

Journalism club is engaging with arts and culture

Susan Collins creates a new twist on 'The Hunger Games' with her latest book 'A Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes'

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Pre 'Hunger Games' Panem is an interesting situation: President Snow is not so much the president yet, but an adolescent nearing the end of school and thinking about university. Where the hunger games are an unwatched event, tributes are treated like dirt and key functions such as mentors, betting and parcels delivered to tributes are all still non-existent. Compared to 'The Hunger Games', everything is different as 'A Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes' goes back to the roots of the widespread district hate of President Snow and the creation of the exceedingly dangerous hunger games in Panem today.

For the fourth book in 'The Hunger Games' series, instead of following Katniss and the change in rule of Panem after the second district uprising, Suzanne Collins does a complete u-turn as the world she has created throughout her trilogy is flipped on its head and we are introduced to the post-war capital after the first revolt. For those who have read 'The Hunger Games' you will be glad to know that this book is completely full of surprises and plot twists you would never have seen coming. However, if you are someone who has never read or seen 'The Hunger Games' you're in luck, as 'A Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes' can be read as a stand alone book, giving you a newfound context to some of the core characters found within the main trilogy.

So how does 'A Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes' compare to the main trilogy? From a personal perspective, I believe this is Collins's best book in the series, however, this was because I read this book fourth and began to draw lines and cross reference information about the characters and Panem between all three books, changing my opinions on characters that I never thought could be shaken. Where one girl sends the whole world of the trilogy crashing down, creating a new opening to discover what happened to President Snow and how he became the building blocks of the hunger games that are known today.

Following Coriolanus Snow's time as a mentor, to the district 12 female tribute Lucy Gray Baird, is one that is certainly surprising, where every chapter ends on a cliffhanger giving a need to read forward just a few more pages to see what happened. By the time the next few pages are read, which soon translates into at least two more chapters of reading, a stopping point is still nowhere to be found. Perhaps this continuous movement and little time to pause is the very essence of the hunger games themselves, which Collins manipulates with incredible skill, creating the most memorable book yet.

