority of its European parents and eager to create its own character founded on a different set of values and priorities” (Millard 5). America’s colonial history and gradual path towards independence and national unity can thus also be seen as a form of *Bildung* (Kardux 185). In other words, there is an unmistakable analogy between the genre of the *bildungsroman* and the American narrative of national identity (Millard 5). The American literary scholar and critic Richard W. B. Lewis was highly influential in the emergence of this idea as he introduced the American-as-Adam thesis in his work *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (1955). For Lewis the prototypical protagonist of American literary texts in the nineteenth century is a version of the biblical Adam who passes from innocence to experience, after being expelled from the symbolical Garden of Eden (129).

All in all, the genre of the *bildungsroman* obviously not only plays a central role in the Germany of the eighteenth and nineteenth century but is also of great relevance transnationally. Generally, one can conclude that the English-language *bildungsroman*, which includes both the American and the British tradition of this genre, is a broader, less rigid category (Buckley 13) than the German one. However, discussing a genre from the perspective of different nations seems rather outdated. As Franco Moretti puts it, in times of globalization one should cease to discuss genres from a purely national point of view and instead look at broader patterns (54).

In line with this, looking at the term *bildungsroman* it seems obvious that this particular genre tries to capture the process of *Bildung*, a concept that is in itself a subject of great discussion and change. Tracing back the origin of this term, it is closely related to the German word *Bild*, which was used in religious contexts to refer to the restoration of God's image (Berger 3). Men were created to resemble God (*Vorbild*), but due to the Fall, had to 're-build' themselves (Berger 3). According to Jost, this religious concept of *Bildung* then became secularized in the eighteenth century and Gohlman denotes that "the loss of a concrete *Vorbild* [...] drove writers and thinkers back on themselves to create something new out of the fragments of their own stable past which was now gone forever" (19). To put this differently, by turning their backs on religious models, people had to come to terms with their now seemingly unstable future, which lead to a "gradual revolution in the Bildungsprozess" (Gohlman 18).

But what exactly is *Bildung* and how does it proceed? Ziolkowski argues that as the universe is meaningless, gaining self-knowledge, too, is impossible. The only goal of the characters of the *bildungsroman* would therefore be to discover that *Bildung* is nothing but an illusion as there cannot be any objective knowledge about reality (Ziolkowski). Boyle outlines that the *bildungsroman* necessarily has to be "philosophically rich [...] if only because *Bildung* is responsible for nothing short of thought's answerability to the world" (184) and Bolaki even seeks to open up new questions regarding "the function of the genre and the project of *Bildung* in an ethnic American and postcolonial context" (20) through her book *Unsettling the Bildungsroman*. *Bildung* as compared to *Entwicklung* is according to Gohlman

“a process in which the individual actively influences what he absorbs” (21), thus agency and the unlimited possibilities of humanity play an important role in the genre of the *Bildungsprozess* (22). However, exploring the concept of *Bildung* from a philosophical point of view in depth would go beyond the scope of this thesis. Comparing the above definitions and ideas of *Bildung*, it becomes clear that this concept is far from uncontroversial. The point I want to make here is that what we perceive as *Bildung* alters over time and thus the only logical conclusion is that the genre of the *bildungsroman*, which tries to grasp this process, too, intrinsically is subject to change (Gohlman 7). However, in a globalized world this change does not happen anymore on a national level but on a global one. Thus, both nationally differentiated and ostensibly stable definitions of the *bildungsroman* are clearly outdated and should be regarded as a thing of the past.

On a broader scale, as mentioned earlier, Iversen distinguishes two major trends regarding definitions of the *bildungsroman*:

I will distinguish between these two tendencies by calling the former the *Germanist Purist position* and the latter the *International Pluralist view*. Germanist Purists accuse Internationalist Pluralists of not knowing what the term *bildungsroman* means, and of using it far too widely and divorced from the historical context that it is inextricably bound to. Internationalist Pluralists are generally less concerned with theoretical matters, but in theory as well as specific studies often oppose the Germanists on two counts: Firstly, they insist that there is a strong *bildungsroman* tradition outside Germany. Secondly, they claim that many twentieth- and twenty-first-century authors – especially female and minority authors – have reacted against and subverted “the traditional *bildungsroman*” in order to assert alternative views of subjectivity and ways of becoming an adult. (11, emphasis added)

This distinction of definition trends in the *bildungsroman* dispute is very helpful and to the point as it helps to unravel an otherwise highly confusing tangle of controversial opinions. In other words, one can differentiate between a traditional German concept of the *bildungsroman* and broader, “non-Germanist” definitions of this genre (Iversen 22). The former centers on Wilhelm Dilthey’s definition of the *bildungsroman* genre, which describes the *bildungsroman* as the history of a young man “who enters into life in a blissful state of ignorance, seeks related souls, experiences friendship and love, struggles with the hard realities of the

world and thus armed with a variety of experiences, matures, finds himself and his mission in the world" (Hardin xiv, translation). Jeffrey L. Sammons, Michael Beddow and François Jost can, for example, be seen as representatives of this Germanist Purist position (Iversen 23-25). The process of *Bildung* in a bourgeois setting as well as the concept of individualism are usually seen as the central characteristics of a *bildungsroman* (Iversen 24-25). Moreover, this traditional definition of the *bildungsroman* has a teleological character as life ultimately seems meaningful to the protagonist, who reaches some sort of goal or insight at the end of his journey (Hardin xxi). Most importantly though, the *bildungsroman* is usually regarded as a solemnly German genre by Germanist Purists as it is concerned: "with the portrayal of an individual's 'Bildung,' where Bildung denotes a distinctively German pursuit of harmonious self-development, generally conducted at some remove from the domain of public experience" (Beddow 2). Thus, a large number of texts are excluded from the genre, either for not being German in origin or for missing some of the 'necessary' *bildungsroman* features. François Jost, for example, believes in a certain set of fixed characteristics a *bildungsroman* needs to incorporate in order to belong to this genre (126). His mission seems to be to exclude most English novels from the genre as they miss certain fundamental *bildungsroman* features, like the protagonist's family providing a good moral upbringing in order to further a positive attitude towards society in the main character (Iversen 25). These rather restrictive, Germanist Purist definitions of the genre of the *bildungsroman* were mainly popular in the early twentieth century. However, scholars like Jost or Sammons retained this view far longer.

The "International Pluralists view" (Iversen 11), however, finds considerably more supporters from the twentieth century onwards. The *bildungsroman* is seen as a genre that is widely spread all over the world, manifesting itself in a huge variety of texts, reaching from the British or American female *bildungsroman* (Lowe, Kornfel and Jackson) to the Caribbean *bildungsroman* (Bolaki 11) or the "prosumer girl" *bildungsroman* (Jones 442). Most significantly, this perception of the genre is generally more open-minded, not prescribing a set of necessary features. Patricia Alden, who concentrates on the English tradition of the *bildungsroman*, defines the genre, for example, as centering on "the development

of a single individual within a particular social world" (1). She adds that "it may be in part autobiographical; it is likely to give the history of this individual from childhood up to a point at which the development or unfolding of his or her character is achieved; in other words it is the story of apprenticeship rather than a life history" (Alden 1). Her choice of words indicates that none of these features are obligatory but merely constitute a tendency. As opposed to Sammons or Beddow, she sees the *bildungsroman* as a more fluid genre, which may manifest itself in different ways. Susan Gohlman distinguishes between a historical and a critical usage of the term *bildungsroman* (3). She describes a number of features that most people will associate with the literary genre of the *bildungsroman*, namely: "a young hero (usually male), a wide range of experiences, and a sense of the ultimate practical value of these experiences in the later life" (4). Although these are of course stereotypical, oversimplified features, they seem to form some kind of essence of the *bildungsroman* (Gohlman 3). Like with Alden, these features are however not obligatory in nature.

Jerome Buckley, too, provides a very detailed definition of the *bildungsroman*, which also weakens the connection to the genre's German origins considerably (Iversen 26). He names a number of characteristics, which, to him, constitute a *bildungsroman*, but which are, again, by no means obligatory as they constitute only "the broad outlines of a typical Bildungsroman" (Buckley 17):

A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling, even if not totally inadequate, may be frustrating insofar as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting. He, therefore, sometimes at a quite early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently in the city [...]. There his real 'education' begins, not only his preparation for a career but also -and often more importantly- his direct experience of urban life. The latter involves at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting, and demands that in this respect and others the hero reappraise his values. By the time he has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon maturity. His initiation complete, he may then visit his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or the wisdom of his choice. (Buckley 17-18)



Reading this definition, it seems rather striking that Buckley only centers on a male protagonist, thus excluding female *bildungsromans* altogether. Therefore, James Hardin criticizes Buckley's idea of the *bildungsroman*, even labeling it a "thin definition" (xvii) as it fails to accurately describe the development of women, who could for example not simply leave the country or their family behind. In line with this, Kornfeld and Jackson focus on the female *bildungsroman* in America of the nineteenth century. They describe and analyze literary works, like Louisa May Alcott's novel *Little Women*, which were "written especially for and about adolescent girls" (Kornfeld and Jackson 69) and constitute female *bildungsromans*. These novels often address the female protagonists' secret hopes and dreams which stand in stark contrast to social expectations (Kornfeld and Jackson 69-70). Thus, the term *bildungsroman* is used yet for another group of literary texts, expanding its genre boundaries even further.

More recently, a radically new and significant notion of the contemporary *bildungsroman* has been proposed by Leisha Jones. She breaks new ground by describing the *bildungsroman* of the twenty-first century as a canonical prosumer girl *bildungsroman*. Jones claims that "21<sup>st</sup> century networked girls actively produce their own *bildungsromans* every day through social networking sites such as Facebook" (Jones 441). As an example she discusses Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga and stresses the fact that readers, by actively producing fan fiction, become "prosumers", a term coined to describe the combination of being both passive consumers and active producers (Jones 442). By rewriting texts of others (e.g. *Twilight*, *Harry Potter*, etc.) prosumer girls actually write *themselves* (Jones 461). The papered *bildungsromans* as well as the actively produced *bildungsromans*, through the means of fan fiction, coexist and thrive from one another (Jones 454). Thus, great changes are brought upon the function of the *bildungsroman*, but not necessarily its form (Jones 447). According to Jones, "this bildungsroman 2.0 produces a collective subject in addition to or in place of the multiple subject of postmodernity" (448).

Another perception that came to flourish around the turn of the twenty-first century focuses on the relationship between the genre of the *bildungsroman* and that of young adult literature. Generally, the genre of young adult literature has

become increasingly popular since the 1970s (Cart 96). On the one hand, this relatively new genre has been immensely successful. In the last two decades, the fastest population growth in the USA could be observed in the segment of adolescents (Cart 95-96). Thus, the market for young adult literature has expanded as well, trying to correspond to the new market (Koss and Teale 563) and bookstores even developed own sections labeled “Young Adult” (Stephens 34). However, on the other hand, young adult literature has also been criticized for various reasons: for only being based on a marketing strategy, for being too simplistic in nature, for only being light chick lit for teens or for simply being badly written (Stephens 34). Jonathan Stephens defines the genre of young adult literature as subsuming texts that are usually “Written about Teens”, include a “Distinct Teen Voice”, depict “The Journey towards Identity”, “Track Adult Issues in Teenage Lives” and have “The Same Potential for Literary Value as Grownup Novels” (41). Young adult literature can be seen as a quite broad genre with numerous sub-genres: there are for example young adult dystopian fiction novels, young adult fantasy texts, young adult romances, young adult science fiction books and many more similar sub-genres (Stephens 35). Famous contemporary examples of young adult literature are J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series, Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* saga and of course Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games*. However, classics that are regarded as part of the high literary canon are also often referred to as young adult texts, namely, for instance Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*, Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* or Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* (Stephens 35). As most of these young adult novels depict a teenager’s “Journey towards Identity” (Stephens 41) it has also been argued that young adult literature can, more often than not, be regarded as a type of *bildungsroman* (Sharma, Levy, Sullivan etc.). All of the above named examples have been classified as *bildungsromans* (Iversen, Bolaki, Jones, etc.) as well as young adult fiction novels. Michel Levy dedicated an article to this topic arguing that although not every young adult novel is a *bildungsroman*, a large number of them in fact are (99-102). He defines a *bildungsroman* in recourse to Buckley’s definition, which I outlined earlier in this chapter. However, Levy also considers feminist critiques’ perceptions on this genre (Abel, Hirsch and Langland etc.). By examining three young adult fiction novels (Robert Westall’s *Urn Burial*, Louise Lawrence’s *Moonwind*, William Sleator’s *Interstellar Pig*) Levy stresses that the

young adult science fiction genre is “with its emphasis on change, the discovery of new knowledge, and the conquest of new worlds [...] a logical medium for the *bildungsroman*” (117). This is also true for Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy, which is mostly referred to as a dystopian young adult fiction series: The protagonist Katniss Everdeen has to undergo a long and gruesome journey which involves both internal change on the part of Katniss’ mental development and external change regarding the destroyed and later rebuilt landscape as well as the downfall of the totalitarian regime. Moreover, the relationship between society and individual is a prime focus of the series as well as “the discovery of new knowledge” and even the “conquest of new worlds” (Levy 117) is arguably depicted through the fights in different arenas and conquests of various districts. Thus, the detailed investigation of Collins’s series, not simply as a young adult fiction novel but as a contemporary *bildungsroman*, is of great interest.

In a nutshell, the *bildungsroman* has come to be used in an increasingly broader sense in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Stella Bolaki states that “the Bildungsroman is not an outdated and exhausted form but one that can be detached from its initial context and used productively across different historical periods” (9). She goes on that nowadays critics have ceased to rely on essentialist genre definitions and, in line with this, the *bildungsroman* has become increasingly popular in minority writings in the twentieth century in new innovative forms (Bolaki 9-11). Not only the female *bildungsroman* of the nineteenth century (Kornfel and Jackson) evolved but also for example the Asian American *bildungsroman*, the Caribbean *bildungsroman*, the African American *bildungsroman* (Bolaki 11) and the concept of the “prosumer” girl *bildungsroman* (Jones 439). According to Jones, nowadays, “the bildungsroman [...] reflects the diversity of authorial experience, including the lives and cultures of others such as women, the disabled, gays and lesbians, immigrants, the diasporic, and the girl” (446). In consonance with this, some critics (Sharma, Levy, Sullivan etc.) also see a distinct relation between a large number of highly popular young adult novels and the genre of the *bildungsroman*, even though the former is often discredited for allegedly only being light literature while the latter is honored as high literature (Sharma 4).

In conclusion, the fundamental questions, which also divide Germanist from Non-Germanist definitions of the *bildungsroman* and which need to be answered before being able to analyze any text in regard to it being a *bildungsroman*, are: What does a *bildungsroman* look like? Are there certain essential features that every *bildungsroman* needs to have in order to belong to this genre or is there just a number of possible characteristics only some of which have to be incorporated in a text to be referred to as *bildungsroman*? The latter question can of course be asked in regard to virtually any literary genre. However, as it is also fundamental for my analysis of Collins' *The Hunger Games* as contemporary *bildungsroman*, I will I dedicate my next chapter to it and argue that in fact the single 'correct' definition of the *bildungsroman* does not exist.

## **b. Essentialist Versus Non-Essentialist Definition and Classification**

In order to fully grasp the controversies that surround the *bildungsroman*, it is necessary to also look into different approaches to the literary concept of 'genre'. The term genre derives from the Latin word *genus*, which can be translated into English 'birth' or 'origin' (Iversen 41). A genre can for example be defined as "a recognizable and established category of written work employing such common conventions as will prevent readers or audiences from mistaking it for another kind" (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* 140) or as "a style, especially in the arts, that involves a particular set of characteristics" (*Cambridge Free English Dictionary*). In the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, a genre is described as "a particular type of art, writing, music etc, which has certain features that all examples of this type share" (728). This last definition seems particularly striking as it is clearly in line with the Germanist Purist perception of the *bildungsroman*: Only texts that incorporate a certain set of essential features and were produced in Germany of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, above all Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, are seen as *bildungsromans* (Iversen 11). Iversen, however, gives a different, more usage-oriented definition for this term, as she declares that a "genre is a tool that guides the reading experience, and it kicks in right from the start" (52). Thus, clearly there are various, mostly opposing, ideas on how to define the term genre and thus also on all concepts that fall under this

category (e.g. the *bildungsroman*). Basically, these different definitions derive from two conflicting perceptions of language: essentialism and non-essentialism.

Even though the distinction between essentialism and non-essentialism is not always a clear-cut division (Iversen 32), I will try to outline the basic difference. Essentialist classifications root back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle. He sought to assign a mutually exclusive set of qualities to items belonging to one class. These qualities were both *necessary* and *sufficient*, meaning that an item that lacks one feature does not belong to the class and that only through these basic qualities one could distinguish items of one class from items of any other class (qtd. in Iversen 38). This classification system can also be called monothetic (Iversen 45). The table below illustrates how the concept of genre is perceived in an Aristotelian manner:

Properties	Genre I	Genre II
A	X	
B	X	
C	X	
D		X
E		X
F		X

Table 1: Aristotelian/Monothetic Classification of Genres

As illustrated in Table 1, genre I has the properties A, B and C, while genre II has the qualities D, E and F. There is no overlapping of features and all three properties need to be included in a literary work in order to belong to either genre. In other words, all three properties are compulsory. Regarding the definition of the *bildungsroman*, this perception of language can for example be found in François Jost's idea of this genre, which was outlined in Chapter 3a. Jost basically believes in a "true" *bildungsroman*, which is very close to the standard German definition of the genre, and lists a set of obligatory features a literary text needs to incorporate in order to be rightfully labeled a *bildungsroman* (125-128).

However, for example Karol Janicki and Karl Popper strongly contradict this Aristotelian classification system. They hold the opinion that one should not lose oneself in the impossible task of inventing precise and exact definitions (Janicki

60-62; Popper, *Poverty of Historicism* 29). Instead, the aim of a definition should be to explain something *sufficiently* for a specific purpose (Iversen 33). Janicki outlines that a large number of conflicts are language-related and are often based on misunderstandings (132-133). In line with this, also the age-long *bildungsroman* dispute is rooted in the ancient conflict between essentialist and non-essentialist perceptions of language. Essentialists hold the view that “words mean (or ‘should mean’ rather) what they meant when they were first coined” (Janicki 59). This is also true for the attitude of Germanist Purists towards the genre of the *bildungsroman*: Only texts that are highly similar to the prototypical *bildungsroman* (i.e. Wilhelm Meister) should be perceived as such. However, this perception is what is called an “etymological fallacy”, that is assuming that what a word really means needs to be what it once meant (Wilson 126).

Popper describes the difference between essentialist and non-essentialist beliefs as “right-to-left” and “left-to-right” definitions (*Open Society* 19-20). The definition “a kitten is a young cat” would in his terms be a “left-to-right” and thus an essentialist or Aristotelian definition because “young cat” is seen as the essence of the word “kitten” (Popper, *Open Society* 19-20). A “right-to-left”, non-essentialist perception of a definition, however, regards the right part only as one possible way of explaining the left item: Instead of saying “young cat” one can, for simplicity’s sake, just use “kitten”. Saying that “a kitten is a young fluffy animal” would thus be an equally correct definition from a non-essentialist point of view.

In line with Popper’s “right-to-left” perception of definitions (*Open Society* 19-20), it is a common fact that hardly anything is defined by all people identically. For example, if you ask twenty people to define the term ‘house’ it is very likely that they will all come up with slightly different definitions, either emphasizing different qualities, thinking of different variations (bungalow, villa, etc.) or assigning different sets of emotional values to the term. Therefore, a non-essentialist perception of language is far more reasonable: the meaning of words clearly alters over time and also highly depends on the speaker and the context. Genres in particular are subject to constant change as they are exposed to transformation processes like “combination” or “change of function” (Fowler 170-174). According to Fowler, the first process describes the “combination of repertoires” of different

genres and the second one illustrates that even slight changes, for example “varying the speaker or addressee”, can alter a genre (Fowler 170-174). In regard to the *bildungsroman*, these transformation processes can for example be illustrated when looking at the recent tendency to merge *bildungsroman* characteristics with young adult fiction features (Sharma, Levy, Sullivan etc.). In addition to the fact that genres clearly change in many different ways over time, authors also intentionally overstep genre boundaries and introduce new ideas in order to surprise readers and enlarge their audience (Iversen 41). Thus, it is impossible to break down genres to their ‘one’ ‘true’ essence. They are fluid and ambiguous in nature.

Anniken Telnes Iversen holds a non-essentialist opinion, arguing that “it is a fact that the word ‘bildungsroman’ is used in many different ways in several languages, and to insist on a particular old meaning is to fight a battle that has already been lost” (37). According to her, “all that can be done is to say how one wants to use the word in a particular context and for a particular reason” (Iversen 37). She agrees with Ludwig Wittgenstein’s theory of “family resemblances”, which suggests that for example “games” are not a category due to their common essence (for it is probably impossible to find a common essence for all games from chess to hide and seek) but due to their resemblance in various aspects (Wittgenstein 66-67). Thus, games are related to one another and have a huge variety of qualities that ‘run in the family’ but no member will incorporate all these characteristics (Wittgenstein 67). In the table below, this non-essentialist or polythetic perception of language, which also coincides with the idea of “family resemblance” (Wittgenstein 66), will be illustrated:

Properties	BR 1	BR 2	BR 3	BR 4
A	X	X	X	X
B	X	X		X
C	X			
D	X	X	X	
E	X	X		X
F			X	X

Table 2: Polythetic, Non-Essentialist Classification of *Bildungsromans*

Table 2 assumes that the properties A to F are found in most texts classified as *bildungsromans* (BR). Each *bildungsroman* has at least three of these qualities but no single feature is obligatory. Features A to F can, for example, be identified through close scrutiny of what are perceived as prototypical *bildungsromans* by a majority of readers and critics (e.g. *Wilhelm Meister*, *Great Expectations*, *Huckleberry Finn* etc.). Based on this idea, Iversen developed the “Bildungsroman Index (BRI)” (51), which is meant to be an ubiquitous tool for the classification and discussion of *bildungsromans*.

For centuries, critics have struggled to grasp the essence of the *bildungsroman* to no avail. Essentialist definitions are highly restrictive and thus incapable of grasping the full scope and numerous facets of the genre of the *bildungsroman*. Thus it seems high time to question essentialism in general and instead try to work with polythetic classes, which share a large number of non-obligatory characteristics. Therefore, in order to analyze Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy as contemporary *bildungsroman*, I will not try to apply one ‘full-fledged’ definition of this genre to Collins’ series or to develop my own essential features of the *bildungsroman* genre. Instead, I will aim to take on a broader, non-essentialist perspective and make use of Iversen’s BRI, which seems to be the most reasonable method of investigating a text in regard to it being a *bildungsroman* at present. This index is very comprehensive including 96 frequent *bildungsroman* features, which have been collected from a huge variety of common definitions as well as from the close investigation of four prototypical *bildungsromans*. None of these features is however compulsory. Instead, a degree to which a text belongs to the genre of the *bildungsroman* can thus be determined. The BRI will be explained more thoroughly in the following chapter.



### c. The Bildungsroman Index (BRI) by Anniken Telnes Iversen

The most comprehensive and adequate way of investigating Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* series as belonging to the genre of the contemporary *bildungsroman* seems to be through the application of Anniken T. Iversen's "Bildungsroman Index" (51). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a basic insight into the structure and scoring system of the BRI.

Iversen herself states that "The Bildungsroman Index (BRI) represents an attempt not so much to define the bildungsroman as to pinpoint and describe typical features of novels that are generally recognized as bildungsromans" (51). However, none of these features is obligatory (Iversen 55). Thus, as outlined in the previous chapter, Iversen adopts on a non-essentialist perspective in the genre dispute and regards the *bildungsroman* as being multinational and not restricted to a specific period of time (19). By means of assembling and summarizing a large variety of more or less 'typical' *bildungsroman* features she has designed a list that consists of 96 characteristics and is divided into nine larger categories, namely: narrative perspective and mode; characterization: protagonist; characterization: secondary characters and their functions; topical story elements: affecting protagonist; topical story elements: affecting secondary characters; setting; plot and structure; generic signals and, last but not least, theme, subject matter and motifs (Iversen 56-64). Each of the 96 *bildungsroman* features also comes with a brief explanation in order to make the application of the BRI as easy and straightforward as possible (Iversen 56-67). Only the last section, which centers on the psychological and moral development of the protagonist, slightly differs from the other categories. In section nine, the protagonist's identity development needs to be analyzed with the aid of the most prominent approaches of developmental psychology, namely Erik Erikson's psychological stages and James Marcia's further development of Erikson's conception. I will, however, not go into further detail here but only explain each feature more extensively when discussing it in Chapter 4.

Generally, Iversen selected the BRI characteristics firstly, through the integration of “features found in actual novels”, secondly, by merging various critics’ opinions on the genre of the *bildungsroman* and thirdly, by means of “generic markers” (53). Thus, on the one hand she investigated four “prototypical examples”, namely: “Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, and Dickens’s *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*” and pinpointed typical features in each of them (Iversen 53). Iversen explains her selection of texts as follows: *Wilhelm Meister* is usually seen as the prototype of this genre (Millard 2) and highly influenced *bildungsromans* of the nineteenth century both in Germany as well as in countries like England or France (Iversen 53). The novels *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* were especially influential regarding the English tradition of the genre (Iversen 53). Moreover, as they are part of today’s literary canon and therefore frequently read in schools and universities they also have a strong impact on contemporary English-language *bildungsromans* not only in Great Britain but also in the US or Canada (Iversen 19). By means of drawing upon three English novels out of four ‘typical’ *bildungsromans*, Iversen ensures that the BRI is also specifically applicable to English-language texts. In line with this, she also incorporated various national definitions of the genre, some of which I outlined in Chapter 3a (Buckley, Sammons, Jost etc.). On the other hand, Iversen also includes “generic signals” (Fowler 88) into the BRI, “whose main purpose is to make readers identify a work as belonging to a particular genre” (Iversen 54). Alastair Fowler explains that generic signals “have a strategic role in guiding the reader. They help to establish, as soon as possible, an appropriate mental ‘set’ that allows the work’s generic codes to be read” (88). In regard to the BRI, Iversen expounds that the title of a text (which often includes the name of the protagonist) as well as an orphaned protagonist serve as generic markers of the *bildungsroman* (Iversen 54).

As regards scoring, most *bildungsroman* features can receive only one point, however, some can also score two or three points if they are of particular significance. Iversen points out that the latter either are: “1) very pervasive, and found in virtually all *bildungsromans*, or 2) emphasized by a large number of critics, or 3) central for the reader’s recognition of the work’s generic identity” (54). Moreover, some features are also mutually exclusive (e.g. having no father

and being an orphan). In total, novels can thus score up to 148 points on the BRI (Iversen 67). However, the BRI is no means of classifying text categorically as either being a *bildungsroman* or not. Instead, the final score will indicate the novel's place on a continuum reaching from what is a clear-cut *bildungsroman* to what is clearly no *bildungsroman* (Iversen 51). According to Iversen, the final result "gives an indication of the extent to which a novel resembles classical bildungsromans" (51). Maybe even more importantly though, after having analyzed a particular text by application of the BRI, one can look more thoroughly into the specific characteristics, which were either absent or present, and thus discover new angles from which to discuss a literary work.

Therefore, the application of the BRI to Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy constitutes an auspicious starting point for further investigation and innovative usage of the series, for instance, in a classroom situation. It will also open up the possibility of comparing the trilogy to other *bildungsromans*, which have already been analyzed with the help of the BRI (e.g. Paul Auster's *Moon Palace* or Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*). Hence, the next chapter will center on the analysis of Suzanne Collins' trilogy with the help of Iversen's BRI.

#### **4. The Hunger Games Trilogy: A Contemporary Bildungsroman?**

Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy certainly contains a number of features, which are usually attributed to *bildungsromans* (Henthorne, Nayar, Layfield, etc.). However, an extensive analysis of all three volumes of the saga in regard to its *bildungsroman* characteristics has not yet been conducted. Therefore, this chapter is dedicated to filling this gap by means of discussing Collins' series on the basis of Iversen's "Bildungsroman Index" (51). New ground for further discussion will be opened up by determining in which aspects and to what extent the trilogy is a contemporary *bildungsroman*. In the following nine subsections, which are based on Iversen's BRI, Collins' *The Hunger Games* will be analyzed in regard to: narrative perspective and mode; characterization: Katniss Everdeen; characterization: secondary characters and their functions; topical story elements: affecting Katniss Everdeen; topical story elements: affecting secondary characters; setting; plot and structure; generic signals and, finally, theme, subject matter and motifs. Each of these subsections centers on a number of *bildungsroman* features, which I will assign points to as explained in Chapter 3c. All the results will be given in tables, which are taken from Iversen's model of the BRI (54-65), at the beginning of each subsection.

##### **a. Narrative Perspective and Mode**

The table below summarizes the analysis of Section 1 "Narrative perspective and mode" of the BRI (Iversen 56) for Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*:

Features	Section 1: Narrative Perspective and Mode	Points
1	Focalization shifts between narrator and protagonist (whether 1st or 3rd person)	0/3
2	Access to protagonist's consciousness	2/2
3	Retrospective narrative (1st person or omniscient)	0/2
4	Narrator understands more than young protagonist	0/2
5	Ironical attitude to young protagonist	1/2
6	Plot combines action and reflection	2/2
7	Verisimilar novel: Portrays existing world realistically	1/2
	<b>Section total</b>	<b>6/15</b>

Table 3: Narrative Perspective and Mode (Iversen 56)

Generally, it can be seen that for this segment of the BRI the section total for Collins' trilogy is six out of fifteen possible points. This score is not very high considering that all the works usually perceived as prototypical *bildungsromans* (i.e. *Wilhelm Meister*, *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*), which Iversen investigated, receive the full score of fifteen (83). In the following paragraphs, each feature will now be discussed in detail in order to illustrate this result.

Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy is written from the perspective of a first person narrator, namely, the protagonist Katniss Everdeen. Katniss is a sixteen-year old girl who lives in District 12 of a dystopian future society together with her little sister Prim and their mother. Katniss is the sole narrator throughout all three volumes and the reader only perceives the story through her eyes. Thus, there are no "focalization shifts between narrator and protagonist" (56), which is Feature 1 of Iversen's BRI. Moreover, as the entire story is recounted in the present tense, the narrator cannot apprehend more than the young protagonist (i.e. Feature 4). However, a handful of instances in the narration seem quite ambiguous as certain events that will only occur at a later point are being foreshadowed: "Although I do not yet understand Cinna's design, it's a reminder the Games are not quite finished" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 431-432,

emphasis added) or “And right now, the most dangerous part of the Hunger Games is about to begin” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 436). These passages can either simply be seen as Katniss’ thoughts of what will probably happen in the future or as foreshadowing by the narrator, Katniss, who is one step ahead of the reader. In line with this, it seems highly interesting that most of the secondary characters (Haymitch, Peeta, Gale, etc.) usually have greater knowledge and understanding of the situation than Katniss, a fact that she is in some instances aware of: “It’s an awful lot to take in, this elaborate plan in which I was a piece, just as I was meant to be a piece in the Hunger Games. Used without consent, without knowledge” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 432). Generally, only the secondary characters know more than Katniss and these potential instances of foreshadowing are highly ambiguous and very rare. Therefore, Feature 4 will also receive zero points. Likewise, Feature 3, retrospective narrative, which means that the narrator is “situated outside the story, and thus also after the events” (Iversen<sup>56</sup>), obtains zero points for obvious reasons: *The Hunger Games* series is recounted exclusively from Katniss’ point of view in present tense and all events thus unfold before the reader’s eyes. Accordingly, the protagonist is not situated outside or after the story.

However, as all parts of the trilogy are written in the present tense, the reader has immediate and constant access to the protagonist’s consciousness: “Suddenly I am furious, that with my life on the line, they don’t even have the decency to pay attention to me” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 124). Therefore, although, Katniss’ thoughts are not constantly centered on, Feature 2 receives the full score of two points as the reader clearly has access to the protagonist’s mind. Regarding Feature 5, “ironic attitude to young protagonist” (Iversen 56), Katniss herself is not self-ironic but her mentor Haymitch keeps making ironic utterances about her: “What is it, sweetheart? More boy trouble?” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 408). Thus, an ironic attitude towards the protagonist is used to convey Katniss naïveté. Therefore, Feature 5 receives one point.

Feature 6, “plot combines action and reflection” (Iversen 56) is highly prominent throughout Collins’ series. Firstly, there is constant alternation between moments of pure action and moments of thought and reflection:

My head snaps from side to side as I examine the pack, taking in the various sizes and colours [of mutated animals]. The small one with the red coat and amber eyes...Foxface! [...]

"It's them. It's all of them. The others. Rue and Foxface and...all of the other tributes", I chock out. [...]

Their eyes are the least of my worries. What about their brains? Have they been given any of the real tributes' memories? [...]

Before I can get this out the mutts begin a new assault on the horn.  
(Collins, *The Hunger Games* 405-406)

Collins even visualizes Katniss' thinking pauses by making use of ellipses. Secondly, what is even more striking is the function of the two male main characters, Gale and Peeta, who find themselves in a love-triangle with Katniss: Peeta seems to stand for the concept of reflection, while Gale represents action as his name suggests as well. These tendencies become more and more prominent towards the end of the series: For example, Peeta tells Katniss in the novel *Mockingjay*:

"Don't be a fool, Katniss. Think for yourself. They've turned you into a weapon that could be instrumental in the destruction of humanity. If you've got any real influence, use it to put the brakes on this thing. Use it to stop the war before it's too late. Ask yourself, do you really trust the people you're working with? Do you really know what's going on?" (Collins 127)

In contrast to that, Gale declares: "Katniss, I'm not arguing. If I could hit a button and kill every living soul working for the Capitol, I would do it. Without hesitation" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 35). Katniss sways between these two poles, indecisive whom to choose and repeatedly veering from one extreme to the other. For instance, after Gale has been tortured and severely wounded in the first volume of the trilogy, Katniss takes his side. She feels the hatred and anger towards the Capitol and decides that it is high time to take action against their oppressors: "I have chosen Gale and the rebellion, and a future with Peeta is the Capitol's design, not mine" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 137). Soon thereafter, however, she reconsiders her former very intuitive decision: "*An uprising*, I think. *What an idiot I am*" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 147) as she discovers numerous flaws in her plan. At the very end of the series, Katniss chooses Peeta over Gale, because she cannot forgive Gale his part in the death of her younger sister but, more importantly, because "What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 436). Thus, she symbolically

chooses reflection over immediate action without deeper thought. Arguably, this decision also constitutes the telos of Katniss' *Bildungsprozess*. All in all, Feature 6 certainly receives full score.

Feature 7, "verisimilar novel" means that the "plot should be seen as possible and plausible" and "the world portrayed is the one we know, rather than the made-up worlds of fairy-tale, fantasy or science fiction, and characters behave like people in the real world" (Iversen 56). This is only partly true for Collins' *The Hunger Games* series, as the story is set in a dystopian future world, which is not 'our world', but based on ancient Roman ideas (gladiators, etc.) (Henthorne 29) and incorporates futuristic machines such as so-called "Hovercrafts" or man-built high-tech arenas. Still, the plot seems plausible enough, as all characters act in a comprehensible way. Accordingly, realism is certainly an important factor as well because the portrayal of violence and psychological deterioration due to the cruelties of war are not undermined by any light-hearted love story but constitute a central theme of the trilogy (Henthorne 63). Therefore, I will assign one out of two possible points to Feature 7.

In conclusion, Features 1, 3 and 4 score zero points and only Features 2 and 6 receive the full score. The most auspicious approach that was opened up in this section is probably Collins' trilogy in regard to the constant alternation between action and reflection. This issue would certainly lend itself for further discussion, also in relation to the genre of the *bildungsroman*. Generally, however, with a section total of six points it can be said that Collins' trilogy is, in regard to narrative perspective and mode, not a typical *bildungsroman*. However, for example Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* also only received eight points for this section in Iversen's analysis of this novel although it is usually referred to as a prototypical American *bildungsroman*. Like Twain's novel, *The Hunger Games* does not introduce any narrative distance, which is very common for the genre of the *bildungsroman* (Iversen 150). As Katniss is the sole narrator, who recounts all events in present tense there is no retrospective narration, no greater understanding on the narrator's part than on that of the young protagonist and there are no focalization shifts as well as very little irony.



## b. Characterization: Katniss Everdeen

Section 2 focuses on the characterization of the female protagonist, Katniss Everdeen. Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* receives nine out of fifteen possible points for this segment. Therefore, this section's total is a little higher than that of Section 1. Table 4 below summarizes the results of Section 2:

Features	Section 2: Characterization: Katniss Everdeen	Points
8	One main character	1/1
9	Protagonist is a round character, not flat	1/1
10	Protagonist is dynamic; changes in the course of the novel	2/2
11	Protagonist is an only child	0/1
12	Protagonist is an orphan or	–
13	Fatherless or	or 2/2
14	Parent dies in the course of the novel	–
15	Only one or no (known) living relatives	0/1
16	Of middle-class background	0/2
17	Ordinary (not particularly talented or untalented)	0/2
18	Protagonist is basically good and willing to help others	2/2
19	Male protagonist: Relatively passive, uncertain about goals, leaves decisions to chance or other people	–
20	Female protagonist: Relatively active, has strong goals, makes decisions easily	or 1/1
	<b>Section total</b>	<b>9/15</b>

Table 4: Characterization: Katniss Everdeen (Iversen 57)

As outlined in the preceding section, the entire story is recounted by Katniss herself, who is both the main character and the narrator and is thus an autodiegetic narrator (Genette 245). Therefore, Feature 8, “one main character” (Iversen 57), scores one point. Feature 9 and 10, “protagonist is a round character, not flat” and “protagonist is dynamic; changes in the course of the novel”, center on whether the main character is “multi-faceted” or “one-dimensional and stereotypical” (Iversen 57). For Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*, these two features also receive the maximal amount of points. Katniss is clearly a complex character, who is engaged in self-reflection at various points

throughout the plot and also changes and develops over time. For example, while her sole goal in the first novel is to survive for the sake of her family, in the later novels Katniss strives hard to bring about social change. When Katniss has to leave home in order to participate in the Hunger Games in part one of the trilogy, she promises her little sister to survive: “[I will] Really, really try. I swear it,’ I say. And I know, because of Prim, I’ll have to” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 44). In the second volume, *Catching Fire*, she then realizes who the real enemy is, namely, not the fellow tributes she has to fight in the arena but the Capitol: “I have always known who the enemy is. Who starves and tortures and kills us in the arena. Who will soon kill everyone I love” (Collins 424-425). Finally, in the third novel of the series Katniss chooses the greater good over her own, her family’s and Peeta’s survival when she decides to actively participate in the rebellion by performing as the symbol of the revolution: “*What am I going to do?* I take a deep breath. My arms rise slightly – as if recalling the black-and-white wings Cinna gave me – then come to rest at my side. ‘I’m going to be the Mockingjay’” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 35). Thus, Katniss clearly changes over the course of the plot. Moreover, she is the sole provider for her little sister and mother, who was not able to cope with her husband’s early and violent death in the mines and thus could no longer take care of her children: “My mother laughs, and I think about how there was no going back after I took over caring for the family when I was eleven. How I will always have to protect her” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 35). Katniss had to start hunting in the woods to feed her mother and sister. At school she likes to keep to herself and has very few friends: “She [Madge] just keeps to herself . Like me. Since neither of us really has a group of friends, we seem to end up together a lot at school” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 14). Thus, Katniss is certainly neither a stereotypical nor a flat character but multi-faceted and constantly changing both physically (from wearing her father’s plain old hunting jacket and hiding her braid to wearing various expensive, very feminine, dresses or the Mockingjay costume) and psychologically.

However, as Katniss is not an only child (she has a sister), has more than one living relative (her mother and sister), and has no middle class background but lives in the poorest district, Features 11, 15 and 16 score zero points. In line with this, Feature 17, “ordinary (not particularly talented or untalented)” describes that

“the subjects of the bildungsromans are usually interesting for their representative ordinariness, not because they stand out in any way” (Iversen 57). This feature does also not really apply to Katniss. From the beginning on, she is depicted as highly talented at handling bow and arrow and also as an extraordinarily good climber: “Without thinking, I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Gamemakers’ 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” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 124) or “Gale always says I remind him of a squirrel the way I can scurry up even the slender limbs [of the trees]” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 220) . Moreover, she becomes the symbol of the revolution, the Mockingjay, who is the driving force for the rebellion and whose fame spreads over all districts. In addition, Katniss even brings on yet another change to her nation’s future at the very end of the saga when she kills the rebel president, Coin, for being an equally despotic and cruel leader as her predecessor: “Nothing has changed. Nothing will ever change now. [...] The point of my arrow shifts upward. I release the string. And President Coin collapses over the side of the balcony and plunges to the ground. Dead” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 417-418). For all the above reasons, Katniss is certainly not an ordinary character, but stands out from the crowd. Thus, Feature 17 receives zero points.

Furthermore, Features 12, 13 and 14 are mutually exclusive. As Katniss is fatherless *The Hunger Games* thus receives two points for Feature 13: “My father knew [how to find food in the woods] and he taught me some ways before he was blown to bits in the mine explosion. There was nothing left of him to bury (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 6). In addition, Feature 18, “protagonist is basically good and willing to help others” (Iversen 57), is clearly true for Katniss. As mentioned earlier, she became the sole provider for her family at age eleven and throughout the plot always tries to protect her little sister. When Prim is chosen to participate in the Hunger Games, Katniss volunteers to take her place: “‘Prim!’ The strangled cry comes from my throat [...]. I reach her just as she is about to mount the steps. With one sweep of my arm, I push her behind me. ‘I volunteer!’ I gasp” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 26). Later, Katniss makes it her goal to save Peeta: “But this time, I trap my terror, push it down, and stand by his side. This time my survival isn’t the goal. Peeta’s is” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 334). Moreover, Katniss

despises the killing of innocent people. For example, when Gale suggests to trap the enemy troops in a mountain and suffocate them, Katniss opposes him: "I can't help it. I can't condemn someone to the death he's suggesting. 'Gale,' I say, taking his arm and trying to speak in reasonable tone (Collins, *Mockingjay* 229). Similarly, her decision to act as the Mockingjay is selfless and for the greater good. Thus, Katniss is clearly a morally good person, who frequently tries to help others, placing other people's survival over her own. Therefore, Feature 18 receives the full score as well.

Feature 20, which says that the female protagonist is "relatively active, has strong goals, makes decisions easily", is defined by Iversen as referring to the fact that "protagonists tend not to be typical representatives of their sex" (57). Especially at the beginning of the series, Katniss performs masculinity as she takes over the role of the provider, thus becoming "the man of the family" (Henthorne 44). She even wears her father's hunting jacket and hides her long hair: "I pull on trousers, a shirt, tuck my long dark braid up into a cap" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 4). Thus, she symbolically hides her femininity. Katniss also passes from passivity to activity, when, instead of letting her family starve to death, she decides to take over her father's role (Henthorne 44). In the course of the plot, she becomes more and more active as she gradually starts to make her own plans instead of only being a pawn in other people's games. The climax of her agency is reached when she kills the rebel president, Coin, at the very end of the last novel, thus changing everyone's future. Moreover, Katniss usually makes her decisions spontaneously, for instance when she decides to kill Coin, or to destroy the electric field that surrounds the second arena as an act of rebellion or to eat poisonous berries in order to trick the Gamemakers in the first novel: "'Trust me,' I whisper. He holds my gaze for a long moment, then lets me go. I loosen the top of the pouch and pour a few spoonfuls of berries into his palm. Then I fill my own" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 418). Katniss usually does not reflect on her actions beforehand (especially in the first two novels of the trilogy) but mostly acts on gut feeling. All in all, Katniss is clearly a very active protagonist, who has strong and idealistic goals, like saving other people's lives or initiating a revolution, and who makes decisions easily. Thus, Feature 20 receives the full score as well.

In conclusion, while Katniss' family constellation and social rank are not typical of the *bildungsroman* (as she is from a lower social class rather than middle class, not an only child and has more than one living relative), regarding her character traits, she is very prototypical of this genre. Katniss is a round and dynamic protagonist, changes over time, she is morally good and very active and clearly pursues strong goals.

### **c. Characterization: Secondary Characters and their Functions**

Section 3 centers on the characterization of the secondary characters. As opposed to the preceding two sections, Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy obtains the full score here and thus is in this respect highly prototypical of the genre of the *bildungsroman*. In regard to this section, Iversen outlines that especially the first two characteristics are intended to relate "to the question of individualism in the genre" (95). Individualism is usually seen as a central concept in the genre of the *bildungsroman* as the tension between individual and society is depicted (Bolaki 11). Iversen argues that "the genre in fact creates its own peculiar blend of individualism and communalism, emphasizing the need to create one's own identity, but that this can only be done in close interaction with others" (19). This is also the case for Collins' series as can be seen in the table below (i.e. Feature 21 and 22 receive the full score):

Features	Section 3: Characterization: Secondary Characters and their Functions	Points
21	Other character(s) essential in making protagonist change and grow	3/3
22	Other characters more important in their relationship to protagonist than in their own right	1/1
23	Important educator(s)	3/3
24	Important companion(s)	2/2
25	Important lover(s)	3/3
26	Other characters' love relationships as exemplary or as contrast to protagonist' s	1/1
27	Other characters' marriage as exemplary or as contrast	1/1
28	At least one important character from lower, middle, and higher social classes	3/3
	<b>Section total</b>	<b>17/17</b>

Table 5: Characterization: Secondary Characters and their Functions (Iversen 58)

Feature 21 receives all three possible points as a number of characters, most of them male, are essential in making Katniss grow and change. Firstly, there is her mentor Haymitch, a former victor of the Hunger Games. He is always one step ahead of Katniss, passing on advice on how to act. For example, after Katniss outwitted the Gamemakers by threatening to eat poisonous berries and thereby ends the Hunger Games with two victors instead of one, Haymitch explains to Katniss that: “Your only defence can be you were so madly in love you weren’t responsible for your actions” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 433). Left to her own devices, Katniss did not realize that she ridiculed the Capitol through her actions in the arena and now poses a threat to President Snow’s power. Secondly, as explained in Section 1, both Peeta and Gale are also essential in Katniss’ mental growth and development as they portray two antipodes: reflection and action. Peeta seems to be more advanced than Katniss in what one could call his *Bildungsprozess* and always tries to inspire deeper reflection on Katniss’ part:

“Only I keep wishing I could think of a way to...to show the Capitol they don’t own me. That I’m more than just a piece in their Games,” says Peeta. “But you are not,” I say. “None of us are. That’s how the Games work.” “OK, but within that framework, there’s still you, There’s still me,” he insists. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 172)

This scene takes place at the beginning of the very first volume when Katniss has not yet acquired any mental depth, nor really questioned the society she lives in. However, in the last novel of the series, she then realizes what Peeta meant that night: “[...] It just goes around and around, and who wins? Not us. Not the districts. Always the Capitol. But I’m tired of being a piece in their Games.’ [...] He understood it all before we’d even set foot in the arena” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 241). Peeta initiated this reflection process and thus furthered her development and psychological change. Gale, on the other hand, is arguably less advanced in his moral development than both Peeta and later also Katniss. He usually acts on instinct rather than thought and assigns little value to moral questions. This becomes clear, for instance, when he helps design deadly traps for the opposing troops:

At some point, Gale and Beetee [...] focused on more human impulses. Like compassion. A bomb explodes. Time is allowed for people to rush to the aid of the wounded. Then a second, more powerful bomb kills them as well.

“That seems to be crossing some kind of line,” I say. “So anything goes?” They both stare at me – Beetee with doubt, Gale with hostility. “I guess there isn’t a rulebook for what might be unacceptable to do to another human being.”

“Sure there is. Beetee and I have been following the same rule book President Snow used when he hijacked [brainwashed] Peeta,” says Gale. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 208)

In this passage, it becomes obvious that for Gale, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” is the motto he lives by. Unlike Katniss, he devotes no second thought to the immorality or to the cruelty of such a trap since the enemies use similar strategies. Katniss’ *Bildung* is influenced by both Gale and Peeta, but while she is closer to Gale’s state of thoughtless action at the beginning of her journey, she has a strong sense of morality from the beginning and gradually acquires Peeta’s ability to question and reflect both her own and other people’s decisions and attitudes. For example, she takes the side of her stylists, who were responsible for her outward appearance during the Hunger Games, when they are held prisoners in the rebel stronghold:

[...] Gale's voice interrupts me. "Katniss, why do you care so much about your prep team?"

I open my eyes to see if he is joking [...] "Why shouldn't I?"

"Hm. Let's see. Because they've spent the last year prettying you up for slaughter?" he suggests.

"It's more complicated than that [...] But they don't view it the way we do," I say. "They're raised on it and –". (Collins, *Mockingjay* 60-61)

This scene shows Gale's limited understanding of Katniss' empathic skills and the effect this has on her: Katniss questions her own commitment and decisions, as she tries to comprehend both her own emotional attachment as well as her stylists' attitudes.

Thirdly, Katniss' stylist Cinna also plays a central role in her development. Cinna is very sensitive and functions as both an advisor and a supporter to Katniss. He, too, is crucial in guiding Katniss on her path towards maturity because he encourages her to be herself: "'I just can't be one of those people he [Haymitch] wants me to be,' I say. Cinna thinks about this a moment. 'Why don't you just be yourself? [...] No one can help but admire your spirit.' My spirit. This is a new thought. I'm not sure exactly what it means, but it suggests I'm a fighter" (Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 147). Thus, he triggers Katniss' contemplation of who she really is. Lastly, even her younger sister Prim, at the very end of the series, takes on the role of an advisor for Katniss: "Prim thinks this over. 'Katniss, I don't think you understand how important you are to the cause. Important people usually get what they want. If you want to keep Peeta safe from the rebels, you can'" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 38). Thus, Prim too, helps Katniss to change and grow.

All the characters named above are also more important in their relationship to Katniss than in their own right (Feature 22). It is reasonable to argue, that the fact that Collins' trilogy has a first person narrator only, namely Katniss, also strongly influences this issue. The reader only perceives all other characters through Katniss' eyes and Katniss is primarily engaged in her own quest for identity. Therefore, there is, for example, very little information offered about Haymitch, apart from his relationship to Katniss as her mentor: He won the Hunger Games at age sixteen and, like Katniss, outwitted the Capitol as he used the force field



surrounding the arena to kill his last opponent. For this act of public disobedience, his entire family was executed and ever since Haymitch has tried to drown his sorrow in alcohol. All this information is only gradually revealed to the reader. Primarily, Haymitch is described as being quite similar to Katniss: “Haymitch and I don’t get along well in person, but maybe Peeta is right about us being alike, because he seems able to communicate with me by the timing of his gifts” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 372). In line with this, Cinna, Gale, Prim and Peeta are also only characterized through their relationship to Katniss. All of them believe in her and love her in some way. Om could even argue that there is no single character, who does not serve the purpose of encouraging Katniss’ change and growth. Even ruthless President Snow and President Coin are essential for her development. The former even actively guides Katniss towards questioning the rebel regime: “But I wasn’t watching Coin. I was watching you, Mockingjay. And you were watching me. I’m afraid we have both been played for fools” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 403).

Regarding Feature 23 (i.e. important educators), which is very closely linked to Feature 21 (Iversen 58), Haymitch and Peeta are to be named as the most central educators for Katniss. As outlined already, both of these characters guide Katniss and further her capacity of (self-)reflection and ultimately thus her identity development or *Bildung*. Moreover, Feature 25 (i.e. important lovers) is also clearly present in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* series: There is a highly symbolic love triangle between Katniss, Gale and Peeta, which is also crucial in respect to the protagonist’s *Bildung* and has already been discussed in Section 1.

As regards Feature 24, “important companion(s)” (Iversen 58), Katniss’ best friend Gale as well as Finnick and Rue, who were both also tributes in the Hunger Games, need to be mentioned. As outlined earlier in this section, Gale does not really serve the purpose of an educator or *Vorbild* as he is rather simpleminded. Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that he symbolically stands for Katniss’ earlier stage of development from which she gradually advances and, thus – step by step – grows apart from Gale. However, Gale is an important companion for Katniss and provides emotional support throughout all three novels. Especially at the beginning of the story, he can be seen as a ‘refuge’ for Katniss: “In the wood

waits the only person with whom I can be myself. Gale. I can feel the muscles in my face relaxing [...]" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 7). Moreover, Rue, a little girl who becomes Katniss' ally during the first Hunger Games, also is a noteworthy companion for the female protagonist. Rue's company makes the cruelties of the fights in the arena more bearable: "My wounds healing, my mind still a bit foggy from the venom, and the warmth of Rue at my side, her head cradled on my shoulder, have given me a sense of security. I realize, for the first time, how very lonely I've been in the arena" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 252). Finnick, who is also a former victor of the Hunger Games and Katniss' ally in the second arena, is also an important companion for her. He only appears in the second book of the trilogy but quickly earns Katniss' trust and helps her to overcome difficult times: "When the restless, wiggling majority has settled into sleep, I carefully extricate myself from my blanket and tiptoe through the cavern until I find Finnick, feeling for some unspecified reason that he will understand" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 173).

Finnick and his relationship to Annie are also crucial for Features 26 and 27 (i.e. other characters' love relationships and marriage as exemplary or as contrast to protagonist's). Finnick and Annie are both victors of earlier Hunger Games and have both suffered from psychological and physical abuse in the arena and – in Finnick's case – also afterwards by the Capitol. Due to their traumas, they are both mentally unstable. However, after their wedding, a ceremony that is staged by the rebel president Coin for the purpose of lifting the spirit before the final attack on the Capitol, they are on the road to recovery. This marriage as well as their whole love relationship can be seen as exemplary for Katniss and Peeta. There are a number of similarities that call for attention: Both couples had to endure the cruelties of the Hunger Games and survived, though traumatized for life. They all thrive from their love relationships, their respective partners providing support and comfort: "Peeta says it will be OK. We have each other" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 438). Similarly, Finnick loves Annie even though most people think of her as insane: "*So that's who Finnick loves, I think. Not his string of fancy lovers in the Capitol. But a poor, mad girl back home*" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 390). This unconditional love is also exemplary for Katniss when she tries to cope with Peeta's capture by the Capitol: "Despite serious reservations, I had to

forgive Finnick for his role in the conspiracy that landed me here. He, at least, has some idea of what I'm going through" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 13). Even though Peeta – after being brainwashed by the Capitol – hates her and even attempts to kill her, she still tries to hold on to their former relationship: "I wish I could read what's going on in his mind, that I could go in and untangle the mess of lies (Collins, *Mockingjay* 339). Moreover, like Finnick and Annie, Peeta and Katniss also have children at the end of the saga. Thus, even though the reader is left in the dark as to whether Katniss and Peeta, too, got married, they certainly have a family of their own and live together. A scene in the epilogue paints an idyllic picture: "They play in the Meadow. The dancing girl with the dark hair and blue eyes. The boy with blond curls and grey eyes [...] It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 437). Generally, it seems clear that it is the love relationship that gives both couples strength and transforms them:

It's something to see Finnick's transformation since his marriage. His earlier incarnations – the decadent Capitol heartthrob I met before the Quell [a special version of the Hunger Games], the enigmatic ally in the arena, the broken young man who tried to help me hold it together – these have been replaced by someone who radiates life. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 268)

Like Katniss, Finnick had to play multiple roles in order to survive and to both of them their respective partner is a refuge and source of support. Thus, Finnick is very similar to Katniss in terms of their horrible experiences and their love relationship to another (mentally unstable) former tribute of the Hunger Games and he thus clearly functions as a role model for Katniss. All in all, Annie's and Finnick's marriage and family formation are certainly exemplary for the protagonist, even though it remains unclear whether Peeta and Katniss actually marry.

Likewise, Feature 28 (i.e. at least one important character from lower, middle, and higher social classes) is also present in Collins' trilogy. There are numerous characters from various classes displayed: All inhabitants of the upper districts are members of the privileged upper classes. Katniss is from District 12, which is inhabited by the lowest class. However, there are also so-called Avox people that

is, rebels who were punished for treason by cutting out their tongues. They serve the Capitol as slaves and can be considered an even lower class than Katniss’.

All in all, Section 3, the characterization of the secondary characters as well as their functions (Iversen 58), receives the maximal score of seventeen points. It can be summarized that, concerning secondary characters and the role they play in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy, the series is highly prototypical of the genre of the *bildungsroman*. There are a number of essential educators, companions, role models (Finnick and Annie) and even two lovers, all of whom are in some way crucial for Katniss’ development and *Bildung*, but who are assigned little importance in their own right. Thus, the concept of individualism also plays a central role in Collins’ series.

#### **d. Topical Story Elements: Affecting Katniss**

Section 4 focuses on topical story elements that affect the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen. The table below summarizes the results of Features 29 to 50. It can be seen that Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy receives a high section total for this part, namely twenty-one out of twenty-six possible points. Thus, in regard to topical story elements that affect Katniss, this series has much in common with texts that are assigned to the genre of the *bildungsroman*.

Features	Section 4: Topical Story Elements: Affecting Katniss	Points
29	Experiences poverty	2/2
30	Experiences hunger	2/2
31	Goes to boarding school	0/1
32	Moves to big city or	–
33	Moves away from home or	–
34	Leaves home to go on journey	or 2/2
35	Introduced to new social groups, classes, and professions	1/1
36	Learns skills	1/1
37	Tries on particular role or roles	1/1
38	Falls in love	2/2
39	Has money problems	1/1
40	Is wounded or sick	1/1
41	Nursed back to health by parent substitute or loyal friend	1/1
42	Nurses other sick person	1/1
43	Adopted parent dies	0/2
44	Death of close relative or friend	2/2
45	Repents immoral or insensitive action	1/1
46	Rescued from emergency or cliffhanger	1/1
47	Gets inheritance at the end or	0/2
48	Loses prospective inheritance at the end	–
49	Gets engaged or married	1/1
50	Has children	1/1
	<b>Section Total</b>	21/26

Table 6: Topical Story Elements: Affecting Katniss (Iversen 59)

In this section, only Features 31, 43 and 47 (i.e. the protagonist goes to boarding school; an adopted parent dies; the protagonist receives or loses an inheritance at the end) do not apply for Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*. Katniss does not attend any kind of boarding school but goes to the school in her district, where mainly mine related skills and knowledge are taught. Generally, school is a minor theme in *The Hunger Games*: no scenes actually take place at school. The reader only learns about Katniss' schooldays in retrospect and mainly with a focus on other events, not her actual school life: "And more than once, I have turned in the school hallway and caught his [Peeta's] eyes trained on me, only to quickly flit away" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 39). Moreover, Katniss has no adopted parents but lives with her mother and sister and she neither receives a

inheritance nor loses one at the end of the saga. Thus, all three features receive zero points.

However, all other features get the full score. Features 29, 30 and 39, which state that Katniss experiences poverty as well as hunger and, in line with this, has money problems, are not only included in Collins' series but represent central themes. As the trilogy is named *The Hunger Games*, the latter feature is attributed so much importance as to be made the title of the series. Katniss grew up in the poorest district of the city and, as already mentioned, after her father's death she had to fight hard to ensure the survival of her family. At age eleven, when in this society a child's name is entered for selection of the tributes of the annual Hunger Games, Katniss has to add her name multiple times in exchange for so-called "tesserae": "But here's the catch. Say you are poor and starving, as we were. You can opt to add your name more times in exchange for tesserae. Each tesserae is worth a meagre year's supply of grain and oil for one person" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 15). Thus, hunger and poverty are central and constantly recurring themes in the trilogy. Especially at the beginning of the story, the reader learns that food is something precious to Katniss and not nearly sufficiently available in her district as opposed to the abundance that the citizens of the first district take for granted:

Chicken and chunks of oranges cooked in a creamy sauce laid on a bed of pearly white grain, tiny green peas and onions, rolls shaped like flowers, and for dessert, a pudding the colour of honey.

I try to imagine assembling this meal myself back home. Chickens are too expensive, but I could make do with a wild turkey. I'd need to shoot a second turkey to trade for an orange. Goat's milk would have to substitute for cream. We can grow peas in the garden. I'd have to get wild onions from the woods. [...] Days of hunting and gathering for this one meal and even then it would be a poor substitute for the Capitol version. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 79)

This passage clearly depicts the social gap between the citizens of different districts. While in some districts people starve to death, "starvation's not an uncommon fate in District 12" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 33), in others (primarily the first district) the inhabitants drink poisonous liquids in order to get sick and, after having vomited, can continue eating: "You mean this will make me

puke?” My prep team laughs hysterically. ‘Of course, so you can keep eating’” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 91). Generally, Katniss certainly experiences both poverty and hunger and also has severe money problems. Therefore, Features 29, 30 and 39 receive the full score.

Likewise, Katniss is also introduced to new social groups, classes and professions and learns new skills (Feature 35, 36): Katniss has to move to the capital, Panem, after having been selected to participate in the Hunger Games and this is when she encounters new social classes like the citizens of this district, whom, at that point of the plot, she only knew from television:

Both Peeta and I run to the window to see what we’ve only seen on television, the Capitol, the ruling city of Panem. The cameras haven’t lied about the grandeur. If anything, they have not quite captured the magnificence of the glistening buildings in rainbow of hues that tower into the air. [...] The oddly dressed people with bizarre hair and painted faces who have never missed a meal. [...] Why do these people speak in such high pitch? Why do their jaws barely open when they talk? (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 72-74)

For Katniss the people of District 1 are strange, artificial and naïve. Back home, they had no need for stylists or similar professions. However, as she gets to know the people of Panem better, she becomes fond of some of them: For example, Cinna, who is her stylist, becomes one of her most important educators in the course of the narration. While Katniss gets to know new people from different social classes, she also learns new skills during her time in District 1: “So the next three days pass with Peeta and me going quietly from station to station. We do pick up some valuable skills, from starting a fire, to knife throwing, to making shelter” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 118). Thus, both Feature 35 and 36 also receive the maximum score.

Features 32, 33 and 34 are again mutually exclusive, thus only one can score points. However, it could be argued that all three apply to Collins’ trilogy: Katniss moves away from home and to a big city (i.e. District 1, Panem) and thus leaves home to go on journey (from District 1 to the first arena, back to District 1 and later home, and touring through all other districts, then arena two etc.). As *The Hunger Games* can, however, only score for one of these features, Feature 34

(i.e. protagonist leaves home to go on a journey) receives two points, as it seems to be the most accurate. Rachel Fentin also already discussed this issue and that of Katniss' difficult family situation (mentally unstable mother, dead father) in relation to *The Hunger Games* being a *bildungsroman*. She declares that "the loss of a parent or the lack of familial happiness is an important motivating force in these stories [*The Hunger Games* and *The Giver*]. The young adults cannot rely on their family to define them and guide them safely. They are forced into greater experimentation and exploration by leaving home" (Fentin 31). These topical story elements are very obvious indicators that *The Hunger Games* is a contemporary *bildungsroman*.

Another important feature of the BRI is present in Collins' series as well: Katniss tries out many different roles in the course of the plot and, therefore, Feature 37 also receives the maximum amount of points. For example, Katniss gets dressed in expensive costumes to represent her District in the Hunger Games and also is instructed on how to act and how to present herself in front of the audience: "The next hours are agonizing. At once, it's clear I cannot gush. We try me playing cocky, but I just don't have the arrogance. Apparently, I'm too 'vulnerable' for ferocity. I'm not witty. Funny. Sexy. Or mysterious" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 143). Katniss has to try out different roles but it turns out that she just needs to be herself in order to win over the audience. This revelation is also highly iconic for the genre of the *bildungsroman* as the quest for identity usually poses a central theme. This topic will be discussed in more detail in Section 9. Similarly, during the Hunger Games, Katniss purposefully employs certain ways of action, in order to receive gifts, like medicine, from the audience: "If I want to keep Peeta alive, I've got to give the audience something more to care about. Star-crossed lovers desperate to get home together. Two hearts beating as one. Romance" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 316). Moreover, in the last part of the series Katniss also decides to take on the role of the Mockingjay and thus act as the symbol of the revolution as described earlier in Section 2. This process of trying out roles, like that of the 'girl on fire' or the symbol of the revolution or acting in a particular way in the arena in order to get sponsors is also highly important for Katniss' quest for identity and thus for her *Bildungsprozess*. By experiencing different roles, she gradually discovers who she really is.



The topic of love is another central element in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* that is highly influential on Katniss' development. Katniss feels love for her sister, her newfound friends (Rue, Cinna, etc.) and of course for Peeta and Gale. She gradually tries to unravel her own emotions and in the end falls in love with Peeta: "So after, when he whispers, 'You love me. Real or not real?' I tell him, 'Real'" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 436). Therefore, Feature 38 (i.e. protagonist falls in love) also receives the full score of two points. In general, even though the love triangle between Peeta, Katniss and Gale is arguable not one of the main themes of the saga, love still poses an important topic and is highly important for Katniss' quest for identity (see Section 1). In line with this, Features 49 (i.e. protagonist gets engaged or married) and 50 (i.e. protagonist has children) also obtain the full score. As outlined in Section 3, at the very end of the trilogy Katniss has two children and lives with them and Peeta. Therefore, Feature 50 is clearly given and Feature 49 is left to the reader's imagination. However, as the the epilogue reveals that in the last of fifteen years, Katniss has started a family and that the four of them now live together I will assume that she actually got married and assign 1 point to Feature 49 as well.

In general, the topics war, death and violence stand in stark contrast to that of love. However, they are equally – or even more – important in Collins' *The Hunger Games*. As Henthorne puts it, *The Hunger Games* trilogy is about "making war not love" (63). For example, Features 40, 41, 42, 45 and 46 (i.e. protagonist gets wounded or sick, is nursed back to health by parent substitute/loyal friend, nurses other sick person, experiences the death of a close relative/friend and is rescued from emergency/cliffhanger) all apply to the trilogy and thus gain the maximum score. In the course of the plot, Katniss is wounded numerous times, both during her stay in the two arenas of the Hunger Games and in the final war against the Capitol. For example, after an explosion in the first arena, Katniss loses her ability to hear on one ear: "I can't adjust to deafness in the ear. It makes me feel off-balance and defenseless to the left. Blind, even" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 276). In line with this, nearly every chapter ends with some kind of cliffhanger as Katniss is rescued from life threatening emergency situations at numerous points during the story: For example, a fellow tribute saves her life in the first arena when Katniss is about to be killed by two

other competitors: “I brace myself for the agony that’s sure to follow. But as I feel the tip open the first cut at my lip, some great force yanks Clove from my body and then she is screaming” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 348). She is also “nursed back to health” (Iversen 59) by Peeta after receiving a serious head wound in this same fight: “Peeta feeds me bites of groosling and raisins and makes me drink plenty of water. He rubs some warmth back into my feet and wraps them in his jacket before tucking the sleeping bag back up around my chin” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 355). Similarly, Katniss herself also nurses other sick people, for instance Peeta, after he has been severely wounded in the first arena or Gale after he was publically whipped for the crime of going hunting: “I gently unzip his [Peeta’s] jacket, unbutton his shirt and ease them off him. His undershirt is so plastered into his wounds I have to cut it away with my knife” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 308) or “Alone in the kitchen with Gale, I sit on Hazelle’s stool, holding his hand” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 132-133). Accordingly, Feature 44 (i.e. death of close relative/friend) is also present in *The Hunger Games*. Katniss experiences the death of both a close relative – her little sister Prim at the very end of the series – as well as of a close friend, namely her fellow tribute and confederate Rue in the first novel of the saga. I will come to discuss these incidents in a little more detail in Sections 5 and 7. In sum, all five features receive the maximum amount of points.

Likewise, Feature 45 (i.e. protagonist repents immoral or insensitive action) does apply to *The Hunger Games* as well. Iversen explains that this feature of the BRI “is intended to cover the protagonists’ realization that they have done wrong in the past and have subsequently decided to mend their ways” (60). At the very beginning of the trilogy, Katniss is being haunted by guilt for not helping a fleeing girl and boy, whom she and Gale encountered in the woods while hunting. Later, the boy was shot by a Capitol forces and the girl became an Avox (i.e. a slave), whom Katniss meets again on her first journey to Panem. In the wake of this experience, Katniss is not able to fall asleep: “Perhaps the girl doesn’t even remember me. But I know she does. You don’t forget the face of the person who was your last hope [...] I can feel her eyes staring at me, piercing through walls and doors and bedding” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 104). From this point onwards, Katniss seems to try saving as many innocent lives as possible. She

attempts to rescue Rue, however fails to do so, but then manages to save Peeta. In the second arena, as mentioned in Section 2, her sole goal is Peeta's survival and no longer her own. Finally, her decision to become the Mockingjay is a selfless attempt to help to stop the atrocities of the ruling regime. All in all, Katniss clearly realizes that she has done wrong in the past and therefore reconsiders her attitude and changes her behavior over the course of the plot. Thus, Feature 45 receives the full score as well.

In conclusion, Section 4, topical story elements that affect Katniss, receives twenty-one out of twenty-six possible points thus strongly indicating that Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* is a contemporary *bildungsroman*. The trilogy even scores higher in this section than Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* does: the novel that is generally regarded as prototype of the genre only receives nineteen points in Iversen's analysis (99). In *The Hunger Games* the topics of death, violence, hunger, poverty as well as traveling, love or family formation are all and strongly influence Katniss' character development. Especially death and the atrocities of war are highly prominent elements that expose readers – and thus adolescents – to “adult reality” (Henthorne 63).

#### **e. Topical Story Elements: Affecting Secondary Characters**

Section 5 discusses topical story elements that affect the secondary characters of Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy in order to determine to what extent this series is a contemporary *bildungsroman*. Generally, in relation to this part of the BRI Iversen explains that “the events in this section may be directly witnessed, but may also be presented in conversations, stories, or letters” and that they have to be of “some importance” (60). In this section, the topics of violence, death and war are once again prominent and clearly not only affect Katniss (as discussed in the previous section) but also the secondary characters. As can be seen in the table below, *The Hunger Games* here receives a very high score again, namely eight out of nine points:

<b>Features</b>	<b>Section 5: Topical Story Elements: Affecting Secondary Characters</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>51</b>	Serious crime such as murder	1/1
<b>52</b>	Dangerous or disastrous fire	1/1
<b>53</b>	Character seriously ill	1/1
<b>54</b>	Character becomes an invalid	1/1
<b>55</b>	Character ruined financially	1/1
<b>56</b>	Character dies (not close relative or close friend)	1/1
<b>57</b>	Funeral	1/1
<b>58</b>	Identity or family relationship outside protagonist's family revealed	0/1
<b>59</b>	Family secret of other family revealed	1/1
	<b>Section total</b>	<b>8/9</b>

Table 7: Topical Story Elements: Affecting Secondary Characters (Iversen 60)

All features, except Feature 58, appear in Collins' series. The secondary characters experiencing events like murder, disastrous fires and illnesses: Peeta becomes an invalid, Gales and his family are ruined financially after his father's death, a number of characters die, there is Rue's funeral in the first novel of the trilogy and a secret of Peeta's dad is revealed in the first volume as well. Features 51 and 56, (i.e. serious crime such as murder and character dies) are both important topics in Collins' series. Numerous secondary characters are killed during the Hunger Games, a reality TV show during which children from age 12 to 18 have to fight to the death in arenas. In addition to that, the reader learns that Haymitch's entire family was murdered by the Capitol after his act of disobedience during the Hunger Games (see Section 3): "My mother and younger brother. My girl. They were all dead two weeks after I was crowned victor. Because of that stunt I pulled with the force field', he [Haymitch] answers" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 193). In line with this, an uncountable number of characters, who are not Katniss' close relatives or friends, die in the course of the story, for example from starvation, in the mine accident or in the course of the rebellion. One of them is the commander of Katniss' unit: "What? Boggs? Boggs?' His eyes are still open, but dead" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 315). In addition, there is also a funeral in the first volume of Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy, namely that of Rue. Rue is Katniss' ally during the first Hunger Games and is

then killed by another tribute before Katniss can come to her rescue. After singing to her while Rue is dying, Katniss covers her in flowers as a kind of funeral with the intention of denouncing the cruelty of the Hunger Games, which is little more than a superficial entertainment to the citizens of District 1: “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 colours. They’ll have to show it” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 286-287). Therefore, Feature 57 also receives the full score.

Feature 52 (i.e. the occurrence of a dangerous or disastrous fire) is part of the plot as well. There are two disastrous fires in Collins’ trilogy: firstly, there is huge fire in the first arena and secondly, the Hob (a black market in District 12) is burned to the ground. While Katniss experiences the first incident personally, the second one only affects secondary characters: “Some streets away from the square, I see a blaze flare up [...] That can only be the Hob going up in smoke. I think of Greasy sea, Ripper, all my friends who make their living there” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 146).

Moreover, both Gale and Peeta are seriously ill (i.e. Feature 53) as already discussed in Section 4: Gale after the whipping and Peeta due to wounds inflicted in fights during the Hunger Games. If one counts mental illnesses as well, primarily Haymitch, Peeta and Finnick suffer from serious traumas after their time in the arenas: “‘How’s Finnick doing?’ ‘He’s...he’s having concentration problems,’ I answer. I don’t want to say he had a complete mental meltdown” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 74-75). In line with this, Peeta even becomes an invalid (i.e. Feature 54) after his stay in the first arena. His leg needs to be amputated after an attack by wolf-like mutations: “‘New leg?’ I say, and I can’t help reaching out and pulling up the bottom of Peeta’s trousers. ‘Oh, no,’ I whisper, taking in the metal-and-plastic device that has replaced his flesh” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 447-448).

As regards Feature 55 (i.e. character ruined financially), Gale, like Katniss, had to take on the role of a provider for his family, after his father, too, was killed in the same mining accident as Katniss’ father: “At fourteen, Gale, the eldest of the kids, became the main support of the family” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 9). Thus, his family

was ruined financially after his father, who had been the only member of the family, who earned an income, died. Finally, also Feature 59 (i.e. family secret of other family is revealed) is present in Collins' series: Peeta tells Katniss his father's secret of having being in love with her mother: "“He said, ‘See that little girl? I wanted to marry her mother, but she ran off with a coal miner,’ Peeta says” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 365). Thus, this feature also receives the full amount of points. Only Feature 58 “identity or family relationship outside protagonist's family revealed” (Iversen 60) does not apply to Collins' *The Hunger Games* regarding Section 5.

In conclusion, concerning topical story elements that affect secondary characters, *The Hunger Games* trilogy seems to be a typical example of the genre of the *bildungsroman*. Numerous tragedies (murder, disastrous fires, sever wounds, etc.) affect the secondary characters of the trilogy just as they do Katniss (see Section 4). For comparison purposes, *Wilhelm Meister*, *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre* also all include these elements and thus score the maximum amount of points in Iversen's analysis (150).

#### f. Setting

Section 6 is concerned with the novel's setting. Here Feature 61 and 62 are again mutually exclusive (Iversen 60) and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* can only score points for Feature 62, as her trilogy is an English-language series. In sum, Collins' saga receives three out of five possible points for Section 6 as illustrated in the table below:

Features	Section 6: Setting	Points
60	Setting for childhood scenes is countryside or provincial town	2/2
61	English-language novels: Setting after school-leaving age is capital or large city	1/3
62	German-language novels: Setting after school-leaving age is one or more large houses (other than family home)	–
	<b>Section total</b>	<b>3/5</b>

Table 8: Setting (Iversen 60)

Feature 60, „setting for childhood scenes is countryside or provincial town” (Iversen 60) obtains the full score of two points. Even though Katniss is arguably a child during the entire course of the story (except in the epilogue), all scenes in which she is younger than sixteen take place in District 12 or in the woods that surround her neighborhood. Katniss lives in the Seam, which is a part of District 12 and her hometown is clearly provincial: “Our house is almost at the edge of the Seam. I only have to pass a few gates to reach the scruffy field called the Meadow” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 5). The edge of the Meadow is also where the woods begin. These woods are the setting for nearly all of Katniss’ childhood scenes in which she used to learn from her father how to hunt and gather edible plants. Hence, Feature 60 clearly receives the full score. In addition, the protagonist received her first name from the so-called katniss root:

In late summer, I was washing up in a pond when I noticed the plants growing around me. Tall with leaves like arrowheads. Blossoms with three white petals. I knelt down in the water, my fingers digging into the soft mud, and I pulled up a handful of the roots. Small bluish tubers that don’t look like much but boiled or baked are as good as any potato. “Katniss,” I said aloud. It’s the plant I was named for. And I can hear my father joking, “As long as you can find yourself, you’ll never starve”. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 63)

This childhood scene is not only striking because it takes place in Katniss’ rural hometown, it also clearly foreshadows Katniss’ future and her quest for identity: Katniss can arguable be seen as the root of rebellion as she unintentionally fueled the revolution when outwitting the Capitol in the first arena. In the course of the plot, she becomes the Mockingjay and is also often called “the girl who was on fire” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 82) for her burning costumes that she wore in District 1. Like the katniss root needs to be boiled or baked, Katniss too needs to “burn” and thus change in order to fulfill her role in history. Similarly, the shape of the plant’s leaves (i.e. like arrowheads) also foreshadow Katniss’ later development to the symbol of the revolution, the Mockingjay, who is always depicted with bow and arrow. Moreover, the last sentence of the scene given above also clearly indicates Katniss’ later search for identity, which constitutes a central theme in *The Hunger Games* as well as in the genre of the *bildungsroman*.

Feature 61 “setting after school-leaving age is capital or large city” (Iversen 60) is however once again a less clear-cut case in regard to Collins’ *The Hunger Games*. Firstly, as outlined earlier, school plays a minor role in the trilogy and the reader is not informed when exactly Katniss left or is leaving school. Secondly, the setting of the story is only partly in large cities, namely in the Capitol and later in District 13, where the rebels live in some sort of underground stronghold. However, great parts of the plot also take place in various arenas as well as in different parts of District 12 (the Seam, the Victors’ Village, the Hob, etc.). Therefore, Feature 61 only scores one out of three possible points.

In conclusion, the setting of Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* is not as prototypical for the genre of the *bildungsroman* as for example the characterization of the protagonist and that of the secondary characters (see Section 3 and 4). However, for example *Jane Eyre*, which is regarded as prototypical English-language *bildungsroman* scores even fewer points for this section of the BRI, namely two.

#### **g. Plot and Structure**

Section 7 deals with the plot and structure of Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* in regard to it being a *bildungsroman*. For this section, the trilogy only scores seventeen out of twenty-eight possible points as there are a number of deviations, both structure- and contentwise, from what is usually denoted a *bildungsroman*. The table below illustrates the results of Section 7:



Features	Section 7: Plot and Structure	Points
63	Plot is primarily chronological	2/2
64	Main part of plot about period when protagonist is between 18 and 23 years old	0/3
65	Story goes from childhood to adulthood (early 20s)	1/2
66	Inserted letter(s)	0/1
67	Inserted narrative: Other character's life story (brief)	1/1
68	Inserted narrative: Other character's life story (long)	0/2
69	Turning point, reversal: Protagonist experiences important defeat or failure	3/3
70	Journey toward end of book	1/1
71	Returns to childhood home after many years	0/1
72	Protagonist develops from self-centeredness to compassion and desire to be of use	2/2
73	Protagonist discovers tie to his or her family toward end	0/2
74	Protagonist learns to "see" at end	3/3
75	Episodic structure that nevertheless forms a pattern at end	0/1
76	Epigrammatic utterance by protagonist at end or just before	2/2
77	Projected ending: Protagonist finds a place in society (but expectation may not be met)	2/2
<b>Section total</b>		<b>17/28</b>

Table 9: Plot and Structure (Iversen 61)

On the one hand, it can be seen that *The Hunger Games* receive zero points for Features 64, 66, 68, 71, 73 and 75. Feature 64, "main part of plot about period when protagonist is between 18 and 23 years old" (Iversen 61) is not the case for Collins' series because the greatest part of the story takes place when Katniss is sixteen and seventeen years. Moreover, there are also no inserted letters (i.e. Feature 66) and no extensive inserted narratives about secondary characters' lives (i.e. Feature 68). As regards Feature 71 (i.e. protagonist returns to childhood home after many years), although Katniss does return to her childhood home after a period of time, the duration of her absence is only several months and she

keeps leaving her home and returning to it a number of times throughout the trilogy: Generally, Katniss comes back home after each crucial event, namely after each participation in the two Hunger Games and after the final war against the Capitol. Therefore, Feature 71 does not score any points as well. In line with this, Feature 75, “episodic structure that nevertheless forms a pattern at end” (Iversen 61), also receives zero points. Even though Collins’ *The Hunger Games* has an episodic structure – each novel consisting of three parts similar to the classic drama: exposition, crisis and climax/resolution (Henthorne 27) – this alone is not what Feature 75 stands for. Iversen outlines that a text only scores here if “the plot is *not* a tight structure of events or actions that are directly causally linked, or that are a result of the protagonist’s or other character’s unilinear pursuit of a particular goal” (Iversen 62, emphasis added). As already mentioned, nearly every chapter of *The Hunger Games* ends with a so-called cliffhanger and a number of secondary characters (Haymitch, Cinna Plutarch, Coin, etc.) actually peruse a particular goal, namely overthrowing the ruling party. In order to achieve their goals they also manipulate Katniss. Thus, the episodes of the story do in fact form a “tight structure” and are the result of other characters’ “pursuit of a particular goal” (Iversen 61). Moreover, all the events are causally linked: due to Katniss’ actions in the first arena, President Snow decides to stage the Quarter Quell (i.e. a special kind of Hunger Games, where all the former victors have to compete) and the rebels decide to save Katniss and make her the face of the revolution. Thus, even though this feature is certainly ambiguous and one could also argue otherwise, I will assign zero points to it. Finally, as regards Feature 73, Katniss does not discover any ties to her family at the end of the story. On the contrary, she distances herself from her last living relative, namely her mother: After Prim’s death, Katniss moves back home, while her mother helps to create a new hospital in District 4 because for her “the place [their hometown] is too painful to bear” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 427).

On the other hand, *The Hunger Games* clearly has a chronological structure (i.e. Feature 63) and Katniss undertakes a journey towards the end of the book (i.e. Feature 70), namely from District 13 to District 1, the Capitol. Therefore, both of these features receive the full score. Moreover, there are also short inserted narratives about other characters’ life stories (i.e. Feature 67), for example Rue’s:

“And I come to know Rue, the oldest of six kids, fiercely protective of her siblings, who gives her rations to the younger ones, who forages in the meadows in a district where the Peacekeepers are far less obliging than ours [...]” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 255).

Features 69 (i.e. turning point: protagonist experiences important defeat or failure) is also clearly present in *The Hunger Games*. When President Snow explains to Katniss that he was not responsible for the bombing of the children in District 1 and thus also not for her sister’s death but that this was the rebel President’s final move to win the war, Katniss tries to deny the ugly truth. Later, she experiences “a strong feeling of loss and failure” that also leads to her “temporary resignation” (Iversen 62):

I feel like a caterpillar in a cocoon awaiting metamorphosis. I always supposed that to be a peaceful condition. At first it is. But as I journey into night, I feel more and more trapped, suffocated by the slippery bindings, unable to emerge until I have transformed into something of beauty. I squirm, trying to shed my ruined body and unlock the secret to growing flawless wings. Despite enormous effort, I remain a hideous creature, fried into my current form by the blast from the bombs. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 409)

Momentarily, Katniss cannot cope with this terrible new knowledge, with her grief and her own failure when she discovers that she herself helped the person who killed her sister. Thus, she feels incapable of action. This simile is also highly iconic for the genre of the *bildungsroman*. Katniss compares herself to a caterpillar that fails to metamorphose into a butterfly, thus she also describes what could be called her *Bildungsprozess* or development from naiveté to the acceptance of cold reality: While she first thought that this process would be a “peaceful condition” she then realizes that she needs to fight her way out of the cocoon and finally discovers that she will never become a butterfly at all. This scene and its relation to the *bildungsroman* would certainly lend themselves to further investigation.

In line with this, Feature 72 centers on the protagonist’s development “from self-centeredness to compassion and desire to be of use” (Iversen 62). As discussed in detail in Section 2, Katniss undergoes fundamental changes in the course of the plot: While she only cares about her family and friends at the beginning of the

story, she then puts other people's survival over her own and ultimately even over that of those closest to her by deciding to act as the Mockingjay. Therefore, this feature, too, receives the maximum points. In the last stage of her development from self-centeredness to compassion, Katniss also learns to "see" (i.e. Feature 74): "President Snow once admitted to me that the Capitol was fragile. At the time, I didn't know what he meant. It was hard to see clearly because I was so afraid. Now I'm not. The Capitol's fragile because it depends on the districts for everything [...] If we declare our freedom the Capitol collapses" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 189-190). In this scene, Katniss shoots a TV announcement dedicated to the citizens of the Capitol. In this she reveals her own insights to the audience and makes them "see" too. Thus, feature 74 receives three points.

As for Features 76 and 77, *The Hunger Games* trilogy includes an "epigrammatic utterance" by the protagonist at the end of the story and there is a "projected ending" as well (Iversen 61). Iversen defines "epigrammatic utterance" as a statement made by the protagonist, "which summarizes his or her learning and worldview" (62). This literary device can be found at the very end of Collins' *The Hunger Games*, when Katniss chooses to spend the rest of her life with Peeta and explains this decision as follows: "[...] what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction" (*Mockingjay* 436). This statement indicates that at this point in the narrative Katniss finally knows who she is and what she wants. In contrast, Katniss was angry and shocked the first time she overheard Peeta and Gale talking about who of them she will choose and for what reason:

A chill runs through me. Am I really that cold and calculating? Gale didn't say, "Katniss will pick whoever it will break her heart to give up," or even "whoever she can't live without." Those would have implied I was motivated by a kind of passion. But my best friend predicts I will choose the person who I "can't survive without" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 372).

In the end, Katniss has accepted who she is and even uses the exact same phrase she was so shocked about earlier: "what I need to survive is [...]" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 436). This epigrammatic utterance also indicates that she chooses peace over war, reflection (Peeta) over immediate action (Gale).

Concerning the “projected ending”, Iversen outlines that a *bildungsroman* often creates a desire in the reader for to see the protagonist finding his or her place in the world. This expectation does, however, not have to be met but there can also be an “unhappy or disastrous” ending (Iversen 62). As already mentioned, *The Hunger Games* ends with an epilogue about Katniss’ life with Peeta and their kids. Thus, the reader’s desire for a happy ending is generally met but it is also highlights that the shadows of Katniss’ past will never completely vanish: “I’ll tell them [her children] how I survived. I’ll tell them that on bad mornings, it feels impossible to take pleasure in anything because I’m afraid it could be taken away” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 438). This utterance relativizes the superficially happy ending by depicting Katniss as suffering from severe and lasting trauma. Thus, the reader’s expectations are arguably both met and turned down: while there is a tentative happily ending, the downsides of life in the aftermaths of war are pointed out as well.

Feature 65 (i.e. story goes from childhood to adulthood) is a less clear-cut case. I assign one out of two points to it, even though I explained earlier that the main part of the plot is set when Katniss is sixteen and seventeen years old, thus a child. This is justified because, emotionally, Katniss becomes an adult throughout the story. While, at the beginning of the plot, she is naïve and does not question other people or society in general, in the course of the narrative, she gradually starts to reflect upon and make her own decisions. She also loses her naiveté when she has to face the cold realities of war. Her black-and-white thinking is finally also disrupted when she learns the truth about the ruthless rebel president. There is one scene in which Katniss herself realizes that she has not been a child anymore for a while: “Children are precious to [District] 13, or so it has always seemed. Well, not me, maybe. Although I think it’s been a long time since I’ve been considered a child in this war” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 405). Therefore, I assign one point to Feature 65, although, strictly speaking, Katniss is not an adult for the largest part of the plot. I will go into more detail about the ambiguous periods of childhood and adulthood in Section 9.

In conclusion, in regard to plot and structure, *The Hunger Games* is only partly iconic for the genre of the *bildungsroman*. While certain scenes (e.g. the

caterpillar metamorphosis) are strong indicators that the series is a contemporary *bildungsroman*, other *bildungsroman* characteristics are missing completely. In general, Katniss' mental development and her changes of attitude are probably the most prototypical characteristics that *The Hunger Games* trilogy shares with what is usually perceived as a *bildungsroman*.

## h. Generic Signals

Section 8 centers on generic signals of the genre of the *bildungsroman*. As explained in Chapter 3c, the term “generic signals” is taken from Alastair Fowler's work *Kinds of Literature*, in which the author describes them as follows: “They help to establish, as soon as possible, an appropriate mental ‘set’ that allows the work's generic codes to be read. One might call them the key words of the code [...]” (88). Concerning *The Hunger Games*, generic signals of the *bildungsroman* are a rarity. Thus, Section 8 only scores one point as can be seen in the table below:

Features	Section 8: Generic Signals	Points
78	Book title includes the name of the protagonist	0/1
79	Book title includes the words “years,” “life,” “adventures,” or “history”	0/1
80	Allusions to <i>bildungsromans</i> , typically Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, or Great Expectations	1/1
81	Indications from early on that this will be a life story	0/1
	<b>Section total</b>	1/4

Table 10: Generic Signals (Iversen 63)

Firstly, the book title itself does not have any typical generic markers (i.e. Feature 78): Collins' three novels are labeled *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*. None of these titles includes the heroine's name. Arguably however, the last volume, *Mockingjay*, gives Katniss' alias, as, at that point in the plot, she is the face of the revolution, the Mockingjay. This neologism, coined by Suzanne Collins, in the trilogy refers to a hybrid species of birds that developed from the mating of mockingbirds with what she calls “jabberjays”. The latter is a sort of

living tapping device created by the Capitol. As the jabberjays soon came to be used to pass on wrong information and thus trick the ruling class, the Capitol decided to stop the production of these artificial creatures. However, instead of dying out, a new species, the mockingjays, who can mimic human songs, developed. This evolution was involuntary on the Capitol's part as these new birds were "never intended to exist" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 105), just like Katniss was never intended to become the face of the revolution due to her actions in the Hunger Games. Thus, both the mockingjays and Katniss, when she turned into the symbol of the revolution, the Mockingjay, mock the Capitol. However, as "Mockingjay" is only an alias and not Katniss' real name I will assign zero points to Feature 78. Still, the mockingjay seems to be of relevance in regard to generic signals of the genre of the *bildungsroman* because this species developed from the mockingbird and also bears a similar name. This can be seen as an allusion to a particular *bildungsroman* (i.e. Feature 80), namely Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Taking into consideration all these issues, even though, this is once again an ambiguous case, I will assign one point to Feature 80 to balance the score for Feature 78.

In line with this, Katniss becoming the Mockingbird can also be seen as metaphorical for her transformation process. She not only takes on yet another role but has much in common with this animal as well: both have transformed themselves into something beyond the Capitol's control. Similarly, the combination of Katniss acting as the Mockingjay in the revolution and as the 'girl on fire' brings to mind the mythical animal, the phoenix. This bird, like Katniss, needs to burn in order to transform into beauty. However, as depicted by the caterpillar scene (see Section 7) Katniss' metamorphosis fails: "I remain a hideous creature, fried into my current form by the blast from the bombs (Collins, *Mockingjay* 409)". Thus, Katniss developmental process or *Bildungsprozess* leads her towards accepting cold reality, leaving behind her childlike naiveté (also see "epigrammatic utterance" Section 7).

Returning to the matter at hand, Features 79 and 81 receive zero points once again. The titles include none of the words "life", "years", "adventures" or "history" (i.e. Feature 79) and there are no "indications from early on" that *The Hunger*

*Games* will be a “life story” (Iversen 63). Iversen explains that the latter (i.e. Feature 81) scores points if, for example, a first-person narrator announces this explicitly or if a text conveys this idea by beginning with the birth of the protagonist. Neither of these is the case for Collins’ *The Hunger Games* and therefore Feature 81 also receives zero points.

In conclusion, *The Hunger Games* trilogy has nearly no distinct generic signals that indicate from early on that this series is in fact *bildungsroman*. This is probably due to the fact that this trilogy combines numerous genres like dystopian fiction, romance, survivor story and of course the *bildungsroman* (Henthorne 30-34). Thus, not all the different genre expectations can be met. Interestingly, neither *Wilhelm Meister* nor *Jane Eyre* receive the maximum score for this section and *Great Expectations* even receives only one point in Iversen’s analysis (111).

#### **i. Theme, Subject Matter and Motifs - Katniss’ Identity Development**

The approach to this last section slightly differs from the previous ones. It focuses on the protagonist’s identity development from the perspective of developmental psychology (mainly based on Erik Erikson’s, Jane Kroger’s and James Marcia’s perceptions). Iversen allotted a comparatively higher number of points to Features 82 to 96 of the BRI in order to “compensate for the fact that thematic issues only account for 29 out of 1478 [sic. 148] possible index points” (70), even though the protagonist’s development throughout the story is a central characteristic of the genre of the *bildungsroman* (70).

Iversen, mainly relates to Ericson’s psychological stages and Marcia’s operationalization of this model (73-76). Erikson designed a concept to classify human development, which is based on Freud’s psycho-sexual stages (28-29). There are eight stages reaching from “infancy” to “maturity” (Erikson 28-29). The third to last stage is called “adolescents” (Erikson 120) and describes the period between the age of twelve and twenty-three. During this phase, a person experiences the conflict between “identity vs identity diffusion” (Erikson 73). This period is again divided into three parts, the last of which is referred to as “late



adolescence” (Erikson 120). Marcia enhances Erikson’s model and describes four “identity statuses”, which are: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and identity achievement (“Development and Validation” 551-552). These statuses may be undergone during the stage of late adolescence (“Development and Validation” 551). Each of these phases has a purpose of its own: basically, “identity diffusion” constitutes the lowest status as during this period for example a person’s moral development is still very little advanced; “foreclosure” entails strong identification with authorities and adopting their values without questioning them; “moratorium” is described as an “identity crisis”, in which adolescents “vacillate between rebellion and conformity”; and lastly “identity achievement is the highest status, in which people know their goals in life and generally appear settled and calm” (Marcia, “The Empirical Study” 74-77). These statuses undergone in the stage of late adolescence constitute the main focus of the genre of the *bildungsroman* (Iversen 64).

In sum, Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy receives twenty-five out of twenty-nine points for Section 9 “Theme, Subject Matter and Motifs” (Iversen 64). This very high score once again proves that the series is highly prototypical for the genre of the *bildungsroman* in regard to Katniss’ identity development. This result is also illustrated by the table below:

Features	Section 9: Theme, Subject Matter and Motifs	Points
82	The psychological and moral development of the protagonist from youth to adulthood (main theme)	2/3
83	Protagonist strives for liberation from the people he/she depends upon in childhood, their values, and their plans for his/her future	2/2
84	Search for new commitments to people and ideas	1/2
85	Tension/conflict/discrepancy between inner and outer worlds	2/2
86	Development from false self-perception to self-knowledge	2/2
87	False idealism gives way to acceptance of reality	0/1
88	Learning through pain and loss	1/1
89	Fate and chance	1/1
90	Free will	1/1
91	Death and grief	3/3
92	Love, relationships, and marriage	2/3
93	Portrayal of society	2/2
94	Social criticism	2/2
95	Protagonist confronted with at least one philosophy or philosophical system	2/2
96	Family becomes a theme at the end	2/2
	<b>Section total</b>	<b>25/29</b>

Table 11: Theme, Subject Matter and Motifs (Iversen 63)

Feature 82 of Iversen's BRI focuses on "the psychological and moral development of the protagonist from youth to adulthood", which is usually seen as the main theme of the *bildungsroman*. Iversen declares that this feature only scores points if the text does not end before the protagonist reaches at least the age of eighteen and is no older than twenty-three at the beginning (64). However, Erikson himself did not suggest any chronological age range for this period (Sokol 140). Psychological stages only describe a general tendency of how most human beings develop and are anything but discrete and exact categories (Blatterer 64). As Gill Valentine puts it:

[...] the boundary between childhood and adulthood is very difficult to define. Notably, it is blurred by the ambiguous period of 'youth'. [...] Social differences such as class, race, gender, sexuality, etc. can all play a part in defining the transitions that we make. The processes through which we make the transition from being regarded as children to adults are therefore complex and fluid. (48-49)

Thus, it can be argued that certain circumstances or "life events" also influence the duration of the transition from childhood to adulthood and thereby the age at which someone reaches what is perceived as 'adulthood' as well (Young et al. 4).

First of all, in regard to *The Hunger Games*, it seems necessary to mention that Katniss uses bow and arrow as a weapon. According to Godbey, "the bow and arrow symbolically link Katniss to Artemis, the virgin huntress and goddess of transition who guides young boys and girls to adulthood". This allusion to Artemis indicates that the transition from childhood to adulthood constitutes a central theme in *The Hunger Games*. While Katniss does not lead other people to adulthood, she herself undergoes this same transition in the course of the trilogy.

In line with this, as I already argued in Section 7 in relation to Feature 65 (i.e. story goes from childhood to adulthood), I believe that at the end of the series Katniss – at age seventeen – can already be seen as more of an adult than an adolescent as regards her identity formation and development: she has learned to reflect her actions, considers herself responsible for them and carries the burden of having great influence on the outcome of a devastating war. As already discussed several times, Katniss' quest for identity as well as her psychological and moral development are central themes in *The Hunger Games*: She continuously reflects on who she is – "And I am beginning to know who I am" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 229) – and also develops a strong sense of morality as outlined in Section 2. She arguably undergoes all four identity statuses as well: Katniss develops from naïveté without deeper reflection (i.e. "identity diffusion" and "foreclosure") to "moratorium" (Marcia, "The Empirical Study" 74-77), when she has a break-down after discovering who really was responsible for her sister's death, to "identity achievement" at the very end of the series when she chooses her future with Peeta and learns to cope with her past. Moreover,

according to Valentine, “growing up is often measured in terms of competence and responsibility” and children can thus grow by acting responsibly irrespectively of their actual biological age (38). For all the above reasons, I will not give zero points to Feature 82 as Iversen suggests (64), only because Katniss has not the right age, but assign two points to it.

In regard to Feature 83, “protagonist strives for liberation from the people he/she depends upon in childhood, their values, and their plans for his/her future” (Iversen 64), *The Hunger Games* receives the full score. Katniss both seeks liberation from her weak mother, whom she cannot forgive for neglecting her children after their father’s death, as well as from the oppressive political system of Panem. For example, Katniss repeatedly provokes the Gamemakers and does not want to acquiescence to their rules: once she hangs a dummy and writes the name of the previous lead Gamemaker on its torso. When Peeta asks her why she did that Katniss answers: “I don’t know. To show them that I’m more than just a piece in their Games?” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 273). Obviously, she does not want to conform to the plans they have for her. In line with this, in the first volume of the trilogy Katniss even refuses to tell anything personal while starring in a TV show and states: “They’re already taking my future! They can’t have the things that mattered to me in my past!” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 142). It appears that Katniss certainly seeks liberation from Panem’s totalitarian government. Moreover, even though she does not really depend on her mother but rather takes care of her family herself, Katniss arguably seeks liberation from her obligations (see Section 2). However, most importantly, she tries to free herself from the power the Capitol and later the rebels have over her. Therefore, Feature 83 receives two out of two points.

Feature 84 centers on the protagonist’s “search for new commitments to people and ideas” (Iversen 64). It can be argued that Katniss seeks commitment to new ideas, more precisely to a new political system, a world without hunger, violence and TV shows like the Hunger Games. She decides to help the rebels by inciting an uprising in all the districts and thus overthrow the Capitol. However, she is never wholeheartedly committed neither to a ‘new’ person nor to an idea over a longer period of time. She always keeps questioning her decisions and rather

seeks liberation than new commitments. For example, when she is with the rebels she has to be convinced to act as the Mockingjay and is not really dedicated to the idea: "What they want is for me to truly take on the role they designed for me. The symbol of the revolution. The Mockingjay. It isn't enough, what I've done in the past, [...]. I must now become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 11-12). Thus, while Katniss certainly feels committed to new people (e.g. Cinna see Section 4) and also ideas these attitudes are usually rather short-lived and not the result of an actual 'search' on Katniss' part. Hence, I will only assign one point to this feature.

Feature 85, "tension/conflict/discrepancy between inner and outer worlds" describes "the relationship between individuals and their community, society, or world in general" (Iversen 65). It cannot be denied that there is a conflict between Katniss' values and ideals and those displayed by the ruling party. Thus, there clearly exists a "discrepancy between inner and outer worlds" (Iversen 65). This is also a topic that is usually addressed by works that belong to genre of the *bildungsroman* (Bolaki 11). In *The Hunger Games* there is clearly a conflict between individual and society: Katniss despises the killing of innocents as well as the injustice of the social gap between the starving districts and the abundance that is the norm in the capital. The discrepancy between Katniss' inner self and the outer world is made explicit several times throughout the narration: "'District Twelve. Where you can starve to death in safety,' I mutter. Then I glance quickly over my shoulder. Even here, even in the middle of nowhere, you worry someone might overhear you" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 7). Katniss is not even able to express her thoughts freely for fear of punishment. Hence, Feature 85 again receives the full score.

Similarly, Features 86 and 88 of the BRI (i.e. Katniss' development from false self-perception to self-knowledge and her learning through pain and loss) both play a role in Collins' *The Hunger Games* as well. At the beginning of the series, Katniss has not yet reflected on who she really is or who she wants to be. However, in the end she has completed her quest for identity: "[...] I know this would have happened anyway. That what I need to survive is not Gale's fire,

kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 436). Katniss is certainly aware of this change as she states: "It is the old Katniss's favourite kind of day. Early spring" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 433). This journey towards what Marcia calls "identity achievement" ("The Empirical Study" 75) is anything but easy. Katniss experiences numerous episodes of self-loathing and insecurity throughout the course of the plot: "Finally, he [Peeta] can see me for who I really am. Violent. Distrustful. Manipulative. Deadly" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 259). Hence, Katniss progresses from "false self-perception to self-knowledge" (Iversen 65). In line with this there are also a number of scenes in *The Hunger Games* trilogy in which Katniss looks into a mirror or sees her self on television and tries to decipher who she really is. For example, Katniss does not recognize herself when seeing the TV spot in which she is the Mockingjay: "[...] I watch the woman on the screen. Her body seems larger in stature, more imposing than mine: her face smudged but sexy. Her brows black and drawn in an angle of defiance. [...] I do not know who this person is" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 79). Only later, when all the makeup is removed, Katniss finds herself in the mirror again: "The person in the mirror looks ragged, with her uneven skin and tired eyes, but she looks like me" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 87). These instances of self-recognition are crucial landmarks in Katniss' journey towards identity achievement and thus strong indicators that *The Hunger Games* series is a contemporary *bildungsroman*, in which the protagonist's change and development from false self-perception to self-knowledge poses a central theme.

Likewise, Katniss clearly learns through pain and loss (i.e. Feature 889. As discussed in relation to Feature 44, Katniss has to endure numerous deaths of both friends and family members throughout the course of the plot. These deaths make her see more clearly. For example, after Rue dies Katniss for the first time during the Hunger Games thinks about who is really responsible for all the deaths in the arena: not the tributes, who do the actual killing, but the Capitol, who stages the cruel show. Until this point, Katniss' sole goal was to survive and she acted only on instinct. However, after Rue's death she reflects on who the real enemy is: "To hate the boy from District 1, who also appears so vulnerable in death, seems inadequate. It's the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us" (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 286). In line with this, her sister Prim's death at the

very end of the series ultimately leads Katniss towards the realization that the new leader is morally no better person than the former ruler, President Snow. Therefore, she clearly also learns through pain and loss and Features 86 and 88 both receive the maximum points.

In regard to Feature 89, 90 and 91, fate and chance, free will as well as death and grief all play a central role in *The Hunger Games* as well. A common saying by the presenters of the Hunger Games is: “May the odds [...] be ever in your favour” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 9). Thus, whether the odds are with or against someone is a recurring theme in Collins’ trilogy. For example, Katniss is well aware of the fact that the Capitol influences the choice of the participants in the Hunger Games, depending on what will attract the largest number of viewers: “Victor’s children have been in the ring before. It always causes a lot of excitement and generates talk about how the odds are not in that family’s favour. But it happens too frequently to just be about the odds” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 52). Generally, the topics of fate and chance are broached upon several times in the course of the plot and therefore Feature 89 receives the full score. Moreover, as mentioned in Section 3, the concept of free will also is important in Collins’ *The Hunger Games*. In the first volume of the series Peeta and Katniss talk about how Peeta wants to stay himself, “maintain his identity” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 171), during the Hunger Games. He states that he wants to be “more than just a piece in their Games” (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 172). Only later does Katniss understand what he meant by this metaphor (see Section 3). Thus, the topic of free will is also a central topic in *The Hunger Games* and Feature 90 receives one point. Similarly, “death and grief” (i.e. Feature 91) are also attributed great importance in Collins’ trilogy. Thus, Feature 91 also scores one point.

As mentioned in Section 4, the topic of love is also prominent in Collins’ *The Hunger Games*. In line with this, Feature 92, “love, relationships, and marriage” (Iversen 64), does also apply to the series: There is, for example, Katniss’ love for both Peeta and Gale and her relationship to her newfound friends (Haymitch, Cinna, Finnick, etc.). These characters all make her change and grow thus furthering her *Bildung* (see Section 3). I will, however, only assign two out of three points to this feature to compensate for the fact that Feature 49 (i.e. protagonist

gets engaged or married) received the full score even though it remains unclear whether Katniss is actually married at the end of the series. Anyway, 'family' (i.e. Feature 96) clearly becomes a dominant theme in the epilogue, which shows Katniss living with Peeta and caring for their two children. Hence, Feature 96 receives the full score again.

Finally, Features 93, 94 and 95 (i.e. the portrayal of society; social criticism; the confrontation with at least one philosophical question) all get the maximum amount of points. The role of society clearly constitutes a central theme in *The Hunger Games*. At the very beginning of the trilogy, the reader learns that Panem and its Districts are located in what used to be North America. Throughout the course of the plot, more and more details about the oppressive class system are revealed and the downfall of this totalitarian system turns into a central topic of the trilogy. Hunger in the face of food wastage is displayed as well as social inequality, the misuse of power and the atrocities of reality TV (Layfield, Nayar, etc.). Even the moral worth of mankind as a whole is called into question at the very end of the series:

"Are you preparing for another war, Plutarch?" I ask.

"Oh, not now. Now we're in that sweet period where everyone agrees that our recent horrors should never be repeated," he says. "But collective thinking is usually short-lived. We're fickle, stupid beings with poor memories and a great gift for self-destruction. Although, who knows? Maybe this will be it, Katniss."

"What?" I ask.

"The time it sticks. Maybe we are witnessing the evolution of the human race." (Collins, *Mockingjay* 426)

Accordingly, social critique is clearly a main theme in *The Hunger Games*. As the ending of the trilogy – in regard to what kind of political system people in Panem are now governed by – is left to the reader's imagination, one could argue that thus the target audience, young adults, is encouraged to reflect upon this question. This might even further their own *Bildungsprozess* (Henthorne 78) and would therefore certainly offer a great starting point for the application of the series in class. Moreover, philosophical questions about identity, morality or whether the end justifies the means (i.e. consequentialism) are posed as well (see also Henthorne, Dunn et al. etc.). For example, Katniss discusses this last issue with Gale after the killing of enemy troops by trapping them in a mine:



“Katniss, what difference is there, really, between crushing our enemy in a mine or blowing them out of the sky with one of Betee’s arrows? The result is the same.” [...] But that kind of thinking ... you could turn it into an argument for killing anyone at any time. You could justify sending kids into the Hunger Games to prevent the districts from getting out of line,” I say. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 247).

Hence, different philosophical approaches are being displayed and discussed. In sum, Feature 93, 94 and 95 all receive two out of two points.

Feature 87, “false idealism gives way to acceptance of reality” (Iversen 64), is the only characteristic that scores zero points in this section. This is because idealism never really plays a role in Katniss’ development. Her true change is rather that from acting purely on instinct – her sole goal being to survive in the first volume – to reflecting her actions and trying to save the lives of others. Most of the time, her attitude is either realistic or pessimistic. For example, when she first learns that there might be rebels, who could offer refuge to her friends and family, she does not believe it: “These are delusions. District 13 doesn’t exist because the Capitol would never let it exist” (Collins, *Catching Fire* 167). Hence, Katniss entertains no false idealism but has a rather realistic attitude from the beginning.

In conclusion, Section 9, “theme, subject matter and motifs” (Iversen 64) receives the very high score of twenty-five points. For the purpose of comparison, it is worth mentioning that in Iversen’s analysis *Wilhelm Meister* gets the full score for this section in, *Great Expectations* scores twenty-five points just like *The Hunger Games*, while *Huckleberry Finn* only gets ten points (80). Thus, in this respect Collins’ series is a very prototypical *bildungsroman*. Moreover, the slightly ambiguous ending of the trilogy as well as the fact that various philosophical questions are posed in *The Hunger Games* both lend themselves to further exploration with respect to the classroom usage of the trilogy. In the following two chapters, all results will be discussed and, on the basis of these findings, two lesson plans for the classroom application of the series will be presented.

## 5. Conclusion

In sum, Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* receives 107 out of 148 possible points on Anniken Telnes Iversen's "Bildungsroman Index" (51). Section 3, the characterization of secondary characters and their functions, is the only one that obtains the maximum section score, which in this case is seventeen points. Sections 4 and 5, which center on topical story elements affecting Katniss and the secondary characters, also both have very high scores, namely twenty-one out of twenty-six for Section 4 and eight out of nine for Section 5. Lastly, Section 9, which focuses on themes, subject matters and motifs, also receives a considerably high number of points, that is twenty-five out of twenty-nine points on Iversen's BRI. Contrary to that, Section 8, generic signals, has the very low section total of one out of four points and Sections 2, 6 and 7 all obtain slightly more than half of the possible number of points. All these results are illustrated by Table 12 and by Figure 1 below:

Sections	Points
<b>Section 1:</b> Narrative Perspective and Mode	6/15
<b>Section 2:</b> Characterization: Katniss Everdeen	9/15
<b>Section 3:</b> Characterization: Secondary Characters and their Functions	17/17
<b>Section 4:</b> Topical Story Elements: Affecting Katniss Everdeen	21/26
<b>Section 5:</b> Topical Story Elements: Affecting Secondary Characters	8/9
<b>Section 6:</b> Setting	3/5
<b>Section 7:</b> Plot and Structure	17/28
<b>Section 8:</b> Generic Signals	1/4
<b>Section 9:</b> Theme, Subject Matter and Motifs	25/29
<b>BRI Total</b>	<b>107/148</b>

Table 12: BRI Results: *The Hunger Games*

In the pie chart of Figure 1, it can be seen that *The Hunger Games* approximately obtains three fourths of the maximum amount of points on Iversen's "Bildungsroman Index" (51). For comparison purposes, *Wilhelm Meister* and *Jane Eyre* receive a total score of 139 points; *David Copperfield* even scores 144 and *Great Expectations* 137 points, while *Huckleberry Finn* only obtains a total of 53 points in Iversen's analysis (80).

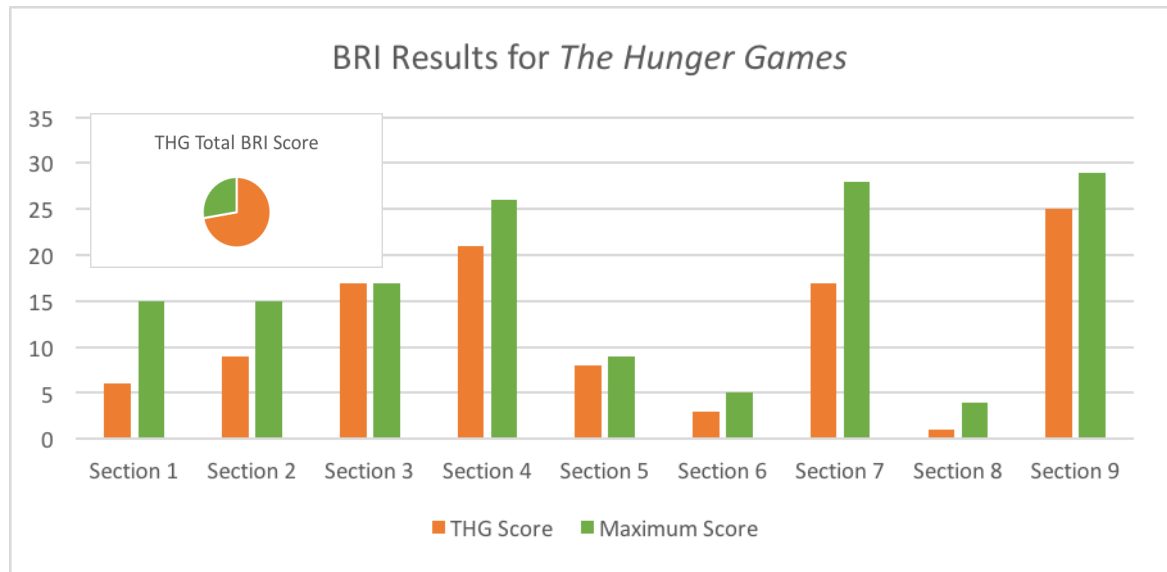


Figure 1: BRI Results for *The Hunger Games*

All in all, with a score of 107 points, it can be concluded from this investigation that Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy clearly is a contemporary *bildungsroman*, which, regarding a number of aspects, is highly prototypical for this genre. For example, Katniss' character traits are a strong indicator that the series is a *bildungsroman*: she is a round and dynamic protagonist, who changes over time, she is morally good and very active and she clearly pursues strong goals (Section 2). Furthermore, in respect to the characterization of the secondary characters as well as to the topical story elements, the series has very much in common with what is usually perceived as a *bildungsroman*. All secondary characters influence Katniss one way or another, thus making her change and grow throughout the course of the narration. There are a number of essential characters (e.g. Haymitch, Peeta, Gale, Cinna, etc.), who function as educators, companions and lovers and guide Katniss in her *Bildungsprozess*. However, all of them have little importance in their own right as Katniss' development is the main focus of the series (Section 3). Likewise, the conflict between individual and society (Section 9) is depicted and therefore, the topic of individualism, which is a highly common issue in the genre of the *bildungsroman*, certainly plays a central role in the series as well. In line with this, the discrepancy between Katniss' inner and outer world manifests itself in many different ways throughout the series and, accordingly, social critique is also a very prominent topic in *The Hunger Games*.

In line with this, this analysis has shown that Katniss' quest for identity poses a central theme in *The Hunger Games* (Section 9). Katniss gradually loses her naïve worldview and faces the cold realities of adult life. While, in the beginning, it is her sole goal to save herself and her family, she becomes a selfless person, who peruses strong goals like ensuring freedom, equality and safety for everyone in the course of the novels. In this quest for identity, Peeta and Gale also play essential roles as they can be seen as representing two antipodes: reflection and action. They have great influence on Katniss' personality development as they trigger her reflection process on who she is and who she wants to be. There are numerous scenes, which focus on this quest for identity: For example, Katniss repeatedly looks into mirrors or sees herself on TV and tries to decipher if she really is the person in the reflection or on the screen. Similarly, she takes on various roles and thus proceeds from false self-perception to self-knowledge (see Section 9). In the end, Katniss then reaches the stage of identity achievement according to Marcia's identity status paradigm ("The Empirical Study" 77). Likewise, Katniss' development is also illustrated by various similes, metaphors and allusions (e.g. the caterpillar scene, Katniss' name meaning root, Katniss as a mockingjay/phoenix, Katniss as Artemis). These literary figures all serve the purpose of foreshadowing and depicting Katniss' *Bildungsprozess*. Moreover, the topics of death, violence, poverty, hunger but also of love play a crucial role in the series and have great influence on Katniss' identity development and *Bildung* as well.

On the contrary, Collins' *The Hunger Games* also deviates in certain aspects from what is usually perceived as a *bildungsroman*. For example, Katniss' family constellation and social rank are not typical of the genre of the *bildungsroman*. Katniss is not an only child, she does not come from a middle class background, she has more than one living relative and she has no adopted parents. Similarly, she does not discover any ties to her mother in the end but grows apart from her. In addition, generic markers are a rarity in the saga. Only the ambiguous allusion to Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* can arguably be seen as one.

However, there is one plausible explanation for the lack of some of these factors: Collins' trilogy merges a variety of different genres – romance, dystopia, survivor story, *bildungsroman* and even science fiction story (Henthorne 30-35). Thus, while this analysis has shown that *The Hunger Games* is, in a variety of aspects, a *bildungsroman*, it is *not only* a *bildungsroman*. What is more, the saga certainly is a young adult trilogy as its intended audience clearly is adolescents (Henthorne, Fentin, etc.). This is made explicit by the series' writing style and narrative technique: Section 1 only received a moderate amount of points as *The Hunger Games* for example lacks focalization shifts and there is no narrator other than Katniss herself. Instead of being very complex in terms of narrative technique like many earlier *bildungsromans* (e.g. *Wilhelm Meister*), the novels' writing style is highly graphic and to the point, not sparing the readers any cruel details (Henthorne 70). Similarly, the use of present tense and great amount of cliffhangers at the end of most chapters create a sense of immediacy (Henthorne 38). Thus, *The Hunger Games* meets today's zeitgeist as well as readers' demands: the trilogy is fast, uncensored, to the point and loaded with action and unexpected turning points. Hence, the writing style is very much like the script of a movie (Henthorne 38). In line with this, in certain scenes, metaphors are even explained to the audience:

It's on the third night, during our game, that I answer the question eating away at me. Crazy Cat becomes a metaphor for my situation. I am Buttercup. Peeta, the thing I want so badly to secure, is the light. As long as Buttercup feels he has the chance of catching the elusive light under his paws, he's bristling with aggression. (That's how I've been since I left the arena, with Peeta alive.) When the light goes out completely, Buttercup's temporarily distraught and confused, but he recovers and moves on to other things. (That's what would happen if Peeta died.) But the one thing that sends Buttercup into a tailspin is when I leave the light on but put it hopelessly out of his reach, high on the wall, beyond even his jumping skills. He paces below the wall, wails, and can't be comforted or distracted. He's useless until I shut the light off. (That's what Snow is trying to do to me now, only I don't know what form his game takes.) (Collins, *Mockingjay* 171-172)

In this scene it becomes obvious that *The Hunger Games*' writing style deviates from that of most novels perceived as *bildungsromans* because it is highly straightforward and explicit: Katniss even literally spells her situation and insights to the audience, who are thus experiencing her *Bildungsprozess* step by step. In the above scene, for example, it is made sure that the message is communicated

clearly and unambiguously. Similarly, Katniss, is a very straightforward protagonist, with whom the reader can easily identify: she is emotionally strong, loyal, morally good and certainly very brave and heroic. This clarity and the fact that identification with the heroine is so easy, not only mark the series as especially appropriate for its target audience but might even further the readers' own *Bildung* or quests for identity: Even highly complex philosophical topics (e.g. consequentialism) are addressed in an age-appropriate and tangible manner. Accordingly, the slightly open ending (i.e. there is no elaboration on what kind of political system Katniss in the end lives in), too, might encourage further reflection on the readers' part.

In conclusion, this investigation has shown that Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* series is a contemporary *bildungsroman* explicitly suitable for adolescents. Thereby, this popular series has itself contributed to the change/adaptation of the fluid genre of the *bildungsroman*: it merges it with the writing style and straightforwardness of young adult literature. Accordingly, even though a number of findings lend themselves to further exploration (e.g. a detailed comparison of the series to other *bildungsromans* like Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*), the most interesting one seems to be the trilogy's application in class. Clearly, students from age sixteen to eighteen are the intended target group of the novels. Thus, through tentative guidance by the teacher, highly complex (philosophical) topics can be discussed in an interesting and age-appropriate manner by making use of Collins' series. The fact that *The Hunger Games* trilogy is a *bildungsroman*, can not only be addressed by explicitly relating to this genre but also lends itself to the discussion of topics like developmental psychology, *Bildung* or identity formation. Therefore, the final chapter will now offer two practical examples on how to use *The Hunger Games* trilogy in class and thus further the students' own reflection process and *Bildung*.

## **6. Outlook: Classroom Usage of *The Hunger Games* Trilogy as *Bildungsroman***

This last chapter suggests two possible ways of using of Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* in relation to the genre of the *bildungsroman* in class. My own field of expertise lies in the subjects English, psychology and philosophy. Therefore, one lesson plan focuses on a psychological approach to Collins' series and the other one on an English language-related approach. Moreover, both lesson plans are designed in accordance with the Austrian school curriculum and will relate to Tricia Hedge's "teacher's roles" (27-33). Most importantly though, they will be based on the findings of Chapter 4. All necessary handouts are provided in Appendix A.

First of all, which advantages or positive effects has the classroom usage of a contemporary *bildungsroman*? As Erin Counihan puts it, novels of the genre of the *bildungsroman*:

are excellent tools through which to encourage high school students to examine their own selves, their feelings of identity, and the places they imagine for themselves in the world beyond high school. It is important for students to see relevance in the works that they read, but the opportunity for students to analyze themselves as well as literature is a valuable opportunity for any teacher. (39)

Thus, through analyzing Collins' series – or sections of it – from the perspective of it being a *bildungsroman*, students have the opportunity to reflect upon their own goals in life as well as on their own identities. These topics are challenging to apprehend and possibly ambiguous, especially for a teenager, who probably finds him- or herself unconsciously in the search for identity. However, by using a novel as a guideline, students can playfully approach this issue. Thus, their social understanding as well as their interpersonal skills are fostered, an objective that constitutes a central goal in the Austrian school curriculum (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, "Lebende Fremdsprachen" 1). In line with this, it is the main goal of the subject of psychology and philosophy to help students to comprehend and discuss the main questions of life (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, "Philosophie und Psychology" 1). For this purpose, self-reflection and questions

about identity formation, advancing from childhood to adulthood and on one's goals in life form vital issues. By using Collins' trilogy and discussing Katniss' *Bildung* and her quest for identity these issues can be broached in an appropriate and interesting manner. Many students probably know or have heard of *The Hunger Games* and thus they will be more enthusiastic to learn about these otherwise comparatively theoretical ideas. The relationship between the individual and society also forms a central topic in the genre of the *bildungsroman*. This topic is closely linked to that of the influence media have on young adults, which is also an issue that is stressed by the Austrian school curriculum for the subject philosophy (1). Katniss' experience with the media, the continuous surveillance or the fashion dictate in relation to her self-perception could also be addressed in class. Last but not least, by exploring Collins' series, students can also develop a deeper understanding of literary analysis and their reflection and interpretation skills are being enhanced.

Generally, *The Hunger Games*' target audience is young adults and therefore, the writing style and plot is perfectly suitable both language- and topic wise for a seventh or eighth grade of Austrian AHS. Moreover, the movie adaptations of the series are very popular as well and many students will either have seen the films or read the novels. Thus, *The Hunger Games* series as contemporary *bildungsroman* offers many new ways of addressing philosophical or psychological topics in an age-appropriate and compelling manner. For example, as discussed in Chapter 3, nowadays young adults produce enormous amounts of fan-fiction online in their leisure time (Jones 442). Thus, they become "prosumers", a term coined by Jones that describes the new phenomenon of consumers who also act as producers, and unknowingly even create their own *bildungsromans*. This trend could be used to draw students' interest towards writing fan-fiction about *The Hunger Games* trilogy and afterwards, towards reflecting their own adaptations of the series. Students could also discuss Katniss' change over the course of the plot and state their own opinions on her development as well as on her final 'place in the world'. This approach would both be suitable for an English lesson with a writing and speaking focus and for a philosophy or psychology lesson on identity development, attitudes and goals in life. However, it seems more suitable to only discuss sections or individual



passages of Collins' trilogy, which are particularly iconic for the genre of the *bildungsroman* (e.g. the caterpillar scene) and thus offer a great starting point, than requiring students to read all three novels of the series. The latter might only work as a semester project and even in this context it would probably be too extensive. Thus, for the following two lesson plans students do not have to know the entire trilogy in order to be able to participate.

Firstly, I will present an English lesson for a seventh or eighth grade (level B2) similar to the one just suggested: As a starting point, students have to read a brief summary of *The Hunger Games*, which however leaves the end open. Then, in groups, they are invited to answer a few questions on what kind of ending they expect. Afterwards, they receive the original epilogue of the series (which only comprises one page). Now, students are encouraged to discuss the differences and similarities between their own expectations and the actual ending. In this phase, the teacher mainly acts as organizer, supporter and prompter (Hedge 28). On a higher level, students could then also reflect upon why they had particular expectations and present their opinions on the actual ending of the series. In line with this, the topic of Katniss' development throughout the series (from childhood to adulthood), which constitutes a fundamental theme in the trilogy, could be broached as well, in case a number of students know the trilogy (either the novels or the movies). By means of this English lesson not only the students' reading, writing and speaking skills are trained but they are also encouraged to state their own expectations and opinions and discuss and give reasons for them (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, "Lebende Fremdsprachen" 1). Moreover, should they already know Collins' series, they will be able to contribute their knowledge and will discover a new perspective from which to look upon *The Hunger Games*. The Table below illustrates this lesson plan in more detail:

Time	Procedure	Materials	Teacher's roles
2'	Introduction: topic & general procedure		organizer, motivator
15'	Reading of summary and answering of questions	handout: plot summary	supporter, organizer, resource
5'	Reading: Epilogue	handout: epilogue	supporter, organizer, resource
13'	Group discussion: own expectations vs actual ending	students' notes	supporter, organizer, resource, participant, prompter
15'	Plenum discussion: why did students have certain expectations? Is the epilogue a suitable ending for the trilogy? Does Katniss change in the course of the plot? How?	board, students' notes	supporter, mediator, organizer, resource, participant, guide, prompter

Table 13: Lesson Plan: English

The second lesson that I will present is a psychology lesson, which focuses on identity development in adolescents. Developmental psychology (e.g. Erikson, Marcia) also constitutes an important part of the Austrian school curriculum for the subject psychology (3). Thus, by discussing this topic in relation to Collins' *The Hunger Games* different psychological stages (Erikson) or statuses (Marcia) can be illustrated. In the lesson outlined below, students learn about James Marcia's "identity status paradigm" ("Development and Validation" 551-552) and are asked to relate them to different scenes taken from *The Hunger Games*, which depict different phases of Katniss' identity development. Firstly, the teacher introduces Marcia's concept and briefly describes the four different statuses: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and identity achievement (Marcia, "The Empirical Study" 74-77). Meanwhile, the students are asked to take notes. In this phase, the teacher mainly acts as presenter (Hedge 28). Then, in groups of four, students receive four texts that give different scenes from Collins' trilogy. In each scene Katniss can be seen as experiencing one of the identity

statuses which are undergone during the phase of late adolescence (Marcia, "Development and Validation" 551). After every student has read out a scene, the entire group tries to assign one of Marcia's identity statuses to each extract from *The Hunger Games*. The teacher may act as guide or prompter or participate in group discussions (Hedge 28-29). At the end, all results are compared in a final plenary discussion. In this last phase of the lesson, it is important to ask students to give reasons for their choices. Moreover, there should also be room for questions for further reflection. For example: Do you think that Marcia's identity statuses apply for every adolescent? Does everyone undergo all phases? If you knew *The Hunger Games* before this lesson, have you devoted some thought to Katniss' development up until now? Through the aid of these questions, students should realize that they can also question Marcia's perception and that these identity statuses are just one way of classifying human development. However, they should take with them the insight that every human undergoes some kind of psychological development throughout his or her lifetime and the concept of change as well as questions about one's identity form a central part of this process. In this phase, the teacher plays a very important role as he or she needs to act as guide, participant, prompter, administrator and maybe mediator (Hedge 28-29). The table below will illustrate this lesson plan:

Time	Procedure	Materials	Teacher's roles
15'	Introduction: Developmental psychology James Marcia's identity status paradigm: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, identity achievement	board, students' notes	presenter, motivator, instructor
20'	Groups of four: Students receive handouts with scenes from <i>The Hunger Games</i> and read them out. Then they try to assign one of Marcia's statuses to each scene and discuss their ideas with their group members.	handouts, students' notes	guide, participant, prompter, supporter
15'	Plenum discussion: all findings are presented and discussed in class. The teacher asks the students to give reasons for their choices and prompts further reflection by asking questions like: Do you think that Marcia's identity statuses apply for every adolescent? Does everyone undergo all phases? If you knew <i>The Hunger Games</i> , have you realized or thought about Katniss' development up until now?	board students' notes	guide, participant, prompter, administrator, mediator

Table 14: Lesson Plan: Psychology

In conclusion, exploring Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* in respect to the trilogy being a contemporary *bildungsroman*, offers many new opportunities for classroom usage of the series. The above two lesson plans only exemplify what this application might look like. Topics like *Bildung*, identity, individual versus society, the influence of the media or the genre of the *bildungsroman* as such can all be addressed by relating to Collins' trilogy and they all lend themselves to further exploration in various subjects.

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## Appendix A

### Psychology Lesson Handouts

"Only I keep wishing I could think of a way to...to show the Capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their Games," says Peeta. "But you are not," I say. "None of us are. That's how the Games work." "OK, but within that framework, there's still you, There's still me," he insists. "A little. Only...no offence, but who cares, Peeta?" I say. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 172)

→ Identity diffusion (Katniss is uninterested in identity issues)

At eleven years old, with Prim just seven, I took over as head of the family. There was no choice. I bought our food at the market and cooked it best as I could and tried to keep Prim and myself looking presentable. (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 32)

→ Foreclosure (no own choices, Katniss had to take over her father's role)

I feel like a caterpillar in a cocoon awaiting metamorphosis. I always supposed that to be a peaceful condition. At first it is. But as I journey into night, I feel more and more trapped, suffocated by the slippery bindings, unable to emerge until I have transformed into something of beauty. I squirm, trying to shed my ruined body and unlock the secret to growing flawless wings. Despite enormous effort, I remain a hideous creature, fried into my current form by the blast from the bombs. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 409)

→ Moratorium (identity crisis)

"[...] what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself" What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction" (Collins, *Mockingjay* 436)

→ Identity achievement (Katniss knows who she is/ what she wants)

## English Lesson Handouts

### **Plot Summary: *The Hunger Games***

Katniss Everdeen is a sixteen-year-old girl, who grew up in a dystopian future society in what used to be the United States. Together with her little sister and her mother She lives in the poorest of twelve districts. After her father's death she now has to hunt in the woods in order to keep her family from starvation. In this future country called Panem, two children from each district have to participate in the annual Hunger Games. This is a reality TV show, in which teenagers have to fight to the death in an arena. The winner receives a lot of money and gets to live in a villa from that time on and his or her district is supplied with enough food for a year. When Katniss' little sister, Prim, is selected to participate in the Hunger Games, Katniss volunteers and takes her place. For her sister's sake, she wants to win the Games and return home.

However, soon she discovers that she is not emotionally capable to kill her friend Peeta, a boy who grew up in the same district as her. Instead, the two of them threaten the so-called Gamemakers to commit suicide if they do not accept both of them as winners. From then onwards, Katniss is forced to pretend that she is madly in love with Peeta and therefore wanted to save him. Otherwise this act of public disobedience would have to be cruelly punished by the leader, President Snow. This puts her in a very difficult situation because now she has to sort out her feelings both for Peeta and for her childhood friend Gale.

After being crowned victors and returning home, Katniss and Peeta receive very bad news: The evil President Snow decided to launch another Hunger Games in which all former victors have to compete against each other. Thus both Katniss and Peeta has to fight in an arena once again. However, now Katniss' goal is no longer her own survival but she wants to save Peeta's life instead. Gradually, Katniss now starts to question the ruthless regime. She then learns about a rebel group, who plan President Snow's downfall. These rebels save Katniss from the second arena and now want her to act as the symbol of their revolution because of her act of public disobedience in the first Hunger Games. Meanwhile, Peeta has been taken prisoner by President Snow and is being brainwashed into hating Katniss. Even though Katniss puts all her loved ones in danger if she accepts this offer she agrees so in order to secure a better future for all citizens of Panem.

After a while, Peeta is released but now is a different person. Only gradually, he remembers who he used to be as well as his relationship to Katniss. In the end, there is a final war between the rebels, lead by President Coin, and President Snow and his troops. In this show-down Katniss' sister is killed and Katniss discovers that President Coin, the rebel leader, was responsible for the attack that cost her sister's life. When Coin suggests to launch new Hunger Games with the prisoners from the war Katniss realizes that this new president is no better than her predecessor. For that reason, she publicly kills president Coin.

**There is also an epilogue, which shows Katniss fifteen years later. Write a brief text about what you imagine this epilogue to look like. Try to answer the following questions:**

- Is there a happy ending? Why? Why not?
  - Is Katniss with Peeta/with Gale or with neither of them?
  - Does Katniss have children? Why? Why not?
  - Is Katniss happy? Does she have a job?
  - Was she able to cope with all her traumatizing experiences? (loss of her sister, war etc.)
- 

### **Epilogue**

**Now read the original epilogue. Did you expect it to be like this? Why? Why not? What is different? Discuss in your group!**

They play in the Meadow. The dancing girl with the dark hair and blue eyes. The boy with blond curls and gray eyes, struggling to keep up with her on his chubby toddler legs. It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly. When I first felt her stirring inside of me, I was consumed with a terror that felt as old as life itself. Only the joy of holding her in my arms could tame it. Carrying him was a little easier, but not much.

The questions are just beginning. The arenas have been completely destroyed, the memorials built, there are no more Hunger Games. But they teach about them at school, and the girl knows we played a role in them. The boy will know in a few years. How can I tell them about that world without frightening them to death? My children, who take the words of the song for granted:

*Deep in the meadow, under the willow  
A bed of grass, a soft green pillow  
Lay down your head, and close your sleepy eyes  
And when again they open, the sun will rise.*

*Here it's safe, here it's warm  
Here the daisies guard you from every harm  
Here your dreams are sweet and tomorrow brings them true  
Here is the place where I love you.*

My children, who don't know they play on a graveyard.

Peeta says it will be okay. We have each other. And the book. We can make them understand in a way that will make them braver. But one day I'll have to explain about my nightmares. Why they came. Why they won't ever really go away.

I'll tell them how I survive it. I'll tell them that on bad mornings, it feels impossible to take pleasure in anything because I'm afraid it could be taken away. That's when I make a list in my head of every act of goodness I've seen someone do. It's like a game. Repetitive. Even a little tedious after more than twenty years. But there are much worse games to play.

THE END (Collins, *Mockingjay* 437-438)

## **Appendix B**

### **Abstract**

This thesis investigates Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy in regard to its affiliation to the genre of the *bildungsroman*. Firstly, this highly controversial genre is discussed and the most central positions in the *bildungsroman* dispute are summarized. It is argued against an essentialist perception of any genre and instead the application polythetic classes, when analyzing a work in regard to its genre, is recommended. Secondly, *The Hunger Games* novels are analyzed by means of Anniken Telnes Iversen's Bildungsroman Index (BRI). This investigation is divided into nine sections, namely: narrative perspective and mode; characterization: Katniss Everdeen; characterization: secondary characters and their functions; topical story elements: affecting Katniss Everdeen; topical story elements: affecting secondary characters; setting; plot and structure; generic signals and last but not least theme, subject matter and motifs. In sum, *The Hunger Games* scores 107 out of 148 possible points on the BRI. Therefore, it can be concluded that Collins' trilogy is a contemporary *bildungsroman*, which however differs in terms of writing style and generic signals from the conventions of the genre. Finally, two lesson plans are outlined in order to give some recommendations for the practical application of these findings.

## Zusammenfassung

Diese Diplomarbeit untersucht *Die Tribute von Panem* Trilogie von Suzanne Collins im Bezug auf deren Gemeinsamkeiten (Verwandtschaft) mit dem Genre des Bildungsromans. Zuerst wird dieser höchst umstrittene Gattungsbegriff selbst diskutiert und die grundlegenden Standpunkte in der Kontroverse rund um den Bildungsroman werden zusammengefasst. Dabei wird gegen die essentialistische Auffassung jedweden Genrebegriffs Stellung bezogen und stattdessen die Anwendung polythetischer Klassifizierungen bei der Analyse eines literarischen Werks im Bezug auf dessen Genrezugehörigkeit empfohlen. Weiters werden *Die Tribute von Panem* Bücher mit Hilfe von Anniken Telnes Iversens Bildungsroman Index' (BRI) analysiert. Diese Untersuchung teilt sich in neun Kapitel: Erzählperspektive- und -weise; Charakterisierung: Katniss Everdeen; Charakterisierung: Nebencharaktere und deren Funktion; thematische Elemente der Erzählung, welche Katniss Everdeen betreffen; thematische Elemente im Bezug auf die Nebencharaktere; Schauplatz; Handlungsverlauf und Aufbau; Genresignale und zuletzt noch Thematik, Inhalt und Motive. Zusammenfassend betrachte erzielen *Die Tribute von Panem* 107 von 148 möglichen Punkten des BRI. Aus diesem Grund lässt es sich feststellen, dass es sich bei Collins' Trilogie um einen zeitgenössischen Bildungsroman handelt, welcher jedoch, was Schreibstil und Genresignale betrifft, von den Konventionen der Gattung abweicht. Abschließend werden zwei Stundenbilder für den Einsatz im Unterricht beschrieben, um Empfehlungen für die praktische Anwendung der oben beschriebene Ergebnisse zu präsentieren.