Criticizing Authoritarianism through Young Adult Fiction: Rowling’s *Harry Potter* and Collins’ *The Hunger Games* as Pedagogical Works.

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1. Introduction

Young adult literature (YAL) is a genre that has become highly popular in the last twenty years. Nevertheless, it is often not seen as serious literature like works from the so-called canon. While it is true that there are many formulaic and unimaginative YA books, some works consist of various layers and can be read through a variety of lenses. Collins’ *Hunger Games* series and Rowling’s *Harry Potter* novels have the potential to belong to the latter group.

The aim of this thesis is to work out and analyse the hidden power structures in these two YA novel series and by examining them through the lens of Michel Foucault’s *Surveillance and Punishment* understand in which way the oppressive systems in the novels exert power. It will be shown how means of panoptic surveillance are used for disciplining and in what way mass media are used to enforce but also to subvert power regimes. More generally, the way of showing resistance, both as individual and as organized group, will be one of the main focuses of the thesis. Moreover, it will be discussed how Rowling and Collins incorporate such serious topics in a way that the main target group of the novels, teenagers and young adults, can relate to them.

The thesis will also give three exemplary classroom activities for ESL classes. The activities base on the analysis part of this thesis and are adapted to suit the abilities of students in upper secondary education. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as well as Austrian school curricula are taken into account. The activities use well founded didactic approaches that have proven to work in practice. They should not only make the students aware of the power mechanics of oppressive systems in the novels but also have a positive influence on the students’ general attitude towards literature and spark more reading.

2. Theoretical Background and Definitions

‘Authoritarian’ and ‘totalitarian’ are buzzwords that are frequently used in political discussions. However, they are often used inaccurately or in wrong contexts. Therefore,
short and precise\textsuperscript{1} definitions based on Juan C. Linz and Carl Friedrich's research will be
provided. They belong to the most influential researchers on modern autocratic systems
and their definitions can be considered standard today.

Discipline and surveillance as important features of all autocratic regimes need to be
analysed thoroughly. Michel Foucault’s highly influential book \textit{Discipline and Punish: The
Birth of the Prison} will be used as theoretical foundation for the literature analysis. Jeremy
Bentham’s concept of the ‘panopticon’ was elaborated in \textit{Discipline as Punish} and will serve
to analyse space and confinement in the novel series. Thomas Mathiesen’s ‘synopticon’ is
basically a reversion of the ‘panopticon’ with similar effects in regard of surveillance and
disciplining. Mathiesen’s work is a response on the Foucauldian view on surveillance.

Young adult fiction as category of its own came up in the mid-twentieth century.
Nevertheless, it has become one of the most important literary genre in terms of
popularity. While young adult literate is often deemed of less literary value than the
classics, its characteristics are well suited both for learners of a foreign language and to
spark the interest of reluctant readers.

\textbf{2.1 Totalitarianism}

The most important feature of both authoritarianism and totalitarianism is that they are
nondemocratic political systems (Linz, \textit{Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes} 50).
Although already in the 1930s a small number of scholars differentiated between
authoritarianism and totalitarianism as two distinct political phenomena, the mainstream
view until well after the end of World War II was that democracy and totalitarianism were
two “polar extremes toward which other systems would tend” (Linz, \textit{Totalitarian and
Authoritarian Regimes} 52). In other words, totalitarianism was seen as the antithesis of the
ideal democracy and National Socialism as well as Stalinism were seen as the prototype for

\textsuperscript{1} Although Linz gives a general overview of the features of authoritarianism, he emphasizes that
authoritarianism is very heterogeneous and thus defines a substantial number of subforms. Such a detailed
analysis would, however, by far exceed the level of complexity needed for a literary analysis. Therefore, this
paper uses the basic trichotomy of democracy, authoritarianism and totalitarianism without going into
further detail.
a totalitarian regime. According to this point of view, totalitarianism was the most extreme form an authoritarian system could possibly take.

However, as Linz points out, this one-dimensional point of view soon proved to be inadequate and required a separate definition of authoritarianism. Based on his research on the Franco regime in Spain, Linz attempted to define authoritarianism as “a type sui generis rather than on a continuum between democracy and totalitarianism” (Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes 53). Friedrich (15) claimed that the fascist and communist dictatorships that began to rise after World War I should be seen as entirely different from earlier forms of autocratic regimes. He further stated that despite their very different ideology and goals, both National Socialism and Stalinism had very similar defining characteristics (17). Friedrich’s six features of totalitarian systems shall serve as starting point towards the definition to be used in this paper.

Totalitarian systems have (a) an official and elaborate ideology that extends in all important aspects of life and that proclaims a radically new utopian society. There is (b) a single mass party that has all the power. Usually this party is led by one man, the dictator. There is (c) a secret police that supports but also controls the mass party for their leaders and enforces the official propaganda by means of systematic terror. The party has (d) a near monopoly on all means of mass communication, (e) a near monopoly on weapons to prevent any form of armed resistance, and (f) central direction and control of the economy through state planning (Friedrich 19-20). Linz (Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes 67) emphasizes that any of these six features can occur separately in all kinds of autocratic systems and “only their simultaneous presence makes a system totalitarian”. Apart from the first two, these characteristics can and do even appear to some extent in democratic governments. Friedrich (21) exemplifies this by comparing traditional weapons to modern warfare. Two centuries ago, the weapons people could carry were not fundamentally different from those carried by armed troops or police units. However, even democracies with the most liberal gun laws obviously cannot and do not allow civilians to use tanks or fighter aircraft.

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2 Autocracy describes any form of “government by a single person or small group that has unlimited power or authority” (“Autocracy”) and will be used in the following as hypernym for authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.
Juan J. Linz’s definition of totalitarianism is limited to three characteristics. According to him “there is a monistic but not monolithic center of power” (Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes 70), which means that any social or political organizations that are not in line with the ideology of the respective totalitarian state are eliminated or at least decisively weakened and marginalized. However, there can be some degree of political pluralism and conflicts within the inner circle of the ruling elite as long as the concurring organizations are factions or organizations of the single party (Linz, Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes 68-69). Any form of pluralism beyond the monistic centre of power is oppressed. The second defining trait is “an exclusive, autonomous, and more or less intellectually elaborate ideology with [...] some ultimate meaning, sense of historical purpose, and interpretation of social reality” (Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes 70). It is not surprising that any actions or even opinions at variance with the totalitarian ideology by common people or low level party member are punished. The rulers, however, may manipulate or selectively interpret their own ideology if needed (Linz, Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes 77). The third feature according to Linz (Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes 70) is that “[c]itizen participation in and active mobilization for political and collective social tasks are encouraged, demanded, rewarded, and channelled”. Thus a totalitarian state requires everyone to work at maximum effort for the goals set by the leaders of that state or the ideology.

The first two characteristics of Linz’ definition by and large match Friedrich’s first two features. Although Linz does not explicitly mention a secret police, it is implied by the fact that there has to be an institution to monitor and if necessary also punish those who deviate from the official ideology or show resistance against the regime. It is surprising that Linz does not explicitly mention terror in his definition of totalitarian systems. Although he admits that in existing totalitarian systems terror on an unprecedented scale has been exerted by state organizations (Linz, Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes 102), he mentions the possibility of “particularly stabilized systems with all the characteristics of totalitarianism except widespread and all-pervasive terror” (Linz, Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes 101). However, it is hard to imagine that stability in a totalitarian state can be maintained without oppressing all forms of resistance and heterodoxy, as they would be a threat to what Linz calls the monistic centre of power.
The definition which will be used for the analysis of *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games* will, therefore, include the terror element from Friedrich’s definition. Otherwise, I find Juan J. Linz’ three characteristics productive, in particular the aspect of mass mobilization which is missing in Friedrich’s definition. The last three features of Friedrich’s definition, near monopoly on all means of mass communication, near monopoly on weapons and central direction of the economy will be omitted for the following reasons: It is highly questionable whether all modern means of mass communication like internet could be regulated in a way to create a near monopoly. This was true during World War II and the post-war period in which Friedrich’s analysis was given. The near monopoly on weapons, however, is a vague definition. As already mentioned, any system in the world, democratic or non-democratic, has restrictions on which weapons can legally be carried or owned. Even though harsh restrictions on weapons certainly are a feature of totalitarian systems, by no means would strict gun laws imply that a state is totalitarian. Central direction of the economy through state planning is a typical feature of totalitarian but also of other systems that do not correspond to the main criteria of totalitarianism. Therefore, the definition for totalitarianism to be used in this paper is the following:

1. There is a single mass party that has all the power. It is usually led by one man, the dictator.
2. There is an official and elaborate ideology that extends in all aspects of life and proclaims a radically new utopian society.
3. Citizen participation in and active mobilization for political and collective social tasks are encouraged, demanded, rewarded, and channelled.
4. There is a secret police that enforces the official propaganda by means of systematic terror. (Friedrich 19-20, Linz *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* 70)

2.2 Authoritarianism

Although authoritarianism like totalitarianism refers to non-democratic regimes, there are some profound differences that are elaborated in this subchapter. It is important to differentiate between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, as the dichotomy between
non-democratic and democratic would be insufficient both to describe the reality of the 20th and 21st century as well as to analyse literature that criticizes oppressive regimes, especially since George Orwell’s highly influential works *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In authoritarian regimes there is usually very limited pluralism and political opposition is only possible to a certain degree. Authoritarian leaders might allow or even encourage groups or movements independent from the ruling party. However, they will always control and limit their political power and define the conditions under which they are allowed to exist. (Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* 161). While in totalitarian dictatorships everything is done in order to mobilize the citizen and work for the success of the party and the final ideological goal and thus eliminate everything that might even be a distraction, authoritarian leaders basically just try to oppress possible dangers to their power. They usually tolerate social or political groups that had already been in existence before the authoritarian regime was founded unless they become a substantial peril. In particular, Linz (“Recollections” 145-147) mentions the Catholic Church and both its bonds and its conflicts with the authoritarian Falange in Spain.

Another important distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism is the lack of an ideology and mass mobilization. Ideologies are elaborate, codified and have a strong utopian element. Clear ideological belief systems are prerequisite for mass mobilization and manipulation (Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* 162). Authoritarian regimes, however, are more concerned with maintaining their power instead of trying to install some sort of “utopia”—which in fact has produced terrible dystopias as one can see from the historical examples of totalitarian regimes. Therefore, there is no need for neither an elaborate ideology nor mass mobilization. However, as Linz (*Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* 165-166) points out, at some points, especially while the authoritarian regime is being installed, mass mobilization is possible and maybe even necessary in order to overthrow another existing system. This mobilization, however, has to be temporary as in a system with limited pluralism it would eventually result either in the abolition of all forms of pluralism and thus totalitarianism or a collapse which might lead to democracy.
The depoliticization in authoritarian regimes can result in intended political apathy of the masses. This is one of the main reasons why authoritarianism is not just some middle ground between totalitarianism and democracy but in fact an entirely different system. Democracy actually favours and encourages political participation. Also, democratic parties have clear ideological beliefs and goals for the future of the state, although the ideologies and beliefs are of course drastically different from totalitarian regimes. Still, in both democracy and totalitarianism the aims and goals of the respective rulers are oriented towards what they conceive as better future either for all or for a defined group of people.

Prototypical authoritarian regimes mainly have private goals like maintaining wealth and/or power for the ruling class. As already mentioned, many real-world examples do not fit neatly into one of the three main categories and show characteristics of two or all three of the main political systems. A diachronic view on certain regimes offers insights in transformations and possible alternative outcomes in case certain events had not happened. Linz (“Recollections” 144) claims that although Franco had never wanted to create a totalitarian state, in the first years after the civil war there were “strong totalitarian tendencies and totalitarian practices” while later Spain became a prototype for authoritarianism.

To sum it up, the typical features of an authoritarian regime are:

1. One single person or a small group is in power. Limited pluralism is possible as long as no danger to the rulers arises from it.

2. Political participation of the masses is not requested and often not even wanted.

3. There is no guiding ideology. The aims and goals of the rulers are private, they do not proclaim a utopian society but instead want to sustain their power and/or wealth.

This definition might be relatively simple, but it is still accurate enough for the aim of an analysis of youth literature. Due to the great heterogeneity of authoritarian regimes it would be hard to give an accurate definition that encompasses all possible forms.
2.3 Foucauldian Perspectives on Disciplinary Institutions

As can be seen in the definitions, power is a central aspect of both authoritarianism and totalitarianism—and in fact of every form of government. According to Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* there are two types of power which he calls sovereign power, represented by torture and public bodily punishment and disciplinary power which is individual and targets the soul instead of the body. Thus, discipline and punishment are used to get, increase and uphold power—not only by governments and leaders of non-democratic regimes, but also on a smaller scale by various kinds of institutions. While Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy is about a regime that exercises power, the analysis of Rowling’s *Harry Potter* novels will focus more on power structures in groups and institutions.

Until the turn from the 18th to the 19th century, the more severe forms of punishment were mostly directed at the bodies of those to be punished. Although one might think of public executions first, various forms of public torture were far more frequent. Even if the delinquent was to be banished or locked away, public corporal punishment like whipping or branding was usually included to embarrass the condemned (Foucault 44-45). This torturing should have a twofold effect. On the one hand, it should leave a mark on the body of the criminal, on the other hand it should be a spectacle for the public in order to demonstrate the triumph of justice and, consequently, keep citizens from committing crimes (Foucault 47). However, it also had a political function as it was a display of power by the monarch. At that time, any violation of the law was seen as indirect attack on the monarch and thus on her or his power (Foucault 63).

In the last two centuries punishment has become increasingly less corporal. Modern forms of punishment mostly do not allow torturing anymore and most democratic countries have abolished death penalty. Foucault (25) argues that the real intention for this shift from inflicting physical harm to more humane ways of punishing criminals was not mainly to decrease cruelty and intensity. According to Foucault (25-26), the new forms of punishment meant to target the souls of the convicted instead of their bodies. By ‘targeting the soul’, Foucault means that punishment should no longer serve to leave a visible mark and to satisfy the sovereign’s need for revenge but should rather have an effect on the mind and thinking of the criminal. This way punishment does not only have negative consequences
for the convicted, it should form and change them so they become more useful (Foucault 35-36).

Disciplinary power seeks to create what Foucault calls ‘docile bodies’. An ideal docile body is submissive and malleable (Foucault 175). Modern punishment methods use disciplinary power to create such ‘docile bodies’. Even though the punishment is not corporal anymore, it indirectly affects the bodies. The methods used to get a precise control over bodies are called the ‘disciplines’. Those in position of power use the disciplines in order to increase the utility of bodies while at the same time make them even more docile and submissive (Foucault 176).

It would be wrong to assume that only prisons or other buildings to keep criminals enclosed are disciplinary institutions. Foucault names school, hospitals, barracks, factories and more institutions as examples (177). Disciplinary institutions are enclosed spaces that can clearly be differentiated from the outside. They use the principle of partitioning space into small units, ideally one unit per person if possible. Partitioning space serves to better seek out and control individuals as well as to avoid the forming of larger groups. It is crucial that the behaviour and performance of every individual can be measured in order to be optimized. All spaces within a disciplinary institution serve a clear and distinct purpose. Ranking and classification is crucial in disciplining in order to optimize the organization and through that the effectiveness. Various parameters of individuals are constantly monitored and measured in order to rank and thus optimally discipline them (Foucault 181-189). Besides spatial distribution, the meticulous planning of time is also an important aspect of disciplinary institutions. The main three elements of time planning were already present in abbeys long before institutional disciplining came up. They are fixed rhythms, coercion to do certain things and regulated cycles of repetition (Foucault 192). While traditional time tables mainly had the purpose to minimize the amount of unused time, discipline started to partition time into increasingly smaller units in order to get the most out of every moment and to better control and regulate time (Foucault 198).

This shows that punishment in disciplinary institutions differs markedly from the corporal forms of punishment described at the beginning of the chapter. As the aim of disciplining is to form docile and optimized bodies, it mainly relies on correction of any deviations.
Therefore, disciplinary institutions use repetition and exercise of the correct behaviour (Foucault 232). It is important to note that the disciplines do not only seek to punish improper behaviour or bad performance but also reward good behaviour and performance. In order to optimize every single person, disciplinary institutions often have a detailed system to measure, quantify and rate every single achievement and every good or bad behaviour pattern. The sum of all the single pieces of data determines the class or rank (Foucault 232-234). A well-known example for such a quantification and ranking are school grades, which try to quantify the knowledge of individuals based on many measure points collected throughout the school year. According to Foucault (234) the division into ranks, classes or grades should both reward or punish the individuals as well as define a hierarchy of qualities and abilities. Consequently, it also defines what lies within the norm and what is considered abnormal. Normalization as principle of power has the effect of both homogenising individuals within the society as well as categorizing them within the boundaries of the norm (Foucault 237).

Disciplinary power differs from older power mechanisms. Traditionally, power was clearly visible and put into display while the subjects of power were made small and invisible. Disciplinary power, however, tries to stay as invisible as possible while its subjects are constantly controlled and examined (Foucault 241). The partition of space and time into small quantifiable units allows such a constant surveillance. According to Foucault (224) the perfect apparatus for disciplining would be one that enables to see everything at all time.

2.3.1 Bentham’s Concept of the ‘Panopticon’ as Idealized Instrument of Power

Jeremy Bentham’s ‘Panopticon’, an architectural design for a penal institution, would be such an apparatus of perfect disciplining. The Panopticon consists of a ring-shaped outer building divided into single cells. Each cell has two big windows, one towards the outside and one towards the middle of the ring. The windows serve to illuminate the cells so that the person inside remains visible at all time and, therefore, can be constantly monitored. In the centre of the ring there is a tower from which every single cell can be watched. The tower, in contrast to the cells, has windows with blinds so that the surveilled cannot see the guard and so will never know his or her current whereabouts. Although they are not
permanently watched, there is always the danger of being watched. The walls that divide the individual cells prevent any sort of communication and even more so of organizing in groups (Foucault 256-258). Although the Panopticon was initially designed as model for a utopian maximally effective prison (Foucault 263-264), Foucault sees it rather as a concept to be used for various kinds of disciplinary institutions. In schools, for instance, it would minimize any kinds of distraction like chatting with classmates while it would also effectively prevent cheating (Foucault 263-264). More general, the concept of the Panopticon is an ideal instrument to exert power. It allows few people to monitor and control the masses. It is not only efficient, but also economical (Foucault 265).

Foucault characterizes the police as panoptic institution that has to be able to make acts, events and even behaviours visible and register the suspectedness of individuals while staying as invisible as possible (Foucault 273-275). If police officers are distributed throughout the towns and cities, there is always the possibility of being watched. Even though a continuous and all-encompassing surveillance is not possible, the possibility of being monitored at any given moment ensures the panoptic disciplinary power of the police. Mathiesen (218) adds that through modern technology “organized computerized surveillance of whole categories of people, with a view to possible future crimes rather than past acts, has grown enormous.” Electronical surveillance even further discloses the police officers from the people who are being watched. Surveillance in the public fills the disciplinary power gaps between the closed disciplinary institutions like schools or prisons and, therefore, enables a constant disciplining of bodies (Foucault 276). This leads Foucault (278) to the conclusion that our civilisation has shifted from a society of spectacle to a society of surveillance, from a society where many were watching the few (like it was the case with public executions or tortures) to one where few are watching the many. In the eyes of Foucault, panopticism is a political technology for disciplining and forming docile bodies.

2.3.2 Thomas Mathiesen’s Concept of the ‘Synopticon’: “Many Watching the Few”

Mathiesen (218) agrees with Foucault that the concept of the Panopticon, few watching the many, is omnipresent in modern societies, both in criminal control systems as well as
in institutions unrelated to the legal system. However, he challenges Foucault’s belief that the reciprocal phenomenon, many watching the few, has become irrelevant and thus plays no role in disciplining the masses. According to Mathiesen (219) it is inexplicable why Foucault has not even mentioned the roll of mass media in disciplining our society. The development of mass media has been similar both in terms of time and impact on disciplining and controlling people to the development of panoptic systems. Through mass media large groups of people can watch a very limited number of political leaders, reporters, but of course also stars and VIPs. In accordance with the term ‘panopticism’, Mathiesen (219) calls this phenomenon ‘synopticism’. As both phenomena have a significant influence on our society, we do not live in a society of surveillance but rather a viewer society, with the word ‘viewer’ used in a double sense.

While panoptical systems exert power on societies by monitoring them and shape bodies through continuous rewards and punishments, the power of mass media comes from the information they give us or withhold from us. This selection or even manipulation of information “is performed within the context of a broader hidden agenda of political or economic interests” (Mathiesen 226). Consumers of mass media tend to have great confidence in radio or television reporters and commentators according to two studies from Norway (Mathiesen 226). Consequently, it is unlikely that they question the information they get and are, therefore, easy to manipulate. Moreover, studies in the 1990s showed that men, not women, from institutionalized elites were overwhelmingly dominant as faces of the mass media. For Mathiesen (227) this is a significant problem from a democratic point of view. Due to high and influence of mass media, it is no longer the panoptic disciplining but rather the synoptic media system which is targeting and manipulation people’s souls (Mathiesen 230). In times of mass media, docile bodies—or rather docile souls—are created by political and economic influencers, few who try to impose their opinion to the many who are watching them. According to Zygmunt Bauman (53-54) in the Synopticon “locals watch the globals. The authority of the latter is secured by their very remoteness [...] simultaneously inaccessible and within sight [...] setting a shining example for all the inferiors to follow or to dream of following; admired and coveted at the same time – a royalty that guides instead of ruling.” Coercion through disciplining is thus replaced by seduction. Mathiesen (231) adds that “Panopticon and
Synopticon reciprocally feed on each other”. Representations of the Panopticon, like the police, feed news about criminals to the Synopticon, to newspapers or TV broadcasters. They publish a transformed version of this news, focusing on individual cases in a sensationalist manner with the consequence that they bring back the public executions on screen or paper, albeit of course in a metaphorical sense. This, according to Mathiesen, influences the public opinion towards a more positive attitude to surveillance measures.

Therefore, the concepts of ‘panopticism’ and ‘synopticism’ are a good theoretical basis for the analysis of power structures, space and confinement as well as the different forms of punishment within the YA novels discussed in this paper. Foucault describes the different mechanisms and goals of power in detail. The Synopticon serves as ideal counterpart to Panopticism and allows the analysis of mass media as amplifiers of power and surveillance as well as possible instrument of resistance against oppressive systems.

2.4 Young Adult Fiction

Literature written mainly for a teenage audience is relatively new phenomenon. Most scholars date the beginning of young adult literature to the late 1960s. Susan E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* from 1967 is seen as “novel that clearly established the realistic novel for the teenage book market” (Crowe 121) or, along with other novels from that year, “[t]he turning point for YAL” (Herz & Gallo 10). In contrast to most other scholars, Garcia (5) sees the beginning of YAL already in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He explains that in this period teenagers were first seen as potential customer target group. Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, young adult literature was often not recognised as such. In 1998, Crowe (120) complained that often classics like Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* were branded as YAF because they had “been deemed suitable for study in junior high and high school.” On the other hand, books clearly targeted at a preteen audiences were sold under the YAL label. As “[t]here was a time when books were divided into two general categories: children and adult” (Crowe 120), it took long before children’s literature and YAL were seen as two distinct categories.
While young adult fiction was relatively niche until the 1990s, the turn of the century marked the beginning of an era of bestseller series like *Harry Potter* and later *Twilight, The Hunger Games, The Mortal Instruments* and other YAF novels whose “monumental success [...] impact[ed] popular culture across age lines” (Garcia 15). Nowadays, YAL is similarly popular among adults as it is among teenagers and children. A market research report from 2012 showed that “55% of buyers of works that publishers designate for kids aged 12 to 17 – known as YA books – are 18 or older, with the largest segment aged 30 to 44, a group that accounted for 28 % of YA sales” (“New Study”). Being a buyer does not automatically imply being a reader of the book. This report, however, also showed that 78% of the adults buy YAL for themselves (Garcia 16).

This leads to the following questions: What exactly is young adult fiction? What are the main features that distinguish YAL from children’s literature as well as from adult literature? According to Herz and Gallo (11), there are no clear boundaries between YAL and adult literature. J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*, for instance, is popular both among adults and teenagers and—despite being classified almost univocally as adult novel or modern classic—already shows some of the characteristics typical for YAF (cf. next paragraph). On the other side of the spectrum, the boundaries are blurred as well. The first three or four books of Rowling’s *Harry Potter* heptalogy were often categorized as children’s literature while after the release of books 5-7 most scholars spoke of teen, adolescent, or YA books rather than children’s books. Text complexity and length as well as philosophical and political issues but also passages containing violence, torture, and death³ were increased gradually throughout the series.

While there are no clear-cut boundaries, there is a number of features typical of YAF. Herz and Gallo (10-11) provide a list of “characteristics of good fiction for young adults”:

- The main characters are teenagers.
- The length of the average book is around 200 pages, though it may be as brief as 100 pages or (as in case of the Harry Potter novels) as long as 900 pages.
- The point of view is most often first person, and it is usually that of a teenager.
- The narrator is most often the main character.

³ Nevertheless, already the first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, begins with a double murder.
• The story is usually told in the voice of a teenager, not the voice of an adult looking back as a young person (as it is in *To Kill a Mockingbird* or *A Separate Peace*).
• The language is typical of contemporary teenagers, and the vocabulary, unlike that of adult classics, is manageable by readers of average ability.

[...]
• The books contain characters and issues to which teenagers can relate.
• In a majority of the books, parents play a minor role or are “the enemy.”
• The plot and literary style are uncomplicated but never simplistic . . .
• The outcome of the story is usually dependent upon the decisions and actions of the main character.
• The tone and outcome of the novels are usually upbeat, but not in all instances. (Since 2000, there has been an increase in the darker and grittier novels for and about teens.)
• With the exception of complicated plotting, all the traditional literary elements typical of classical literature are present in most contemporary novels for young adults—well-rounded characters, flashbacks, foreshadowing, allusions, irony, metaphorical language—though they are used less frequently and at less sophisticated levels to match the experiential levels of readers.

[...]

These features make YAF both interesting and accessible for a teenage audience and, therefore, help to wake or keep today’s teenagers’ interest in reading books (Crowe 122). YAF serves as bridge between children’s literature and adult books (Belbin 143). Well written YA books might cause older children and teenagers who have outgrown children’s books to stay passionate readers. Herz and Gallo’s *From Hinton to Hamlet* also gives numerous examples of how books written for young adults help to better understand canonical literature and that, therefore, YAL should play an important role in school literature classes. Also Gallagher (8) argues that YA books can be used “as a springboard to [an] adult novel”. Teachers can use YA novels with similar themes and/or a similar literary focus as preparation and working basis for a canonical book. Often, YA books also contain allusions and references to other literature, including canonical classics, and can therefore spark the interest to start reading them. Crowe (121) adds that YA novels could hook teenage non-readers due to their fast pace and higher relevance and “might lead to more reading in the future”. Furthermore, the uncomplicated literary style and use everyday language make YA books manageable also for learners with intermediate language proficiency.
However, it would be unfair to limit YAL to just being a bridge or basis for ‘higher’ forms of literature. Connors (70) sees YAL as “potentially rich form of reading material that evinces a high degree of craftsmanship, is multilayered, and is aesthetically pleasing in much the same way as the classics.” Crowe (122) emphasizes that both adult literature and YAL have poorly written books and—to put it in his words—gold nuggets. Garcia argues that even though YA books might not have the same literary quality as the classics, they still have much to offer. Throughout Critical Foundations, he gives various examples of how popular YA novels can be viewed critically through different literary lenses. He emphasizes that teachers should “engage [their] students in the books that are captivating their interest and holding their imaginations for ransom” (Garcia 134).

Garcia (123) also points out that YAL can be a starting point for creative writing. He gives an example of how he with the help of one of his 12th class students made his class write their own YA novels. Even though the required word count of 30,000 by far exceeded anything his students had been required to write until then, most students handed in complete manuscripts within a bit more than five weeks. While it is highly questionable if such a daunting writing exercise is sensible in a school context, especially for students who are struggling in other subjects, it illustrates the enormous potential many students and even teachers are unaware of. An unimaginable amount of fan fiction of bestselling YA books like Twilight and Harry Potter—often written by teenagers—can be found on the internet. Garcia (122) explains that through the new media novels have become much more malleable and “are now fluid material […] not passively consumed”. This offers many new possibilities for teachers to work with books that fills their students with enthusiasm for literature. While students could, as Garcia (122) exemplifies, focus on a certain character and write from her or his point of view, they could also focus on a specific topic and elaborate on it in a creative manner. In chapter 6.2, an activity designed for Austrian upper secondary school students will show an application of this.

To sum up, YA is a category used for literature that targets a teenage audience. Due to its characteristics, YAL has the potential to be both accessible and interesting for less avid adolescent (and also adult) readers. Therefore, teachers can use YAL both to wake and/or keep the interest in literature and as a bridge to the more difficult and complex classics.
Also, good YA books offer many opportunities for close reading and critical analysis the same way canonical literature can be explored.

3. Systems of Oppression in *The Hunger Games*

Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy is clearly a milestone in 21st century Young Adult Fiction. Along with Rowling’s *Harry Potter* novels and Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* saga, it has had a substantial impact on the reading habits of teenagers and adults likewise. The story of 16-year old Katniss Everdeen trapped in a dystopian world where 12 to 18 year old boys and girls are forced to kill each other as retaliation for a supposed crime that was committed several decades ago has the potential to both captivate young readers and inspire them to take action against oppressive systems instead of being passive and apathetic consumers. While Katniss and Peeta’s fight for survival, the love triangle between them and Gale, and the fact that most of the main protagonists are teenagers indicate that the books are mainly targeted at a young adult audience, they are far from being shallow and superficial. Collins addresses a wide range of problems and dangers of our modern and post-modern world of which the prospect of living under a quasi-totalitarian regime is the most prominent. Due to the current resurgence of authoritarian governments in several countries, the grim and unsettling vision of our possible future is a topical issue. The vivid dialogues and the relatively easy language make *The Hunger Games* a good start to explore the world of dystopian novels.

3.1 Class and Power Structures

The hierarchical and social structure of Panem shows many features of the ancient Roman Empire but—as it is set in the future—also several aspects of modern-day autocratic regimes. Despite being called ‘president’, Coriolanus Snow is in fact a cruel and merciless dictator. The books never indicate whether he was democratically elected, but it is clear that he has been in power for decades. Finnick Odair mentions that Snow was “[s]uch a young man when he rose to power” (*Mockingjay* 192). Snow also eradicated Haymitch
Abernathy’s whole family two weeks after he had won the 50th Hunger Games (*Mockingjay* 193), which means that he had been ruler over Panem for more than a quarter century. Like the ancient Roman emperors, Snow is the single centre of power. He kills everyone, enemies and friends, who are a potential threat to his reign (*Mockingjay* 192). This is best exemplified by the execution of Seneca Crane, who has decided to spare the lives of Katniss and Peeta and declare both of them winners of the 74th Hunger Games.

“If the Head Gamemaker, Seneca Crane, had had any brains, he’d have blown you to dust right then. But he had an unfortunate sentimental streak. So here you are. Can you guess where he is?” he [Snow] asks. (*Catching Fire* 23)

Even though Seneca Crane has never had any ambitions to overthrow or even challenge Snow’s rule in any way, his decision has caused Katniss to become a symbol of hope for the districts. Moreover, it is absolutely reasonable that his only other option—killing both—would have caused a rebellion as well. If there were any fair trials for Capitol officials, he would, therefore, not have been found guilty. This leads to the conclusion that even the highest ranking officials are completely subject to the will of President Snow.

Apart from the fact that Coriolanus Snow is the absolute authority of the Capitol and that the Capitol rules over the rest of Panem, there is hardly anything that is known about the power structures within the Capitol. The books do not mention any particular ministers or state executives apart from a Head Peacekeeper, who, like in the districts, is one of the commanders of the armed forces of Snow’s regime. There are only vague hints at ‘high government officials’ who occasionally visit the districts, but they do not play any further role in the novels. Due to the high importance of the Hunger Games for keeping up President Snow’s power, it can be assumed that those who are involved in the Hunger Games are of a higher social ranking than other citizens of the Capitol. The Gamemakers as well as Katniss and Peeta’s preparation team are invited to the wedding feast for Katniss and Peeta in Snow’s mansion.

The Capitol is not only the centre of power but also extraordinarily rich. Its citizens are described as extremely posh and superficial, as “oddly dressed people with bizarre hair and painted faces who have never missed a meal” (*Hunger Games* 68). While in other areas of Panem most suffer from extreme hunger, Capitol residents literally eat until they vomit.
Peeta looks at the glass again and puts it together. “You mean this will make me puke?” My prep team laughs hysterically. “Of course, so you can keep eating,” says Octavia. “I’ve been in there twice already. Everyone does it, or else how would you have any fun at a feast?” (Catching Fire 91)

This exaggerated decadence reminds the reader of ancient Roman orgies (or rather of how it is commonly believed that such orgies looked like as the popular view of these feasts is not based on real evidence but on a linguistic misinterpretation of the term ‘vomitorium’ (Pappas)). On the surface, this party scene shows the vast difference between the rich Capitol and the poor districts, alluding that the Capitol residents either do not know about the poverty elsewhere or—more probably—simply do not care. However, it also shows a fundamental contradiction to totalitarianism. Whereas in totalitarian regimes everyone is compelled to actively drive the ideological goals forward, the vast majority of the Capitol’s citizens revel in their wealth and decadence and do not care about political participation. They neither actively support the power of Snow’s regime nor start to take action against its injustice. Any totalitarian regime would not reward such passivity but rather punish it.

While the Hunger Games Trilogy as a whole criticizes totalitarian regimes, this special part can also be read as criticism of today’s First World countries. It is well-known that in some autocratic regimes like the totalitarian North Korea most people suffer from hunger, however using hunger as a weapon against its own people is neither a feature of totalitarian nor of authoritarian regimes. Therefore, it is more probable that Collins intends to criticize the lack of support for and exploitation of poor developing countries and the consumerism and over-consumption of First World countries. If we do not limit the term ‘authoritarianism’ to the government of one single country, but use it in a broader sense, it is possible to see appalling similarities between neocolonialism and authoritarianism. Global corporations and governments of industrialized countries are the small group who is in power. Instead of taking measures to reduce hunger, suffering and inequality, they mainly strive for sustaining and even increasing their power (cf. Oxfam International). Due to the extreme exploitation of the twelve districts of Panem, it seems as if they were rather colonies of the Capitol than part of the same country. The rich and decadent Capitol citizens who are seemingly oblivious of the cruelty behind the Hunger Games and indifferent to the terrible economic injustice as well as the plight of the districts can be interpreted as an exaggerated portrayal of today’s wealthy people who live at the expense of poor countries.
As long as both the Capitol citizens’ as well as the people in our world are pacified consumers, they do not challenge those who are in power. Therefore, the scene at the feast reveals one of the Capitol’s ways to create docile bodies and criticises the lack of resistance against and indifference towards both Snow’s tyranny as well as the social and economic injustice.

As pathological eating behaviours and fashion are topics to which most teenagers can relate, Collins’ way of criticising the Capitol’s citizen’s passivity and indifference towards both the districts’ wretched state as well as Coriolanus Snow’s tyrannical regime is accessible and comprehensible for young adult and teenage readers. By overdrawing the Capitol citizens’ gluttony and foible for fashion and body modification trends almost to the absurd, most readers will probably show a negative response to the Capitol’s way of living and maybe be encouraged to overthink their own lifestyle.

In contrast to the Capitol, the people living in the twelve districts ruled by it are mostly poor. However, there are substantial social differences within the respective districts as can be seen in the organization of District 12. The majority of its citizen, coalworkers living in the so-called Seam, have to work extremely hard and yet are constantly fighting starvation. There is also a small merchant class that has enough to live a life in relative prosperity.

The districts do not only lack food. Each year they also have to send 24 of their children as tributes into a deadly competition with only one survivor, which serves as entertainment for the Capitol. However, unlike the Roman gladiator games, the Hunger Games have another important purpose apart from the entertainment factor. They serve as constant reminder of the Capitol’s power.

[T]he real message is clear. “Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen.” (Hunger Games 21)

Moreover, the Hunger Games are the only opportunity for the districts to improve the plight of their citizens. First, the winning district is awarded food gifts from the Capitol until the next Hunger Games. Second, every child eligible for fighting in the arena can ‘buy’ tesserae to get extra food supplies for their family in exchange for having more tickets with their name written on it in the glass ball where the tributes are drawn by lot. In other words,
those children whose families need extra food supplies to survive have a much higher probability to end up in the Hunger Games arena. In the words of Katniss’ friend Gale

“the tesserae are just another tool to cause misery in our district. A way to plant hatred between the starving workers of the Seam and those who can generally count on supper; and thereby ensure we will never trust one another.” (Hunger Games 16)

Therefore, the Hunger Games are not just a reminder of the Capitol’s power but also ensure that Snow’s regime can stay in power. The Capitol uses the well-known military strategy of ‘divide et impera’ to prevent the citizens of the subjugated districts to unite and challenge its rule. The tesserae are a means to reinforce the division between the various social classes within the districts while the deadly arena fights make sure that there is anger and hatred between the various districts. Creating friendships between citizens of different districts is impossible due to the ban on travelling between the districts save for few officially sanctioned exceptions.

While the Capitol does everything to prevent the districts from uniting and rebelling against Snow’s cruel regime, the official ideology tries to depict it as benevolent and guaranteeing peace and a good life for all who live in Panem.

[The mayor of District 12] tells the history of Panem, the country that rose up out of the ashes of a place that was once called North America. He lists the disasters, the droughts, the storms the fires, the encroaching seas that swallowed up so much of the land, the brutal war for what little sustenance remained. The result was Panem, a shining Capitol ringed by thirteen districts, which brought peace and prosperity to its citizens. Then came the Dark Days, the uprising of the districts against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated. The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games. (Hunger Games 20-21)

According to this propaganda speech, the districts are a constant danger of destroying peace, prosperity and stability. Although it is not known whether the whole country was really prosperous or at whether the districts were at least substantially better off before the uprising, it is unlikely due to the fact that all thirteen districts revolted against the Capitol. The book also hints that already before the rebellion there was a central direction of the economy through state planning as before the first revolution District 13 had nuclear development as its principal industry (Catching Fire 166), which means that most likely the social and economic disparity between the Capitol and the districts has always existed since Panem was founded. The use of the word ‘peace’ (as well as ‘justice’) by the Capitol is
almost as misleading as in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In the mayor’s speech, peace means silencing any resistance. With a few exceptions, the heavily armoured and armed peacekeepers terrorize the population of the districts and suppress almost any kind of freedom. While the peacekeepers are the official armed forces, the Capitol also has or at least used to have a secret police:

One [of the Capitol’s muttations (sic)] was a special bird called a jabberjay that had the ability to memorize and repeat whole human conversations. They were homing birds, exclusively male, that were released into regions where the Capitol’s enemies were known to be hiding. After the birds gathered words, they’d fly back to centres to be recorded. It took people a while to realize what was going on in the districts, how private conversations were being transmitted. (Hunger Games 49)

This secret police used genetically modified animals to spy on the citizens of Panem in order to find out subversive tendencies but probably also to record and transmit anything that does not correspond to the official propaganda. As stated in chapter 2.1, totalitarian regimes have a secret police that enforces the official propaganda by means of systematic terror. It is unknown whether a certain section of the peacekeepers used the jabberjays as secret spies. However, there are numerous examples of peacekeepers that use systematic terror to enforce the Capitol’s propaganda.

Snow’s regime, therefore, fulfils three of the four main criteria of totalitarian regimes. Apart from President Snow and his cabinet, there are no political parties and no free elections. There is an official ideology which proclaims that the utopian society is already in existence. The regime spies on its citizens and uses systematic terror. The only missing element is active mass mobilization for political and social tasks. Instead, the Capitol uses the population of most of the districts as slaves to work themselves to death to keep up the power of the leaders as well as the exuberant wealth of the capital city. As it will be shown in the following chapters, the missing mass mobilization is one of the main reasons why the rebels can overthrow the tyrant. Nevertheless, in the trichotomy democracy—authoritarianism—totalitarianism Snow’s regime is without doubt closer to the third than the second. The vast economical difference between the Capitol and the twelve districts of Panem, however, is reminiscent of a very exploitative form of colonialism.

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* In Orwell’s dystopian novel the meaning of several words like ‘peace’ and ‘love’ is reversed. For instance, the ‘Ministry of Peace’ is in fact responsible for maintaining perpetual war.
The rebels in District 13 have a highly hierarchical system as well. It is organized like a military unit with President Alma Coin as commander. Every person—male or female—who reaches the age of 14 is addressed as ‘soldier’. Therefore, it can be assumed that everyone is forced to serve in the district’s armed forces. The novels never mention whether District 13 elects its leaders democratically, but even if this is the case, Coin has absolute power over its population and is willing to use systematic terror. The torturing of Katniss’ prep team for stealing a slice of bread shows that even the slightest deviation from the district’s strict rules provokes excessive and inhumane punishment.

“I guess we’ve all been put on notice,” I say.


“Punishing my prep team’s a warning,” I tell her. “Not just to me. But to you, too. About who’s really in control and what happens if she’s not obeyed. If you had any delusions about having power, I’d let them go now [...]” (Mockingjay 57)

Fulvia and Plutarch, who are among the highest officials of District 13 below Coin and her second-in-command Boggs, were only “told that they were being confined” (Mockingjay 54) while in fact Venia, Flavius, and Octavia were “[h]alf-naked, bruised, and shackled to the wall” (Mockingjay 52). This passage is the first hint that, despite being the leader of the rebels who want to end Snow’s tyranny, Coin is in fact not much different from Snow. Closer examination shows that her rule is even more totalitarian than Snow’s. She has all the power and every single citizen has to follow her orders. Katniss is the only person who can make demands, but only as long as she is indispensable for overthrowing the Capitol. The grey uniforms everybody has to wear and the rigid timetable show that there is no liberty, no room for individuality. Every aspect of life is strictly controlled and everybody is constantly surveilled. The rebels also envision a radically new utopian society, one that stops the sacrificing of innocent children and the starving to death of less privileged citizens (although it eventually turns out that Coin does exactly the same things). The compulsory military service for every person over 14 reflects the mass mobilization characteristic of totalitarian regimes. A secret police is not directly mentioned. However, the inhabitants of District 13 are aware that any breaching of the strict rules set by Coin can have severe consequences. The fact that even the slightest misbehaviours like the before mentioned stealing of a slice of bread or Fulvia’s wasting of a sheet of paper are detected suggests that
everybody is basically under constant surveillance so that no separate secret police is necessary.

To sum up, both President Coriolanus Snow as well as President Coin can be described as totalitarian leaders. Both have an official and elaborate ideology and use means of terror to enforce it. While Snow and his regime are antagonists from the beginning of the first novel, the reader might sympathize with Coin at the beginning and excuse her drastic measures as necessary evil for the greater good. The following chapter will go further into detail and use a Foucauldian perspective to analyse the measures both totalitarian systems use to gain and uphold power.

3.2 Space, Confinement, and Disciplining

As explained in chapter 2.3, Foucault distinguishes between two types of power: sovereign and disciplinary power. Most modern democracies have abolished corporal punishment and rely on a multitude of disciplinary institutions to secure peace and order. Moreover, legislative, executive, and judicial power are separated in order to prevent that a certain group or party can accumulate too much power and overthrow the democratic system. In Panem, as in every totalitarian regime, all the power is concentrated in the hands of those who rule. Snow’s regime draws on sovereign power, disciplining, and mass media in order to maintain his power.

The Hunger Games are an extraordinarily perfidious display of power. They are meant to be a spectacle for the masses to constantly remind them that any resistance will lead to disproportional retaliation. While the children who are forced to fight the Capitol’s gladiator games receive corporal punishment for crimes they have never committed, it targets the souls of the all other people in the districts. They are forced to watch their innocent children fight themselves to death knowing that any resistance will lead to even more terror from Snow’s regime. Therefore, the Hunger Games are an inhumane and cruel way of disciplining the crowds. While normally discipline rewards or punishes individuals, the Hunger Games reward and punish the whole districts. Winning the Games promises the victor a life in ease and wealth and alleviates the plight of the winning district as it gets
regular food deliveries as prize for winning. According to Timm (283) one of the main reasons why the Hunger Games work so well is that the Capitol uses “school time to teach students about the Hunger Games, so they will accept the Games as an ordinary fact of life”. According to Foucault (292) schools and other disciplinary institutions like barracks and prisons are in many respects similar. Schools as well as other disciplinary institutions have the aim to norm and normalize (Foucault 236-237).

However, it is not only the school propaganda that causes the Hunger Games to be accepted as normal. The Hunger Games as well as the reaping and the victory tour are public events where attendance is mandatory. To make all events related to the Games part of the people’s schedule certainly also helps to increase their acceptance. As the population of the districts spends most of their time working, the Games also act as variety from the dull daily duties, especially for those who have no child they could lose. While for the majority of District 12 the public reaping of the tributes is painful,

there are others, too, who have no one they love at stake, or who no longer care, who slip among the crowd, taking bets on the two kids whose names will be drawn. Odds are given on their ages, whether they’re Seam or merchant, if they will break down and weep. (Hunger Games 19)

Shaffer (76-78) argues that schadenfreude is one of the reasons why the Hunger Games are successful. It is a natural human trait to enjoy seeing other people’s misfortune as it makes us “feel better about ourselves and elevate[s] our own social standing.” While Shaffer limits his reasoning to the citizens of the Capitol whose children do not have to take part, it is not unlikely that also people from one district enjoy watching kids from another district suffer and even die.

However, schadenfreude alone cannot explain the Capitol’s citizen’s lack of empathy. According to Shaffer (80-83) there is another important mechanism which causes that the viewers from the Capitol feel entertained by the Hunger Games instead of being repulsed and disgusted by the thought of children killing each other: dehumanization. It was an essential part of the Nazi ideology that not all humans are equally worth. They proclaimed that Jews, Roma, disabled and other groups should be seen as subhumans. This way they tried to justify their industrial slaughtering of millions of people. Shaffer (81) points out that both Effie Trinket as well as parts of Katniss and Peeta’s prep team refer to District 12 people as ‘barbarians’ or not looking like humans. When already their allies not see them
as equal beings, it can be assumed that also other Capitol citizens have such prejudices. While Effie and the prep team have direct contact to people from the districts, most other Capitol residents only see them as passive audience. Through this spatial separation, Snow’s regime makes a rejection of these prejudices almost impossible.

While for the districts the Hunger Games are used as repeated punishment for past crimes, as display of power to intimidate people from trying another revolution, and as means to sow discord, they have a completely different function for the Capitol citizens. In *Mockingjay* (249), Plutarch reveals it to Katniss:

“It’s a saying from thousands of years ago, written in a language called Latin about a place called Rome,” he explains. “*Panem et Circenses* translates into ‘Bread and Circuses’. The writer was saying that in return for full bellies and entertainment, his people had given up their political responsibilities and therefore their power.”

I think about the Capitol. The excess of food. And the ultimate entertainment. The Hunger Games. “So that’s what the districts are for. To provide the bread and circuses.”

Dyke (257) argues that ‘panem et circenses’ are one of Snow’s main means for disciplining the Capitol citizens. She adds that the Capitol’s extreme foible for fashion causes a constant self-surveillance and self-correction with the effect of turning them into docile bodies (Dyke 256). They focus all their resources on optimizing their appearance so that they neither question the mechanics of power nor see the cruelty and injustice of the Hunger Games.

For the tributes, the Hunger Games mean either death or confinement, possibly life-long, even though the Capitol promises “a life of ease back home” (*Hunger Games* 21-22). Although it is true that winners are granted a large house in Victor’s Village and that they do not have to worry about starving anymore, they price for that is their freedom. About half a year after the arena fight, they are forced to go on Victory Tour and visit all districts. Victory tour can be seen as mental confinement as it forces the winning tributes to relive all the horrors in the arena again and again.

I will have to travel from district to district, to stand before the cheering crowds who secretly loathe me, to look down into the faces of the families whose children I have killed. . . (*Catching Fire* 4)

Victory Tour, therefore, serves as another reminder exactly in the middle between the previous and the next Hunger Games that the districts are subject to the will of the Capitol. It is also a reminder that from now on the victor will have to take part on every subsequent Hunger Games as mentor until there is another victor who can take over—which possibly
never happens. The fact that Haymitch had to watch 23 boys and 23 girls he was supposed to keep alive walk to their deaths explains why he has grown bitter and cynical and become a drunkard.

In *Mockingjay* (190) it is also revealed that some of the victors were forced into prostitution.

“President Snow used to ... sell me ... my body, that is,” Finnick begins in a flat, removed tone. “I wasn’t the only one. If a victor is considered desirable the president gives them as a reward or allows people to buy them for an exorbitant amount of money. If you refuse, he kills someone you love. So you do it.” When the Capitol turns victors into sex slaves, they have to abandon sovereignty over their own bodies. While the citizens in the districts at least can choose whom they want to love or marry, the victors are completely at the mercy of those who are in power.

With Peeta, the Capitol uses a special form of punishment and torture that cannot be described with Foucauldian terms: chemical brainwashing—or ‘hijacking’ as it is called in the novels. By using tracker jacker venom, Peeta’s torturers have manipulated his memories of Katniss so that his love for her turn into exaggerated fear, “[s]o scary that he’d see her as life-threatening. That he might try to kill her.” (*Mockingjay* 203)

It is well-known that autocratic regimes seek to silence any form of subversion that endangers the rule of those who are in power. While this is usually meant figuratively, the Capitol silences people in the true sense of the word by cutting people’s tongues and turning them into an ‘avox’ (a word Collins made up using the Greek prefix a- for ‘without’ and the Latin ‘vox’ meaning ‘voice’). There are three known avoxes: Pollux, one of the cameramen shooting the propos, Lavinia, the girl who has tried to flee from the Capitol and was captured by a hovercraft, and Darius, the former Peacekeeper of District 12. The cause for Pollux’ punishment is unknown. Darius, however, was punished for stepping in when Gale was publicly lashed by the new Head Peacekeeper Romulus Thread. Trying to stop Thread from whipping Gale to death obviously was enough to deprive Darius of his tongue and turn him into a voiceless slave.

After his defeat, President Snow tells Katniss that although he is “not above killing children”, he “is not wasteful” and only takes “life for very specific reasons.” (*Mockingjay* 402). Although it is already highly cynical to call a diabolic measure like the Hunger Games or visibly torturing and killing Cinna, Darius, and Lavinia just to unsettle Katniss or Peeta
not wasteful, there are also examples of when Snow’s armed forces kill for absolutely no reason. In the arena, Rue tells Katniss that in her district a small simple-minded boy was killed on the spot when he was caught keeping a pair of glasses to play with (*Hunger Games* 239).

Both the whipping and the cutting of the tongue are forms of corporal punishment. Before Katniss and Peeta’s triumph in the 74th Hunger Games, the annual terror of the Games and the presence of relatively lenient Peacekeepers like Darius and Cray was sufficient. Even Katniss and Gale’s illegal hunting in the woods apparently did not call for more drastic measures. However, with the danger of a rebellion, the Capitol seems to fall back to means of public corporal punishment.

All these examples of torturing seem to indicate that Snow’s regime mainly relies on sovereign power. However, the Capitol also draws heavily on disciplinary power. Panoptic surveillance plays an important role in the *Hunger Games* trilogy. Despite the possibility to freely roam within the districts, the borders are surrounded by high electrified fences and barbed wire. Leaving the districts is generally prohibited unless there is an important reason for it. The inhabitants of one district are thus confined to their home town or, in case there is more than one town, to their homeland. As already explained above, the reason for this is to prevent people from different districts to make bonds or unite. This way, the districts much resemble prisons in a Foucauldian sense. Partitioning of space is an important feature of disciplinary institutions, also because it facilitates surveillance. Beside the omnipresent threat of hovercrafts appearing out of nowhere, it only takes a small group of Peacekeepers to ensure that at least outside their houses the citizens cannot tell whether they are being watched at any given moment or not. If the possibility of secret espionage—as the Capitol did when they were using jabberjays—is also taken into consideration, they have to fear the permanent danger of being under the gaze of the Capitol. However, not only Snow and his henchmen have installed a masterful system of surveillance.

The underground base of District 13 is arguably the best example the *Hunger Games* series gives for a disciplinary institution. Like Districts 1-12, the underground base is an enclosed space that can be differentiated from the outside. It is partitioned into small units and each
unit serves a clear and distinct purpose. In addition to the strict spatial distribution, everybody is assigned a rigid timetable so that every citizen knows where to go and what to do at any given moment. While already the whole underground base can be interpreted as disciplinary institution, its subsections like the training spaces or education rooms allow for further disciplining so that every individual can be formed the way Coin needs them. Even the amount of food is exactly calculated so that every individual gets exactly what she or he needs and not the slightest bit more. Everybody has to wear the same grey uniforms and all the living quarters look exactly the same so that there is not the least space for individuality. Coin demands that every soldier (i.e. any person over 14) operates exactly in accordance with the rules and follows orders without questioning them. As the excessive punishment of Katniss’ prep team after stealing one slice of bread shows, any aberration from the rigid rules can have drastic consequences.

While the first two books of the series mostly give the impression of a clear division between good and evil, the lines in Mockingjay quickly become very blurry. Already this senseless torturing of the prep team for a minor infraction of the rules hints at Coins true personality and intentions. When the rebel forces try to conquer district 2 and discuss how they can defeat the last stronghold of the Capitol, the mountain called ‘The Nut’, Gale openly admits that he is willing to kill every single person trapped inside the mountain. He ignores Beetee’s objections that they could give the people inside the mountain at least the chance to escape through a tunnel and surrender and that most of the workers are probably citizens from District 2. He ignores Katniss’ objection that some might be held there against their will and that some could be rebel spies. In other words, Gale would have sacrificed potentially innocent people by setting a death trap they cannot escape.

Although Coin’s rigid and highly disciplined underground regime is seemingly the exact opposite of Snow and the excesses of the Capitol, the end of Mockingjay reveals that they are flipsides of the same coin. When the rebels first throw parachutes containing bombs at the children Snow is using as human shield to protect his mansion and immediately afterwards kill the medics that have come to rescue to survivors of the first bombing, it becomes clear that also Coin does not have any scruples about murdering children when this benefits her rising to power. Her proposal to continue the Hunger Games using children
of high-ranking Capitol officials confirms that she possesses the same tyrannical traits Snow has.

3.3 Synopticism and the Role of Mass Media

According to Collins (“Contemporary Inspiration”), she got the inspiration for the Hunger Games when she was watching television and immediately after some reality TV show there was footage of the Iraq war and both things started to fuse together. While Collins was aware of what was fact and what fiction, this is not always true for passive consumers of mass media. The term ‘reality show’ refers to both fact (reality) and fiction (show). Although the deaths of the children are real, the Hunger Games are a big show as well. The opening ceremonies, the various interviews, the presentation of training scores etc. are all part of the entertainment until the actual fights begin. In order to be prepared for the arena, all tributes have to be styled in the so-called ‘Remake Centre’. This can be taken literally as their bodies are completely redefined in order to suit the tastes of the audience. The interviews as well as the private sessions with the Gamemakers are about making the best possible impression. All this is done to maximize the entertainment factor for the Capitol audience as well as to distract them from realizing that in fact it is not a game, event, or sports competition but a despicable act of horror where fellow human beings, mostly children, are being forced to slaughter each other.

Due to the fact that reality TV shows are very popular among teenagers (Orde 41), connecting the deadly arena fights to a televised mega-event is another factor that makes Collins’ dystopian vision of a totalitarian regime more accessible to young adult readers. The Hunger Games contain various elements of today’s most popular reality show formats. The voting in the private sessions with the Gamemakers is an element of many varieties of shows in which contestants get judged, for instance on their dancing or singing performance. Most shows that have several episodes with the same contestants offer an insight into their private lives, primarily focusing on romantic relationships and affairs. In the *Hunger Games* trilogy, this is reflected in Katniss and Peeta being presented as star-

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5 As the name already suggests, only the scores but not the performance of the candidates are televised, which is, of course, not the case in real world TV shows.
crossed lovers. Like in many shows, the audience can help their candidates by voting for them, the tributes of the Hunger Games can be supported by public sponsoring. The yearly changing landscapes of the Hunger Games arenas have their parallel in shows like the American Survivor or the Swedish Expedition Robinson, in which the contestants are taken to various (mostly exotic) places in the world. These elements are, therefore, well known to most of the readers of Collins’ main target group. However, as it will be shown in this chapter, these elements also have an important function for the Capitol leaders to uphold their power.

While most teenagers and adults are aware that such shows do not depict reality (Orde 43), it has been proven that reality TV shows, just like mass media in general, have a substantial impact on our views and opinions (Orde 42) and can thus be used to influence and manipulate as (Mathiesen 226). In addition to their function as constantly repeated punishment for the districts, Snow’s regime uses the game show as means to manipulate both the Capitol citizens as well as those living in the districts.

While the ordinary population has to fear panoptic surveillance, the tributes as well as the victors face the reverse type of monitoring. While the tributes are in the arena, they are being watched by the whole population of Panem. There are not only cameras everywhere in the arena, but they also get a chip implanted so that every single move is tracked and everyone watching the TV live broadcasts can follow them wherever they are and whatever they do. As already discussed above, the principal “broader hidden agenda of political or economic interests” (Mathiesen 226) of forcing the people of Panem to watch the Hunger Games, is to constantly remind them that any rebellion against the Capitol is futile and will be severely punished. In order to increase the effect of the Hunger Games, the Capitol leaders try to maintain the synoptic gaze upon the tributes throughout the year. The preparation and training phase, the presentation of the winners a few days after the Games, as well as the Victory Tour are televised likewise. Moreover, there are constant recapitulations of important events concerning the tributes and repeated interviews before and after the Games. For the population of Panem this means that the Hunger Games and the desired effects are omnipresent: disciplining through fear for the districts as well as the disciplining through constant entertainment for the citizens of the Capitol. For the tributes
and the surviving victors this means the loss of all privacy. Thus they involuntarily become instruments of the regime for the rest of their lives.

The reason why Katniss and Peeta’s trick with the poisonous nightlock berries has such a great impact is because the whole country is watching them.

“Listen up. You’re in trouble. Word is the Capitol’s furious about you showing them up in the arena. The one thing they can’t stand is being laughed at, and they’re the joke of Panem,” says Haymitch. *(Hunger Games 416)*

By forcing the Gamemakers to decide whether they let both of them survive or have no victor at all, they completely reverse the power relations and take active agency. To use Peeta’s metaphor, they become “more than just a piece in their Games” *(Hunger Games 165).*

Funny, in the arena, when I poured out those berries, I was only thinking of outsmarting the Gamemakers, not how my actions would reflect on the Capitol. But the Hunger Games are their weapon and you are not supposed to be able to defeat it. So now the Capitol will act as if they’ve been in control the whole time. As if they orchestrated the whole event, right down to the double suicide. *(Hunger Games 418).*

As mentioned in chapter 2.3.2, mass media are used to influence and manipulate the viewers through careful selection of information. The Gamemakers know well which scenes from the Games have the desired effect and which an adverse effect. Therefore, in the recapitulation video before the crowning of the winners, they omit the part where Katniss covers Rue, the 12-year old girl from District 11, in flowers after she has been killed *(Hunger Games 424).* However, there would be no possibility to withhold the final showdown from the audience and so everyone in Panem can watch how two teenagers force the Capitol to change their rules and seemingly get away with it without being punished. As Coriolanus Snow draws heavily on sovereign power, any violation of the law (in this case the rules of the Hunger Games) is also a personal attack on the sovereign according to Foucault (cf. chapter 2.3). Although it is not intended at that moment, it is the first time Katniss and Peeta use the synoptic gaze upon them to challenge Snow’s quasi-totalitarian regime. As it will be shown in the next chapter, mass media continue to play a central part in the resistance against the Capitol leaders.

After Peeta and Katniss’ triumph in the 74th Hunger Games, Snow tries to use the two teenagers to influence the public opinion and stifle the beginning uprisings. Fully aware
that her public defying of the Gamemakers and, consequently, the regime itself, without getting punished for it could motivate people in the districts to try the same, he coerces Katniss into publicly displaying a romantic relationship with Peeta. With the lives of her family and Gale at stake, Katniss has no other possibility than to agree.

I stick my head in the study to say hello to the mayor but it’s empty. The television’s droning on, and I stop to watch shots of Peeta and me at the Capitol party last night. Dancing eating, kissing. This will be playing in every household in Panem right now. The audience must be sick to death of the star-crossed lovers from District 12. I know I am.

I’m leaving the room when a beeping noise catches my attention. I turn back to see the screen of the television go black. Then the words “UPDATE ON DISTRICT 8” start flashing. Instinctively I know this is not for my eyes but something intended only for the mayor [...] there’s a mob-scene. The square’s packed with screaming people, their faces hidden with rags and home-made masks, throwing bricks. Buildings burn. Peacekeepers shoot into the crowd, killing at random. (Catching Fire 101-102)

This scene is a great example for how the Capitol leaders use television in a manipulative way. By repeatedly broadcasting details about Katniss and Peeta’s romance and wedding preparations, they want to convince the citizens in the various districts that Katniss has never wanted to challenge the regime, and also show that everyone is and should be happy. They deliberately withhold any information about uprisings in District 8 from the ordinary people in Panem. As the districts are almost completely isolated, mass media are basically the only source of information for them about what is going on elsewhere. In this way, the regime can keep up its propaganda of the benevolent Capitol guaranteeing peace and prosperity as long as possible and avoid that the revolution spreads to more places.

There are several more examples of how Snow makes use of systematic disinformation in order to discipline and manipulate the population of Panem, most prominently the repeated propaganda of the complete eradication of District 13. For many years they have kept showing the same old footage of the district’s Justice Building with everything else destroyed, while in fact District 13 has survived in the underground. Moreover, in schools they withhold the information that District 13 was not only responsible for graphite mining but also for nuclear development.

Not only the population of the districts, but also ordinary Capitol citizens—like Katniss’ prep team—get misleading information.

But then Octavia makes a comment that catches my attention. It’s a passing remark, really, about how she couldn’t get prawns for a party, but it tugs at me.
“Why couldn’t you get prawns? Are they out of season?” I ask.
“Oh, Katniss, we haven’t been able to get any seafood for weeks!” says Octavia. “You know, because the weather’s been so bad in District Four.”

My mind starts buzzing. No seafood. For weeks. From District 4. The barely concealed rage in the crowd during the Victory Tour. And suddenly I am absolutely sure that District 4 has revolted. (Catching Fire 187-188)

Although there are already rebellions in at least three of the districts, Snow’s regime spreads propaganda about unpleasant weather conditions causing shortages of certain kinds of food or luxury items. It is interesting that Snow and his inner circle rather try to calm them down instead of inciting them to prepare for fights. Already at this point it must be clear that in case the revolutions cannot be put down, the rebels will eventually attack the Capitol. As mentioned above, Snow’s regime is mostly totalitarian but completely lacks the mass mobilization aspect. If it were a mobilizational regime, every person able to fight would be obliged to defend the Capitol. There are three main reasons why Snow decides to leave the Capitol residents in the dark. First, those who have not undergone Peacekeeper training might be unable to fight. As mentioned in chapter 3.1, the Capitol citizens seem to be extremely decadent and care mostly about getting their bellies stuffed and looking good and fashionable. Second, at that time Snow might still be convinced that the revolutions can be put down before they affect the whole country of Panem. While the rebellious districts face brutal attacks including aerial bombings, the people elsewhere in the country only get news about the star-crossed lovers and other deceptive information. Due to the monopoly on mass media, this disinformation campaign is highly effective. Third, the Capitol has installed many automatic high-tech defence devices called ‘pods’ and uses muttations (sic) instead of human soldiers to support the Peacekeepers. The high degree of technologization implies that large armies are not needed anymore. Consequently, it is likely that future totalitarian regimes significantly differ from the two most prominent historical totalitarianisms—that the mass mobilization aspect gets replaced with total control of information.

However, not only the Capitol leaders rely heavily on the effect of the synoptic gaze. All their propaganda videos are focused on the person of Katniss Everdeen knowing the effect she has on the population of Panem. As she is the face of the revolution, it is essential for District 13 to show her in action and to make sure that she can be seen by as many people as possible. She is what Zygmunt Bauman (54) calls “the shining example” for the masses
“to follow or to dream of following”. It turns out that Katniss has also a strong impact on the population in District 13. During the high level security drill Plutarch tells her:

“The other people in the bunker, they’ll be taking their cue on how to react from you. If you’re calm and brave, others will try to be as well. If you panic, it could spread like wildfire,” explains Plutarch. I just stare at him. “Fire is catching, so to speak,” he continues, as if I’m being slow on the uptake. \((Mockingjay\ 157)\)

It is surprising that in such a highly militarized and disciplined organization as District 13, one teenage girl can have an influence of that kind. Apart from those who have seen and understood Peeta’s warning, nobody knows that the evacuation is not actually just a security drill but the reaction to an incoming bombing. Therefore, it should be a routine task for most of District 13’s citizens. Of course, it is in the nature of YA literature that teenage characters have a disproportionately high impact on others. However, there is also no doubt that due to her medial omnipresence, Katniss has reached the status of a superstar and, therefore, can cause exceptional reactions in her admirers.

Also during the assault on the Capitol, the panoptic gaze on Katniss plays a decisive role. Along with Gale and Finnick she is assigned to Squad 451, also called Star Squad. The main purpose of this group is to record real fighting scenes for propaganda videos in order to motivate the other rebels and discourage Snow and his forces. The regime again uses Katniss by broadcasting false news of her death to demoralize the rebels.

\(\text{The seal of Panem lights up on the screen and remains there while the anthem plays. And then they begin to show images of the dead, just as they did with the tributes in the arena. They start with the four faces of our TV crew, followed by Boggs, Gale, Finnick, Peeta and me. Except for Boggs, they don’t bother with the soldiers from 13, either because they have no idea who they are or because they know they won’t mean anything to the audience. \((Mockingjay\ 330)\)\)

While at the time of this statement, Boggs and some of the soldiers have in fact been killed, the rest of Squad 451 is still alive. Either the regime believes that they have not survived the bombings and the black goo or Snow deliberately spreads what we would call ‘fake news’ today. Not only does this again highlight the importance of the synoptic gaze on the faces of the rebellion, in particular Katniss Everdeen, but it also has an effect comparable to what Foucault says of public executions (cf. chapter 2.3). By announcing the deaths via emergency broadcast that automatically activates all Capitol television screens, Snow
wants to revel in the triumph over the enemies of his quasi-totalitarian regime. He uses the ‘fake news’ about the deaths of Katniss and the others as display of sovereign power.

It is, however, not only Snow who tries to instrumentalize Katniss’ death. Sending Peeta to Squad 451 is a concealed attempt at eliminating her. Boggs tells Katniss that Coin has not liked her from the beginning and, in addition to that, sees her as major threat. By getting Katniss killed, Coin would not only get rid of her most dangerous internal competitor for leading Panem after the fall of Snow’s regime, but also further help the ongoing rebellion.

“She doesn’t need you as a rallying point now. As she said, your primary objective, to unite the districts, has succeeded,” Boggs reminds me. “These current propos could be done without you. There’s only one last thing you could do to add fire to the rebellion. “Die,” I say quietly.

“Yes. Give us a martyr to fight for,” says Boggs. (Mockingjay 298-299)

This is one of the first passages where Coin’s true identity is revealed. In order to rise to power, she is ready to do anything. Katniss’ medial popularity has helped Coin to convince every single district of the rebellion, but it would also hinder her from becoming Panem’s new dictator. Katniss, however, is still alive when the rebels’ victory is secured. This is about the time when the exploding parachutes from District 13 kill Prim and the other medics. Although it is a Capitol hovercraft which throws the parachutes, Katniss strongly suspects that the operation is orchestrated by Coin.

[S]omeone very high up would have had to approve putting a thirteen-year-old in combat. Did Coin do it, hoping that losing Prim would push me completely over the edge? Or, at least, firmly on her side? I wouldn’t even have had to witness it in person. Numerous cameras would be covering the City Circle. Capturing the moment for ever. (Mockingjay 406-407)

Although there is no ultimate proof that it is indeed a false flag operation and that Coin is guilty of both the mass murder as well as sending Prim to her death, it is reasonable to assume that. Seeing live footage of a Capitol hovercraft bombing innocent and helpless children causes even the most fervent supporters of Snow to abandon their allegiance to him. Moreover, by killing her sister, Coin tries to destabilize Katniss and, consequently, eliminate her psychologically when she could not do that literally.

Taking into consideration the permanent synoptic gaze Katniss had to endure until both Snow and Coin are dead, it is important to examine how she handles the aftermath of the rebellion. When she is back in District 12, she isolates her almost completely from the outside world. Only after a while she attempts to get back to a normal life, just like the
district itself recovers from the wounds the war has inflicted. She and Peeta, who as well struggles to recover, eventually fall in love. According to O’Sullivan (109), the epilogue in *Mockingjay* is “imbued with nostalgia for Arcadian simplicity”. Fifteen years after the overthrow of the totalitarian tyrants, Katniss and Peeta live with their children in a peaceful meadow where they are “far removed from the panoptical and synoptical pressures” (ibid.) they had to endure.

To sum it up, manipulation through mass media is one of the most central aspects of *The Hunger Games*. The eponymous spectacle draws both from Roman gladiator games as well as modern reality TV shows. However, not only the Games are used to manipulate and discipline Panem’s population. Both Snow’s regime and Alma Coin use the synoptic gaze upon Katniss for their own political agenda. The game show character, the focus on the teenage star-crossed lovers as well as Katniss’ struggle against the machinations of both Snow and Coin show that also the mass media aspect of the trilogy is suitable and interesting for a teenage and young adult audience.

### 3.4 Resistance and the Question of Morality

At the time the events of the *Hunger Games* trilogy start to unfold, the twelve districts of Panem have already been oppressed by the quasi-totalitarian Capitol regime for almost three quarters of a century without any major resistance. The last rebellion against its oppressors, called the Dark Days, resulted in the supposed obliteration of District 13 and the barbarous Hunger Games for the other twelve districts. As already discussed before, the Capitol leaders ensure that there is practically no bonding between the people of the various districts and also that there are no larger groups within the districts. This ‘atomizing’ of the people, as Friedrich (250) calls it, inhibits the forming of any significant resistance groups. Therefore, most acts of defiance come from single people protesting against the tyrannical rulers. Friedrich (250-251) sees them as symbolic actions unable to threaten the stability of a totalitarian regime. Snyder, however, argues that “[t]he moment you set an example, the spell of the status quo is broken, and others will follow” (51). In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss’ unintentional acts of defiance in the arena–comforting the dying girl from District 11 as well as the trick with the poisonous berries–were the examples that broke
the spell of the seventy-four-year-long status quo in Panem. While there is no doubt that the rebels have any right to overthrow the quasi-totalitarian system that has been terrorizing them for much too long, one of the key questions is how far they can go to achieve this. Therefore, the following analysis will also take into consideration whether their actions to defeat the tyrants in the Capitol are ethically and morally justifiable.

The novels give little insight as to how and to what extent the people in the districts have been fighting the Capitol’s oppression before the 74th Hunger Games. The only known act of defiance is when during the first rebellion the spying genetically modified birds called jabberjays were fed with useless and false information (cf. chapter 3.2, Hunger Games 49). Besides that, only minor violations of the rules like Katniss and Gale’s illegal hunting in the woods and the trading at the black market in District 12 are known. None of these bendings of the rules challenge or threaten Snow’s regime in any way. They rather have the goal to somewhat improve the living conditions in District 12. The Peacekeepers that are present in The Hunger Games and the first few chapters of Catching Fire tolerate and even support this lack of discipline as it is also beneficial for them.

The first real act of defiance is when Katniss comforts Rue in her last hour. Although it is meant as an act of love, it runs counter to one of the main covert agendas of the Hunger Games. By forcing the children and teenagers to kill one another, they arouse animosity between the districts. This animosity, consequently, should prevent the districts from uniting against the Capitol as they did at the time of the first rebellion. While other alliances between tributes from different districts are only to get a temporal tactical advantage and only last as long as necessary, Katniss truly cares for Rue. While she is holding Rue’s hand and singing the Meadow song, she could easily be attacked and killed herself by one of the career tributes. It is an act of selfless love and has an immediate effect on the citizens in District 11 who in return honour Katniss.

I open the parachute and find a small loaf of bread [...] from District 11. I cautiously lift the still-warm loaf. What must it have cost the people of District 11, who can’t even feed themselves? How many would’ve had to do without to scrape up a coin to put in the collection for this one loaf? It had been meant for Rue, surely. But instead of pulling the gift when she died, they’d authorized Haymitch to give it to me. As a thank you? Or because, like me, they don’t like to let debts go unpaid? For whatever reason, this is a first. A district gift to a tribute who’s not your own. (Hunger Games 278-279)
The fact that Katniss emphasizes that it is the first time a district supports the tribute of another, even though the loaf of bread was mostly a symbolic act, proofs how deep the division between the twelve districts is at that point. The bread does not increase her chances significantly, but it expresses that she has earned the respect from District 11’s citizens. Even if the bread was originally meant for Rue, they could send it to Thresh, their other tribute, who is still alive at that point.

It is surprising that in the film that shows the highlights of the 74th Hunger Games most of the scenes with Katniss and the dying Rue are not censored.

They play her death in full, the spearing, my failed rescue attempt, my arrow through the boy from District 1’s throat, Rue drawing her last breath in my arms. And the song. I get to sing every note of the song. Something inside me shuts down and I’m too numb to feel anything. It’s like watching complete strangers in another Hunger Games. But I do notice they omit the part where I covered her in flowers.

Right. Because even that smacks of rebellion. (Hunger Games 424)

If the regime decides to omit the last part with the flowers and Katniss’ pressing the three fingers against her lips and holding them out in Rue’s direction, it is inconsistent to broadcast the rest in full length. Throughout the whole trilogy, the Capitol leaders are extremely careful about what pieces of information they broadcast in order to reach the desired effect. In this case, however, they give Katniss several minutes screen time to do something that runs counter to one of the main pillars of the regime’s ideology: prevent the districts from uniting.

Nevertheless, it is Rue’s four-note tune and Katniss’ sign with the three fingers pressed to her mouth which become the first symbols of the revolution. After Katniss’ Victory Tour speech in District 11, someone in the crowd whistles Rue’s tune and the whole crowd simultaneously responds with Katniss’ sign.

If I hadn’t spoken to President Snow, this gesture might move me to tears. But with his recent orders to calm the districts fresh in my ears, it fills me with dread. What will he think of this very public salute to the girl who defied the Capitol? (Catching Fire 70)

This reaction to Katniss’ speech is a public display of allegiance to Katniss and, therefore, dangerous for the regime. It is not only an act of defiance, it also foreshadows that District 11 is ready to join rebels from other districts to fight the Capitol. The Peacekeepers’ reaction is what can be expected from a totalitarian regime. The man who has whistled Rue’s tune is drawn onto the stage and shot in front of the crowd, two more unknown
people are killed the same way a few minutes after. In Foucauldian terms this is a display of sovereign power. With the public execution of the initiator, the totalitarian enforcers of terror make clear that every resistance will get severely punished.

It is important to note that the regime inflicts harsh measures of punishment in the rebelling districts but tries its best to soothe the other districts as well as the population in the Capitol. This is due to the almost perfect spatial separation of the twelve districts. It is easier for Snow and his henchmen to fight a few rebelling districts than the whole country of Panem. At this point neither he nor Katniss know about the dissidents within his inner circle, about Plutarch Heavensbee having “been, for several years, part of an undercover group aiming to overthrow the Capitol” (Mockingjay 432). While Katniss attempts to convince Snow and the rest of Panem that her trick with the berries was an act of love for Peeta and not an act of defiance against the Capitol, Heavensbee has already started to work out his subversive plans.

When Katniss and Gale talk about the uprising in District 8, the first one to openly revolt against the Capitol, she still thinks it is her fault to have brought unrest upon the district and without her actions the people would be better off and safe. Gale, however, argues that it was their own choice to revolt and that Katniss has only given them the chance to fight against the injustice they have had to endure for so long.

“Safe to do what?” he says in a gentler tone. “Starve? Work as slaves? Send their kids to the reaping? You haven’t hurt people – you’ve given them an opportunity. They just have to be brave enough to take it. There’s already been talk in the mines. People who want to fight. Don’t you see? It’s happening! It’s finally happening! If there’s an uprising in Eight, why not here? Why not everywhere? This could be it, the thing we’ve been—” (Catching Fire 114)

While Katniss is worried that any organized resistance will lead into massive retaliation from the Capitol, Gale sees the chance to eventually rise up against the tyrants and have a chance to overthrow Snow’s regime. Katniss slowly begins to change her mind after seeing Gale almost whipped to death by the new Head Peacekeeper Romulus Thread. Instead of running away and hiding in the woods, she begins to embrace the possibility of her being the symbol of the ongoing revolts.

One of the turning points is when she meets Bonnie and Twill, the two refugees from District 8, in the woods surrounding her home district. While she is complete unaware of Plutarch Heavensbee’s tipping her of at the Capitol feast by showing her the mockingjay on
his watch, she learns from Bonnie and Twill that the bird on Katniss’ pin has become a symbol of resistance. She begins to understand that her small and unintended acts of defiance in the 74th Hunger Games have evolved into a rebellion in half of Panem’s districts.

In sharp contrast to Katniss’ unintended but highly effective trick with the attempted double suicide, the rebellion in District 8 is meticulously planned with several months of preparing. In contrast to real totalitarian regimes, the mouth-to-mouth propaganda about the subversive plans can be spread relatively safely. First, there is a sharp distinction between allies and enemies. As there is general discontent with the Capitol, every inhabitant of District 8 is either willing to join the rebels or would at least not betray their fellow citizens. Second, the noise of the factories allowed spreading the word without the danger that the enemies, that is the Peacekeepers, could overhear the rebels’ plans. Also in case the factories are monitored remotely by the Capitol, cameras and bugging systems hardly register anything. As two main features of totalitarianism, the secret police as well as mass mobilization, are missing, the rebels groups are able to organize and can at least score a temporary victory, even though the Capitol bombers and peacekeepers can subdue the district again. Despite high losses on the part of District 8, the riot paves the way for a Panem-wide rebellion in two ways. First, it shows that despite their disparities the people of one district can unite and fight for a common cause. Second, Bonnie and Twill are able to escape the district and spread the word to other places in Panem.

As already mentioned, one of the main reasons why there has not been any rebellion between the so-called Dark Days and the events described in *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* is the strict spatial separation between the districts and the social separation within the districts. In the face of the ongoing rebellions in several districts, the Hunger Games have turned from an instrument of sovereign power into a major threat for the regime. The mentors from the various districts would be able to exchange news about the districts and form alliances to overthrow the Capitol. It is, therefore, the most logical strategy for Snow to send in past victors instead of new tributes.

Is it possible that this was really the Quarter Quell written down seventy-five years ago? It seems unlikely. It’s just too perfect an answer for the troubles that face the Capitol today. Getting rid of me and subduing the districts all in one neat little package [...] Yes, victors are our strongest. They’re the ones who survived the arena and slipped the noose of poverty that strangles the rest of us. They, or should I say we, are the very embodiment of hope where
there is no hope. And now twenty-three of us will be killed to show how even that hope was an illusion. *(Catching Fire 198-199)*

As calming down the districts has turned out to be futile, the regime plans to eliminate Katniss as the face of the revolution as well as many other victors for they are both leader figures as well as potential messengers between the various districts. Katniss’ ponderings about destroying all hope by killing the strongest are, again, much reflected in what Foucault says about public executions. It is a public spectacle with mandatory watching for everyone in Panem. By planning to execute the strongest as well as most famous and popular citizens of the respective districts instead of children, the Capitol leaders increase the intensity of their already harsh punishment and would demonstrate the ‘triumph of justice’ if they succeeded.

Just like Snow sees the Quarter Quell as the best opportunity to quell the spreading rebellion, also the rebels are aware that the 75th Hunger Games are crucial for their success. By sabotaging the Games and rescue several of the victors including both Peeta and Katniss, Plutarch and his allies are able to substantially weaken the regime and to proof that the Capitol is vulnerable. This important victory, however, is only possible due to the fact that the resistance also comes from Snow’s inner circle, especially Plutarch, who as Head Gamemaker has access to weapons, hovercrafts, and other important resources for the plans to succeed. For instance, Plutarch makes “sure the wire [is] among the weapons” *(Catching Fire 432)*, so that the force field can be destroyed.

However, the rebels do not only get support from subversives within the regime. There are already first hints that District 13 is still in existence, when Katniss meets the two refugees Bonnie and Twill. In *Mockingjay*, it turns out that there is indeed an underground base where the population of District 13 is living.

Most important for the people of 13, it was the centre of the Capitol’s nuclear weapons development programme. During the Dark Days, the rebels in 13 wrested control from the government forces, trained their nuclear missiles on the Capitol and then struck a bargain: they would play dead in exchange for being left alone. The Capitol had another nuclear arsenal out west, but it couldn’t attack 13 without certain retaliation. *(Mockingjay 19)*

While technically still part of Panem, this shows that District 13 and the Capitol have entered a state similar to the Cold War in the second half of the 20th century. In sharp contrast to Districts 1 to 12, Thirteen is still in possession of high tech equipment and
weapons. Due to their arsenal of nuclear weapons, the district can live underground without getting oppressed by the Capitol.

Already quite early in *Mockingjay* it becomes clear that Coin has her own political agenda and does not support the rebels in the other districts only to end their plight. Nevertheless, the rebels need both District 13 as well as the subversives from the Capitol to be successful.

Friedrich (264) argues that any resistance group from within a totalitarian regime is almost certain to be unsuccessful due to the monopoly of weapons, the monopolized propaganda and the systematic terror from the secret police. As already elaborated in chapter 3.3, District 13 can provide for the necessary means of mass communication to keep the revolution going. The harsh corporal punishment of Katniss’ prep team as well as the bombing of the innocent children and rebel medics during the siege of Snow’s mansion show that Coin is willing to rely on the same methods Snow does. While Snow stops at nothing to maintain his totalitarian leadership, Coin uses systematic terror to overthrow Snow’s rule and take his place. The fact that she suggests introducing new Hunger Games with Capitol children is the final proof that after all Coin’s name is no coincidence for she and Snow are the flipside of the same coin.

Was it like this then? Seventy-five years or so ago? Did a group of people sit around and cast their votes on initiating the Hunger Games? Was there dissent? Did someone make a case for mercy that was beaten down by the calls for the deaths of the districts’ children? The scent of Snow’s rose curls up into my nose, down into my throat, squeezing it tight with despair. All those people I loved, dead, and we are discussing the next Hunger Games in an attempt to avoid wasting life. Nothing has changed. Nothing will ever change now. (Mockingjay 416-417)

After the tyrannical regime is overthrown, Panem could eventually become a real democracy. However, Coin proposes to continue with the same methods Snow has used for vengeance and intimidation. Instead of ordering a fair trial so that those responsible for the atrocities of Snow’s regime could be punished appropriately, she plans to publicly kill innocent children once again. Friedrich (266) claims that it is not unlikely that after a totalitarian regime is overthrown, it is replaced by another one if the conditions that have led to its installation have not changed. Even though Coin lets the seven remaining victors decide whether the new Hunger Games with Capitol children should be held or not, there is no hint that she is going to do anything to defuse the tension between the Capitol and the districts. Melançon (232) argues that it is crucial to “rehabilitate, reconstruct, and
reform the unjust institutions that led to war, and thus secure a lasting peace” and that that it is necessary to “punish all war criminals, regardless of which side they were on. According to him (232-233), not only the suggestion of new Hunger Games are a huge mistake, but also the new government’s unjust dealing with war crimes. Alma Coin is shot by Katniss because she is sure that Coin gave the orders to drop the parachutes that resulted in the death of Prim and many other innocent people.

In his essay “‘Save to do what?’ Morality and the War of All against All in the Arena”, Joseph J. Foy refers to two philosophical views on morality in extreme situations. According to Thomas Hobbes’ moral philosophy “rational human beings should put a premium on their own self-interest” (Foy 212) and, therefore, questions of morality have to be put aside if one’s life is in danger. It is not only acceptable but the most rational choice to kill others if it increases the chances of one’s own survival. Hobbes further argues that there is no real altruism because “people are psychologically constrained at all times to choose what they think will most benefit themselves—at least, when they’re acting rationally and not impetuously succumbing to irrational impulses” (Mann 115). Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative, however, says: “I ought never to act in such a way that I could not also will that my maxim should be a universal law” (qtd. in Foy 213-214) and: “Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only” (qtd. in Foy 214). Thus, from a Kantian perspective, every decision should be morally and ethically justifiable. The main guiding question is not ‘Is there a benefit for me?’ but ‘Would I want other to do the same thing (to me)?’

There is little doubt that Alma Coin, just like Snow, acts only out of self-interest and has no scruples to hurt or kill others if she can keep or gain power through it. However, also some of those who apparently fight for the greater good, that is, freeing the districts from the clutches of Snow’s tyrannical regime, have adopted the Hobbesian point of view in order to get the desired results.

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6 It must be added that Hobbes sees this mainly as a consequence of what he calls ‘state of nature’, a state with no government or laws where every human is a potential threat to every other human. Therefore, he would have condemned the rebellion in the first place as he argues that any government, no matter how bad it is, should be preferred to a lawless ‘state of nature’ (Foy 216-217)
“So you’re suggesting we start avalanches and block the entrances?” asks Lyme.
“That’s it,” says Gale. “Trap the enemy inside, cut off from supplies. Make it impossible for them to send out their hovercraft.”

While everyone considers the plan, Boggs flips through a stack of blueprints of the Nut and frowns. “You risk killing everyone inside. Look at the ventilation system. It’s rudimentary at best. Nothing like what we have in Thirteen. It depends entirely on pumping in air from the mountainsides. Block those vents and you’ll suffocate whoever is trapped.”
“They could still escape through the train tunnel to the square,” says Beetee.
“Not if we blow it up,” says Gale brusquely.
His intent, his full intent, becomes clear. Gale has no interest in preserving the lives of those in the Nut. No interest in caging the prey for later use.
This is one of his death traps. (Mockingjay 227)

This conversation is about how to capture or defeat the Capitol’s last stronghold in the districts, a mountain full of peacekeepers and military resources which the rebels have tried to capture numerous times without the slightest success. As many rebel soldiers have already died trying to enter the so-called ‘Nut’, the rebels are thinking of alternative ways to win this important battle. According to Gale it would be the most rational choice to throw bombs at the mountain that cause avalanches to block all entrances so that every single human being inside dies from suffocation. This way the own soldiers would face no losses and further attacks would be prevented. Even when reminded that not only soldiers but also innocent miners from District 2 are probably inside the Nut, he continues arguing for blocking the only escape possibility as otherwise heavily armed Capitol forces would threaten the lives of the rebels. This is basically an extension of Hobbes argumentation for the premium of preserving one’s own lives. However, it completely runs counter to Kant’s categorical imperative as killing innocent miners would be treating humanity as a means only and would never be an acceptable universal law.

According to Melançon (229-230), there are basic ethical and moral principles for warring parties to guarantee jus in bello, justice in war, if wars can ever be called ‘just’. According to the principle of distinction, it is strictly forbidden to directly attack civilians. The principle of military necessity says that not more military force than absolutely necessary should be used. The principle of proportionality aims to keep the number of civilians indirectly affected by attacks as low as possible if there is no way to avoid that. Gale’s proposal to trap and, consequently, kill every single person in the Nut runs counter to at least two of the three principles. He wants to blow up the mountain although he knows that a considerable number of workers from District 2 is most probably also inside the mountain.
While it can be argued whether this classifies as direct attack on civilians or not, setting up a death trap for anyone regardless of combatant status completely ignores the principle of proportionality. Melançon (231) further argues that there is definitely no military necessity to destroy the Nut. The rebels could simply maintain the siege of the mountain so that the Captiol fighters are unable to act and proceed with attacking the Capitol.

While the civilian victims from the Nut bombings—of which the escape tunnel is eventually spared so that at least some people survive—can be seen as unintended consequence, the already mentioned double-exploding parachutes are a fully intended direct attack against innocent children and medics. This atrocity, most probably ordered by Alma Coin, not only completely runs counter the three jus in bello principles and Kant’s categorical imperative, but also cannot be justified with Hobbes’ considerations as the children and medics clearly pose no threat to the rebels. Although Gale and Beetee cannot tell whether it were their bombs, they at least have moral responsibility as they have designed such types of weapons for District 13.

Even though Gale has more just intentions than Coin, who only seeks to replace Snow as ruler over Panem, his actions are too often driven by the hunger for revenge and he disregards basic moral and ethical principles. In regard to this, Peeta is the exact opposite of Gale. Except for the time where he is brainwashed by the Capitol, his acts are mainly driven by altruism, respect for his fellow humans and love for Katniss even if that means putting his own life at stake. Already when they are eleven-year old children, Peeta saves a nearly starving Katniss. He deliberately burns two loaves of bread so that he can secretly give it to her even if he has no benefit from it and risks getting beaten by his parents. Also in the arena, Peeta risks his life several times to protect Katniss even before it is announced that both tributes of the same district could return home together. From a Hobbesian point of view, Peeta succumbs to irrational impulses as he neglects his own safety and would even give his own life to protect Katniss. Just like Katniss and the rebels, Peeta is in favour of overthrowing the quasi-totalitarian system that oppresses the districts. However, he puts a premium on keeping his dignity and acting morally sound. While Coin’s moves in the ongoing rebellion are driven by power and Gale becomes more and more driven by revenge and hatred, Peeta’s primary motives are true love for Katniss as well as a sense of justice.
The *Hunger Games* trilogy shows that there are several ways and reasons to revolt against an oppressive system. Collins’ ending of the series rewards or punishes the various characters according to what they have done. Snow’s totalitarian system is overthrown and he dies. So does his equally immoral successor, Alma Coin, who is shot by Katniss for being responsible for the death of many innocent people including Prim as well as for proposing to continue the cruel Hunger Games. Gale is not directly punished but he loses Katniss’ love for him and will have to live on knowing she will never forgive him creating the double-explosive bombs. Peeta, however, finally can live in peace with the person he has never stopped to love and care for.

Peeta and I grow back together [...] That 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. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that. So after, when he whispers, “You love me. Real or not real?” I tell him, “Real.” (*Mockingjay* 436)

One of the overarching themes of the novel series is Katniss’ insecurity about her feelings for Gale and Peeta and her not recognising what they feel for her. Teenage love triangles are recurring motifs in YA literature. Like Bella Swan in Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* series, Katniss eventually chooses the gentle and sensitive boy over the passionate but hot-headed one. However, unlike Bella Swan, Katniss is not a “helpless girlfriend [...] who needs to be saved by her man” (Miller 155) but rather a strong young woman defying gender prejudices which are unfortunately still common today. Katniss is a tough fighter used to hardship like her long-time hunting partner Gale, but she also shares Peeta’s kindness and readiness to risk everything for the ones she loves. With Katniss choosing Peeta in the end, Collins uses the teenage love triangle to convey the message that compassion for others and selflessness triumphs over hot-headedness and thirst for revenge.

However, Katniss does not only have the choice between the two boys. After all she has achieved before and during the revolution, she could have occupied an important and powerful position in Panem’s new government. She might have even become president instead of Coin due to her widespread popularity in both the Capitol and the districts. Still she resists the temptation of power and chooses to what she sees the only right thing. She shoots Coin to prevent her becoming the new tyrant, even though she is fully aware that she could be sentenced to death for this. Once more, Katniss puts her own life at stake to
do what seems to be the morally soundest decision. In the end, living a peaceful life with the man who can give her warmth and kindness, helps her most to overcome the nightmares she still has many years after the totalitarian terror was eliminated from Panem.

4. Systems of Oppression in *Harry Potter*

When the first book of Joanne K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series was published in 1997, hardly anyone would have guessed that the words of Professor McGonagall in chapter 1, “every child in our world will know his name!” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 14) would turn out to be prophetic. ‘The boy who lived’ not only becomes famous in the fictional wizarding world, but also one of the biggest phenomena in contemporary literature. In early 2018, the sales figures for the whole Harry Potter series—the seven main books discussed in this chapter and three companion volumes—reached 500 million copies sold worldwide (Wizarding World Digital).

The first volumes of the series were mainly aimed at children and young teenage readers. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* bases on a well-known fairy tale concept as Harry’s introducing to the magical world greatly resembles the story of Cinderella (Eccleshare 16-17). Like the second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, it has a simple and straight-forward story line and a clear distinction between good and evil. Nevertheless, already these two volumes had remarkable success beyond their main target group. The next books became subsequently more complex, much longer and also darker and, therefore, were aimed at a more general audience. The most suitable category to fit *Harry Potter* in seems YAL due to the school setting, the teenage main characters, and the uncomplicated literary style. Nevertheless, the series has readers across all age groups. The more complex and darker volumes of *Harry Potter* are also the most valuable in terms of analysing authoritarianism and power relationships. Therefore, the following analysis will mainly focus on books 4 to 7.
4.1 Pure-Blood, Half-Breed, or Mudblood: Supremacism and Power

The plot of the *Harry Potter* novels takes place on three main levels. The first level is Harry’s family where he grows up after his natural parents have been killed. Although Vernon and Petunia’s parenting style towards Harry is also called ‘authoritarian’, it will not be further investigated in the following analysis as this thesis is about power relationships in larger groups and oppressive systems. It is their dislike towards magic and, more generally, towards anything unconventional conflicting with their petty bourgeois lives, that causes them to dislike Harry and treat him accordingly. The second level is Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In many respects boarding schools are comparable to states, only on a much smaller scale. Unlike day schools, they are a permanent home for students except for school holidays. In case of Hogwarts, also the teachers and headmaster live there. The headmaster can be compared to the ruler of a country and is the main legislative power, the staff has the function of executive and judicial powers. The third plot level is the wizarding world in general. It is a hidden parallel world within the real world as it is mostly kept secret to non-wizards, hereafter usually referred to as ‘Muggles’. At least in Great Britain, and assumably in other countries as well, there is a Minister for Magic whose position for the wizarding community of the country is comparable to that of the Prime Minister—both in the fictional Potter universe as well as in our real world. It also shares the same institutions—prisons, hospitals, and banks for instance—and has its own legislature, executive and judiciary. In several ways, the ‘world’ within the castle gates is a mirror image of the wizarding world as a whole as it will be shown in the following. The school context makes it, however, more tangible for teenage and young adult readers and helps to better understand the machinations of power outside the school realm.

While the *Hunger Games* trilogy is about an oppressed society suffering from a tyrannical quasi-totalitarian regime that is finally overthrown, the *Harry Potter* books are about preventing autocratic tyrants to rise to power. The storyline of the first volume begins after the dark wizard Lord Voldemort has been defeated and peace has been restored after years of oppression. The wizarding community lives in freedom and secretly protects the Muggles from any harm caused by misuse of magic, also to prevent that their own existence becomes known to the non-magic public. At the end of the fourth book, Voldemort is able to restore his powers and begins to build an army of witches and wizards as well as all kinds
of dark creatures and other magical beings like giants. Apart from his two main aims, killing Harry and becoming immortal, he also seeks to re-shape the wizarding world. Voldemort’s objective is to rise to the ruler of both realms. Wizards should no longer be hiding themselves but rather rule with iron fist over those not worth it according to Voldemort’s ideology. As shown in the following, this includes not only Muggles, but also wizards and witches descending from non-wizards. The statue in the Ministry of Magic which is installed after the Death Eaters have taken control symbolizes Voldemort’s attitude towards Muggles.

Now a gigantic statue of black stone dominated the scene. It was rather frightening, this vast sculpture of a witch and a wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones, looking down at the Ministry workers toppling out of fireplaces below them. Engraved in foot-high letters at the base of the statue were the words: MAGIC IS MIGHT. (Deathly Hallows 195, last three words centred, enlarged, and bold in original)

Harry looked more closely and realised that what he had thought were decoratively carved thrones were actually mounds of carved humans: hundreds and hundreds of naked bodies, men, women and children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted and pressed together to support the weight of the handsomely robed wizards.

‘Muggles,’ whispered Hermione. ‘In their rightful place. Come on, let’s get going.’ (Deathly Hallows, 196)

For Voldemort the primary purpose of magic is to have power over others. Those in possession of the strongest magical powers should rule over the rest of the world and purge it from those who are—according to them—unworthy: Muggles, but also certain witches and wizards. While most witches and wizards do not judge other witches and wizards by their ancestry, Voldemort and his closest followers claim that witches and wizards born from other witches and wizards are superior to other human beings. Like race supremacists, they categorize others according to their ‘blood status’. Indeed, their classifications, pure-blood, half-blood, and mud-blood, closely resemble the Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany which classified people as Aryans, Mischlinge⁷, and Jews and strictly forbade any marriage between Aryans and Jews. They also regulated in which way those of mixed ancestry could marry and have children.

‘Many of our oldest family trees become a little diseased over time,’ he [Voldemort] said, as Bellatrix gazed at him, breathless and imploring. ‘You must prune yours, must you not, to keep it healthy? Cut away those parts that threaten the health of the rest.’

‘Yes, my Lord,’ whispered Bellatrix, and her eyes swam with tears of gratitude again. ‘At the first chance!’

⁷ German for ‘mongrels’ or ‘half-breeds’
‘You shall have it,’ said Voldemort. ‘And in your family, so in the world … we shall cut away the canker that infects us until only those of the true blood remain …’ (Deathly Hallows 9)

Similar to the blood laws of the national socialists, Voldemort wants to enforce witches and wizards who have no Muggle ancestors to procreate only with other so-called pure-bloods. Also his choice of words, calling those of mixed or Muggle ancestry ‘the canker that infects us’, much resembles the language of the Nazis who saw the Aryans as master race, while non-Aryans were depredated as subhumans. While Snow’s quasi-totalitarian regime in the Hunger Games series dehumanizes the citizens of some of the districts due to their behaviour and looks and sees them as ‘barbarians’, Voldemort’s ideology is entirely based on people’s blood status. Even the strongest and most proficient wizards and witches with the wrong ancestors—like Hermione, whose parents are dentists without any magical powers—are seen as potential harm that can infect pure-blooded families. Wizards and witches born of Muggle parents are referred to as ‘Mudbloods’, an extremely derogatory term vehemently rejected by most wizards and witches. Voldemort also accuses them of stealing magic and knowledge. He, therefore, calls for a removal of those who ‘threaten the health of the rest’, proclaiming a dystopian (in his eyes, of course, utopian) future where anybody not deemed pure enough is either killed or at best allowed to serve the rulers with the right blood status.

While Voldemort proclaims a society of only pure-bloods, his own father was a Muggle, which means that his own blood status contradicts the central aspect of his supremacist ideology. However, it can be argued that precisely his own mixed heritage causes him to hate Muggles and wizards with non-magic ancestors because “[h]e projects his own failings in purity and ability onto those he deems as his inferiors who surround him, or onto those wizards who feed his insecurity with their evident potential for greatness” (qtd. in Oakes 146). While Voldemort is ashamed of his mixed ancestry, Severus Snape is apparently so proud of his ancestry that he gives himself the title ‘Half-Blood Prince’ during his school time at Hogwarts. Oakes (144) argues that “Death Eaters don’t hate Muggles or Mudbloods because they truly feel superior to them. They hate them because they believe that these nonwizards and “tainted” wizards threaten the control of magic from outside the wizarding world. She (146-147) compares their attitude towards magic to the secrecy of ancient and medieval alchemists. Magic knowledge should be kept from all those not worthy of it so
that the pure-blooded witches and wizards can draw their power over others from having the monopoly on magic.

Already Salazar Slytherin, one of the four founders of Hogwarts, “believe[s] that magical learning should be kept within all-magic families” (Chamber 159) as they are the only trustworthy. Therefore, he constructs the Chamber of Secrets so that his heir can open it to “unleash the horror within, and use it to purge the school of all who [a]re unworthy to study magic” (ibid.). The other three founders of the school and also Albus Dumbledore, however, see magic in a similar way we see science (Oakes 147). It should be “communally developed and can safely be shared by those who are born with the aptitude to learn and exercise that knowledge” (ibid.). This democratic and participatory approach to magic treats all witches and wizards regardless of their heritage or blood status as equal.

The rule of pure-blood wizards envisioned by Voldemort and his followers bears many similarities to totalitarian regimes, in particular Nazi Germany. Whereas in totalitarianism the single mass party led by a dictator has all the power, Voldemort aims to become the ruler of both the wizarding and the Muggle world. His mass party are the Death Eaters. Just like totalitarian systems show no mercy to dissidents, becoming a Death Eater is “a lifetime of service or death” (Order of the Phoenix 103). Moreover, Voldemort forces other wizards and witches to join his forces. All those who are not willing, get tortured, killed, or bewitched with the Imperius curse, which allows the caster to take full control over the victim’s mind. The use of the Imperius curse by Voldemort and his Death Eaters much resembles the Capitol’s brainwashing with tracker jacker venom to manipulate Peeta’s memory. While the technique of hijacking one’s brain—as this procedure is called in the Hunger Games novels—only allows to perforate and change the mind during the process albeit with lasting consequences, the Imperius curse allows permanent and total control of the victim once casted. Both procedures symbolize the propaganda and coercion totalitarian states use to bring their citizens into line. Voldemort’s planned regime also has an all-encompassing ideology. His pure-blood supremacism affects all important aspects of life. Dolores Umbridge’s Muggle-born Registration Commission convicts all wizards and witches with only Muggle ancestors either to imprisonment in Azkaban or to a Dementor’s kiss, which according to Lupin means that the Dementors “clamp their jaws upon the mouth of the victim and – and suck out his soul” (Prisoner of Azkaban 262). The Dementor’s
kiss is considered a worse fate than being killed. Like the marriage laws, also this reminds the reader of the situation for those having the ‘wrong’ ancestry in Nazi Germany, where millions of non-Aryans were sent into concentration camps in which they were forced to work as slaves and were killed. In addition to that, Voldemort also has people to spy on wizards and witches he deems not trustworthy or blood traitors. Umbridge and her staff gather information about the blood status of them and their close relatives and investigate whether they belong to organizations or societies like the Order of the Phoenix and, thus, decide about their security status. For instance, Arthur Weasley is being constantly monitored. While under Death Eater control, the Ministry of Magic also monitors all means of transportation that involve magic.

‘We are at an advantage there, my Lord,’ said Yaxley, who seemed determined to receive some portion of approval. ‘We now have several people planted within the Department of Magical Transport. If Potter Apparates or uses the Floo Network, we shall know immediately.’

(Deathly Hallows 12)

Thus it can be said that the regime Voldemort seeks to install fulfils the criteria for being classified as totalitarian. Its cruelty towards muggles as well as witches and wizards born of Muggles is reminiscent of the national socialist ideology which was proclaiming Aryan supremacy. Like in Snow’s quasi-totalitarian regime, a small number of people is favoured while a much larger number has to suffer. In contrast to Panem, where the place of birth decides whether someone can live among the privileged or belongs to the oppressed majority, under Voldemort’s reign it is the ancestry that decides one’s fate. Both use systematic terror to enforce their ideology, both torture and kill not only dissidents but also innocent people including children. Both regimes proclaim a utopian society. While Snow argues that the Capitol’s reign over the districts and the annually repeated Hunger Games secure stability and peace and thus a much better life for all compared to the so-called Dark Days, Voldemort explicitly says that he envisions a better life only for those worth it, which are pure-blooded or at least half-blooded wizards.

As said at the beginning of the chapter, there are three main plot levels of which Hogwarts and the wizarding world in general will be examined closer as many aspects of one are mirrored in the other. This is also the case in terms of totalitarian rule. Dolores Umbridge’s attempt to gradually take over the school is reminiscent of dictators who eliminate democratic institutions step-by-step and thus turn a democracy into an authoritarian or
totalitarian state. In the fifth volume, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Umbridge is sent to Hogwarts on behalf of the Ministry of Magic to suppress the truth about Voldemort’s return. Before discussing Umbridge, a short excursus on the Minister for Magic will be necessary. Already at the end of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* Cornelius Fudge refuses to believe take the appropriate steps and dismisses all evidence of Voldemort’s coming back to life.

‘Voldemort has returned,’ Dumbledore repeated. ‘If you accept that fact straight away, Fudge, and take the necessary measures, we may still be able to save the situation. The first and most essential step is to remove Azkaban from the control of the Dementors – ‘

‘Preposterous!’ shouted Fudge again. ‘Remove the Dementors! I’d be kicked out of office for suggesting it!’ (*Goblet of Fire* 594)

‘Extend them [the Giants] the hand of friendship, now, before it is too late,’ said Dumbledore, ‘or Voldemort will persuade them, as he did before, that he alone among wizards will give them their rights and their freedom!’

‘You – you cannot be serious!’ Fudge gasped, shaking his head, and retreating further from Dumbledore. ‘If the magical community got wind that I had approached the giants – people hate them, Dumbledore – end of my career –’

‘You are blinded,’ said Dumbledore, his voice rising now, the aura of power around him palpable, his eyes blazing once more, ‘by the love of the office you hold, Cornelius! [...] [T]ake the steps I have suggested, and you will be remembered, in office or out, as one of the bravest and greatest Ministers for Magic we have ever known. Fail to act – and history will remember you as the man who stepped aside, and allowed Voldemort a second chance to destroy the world we have tried to rebuild!’ (*Goblet of Fire* 595)

Fudge reveals his true intentions for not believing what Harry has witnessed on the graveyard. As Minister for Magic, he would have to take unpopular precautionary measures in order to weaken Voldemort and his Death Eaters. However, he does not even try to argue against the measures in terms of efficiency, but only comments how they would affect his future career. In order to secure his current power position he fails to make a tough decision and rather begins to silence everyone who could reveal the truth. As in many occasions, Rowling’s choice of name hints at the minister’s character. According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, ‘to fudge’ means “to avoid making a decision or giving a clear answer about something” (“Fudge”) or “to cheat about something slightly, esp. by not reporting facts accurately or not telling the exact truth” (ibid.). Fudging facts is a common behaviour of politicians, in particular before important elections. Not only dictators in authoritarian or totalitarian systems use propaganda to secure their power, also politicians in democracies often make popular but suboptimal decisions or lie about facts in order to not
to lose voters or important supporters and, consequently, lose power. It is later revealed that Fudge fears that Dumbledore wants to form “his own private army, with which he will be able to take on the Ministry of Magic” (Order of the Phoenix 281). Moreover, Lucius Malfoy bribes Fudge and other highly influential Ministry officials.

‘What private business have they [Malfoy and Fudge] got together, anyway?’

‘Gold, I expect,’ said Mr Weasley angrily. ‘Malfoy’s been giving generously to all sorts of things for years … gets him in with the right people … then he can ask favours … delay laws he doesn’t want passed … oh, he’s very well-connected, Lucius Malfoy.’ (Order of the Phoenix 143)

So due to fear of losing his power position as well as wealthy and influential supporters, Fudge deliberately seeks to suppress any evidence about Voldemort’s return. Instead of taking responsibility and protecting both the wizarding community as well as the Muggles, he fights Dumbledore and sends his minion Dolores Jane Umbridge, Senior Undersecretary to the Minister, to Hogwarts.

Umbridge starts as teacher for Defense Against the Dark Arts, but she quickly begins to accumulate power and bring “every aspect of life at Hogwarts under her personal control” (Order of the Phoenix 509). With help from the ministry, she systematically curtails the other teachers’ sphere of influence. While this is in accordance to the orders she gets from the Ministry of Magic, Umbridge also follows her own agenda. Although she never becomes a Death Eater, she has similar supremacist views and particularly dislikes mixed beings like half-giants and werewolves. She calls Hagrid “great half-breed oaf” (Order of the Phoenix 691) and shouts at the centaurs “Filthy half-breeds […] Beasts! Uncontrolled animals!” (Order of the Phoenix 694). According to Anatol, Umbridge also expresses her prejudice against half-giants through the way she communicates with Hagrid. She uses shorter and simpler sentences, speaks more slowly and also “pantomimes what she is trying to convey as if someone of giant ancestry would not have any facility with a spoken language” (Anatol 8)

8 In early 2020, when I was finalizing my thesis, the situation with the pandemic of Covid-19 (coronavirus disease) became more serious every day. It was shocking to see that politicians from several countries and Politicians in several regions around the world (including my homeland Tyrol) were ‘fudging’—not taking appropriate measures quickly or giving incorrect information, mostly either due to pressure from certain economic sectors or to avoid showing weakness and admitting mistakes. Before this, Fudge’s stubbornness and ignorance seemed unrealistic to me. However, the coronavirus crisis was proof enough for me to see Fudge’s passivity in times of great danger as more than just a literary hyperbole.

9 In the following, I will use the word ‘being’ for every subject able to communicate with humans for the same reason Giselle L. Anatol (123) does: “I choose to use the word ‘beings’ rather than ‘creatures’ because I believe the latter animalizes rather than acknowledges the more human qualities of the subjects.”
Anatol sees this as animalization and compares this to “racist beastialization (sic) of non-European people” (ibid.). Her distaste for mixed beings and Muggle-born wizards is much reflected in the choice of people working for her Inquisitorial Squad. Apart from Argus Filch, every member of the squad is from Slytherin. They serve as her private militia and have the right to systematically terrorize their fellow students—officially to enforce the official Ministry propaganda about Voldemort not having returned, but very likely also because of Umbridge’s need to satisfy her sadistic desires.

To sum it up, Umbridge installs a dictatorship in Hogwarts that has both authoritarian as well as totalitarian elements. With the help of the Ministry of Magic, she disposes of Albus Dumbledore and becomes the new headmaster, acts like a dictator, and is the centre of legislative, executive, and judicial power. There is an official ideology which dismisses any evidence about Voldemort’s return as lie. Her Inquisitorial Squad has similar functions as the secret police of totalitarian regimes. They get the right to keep their fellow students under surveillance, open and read “all owl post entering and leaving the castle” (*Order of the Phoenix* 582) and are allowed to bully those students who are not in line. Official approval for bullying other students can be seen as school equivalent to systematic terror in totalitarian states. Like in Snow’s quasi-totalitarian regime, the mass mobilization aspect is missing. Umbridge lacks the charisma of totalitarian leaders to get a substantial number of followers. Also, there is little evidence that she envisions a radically new utopian way of studying and teaching in Hogwarts. Although the *Daily Prophet* calls her teaching methods in Defense Against the Dark Arts revolutionary, in fact they only serve to prevent the students from actually learn how to use spells due to Fudge’s irrational fear of Dumbledore recruiting a private army to overthrow him.

Altogether, Rowling proclaims a clear anti-racist and anti-supremacist message in her novels. Authoritarian and totalitarian dictatorships are criticised roundly and presented in a very negative way. Dictators, no matter if female or male, if in a school context or acting on a larger scale, are presented as evil villains. While children and teenagers probably have less interest in politics, they can easily relate to school issues. Rowling criticizes racism, supremacism and autocratic dictatorships on both levels. This might help children and teenagers to better understand the politics in *Harry Potter* as they see much of Voldemort’s acts and ideology reflected in Umbridge. The Ministry of Magic serves as connector
between the two levels. It is, therefore, no surprise that in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, when Voldemort has gained full control over the Ministry, Umbridge has become one of the main ministerial enforcers of his supremacist ideology.

Despite Rowling’s clear and overt message against racism and supremacism, some scholars point out that several instances of imperialism, ethnocentrism and discrimination can be found hidden beneath the surface of the text.

According to Anatol (112), this is reminiscent of British imperialism. Apparently, Fudge sees the British Ministry of Magic as being responsible for all wizards and witches in the world. Anatol thus interprets this as “reincarnation of the historic British Empire, with London as the seat of power and control” (ibid.). Zipes (183) argues that *Harry Potter* is centred on white, British protagonists who are chosen “because they have the right magical skills and good genes” and that the novels celebrate male dominance. Gupta (106) notes that although in *Harry Potter* the different ethnic groups of our world live together in true equality, the non-whites are not more than “tokenistic marginal characters”. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Hermione’s fight against the slavery of the house-elves is one of the main subplots. According to Carey (170) and Anatol (113), this clear anti-slavery position, however, is undermined in the last regular chapter of the series in which Harry wonders after the demanding battle “whether Kreacher might bring him a sandwich” (*Deathly Hallows* 613). Nevertheless, most of the scholars agree that the clear criticism against abuse of power and elitism as well as the numerous covert hints and allusions outweigh those troublesome passages. Carey concludes his essay about Hermione’s house-elf campaign with the following statement:

Rowling provides plenty of clues to suggest that ultimately their [the house-elves’] welfare, as well as the welfare of all oppressed groups in the wizarding world, is of central concern to a free and equitable society. This message, and the message that political freedoms must be fought for and stoutly defended, is at the heart of Rowling’s project. (Carey 172)

To sum up, the seven novels have a very clear message against supremacism and do this on two major levels. Umbridge’s machinations in Hogwarts mirror Voldemort’s striving for becoming the total ruler over both the wizarding and the Muggle world. The school context
can be very helpful for young readers to better understand the more general political level. Nevertheless, it must be noted that—like in many other pieces of literature—some passages reflect remnants of ethnocentrism and orientalism deeply rooted in the Western society.

4.2 From Wizarding Laws to Unforgivable Curses: Discipline and Punishment in Magic Britain

As the chapter on Collins shows, corporal punishment, disciplining, as well as the use of mass media are almost equally important for the power holders in the Hunger Games series. In the Harry Potter novels, however, power structures mostly rely on one of the three forms of power. Another main difference, as will be shown, is the notion of ‘spatial segregation’ for disciplining which is very prominent in Collins’ novel series but only plays a very minor role in Harry Potter. Furthermore, in Harry Potter, laws and their enforcement play a prominent role, while in Collins’ dystopian novels there is no judicial system. Peacekeepers immediately punish any infraction of the Capitol’s rules and also District 13 punishes any inappropriate behaviour immediately without trial.

Voldemort and his Death Eaters mainly rely on means of sovereign power and, as it will be shown in chapter 4.3, also mass media, but to a much smaller extent. Rather than trying to discipline the Muggles and wizards they aspire to rule, they rely on an ample repertoire of methods to terrorize those wizards who do not join their supremacist cause as well as everyone who is deemed inferior due to their blood status. Unlike Snow and Coin in the Hunger Games series, who torture and kill to reach political goals and to secure their power position, Voldemort and his followers also do this for ideological reasons and partly even for the mere joy of seeing others suffer or die. The riot scene at the Quidditch World Cup exemplifies this:

A crowd of wizards, tightly packed and moving together with wands pointing straight upwards, was marching slowly across the field. Harry squinted at them ... they didn’t seem to have faces ... then he realised that their heads were hooded and their faces masked. High above them, floating along in mid-air, four struggling figures were being contorted into grotesque shapes. It was as though the masked wizards on the ground were puppeteers, and
the people above them were marionettes operated by invisible strings that rose from the wands into the air. Two of the figures were very small. (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 102)

The Death Eaters burn down tents and torture the Muggle family for no other reason than their own amusement. Their supremacist ideology deprives non-wizards from all human rights. The process of dehumanization, already discussed in chapter 3.2 for *Hunger Games*, is taken to an extreme. While the inhabitants of the Capitol see the people from the districts as savages and possibly as subhumans, the Death Eaters maltreat the Roberts family as if they were their toys. In our world such atrocities are universally condemned, not only if other humans are involved but also if any sentient being is tormented this way.

In the *Harry Potter* novels, there are three spells—the Unforgivable Curses *Crucio*, *Imperio*, and *Avada Kedavra*—which are strictly forbidden to be used on other human beings. Any violation of this wizarding law leads to lifetime imprisonment in the wizarding prison of Azkaban. It is no surprise that Voldemort and his followers make ample use of all three of these curses. As mentioned in 4.1, Voldemort uses torturing, brain-washing, and killing in order to make fellow wizards follow him or to eliminate them in case they refuse.

‘Pain,’ said Moody softly. ‘You don’t need thumbscrews or knives to torture someone if you can perform the Crucius Curse … that one was very popular once, too.’ (*Goblet of Fire* 181)

This curse is used to inflict excruciating pain. The Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher compares it to medieval torturing methods. The Death Eaters, however, do not only use this to punish or extract information from their victims. In case of Neville’s parents, Bellatrix Lestrange—along with three other Death Eaters—does not stop torturing them until their mind is irreversibly damaged. They survive the assault but remain in an incurable state of insanity for the rest of their lives. According to Lestrange, to make the Crucius Curse work properly “you need to really want to cause pain – to enjoy it” (*Order of the Phoenix* 746) as anger alone without the joy of seeing the other suffer is not sufficient. Although also other wizards use this curse, it can be seen as Lestrange’s signature spell.

‘Total control,’ said Moody quietly, as the spider balled itself up and began to roll over and over. ‘I could make it jump out of the window, drown itself, throw itself down one of your throats …’

Ron gave an involuntary shudder.

‘Years back, there were a lot of witches and wizards being controlled by the Imperius Curse,’ said Moody, and Harry knew he was talking about the days in which Voldemort had
been all-powerful. ‘Some job for the Ministry, trying to sort out who was being forced to act, and who was acting of their own free will. (Goblet of Fire 181)

While the Cruciatius Curse is the magic equivalent to the most gruesome methods of corporal punishment and torturing, the Imperius Curse is a magic shortcut for creating docile bodies. The dark wizards do not have to rely on disciplinary institutions. Instead, they only have to perform one single spell in order to get what Foucault (175) calls infinitesimal power over the active body. Fortunately, there is no real-world equivalent to this curse. Nevertheless, manipulation and influencing via mass media is a topical issue of our time and likely to become even more important in the future.

The third of the Unforgivable Curses, Avada Kedavra, immediately kills the victim and, apart from some very rare exceptions, cannot be blocked. The killing curse is Lord Voldemort’s signature spell. While even several Death Eaters are reluctant to use it, Voldemort rarely casts other spells than the three Unforgivable Curses and in the majority of the time Avada Kedavra. He kills people for four main reasons. First, he does not accept any refusal from wizards to serve his cause and, therefore, kills his opponents. Second, he kills Muggles and Muggle-born wizards as they are subhumans according to his supremacist ideology. Next, he kills others in order to split his soul in order to create Horcruxes and attain immortality. The last reason for him to kill is that he reanimates corpses to create an army of undead.

‘Er … right,’ said Harry. ‘Well, on that leaflet, it said something about Inferi. What exactly are they? The leaflet wasn’t very clear.’

‘They are corpses,’ said Dumbledore calmly. ‘Dead bodies that have been bewitched to do a Dark wizard’s bidding. Inferi have not been seen for a long time, however, not since Voldemort was last powerful … he killed enough people to make an army of them, of course. This is the place, Harry, just here …’ (Half-Blood Prince 52)

Voldemort wants to have total control over bodies and does not even permit others to rest in peace after their deaths. Necromancy is neither a topic in the Hunger Games series nor something to worry about in our real world. Nevertheless, this extract exemplifies how much Voldemort’s actions are centred on both causing and preventing death. He deliberately kills people but also re-animates them to have an army of docile undead bodies. Groves (138) argues that Voldemort’s name has a double meaning. The French phrase ‘Vol de mort’ can be interpreted both as ‘flight from death’ as well as ‘flight of death’. Moreover, the word ‘vol’ also means ‘theft’ and, consequently, Tom Riddle’s sobriquet also has the meaning ‘theft of death’. Voldemort’s own major goal is the flight
from death, for which he creates the Horcruxes. *Avada Kedavra*, his signature spell, can be seen as the flight of death as it brings almost certain death to its victims. As necromancer, Voldemort is also a thief of death as he steals dead bodies to become his obedient slaves. However, the Unforgivable Curses are not only used on enemies of Voldemort and on those who due to their blood status are deprived of basic human rights in the eyes of the Death Eaters. While he relies on means of terror elsewhere, he demands strict discipline from his closest followers. Like in military institutions every Death Eater is obliged to unquestioningly obey their commander’s orders. Both refusal as well as failure is punished without mercy. After the Death Eaters Thorfinn Rowle and Antonin Dolohov have summoned Voldemort to the café in Tottenham Court Road in vain as Harry, Ron, and Hermione had already disapparated, he severely punishes them.

‘More, Rowle, or shall we end it and feed you to Nagini? Lord Voldemort is not sure that he will forgive this time … You called me back for this, to tell me that Harry Potter has escaped again? Draco, give Rowle another taste of our displeasure … do it, or feel my wrath yourself!’ (*Deathly Hallows* 140)

Draco Malfoy is forced to cast the Crucius spell on Rowle and thus give him the most painful corporeal punishment possible. Rowle is given the choice to either endure further punishment or to fall prey to Voldemort’s snake. Peter Pettigrew does not even get a choice when Harry and Ron overpower him in the cellar of Malfoy Manor.

Wandless, helpless, Pettigrew’s pupils dilated in terror. His eyes had slid from Harry’s face to something else. His own silver fingers were moving inexorably towards his own throat.

‘No—’

Without pausing to think, Harry tried to drag back the hand, but there was no stopping it. The silver tool that Voldemort had given his most cowardly servant had turned upon its Disarmed and useless owner; Pettigrew was reaping his reward for his hesitation, his moment of pity; he was being strangles before their eyes. (*Deathly Hallows* 383)

The same magical hand Voldemort awards Pettigrew at the end of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* for helping him return to his body kills him. Voldemort says that he does not believe Pettigrew to have returned “out of loyalty, but out of fear of [his] old friends” (*Goblet of Fire* 546). Immediately after that he already warns him that his loyalty may never waver again. Obviously Voldemort has cursed the magical hand to immediately strangle its owner after the slightest trace of disobedience.

To sum up, Voldemort mainly relies on means of terror to oppress Muggles, Muggle-born wizards as well as everybody who tries to resist him or his followers. He never manages to
become a rightful ruler and, therefore, during his tyranny the world is always in a state of war. Voldemort and the Death Eaters make ample use of the so-called Unforgivable Curses which are strictly forbidden and usually punishable by life imprisonment. Even in a war situation, killing and torturing people at random is of course strictly outlawed. Like Coin’s bombing of medics and children flagrantly violates jus in bello, Voldemort’s atrocities are heinous crimes regardless if at war or not. Over his own followers he exercises strict discipline, demands total and unswerving loyalty and accepts no failure. Any failure leads to brutal corporeal punishment including torture with the Crucius Curse. Disloyality to Voldemort is usually punished with death.

To protect wizards as well as Muggles, the wizarding world has created legal systems. The seven books of the series only give details about the government and laws of the United Kingdom, but it is hinted at that other regions of the world work similarly. Therefore, the following analysis is restricted at the legal system and Ministry of Magic of the United Kingdom.

As already mentioned, using Crucio, Imperio, or Avada Kedavra on fellow human beings normally leads to a life imprisonment in Azkaban. It is, however, not surprising that during Pius Thicknesse’s period of office as Minister for Magic the three curses are legal, as Thicknesse himself is under the Imperius Curse and thus Voldemort’s puppet. But not only during that time are the Unforgivable Curses legalized. When Voldemort has risen to power the first time, Barty Crouch Sr. is Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

Crouch’s principles might’ve been good in the beginning – I wouldn’t know. He rose quickly through the Ministry, and he started ordering very harsh measures against Voldemort’s supporters. The Aurors were given new powers – powers to kill rather than capture, for instance. And I wasn’t the only one who was handed straight to the Dementors without trial. Crouch fought violence with violence, and authorised the use of the Unforgivable Curses against suspects. I would say he became as ruthless and cruel as many on the Dark side. (Goblet of Fire 444)

In many ways Crouch resembles Alma Coin from the Hunger Games. Both are dedicated fighters against their tyrannical enemies and both eventually fall back on the same evil methods. Moreover, both Crouch and Coin are power-hungry and do not hesitate to sacrifice people who are close to them and trust them. Both are in fact traitors of the democracy and liberty they pretend to defend. While Coin manages to rise to absolute power and fully discloses her true nature when she proposes to continue the Hunger
Games, only with Capitol children instead of children from the districts, Crouch’s rise to power is stopped when his son is caught in the company of Death Eaters. He, therefore, never achieves his final goal, becoming Minister for Magic.

The passage cited above is one of the best examples to show that the characters of *Harry Potter* do not follow the simple dichotomy of good versus evil. Crouch misuses his power position in the Ministry to turn a functioning democracy into an authoritarian state. In several ways he invalidates the separation of powers and, as Hall (158) points out, the European Convention on Human Rights. Although the books do not mention the convention, they are set in the United Kingdom four decades after it signed and ratified the convention. Hall (158) argues that even if the convention is not directly effective in domestic law, “the existence of the convention offer[s] powerful moral authority”. Allowing Aurors to use the Cruciatatus Curse is equal to legalizing torture. Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights says that “[n]o one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (Council of Europe, *Convention 7*). The use of the killing curse, however, may in certain cases be covered by the exemption provisions of Article 2, Right to Live. The Imperius Curse, on the other hand, would certainly violate several of the articles regarding freedom. Convicting Sirius as well as Barty Crouch Jr. to Azkaban without trial means that, instead of independent judges and juries, he alone becomes the judicial power of the wizarding community of the United Kingdom. Moreover, it violates Article 6 of the Convention on Human Rights according to which “everybody is entitled to a fair and public hearing [...] by an independent and impartial tribunal” (Council of Europe, *Convention 9*). Already in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, when due to the ongoing attacks on Hogwarts students Fudge has Hagrid arrested, Article 6 is violated in several ways.

‘Look at it from my point of view,’ said Fudge, fidgeting with his bowler. ‘I’m under a lot of pressure. Got to be seen to be doing something. If it turns out it wasn’t Hagrid, he’ll be back and no more said. But I’ve got to take him. Got to. Wouldn’t be doing my duty —’

‘Take me?’ said Hagrid, who was trembling. ‘Take me where?’

‘For a short stretch only,’ said Fudge, not meeting Hagrid’s eyes. ‘Not a punishment, Hagrid, more a precaution. If someone else is caught, you’ll be let out with a full apology ...’

‘Not Azkaban?’ croaked Hagrid. (*Chamber of Secrets* 276)
Not only is Hagrid denied a fair trial, but also he is presumed guilty although there is not the slightest evidence that he has done anything wrong this time. According to Article 6 “[e]veryone charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law” (Council of Europe, Convention 9). Hagrid’s imprisonment does not lead to widespread public disapproval for two reasons. First, he is known to have a foible for dangerous creatures like dragons and spiders. Second, and more importantly, he is a half-giant. Although half-giants should be treated equally according to wizarding laws, supremacism and prejudices against mixed beings are also widespread among those witches and wizards who are no supporters of Voldemort. It can be assumed that if any other person of the Hogwarts staff would be arrested and sent to Azkaban, there would be widespread and angry protests.

However, also being committed for trial does not guarantee a fair treatment. In Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, Harry casts a Patronus Charm to save the life of his cousin Dudley who is being attacked by Dementors. Immediately after performing the spell, Harry receives a letter from the Ministry of Magic’s Improper Use of Magic Office that says that his “breach of the Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery has resulted in [his] expulsion from Hogwarts” (Order of the Phoenix 25, bold in original) and that Ministry officials will destroy his wand. It is further added that he is required to be present at a disciplinary hearing. According to this letter, the Ministry has already decided on the extent of Harry’s punishment before he even has the chance to defend himself and before he is proved guilty. This injustice, which would again violate Article 6 of the Convention on Human Rights, is revoked soon thanks to Dumbledore’s intervention. Nevertheless, the trial itself is also unfair in several ways. Although Harry’s performing of underage magic is a minor offence, Fudge holds a full criminal trial with the whole Wizengamot present, which is usually only the case if murderers or other serious offenders are tried. It is also an ostentatious display of power to place a fifteen-year-old teenager chained to a chair and surrounded by about fifty adult wizards in uniform robes gazing at him. The beginning of the trial is rescheduled one hour earlier without informing neither

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10 Hagrid was also totally innocent when the basilisk killed Moaning Myrtle fifty years prior to the events of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. However, due to Tom Riddle’s machinations there was abundant evidence to link Hagrid to the crime.
Harry nor his witness for the defence, Dumbledore. Obviously, Fudge seeks to prevent Harry and Dumbledore from showing up in time so they can convict Harry without giving him the chance to defend himself. During the trial, Dumbledore exposes several breaches of existing law by Fudge. He ignores a clause that “states that magic may be used before Muggles in exceptional circumstances [...] which threaten the life of the wizard or witch him- or herself, or any witches, wizards or Muggles present” (Order of the Phoenix 136). Moreover, the Ministry does not have the authority to expel students from Hogwarts “[n]or does it have the right to confiscate wands until charges have been successfully proven” (Order of the Phoenix 137). Fudge’s reaction to Dumbledore’s reminding him to obey the existing laws is that “[l]aws can be changed” (ibid.). Although this remark does not get much attention in the book, it indeed reveals Fudge’s true understanding of power. He sees himself above the law, which implies that the wizarding government of the United Kingdom has become an autocracy. Fudge has effectively dispensed with the separation of powers.

To sum it up, the wizarding world of Harry Potter is a mostly functional democracy with separation of powers and laws that are in accordance with our basic understanding of justice and with the most basic human rights. However, there seems to be a lack of corrective mechanisms so that Fudge can accumulate power without much resistance and thus install himself as authoritarian leader. In contrast to this, the Hunger Games trilogy has two autocratic systems where all the power is already concentrated in the respective dictator. If the Convention on Human Rights had any validity in Panem, both regimes would obviously infract almost every single human right.

Not only the wizarding world in general, also the school of Hogwarts can be analysed in terms of rules, discipline, and punishment forms. According to Foucault (292), prisons und schools are very much alike. Both prisons and schools are disciplinary institutions. As Hogwarts is a boarding school and students are only allowed to leave the school grounds during holidays and the school building itself in the daytime. Many of the school conventions of Hogwarts can be analysed through a Foucauldian lens as disciplinary measures.

In addition to marks and grades, Hogwarts has so-called house points which are awarded according to the student’s behaviour and performance. If a student can prove
extraordinary knowledge or performance during a lesson, the teacher can award their
house bonus points, while some teachers also punish mistakes or lack of knowledge by
deducting a small number of house points. However, a much more important function of
the house points is to discipline students in their spare time as breaking rules can lead to
the loss of a substantial amount of house points. Foucault (232-234) describes such
nuanced and detailed systems of quantifying reward and punishment as ideal apparatus to
form optimized and docile bodies. As this particular disciplinary system does not affect
individual students but rather the whole school house they are part of, losing points can
lead to serious discrimination. Bullying and discrimination at school are typical and
frequent themes in YAL. Most teenagers and young adults can easily relate them to own
experiences or experiences of friends or siblings. In Hogwarts, there are four giant
hourglasses that always show the current scores highly visible to every student. If students
lose significant amounts of points, the whole school will certainly know it soon. This can be
exemplified by the passage when Professor McGonagall takes fifty house points from
Hermione, Harry, and Neville each.

A hundred and fifty points lost. That put Gryffindor in last place. In one night, they’d ruined
any chance Gryffindor had had for the House Cup. Harry felt as though the bottom had
dropped out of his stomach. How could they ever make up for this? [...] From being one of
the most popular and admired people at the school, Harry was suddenly the most hated.
Even Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs turned on him, because everyone had been longing to see
Slytherin lose the House Cup. Everywhere Harry went, people pointed and didn’t take trouble
to lower their voices as they insulted him. (Philosopher’s Stone 262-263)

In top of punishing the three culprits individually by giving them detention, McGonagall
decides to opt for a harsh collective punishment. The loss of the points does not directly
affect Harry, Hermione, and Neville more than any other Gryffindor student as it does not,
for instance, influence their exam grades. However, indirectly it is a severe punishment for
the three children because many other students bear a deep grudge against them. By
displaying the house points publically and visible for everyone, the students effectively
discipline each other to obey to the rules. While in Bentham’s model of the Panopticon few
watch the many in a way that is so effective that the many have the feeling of being
constantly monitored, the house points lead to a system where the students watch each
other to prevent serious mishaps that might cost house points. Through peer pressure,
students from one house discipline each other so to not lose points for the highly
prestigious House Cup which is awarded to the highest scoring of the four school houses at the end of each year. The existence of four different houses can be seen as spatial partitioning for better disciplining, although, of course, this was not the intention of the original founders of Hogwarts.

It is, therefore, a highly effective disciplinary measure, but the competition character can lead to bullying and, moreover, the whole system is grossly unfair. Not only teachers, but also the Head Boy or Head Girl as well as the prefects are allowed to reward or take house points at their will. There is no catalogue or guideline that tells which infractions shall be punished this way and how many house points a certain infringement is worth. The same is true for awarding bonus house points. On many occasions, Professor Snape deducts house points from Harry, often for no valid reason while he seems to ignore almost any misbehaviour from Slytherin students. The fact that students—Head Boy and Girl, prefects, and in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* also members from the Inquisitorial Squad—can deduct points from each other completely undermines any fairness. Draco Malfoy, for instance, completely misuses his position:

> Granger, I’ll have five points from you for being rude about our new Headmistress. Macmillan, five for contradicting me. Five because I don’t like you, Potter. Weasley, your shirt’s untucked, so I’ll have another five for that. Oh yeah, I forgot, you’re a Mudblood, Granger, so ten off for that. (*Order of the Phoenix* 577-578)

In addition to the house point system, detentions are frequently used as form of punishment in Hogwarts. During their detentions, Hogwarts students usually have to do physical tasks without using magic like helping cleaning up and polishing castle objects. Mostly they have to help one of the teachers or Hogwarts staff.

> ‘I’m not going in that Forest,’ he [Malfoy] said, and Harry was pleased to hear the note of panic in his voice.
> ‘Yeh are if yeh want ter stay at Hogwarts,’ said Hagrid fiercely. ‘Yeh’ve done wrong an’ now yeh’ve got ter pay fer it.’
> ‘But this is servant stuff, it’s not for students to do. I thought we’d be writing lines or something. If my father knew I was doing this, he’d—’
> ‘—tell yer that’s how it is at Hogwarts,’ Hagrid growled. ‘Writin’ lines! What good’s that ter anyone? Yeh’ll do summat useful or yeh’ll get out.’ (*Philosopher’s Stone* 268)

This quote explains that the Hogwarts authorities prefer the students to do useful work in compensation for their wrongdoings. This way they do not just punish the students’
misdemeanour but also let them do active rehabilitation. Hogwarts uses modern forms of punishment and disapproves both of corporal punishment as well as senseless activities.

However, Umbridge as Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and later High Inquisitor and headmistress, drastically changes the punishment methods from disciplining to sovereign power and corporeal punishment. Harry is forced to write ‘I must not tell lies’ repeatedly with a quill that uses his own blood instead of ink. He has to do this until his hand—from which the blood is evidently taken—is swollen and inflamed and the words are cut into his skin. This form of punishment is exactly what Foucault (47) describes as leaving a mark on the victim’s body to demonstrate the triumph of justice. It should also be a constant and visible reminder to Harry as well as other students to not say what Umbridge considers as lie. Saying that Voldemort has returned is against the official ideology of the authoritarian regime she is gradually installing throughout the school year. Therefore, she falls back on the most severe forms of punishment. In one occasion, Umbridge even wants to use the highly illegal Cruciatus Curse to torture information out of Harry. She dismisses Hermione’s intervention that Fudge would disapprove of using Unforgivable Curses on students saying “What Cornelius doesn’t know won’t hurt him” (Order of the Phoenix 688). This shows that she does not only work on behalf of the Ministry to secure Fudge’s power position but also that she enjoys having emerged into a position where she can tyrannize students. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Magic seems to approve of medieval torturing methods as well. Educational Decree 29 would give Argus Filch “the power to whip [students] raw” and to string them up “by the ankles in [his] office” (Order of the Phoenix 580). Already in the first two books Argus Filch comments that he misses these forms of punishment.

In Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, when the Death Eaters Amycus and Alecto Carrow teach at Hogwarts, such methods of punishment become more common. Voldemort’s quasi-totalitarian regime and his blood supremacism extend beyond the gates of Hogwarts and turn this former sanctuary in a place where Muggle-borns and opponents of the Death Eater regime receive constant maltreatment.

‘Do you know the Carrows?’
‘Those two Death Eaters who teach here?’
‘They do more than teach,’ said Neville. ‘They’re in charge of all discipline. They like punishment, the Carrows.’
‘Like Umbridge?’
‘Nah, they make her look tame. The other teachers are all supposed to refer us to the Carrows if we do anything wrong. They don’t, though, if they can avoid it. You can tell they all hate them as much as we do.

‘Amycus, the bloke, he teaches what used to be Defence Against the Dark Arts, except now it’s just the Dark Arts. We’re supposed to practice the Crucius Curse on people who’ve earned detentions –‘ (Deathly Hallows 467)

While Hogwarts under Dumbledore’s control has a—admittedly, not always fair—system of disciplining and makes no use of corporal punishment, Fudge and Umbridge introduce corporeal punishment to the school and use it in combination with disciplinary measures to systematically terrorize students that oppose the official Ministry propaganda about Voldemort not having returned. Under the Carrows, things become even much worse.

In contrast to the Hunger Games series, laws and rules are much more important in Rowling’s novels. The Hunger Games, albeit set in the future, mostly make use of pre-modern forms of punishment. Neither Coin nor Snow have an official codex, courts or prisons. The peacekeepers immediately enforce punishment. In Harry Potter, both the school as well as the wizarding world in general have at least a rudimentary system of rules and laws and a separation of powers. However, the Minister of Magic and high-ranking officials like Umbridge tend to bend the law at their will without having to fear consequences. Voldemort and his followers mainly rely on terror. They blackmail, torture, and kill witches and wizards who refuse to collaborate and terrorize humans and other beings they see as inferior.

4.3 Synoptic Gaze and the Dangers of Fake News

In the Hunger Games series, mass media are an important means of spreading propaganda, both for Snow’s quasi-totalitarian regime and the rebels who seek to overthrow him. In Harry Potter, the main villain, Voldemort, makes relatively little use of mass media. However, they play an important role for the Minister of Magic, Fudge, to spread his propaganda.

Although the Harry Potter series is set in the 1990s, newspapers are the most important form of mass media in the wizarding world. According to Rowling (“Technology”), the Ministry of Magic has forbidden any form of wizarding television channels as they would
seriously threaten the witches and wizards’ status of secrecy. This is, however, inconsistent as wizarding radio channels are allowed and in use (cf. Chamber of Secrets 35). Both radio and television, however, only have a very minor importance in the novels.

In the fictional Harry Potter universe, there are only two newspapers of any importance, the Daily Prophet (including special editions as the Evening Prophet and the Sunday Prophet) and the Quibbler. While the former is the main source of information for almost all witches and wizards in the United Kingdom, only few read the Quibbler. This is due to the fact that the Quibbler mostly prints completely nonsensical articles and is, thus, hardly a source of reliable information. According to Hermione, “[t]he Quibbler is rubbish, everyone knows that” (Order of the Phoenix 178). Nevertheless, the Daily Prophet is no reliable source of information either as the articles are often heavily biased in the Ministry of Magic’s favour.

In Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, Cornelius Fudge uses the Daily Prophet to discredit Dumbledore and Harry Potter and suppress any news and rumours about Voldemort having returned. According to Hermione, the Ministry of Magic wants to “turn Harry into someone nobody will believe” (Order of the Phoenix 69) “They want wizards on the street to think [Harry is] just some stupid boy who’s a bit of a joke, who tells ridiculous tall stories because he loves being famous and wants to keep it going” (ibid.). While Dumbledore is excluded from most influential organizations and clubs, Harry Potter has to endure fellow Hogwarts students ignoring, avoiding, and sometimes even ridiculing him. As the Daily Prophet has almost monopoly status in the wizarding world of the United Kingdom, the Ministry can effectively spread its propaganda.

In order to discredit Harry Potter and Dumbledore, the Daily Prophet makes use of a permanent synoptic gaze.

‘Well, they’re writing about you as though you’re this deluded, attention-seeking person who thinks he’s a great tragic hero or something,’ said Hermione, very fast, as though it would be less unpleasant for Harry to hear these facts quickly. ‘They keep slipping in snide comments about you. If some far-fetched story appears, they say something like, “A tale worthy of Harry Potter”, and if anyone has a funny accident or anything it’s, “Let’s hope he hasn’t got a scar on his horsehead or we’ll be asked to worship him next” –’ (Order of the Phoenix 68)

By constantly mentioning Harry, the newspaper effectively changes their readers’ way of thinking. According to Mathiesen (226), people have great confidence in radio and
television reporters. The same is apparently true for readers of the *Daily Prophet*. As the pictures in the *Prophet* move magically, they are comparable to videos embedded in a newspaper website. Therefore, magical newspapers can not only be read but also watched and, consequently, also have an effect on their readers in a manner similar to the effects television has in our real world. According to Hasher et al. (112) frequent repetition of statements increases their validity regardless whether they are true or not. Due to this effect, the lies (or ‘fake news’ as they are often called today) about Harry Potter and Dumbledore increasingly become reality in the minds of the readers. Through constant manipulation of the *Daily Prophet*’s readers, the Ministry of Magic is able to form docile souls that take the official propaganda for granted.

‘What d’you mean, you’re not sure they believed Dumbledore?’ Harry asked Hermione when they reached the first-floor landing.

‘Look, you don’t understand what it was like after it happened,’ said Hermione quietly.

‘You arrived back in the middle of the lawn clutching Cedric’s dead body ... none of us saw what happened in the maze ... we just had Dumbledore’s word for it that You-Know-Who had come back and killed Cedric and fought you.’

‘Which is the truth!’ said Harry loudly.

‘I know it is, Harry, so will you please stop biting my head off?’ said Hermione wearily. ‘It’s just that before the truth could sink in, everyone went home for the summer, where they spent two months reading about how you’re a nutcase and Dumbledore’s going senile!’

(*Order of the Phoenix* 233)

Harry does not understand or accept that his fellow students do not believe the truth about Voldemort. Hermione, as well as the other teachers at Hogwarts, are fully aware that there are different realities—the truth about Voldemort’s return as well as the alternative reality created by Fudge and Umbridge. Also in *Mockingjay*, Peeta has a different sense of reality after the Capitol has corrupted his mind using tracker jacker venom.

When Voldemort and his henchmen take control over the Ministry of Magic, they as well use the *Daily Prophet* to coerce and manipulate the masses. They accuse Muggle-born wizards “to have obtained magical power by theft or force” (*Deathly Hallows* 168, italics in original). In other words, they mark every witch and wizard whose ancestors were Muggles as criminal. Although the *Daily Prophet* writes that the “Ministry of Magic is undertaking a survey [...] to better understand how they came to possess magical secrets” (ibid., italics in original), in fact Muggle-borns are committed for a hearing before the Muggle-Born Registration Commission led by Dolores Umbridge. These hearings are, or course, blatantly
unfair and usually end with the accused being sent to Azkaban or even “subjected to the Dementor’s kiss” (*Deathly Hallows* 209).

Another important function of the *Daily Prophet* under Voldemort’s control is to focus the synoptic gaze on Harry. The Death eaters use the newspaper to spread ‘fake news’ about Harry Potter being connected to the murder of Dumbledore. As apart from Harry only Voldemort’s allies were witnesses of the murder and Snape cannot reveal his true allegiance, there is hardly any chance to successfully debunk these false accusations.

‘And this dramatic change in Ministry policy,’ said Harry, ‘involves warning the wizarding world against me instead of Voldemort?’

‘That’s certainly part of it,’ said Lupin, ‘and it is a masterstroke. Now that Dumbledore is dead, you – the Boy who Lived – were sure to be the symbol and rallying point for any resistance to Voldemort. But by suggesting that you had a hand in the old hero’s death, Voldemort has not only set a price upon your head, but sown doubt and fear amongst many who would have defended you. (*Deathly Hallows* 168)

Like Katniss in the *Hunger Games* trilogy, Harry becomes the person being watched by almost everybody else in the country. While Katniss has to play certain roles—first the female part of the star crossed lovers for Snow, then the Mockingjay for Coin—Harry does not even have any active agency regarding the synoptic gaze upon him. As one-year-old toddler, he becomes ‘the boy who lived’ and until his eleventh birthday, he does not know the reasons for his fame and why so many complete strangers seem to know him. In Hogwarts, Snape welcomes him as “[o]ur new – celebrity” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 146) and harasses him from the very first Potions lesson on. After Voldemort’s rebirth, the *Daily Prophet* spreads rumours about Harry becoming mad, and when Voldemort has installed his puppet Thicknesse as Minister of Magic, Harry is “Undesirable Number One” (*Deathly Hallows* 204).

Overall, the *Daily Prophet* is by far the most important and influential device of mass communication in the wizarding world. However, there are also other means that show that the wizarding world is what Mathiesen calls a viewer society. The so-called ‘Trace’ is a “charm that detects magical activity around under-seventeens, the way the Ministry finds out about under-age magic” (*Deathly Hallows* 36). This means that every single child and teenage witch and wizard is constantly watched by the Ministry of Magic. This also explains why the Ministry always finds out about Harry’s mishaps in the Dursley home—although they wrongly give Harry credit for the spell Dobby has casted. The Trace combines
Both *Harry Potter* and the *Hunger Games* trilogy describe the downsides of being famous. Both protagonists frequently regret being constantly in the focus. While Katniss has her own private sanctuary in the woods surrounding District 12, Harry is most happy when he can spend private time with Ron and Hermione. Even the last chapter in *Harry Potter*, which is set nineteen years after the final defeat of Voldemort, is very similar to the epilogue in *Mockingjay*. It focuses on Harry being a caring husband and father. Ginny and Harry accompany their children to the enchanted platform from which the Hogwarts Express starts its journey. As owner of all three Deathly Hallows, Harry could have become an extremely powerful wizard. Nevertheless, he decides to keep only his Invisibility Cloak and disposes of both the Resurrection Stone and the Elder Wand. He resists the temptation of power and decides for an ordinary family life instead. The Invisibility Cloak can be interpreted as symbol for avoiding being gazed upon. Nevertheless, Harry’s previous fame still seems to haunt him as “[a] great number of faces, both on the train and off, seemed to be turned towards Harry” (*Deathly Hallows* 620). As this does not seem to bother him much, he is better off than Katniss who still suffers from nightmares many years after peace was restored in Panem. According to Gallardo and Smith (104), it is “extraordinary [...] that Harry chooses domesticity at so very young an age and that the narrative portrays his choice in such an overwhelmingly positive light”. The same can be said about Katniss and Peeta. It is indeed unusual for YAL that teenagers deliberately choose to settle down and start a family. However, the protagonists of both novel series have gone through enough adventures that they rather prefer to become invisible.

4.4 Resistance against Oppressive Systems

In *Harry Potter*, there are two main organized resistance groups against autocratic systems. The first, Dumbeldore’s Army, is a group founded by fifth-year Hogwarts students in order to teach other students proper defensive skills. Due to the Cornelius Fudge’s irrational fear that Dumbledore trains students to form a private army and overthrow him as Minister for Magic, the Ministry sends Umbridge to Hogwarts. As Defense Against the Dark Arts
professor, she teaches her students only irrelevant theory—academic discussions about defensive magic—in a class that is meant to be practical training.

‘Your hand is not up, Mr Thomas!’ trilled Professor Umbridge. ‘Now, it is the view of the Ministry that a theoretical knowledge will be more than sufficient to get you through your examination, which, after all, is what school is all about [...]’ (Order of the Phoenix 226)

‘And what good’s theory going to be in the real world?’ said Harry loudly, his fist in the air again. Professor Umbridge looked up.

‘This is school, Mr Potter, not the real world,’ she said softly.

‘So we’re not supposed to be prepared for what’s waiting for us out there?’

‘There is nothing waiting out there, Mr Potter.’ (Order of the Phoenix 226-227)

Umbridge suggests that the only purpose of the course is passing the exams. *Non vitae sed scholae discimus*, as Seneca the Younger would have commented her “theory-centred, Ministry-approved course of defensive magic” (Order of the Phoenix 222). Already in Umbridge’s first class, several students object to her refusal to teach them anything useful. Even if Voldemort and the Death Eaters were not ‘waiting out there’, a defense course that does nothing more than reading and remembering passages from a theory book would be pointless.

As, however, there is a real danger waiting out there, Hermione suggests that Harry teach her and Ron, but also all other students that should turn out to be interested defending themselves. Hermione, who has quickly realised that any open dissent will inevitably be suppressed, holds a secret meeting in the Hog’s head, a pub in Hogsmeade known for its low customer frequency. Nevertheless, someone overhears their plan to found a group practising defensive spells and reports it to Umbridge. She immediately issues an educational decree according to which “[a]ll student organisations, societies, teams, groups and clubs are henceforth disbanded” (Order of the Phoenix 325, bold and centered in original). Forming or belonging to an organisation, society, etc. which has not been officially approved by Umbridge will lead to immediate expulsion from Hogwarts. Therefore, they have to continue in complete secrecy. This is also reflected in the choice of the name of their resistance organization.

‘I was thinking,’ said Hermione, frowning at Fred, ‘more of a name that didn’t tell everyone what we were up to, so we can refer to it safely outside meetings.’

‘The Defence Association?’ said Cho. ‘The DA for short, so nobody knows what we’re talking about?’

‘Yeah, the DA’s good,’ said Ginny. ‘Only let’s make it stand for Dumbledore’s Army, because that’s the Ministry’s worst fear, isn’t it?’ (Order of the Phoenix 362-363)
The abbreviation conceals the real purpose of the organization so that they can talk about it without immediately revealing themselves. On the other hand, ‘Dumbledore’s Army’ is a very clear indicator that they are willing to resist Umbridge and the Ministry. From a more general perspective, DA is a group of teenagers who fight for their right to acquire knowledge in school. They are, as Bealer (181) argues “not proponents of anarchy” and “believe that there should be a central figure of authority at Hogwarts, but that the leader should be Dumbledore”. They stand up for their right to education as only good and useful education is helpful in their lives outside school. Rowling’s novel, therefore, praises the value of education and connotes education with liberty. She does not only criticize authoritarian and totalitarian systems who suppress the acquisition of any unnecessary or nonconformist knowledge but also teachers who deliberately use outdated and ineffective teaching methods, or, even worse, treat their students in a disrespectful way. Dumbledore stands for a dynamic and student-oriented pedagogy and is an “absolute inversion of Umbridge’s [...] [who] discourages critical thought and suppresses intellectual expression in her students” (ibid.). Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix thus encourages teenage and young adult readers to value good and useful education, to think critically and to stand up against injustice. Most young readers probably have experience with either authoritarian teachers or teachers who are unwilling or unable to arouse interest and passion in their students. Consequently, the DA represents the fight against authoritarianism in a way most teenagers and young adults can relate to and approve.

However, not only Harry, Ron, and Hermione seek to resist Umbridge. Fred and George Weasley, who have always been notorious for playing pranks and breaking school rules, find their own way to resist Umbridge and show disobedience. After she has replaced Dumbledore as Headmaster, the Weasley twins decide to cause complete chaos and start fireworks that spread “all over the school” and “cause plenty of disruption” (Order of the Phoenix 584). The Hogwarts teachers react with complete passivity so to silently express their discontent with Umbridge’s authoritarianism.

The upshot of it all was that Professor Umbridge spent her first afternoon as Headmistress running all over the school answering the summonses of the other teachers, none of whom seemed able to rid their rooms of the fireworks without her. When the final bell rang and they were heading back to Gryffindor Tower with their bags, Harry saw, with immense satisfaction, a dishevelled and soot-blackened Umbridge tottering sweaty-faced from Professor Flitwick’s classroom.
‘Thank you so much, Professor!’ said Professor Flitwick in his squeaky little voice. ‘I could have got rid of the sparklers myself, of course, but I wasn’t sure whether or not I had the authority.’ (Order of the Phoenix 584-585).

The teachers know that they cannot get into an open fight against Umbridge. Therefore, they silently resist her and use her own weapons against her. Flitwick’s apparent hesitation is in fact a witty interpretation of Umbridge’s Educational Decree Twenty-Six which bans teachers “from giving students any information that is not strictly related to the subjects they are paid to teach” (Order of the Phoenix 509). Flitwick pretends to be meticulously sticking to the Ministry’s decrees and, therefore, refuses to perform counter-jinxes to stop the fireworks as this might collide with Educational Decree Twenty-Six.

Dumbledore, who along with Harry Potter is the Ministry’s and Umbridge’s chosen enemy, also outwits Umbridge every time she tries to damage him or does harm to fellow teachers or students. Like the other Hogwarts teachers, Dumbledore does all he can to keep Hogwarts as a place where acquiring knowledge is highly valued and open for all. When Umbridge sacks Trelawney and tries to send her away from Hogwarts, he and McGonagall insist that she not leave the castle because Educational Decree Twenty-Three only allows the High Inquisitor to dismiss teachers but not to force them to leave. Trelawney may stay in her quarters at Hogwarts which she considers her home while Dumbledore immediately appoints the centaur Firenze as new Divination teacher. This way, he strictly adheres to all rules and Ministry decrees and hurts Umbridge in three ways. Not only does he stop her from throwing out Trelawney but he also prevents that Fudge can send another of his minions to Hogwarts and upsets pure-blood supremacist Umbridge, who is known to hate mixed beings.

Rowling suggests that there are many ways to effectively resist authoritarian regimes without falling back to means of violence. While Harry confronts Umbridge directly and receives brutal punishment in return, the teachers try to outsmart her and find ways to beat her with her own weapons. It is striking that Dumbledore almost always smiles when he argues with Umbridge. The only time when Dumbledore gets angry and threateningly points his wand at Umbridge is when she seizes the Ravenclaw student Marietta Edgecombe and begins to shake her very hard. In this case, he must obviously react quickly to prevent Marietta from getting injured.
However, not only the Hogwarts staff but also Hermione finds a way to outsmart Umbridge. She arranges an interview with Harry that is published by Luna Lovegood’s father, who is the editor of *The Quibbler*. In this interview, Harry reveals everything that happened in the night of Voldemort’s return. He discloses the names of all the Death Eaters that were present on the Little Hangleton graveyard and describes what Voldemort looks like after his rebirth. One day after the magazine with the interview was released, Luna’s father sends a free copy as well as several responses from readers of *The Quibbler* to Harry. As they read it during the school’s breakfast, Umbridge notices it and immediately declares that anyone reading *The Quibbler* will be expelled.

‘What exactly are you so happy about?’ Harry asked her. ‘Oh, Harry, don’t you see?’ Hermione breathed. ‘If she could have done one thing to make absolutely sure that every single person in this school will read your interview, it was banning it!’ (*Order of the Phoenix* 537)

Hermione reveals that them being caught reading the interview has probably been her plan from the beginning. Due to the Streisand Effect, Umbridge’s ban of *The Quibbler* causes the news to spread all over the school. The Hogwarts students immediately find ways to read the interview without having to fear an expulsion.

Harry knew she [Umbridge] was looking for copies of *The Quibbler*, but the students were several steps ahead of her. The pages carrying Harry’s interview had been bewitched to resemble extracts from textbooks if anyone but themselves read it, or else wiped magically blank until they wanted to peruse it again. Soon it seemed that every single person in the school had read it. (*Order of the Phoenix* 538)

The methods used to undermine Umbridge’s authority are similar to those students in our real world use to cheat in examinations. The key difference is not the use of magic but the purpose these methods serve. Cheaters try to hide information (their crib sheets) from their teacher as to pass a test without having studied enough. The rebellious Hogwarts students, however, hide information to make sure that the truth is eventually revealed. Moreover, they do not rebel against studying, but, on the contrary, against the person who denies them any possibility to learn something in her subject.

The DA, however, turns out to be much more than just a group practising defensive charms. Already at the end of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, six of them go on their first mission outside the (at that moment) safe castle gates. Voldemort lures Harry Potter into the Department of Mysteries in the Ministry of Magic by making him think that his
godfather Sirius is in grave danger. Initially, Harry wants to prevent Neville, Ginny, and Luna from coming with him, Hermione, and Ron.

‘We were all in the DA together,’ said Neville quietly. ‘It was all supposed to be about fighting You-Know-Who, wasn’t it? And this is the first chance we’ve had to do something real — or was that all just a game or something?’
‘No – of course it wasn’t —’ said Harry impatiently.
‘Then we should come too,’ said Neville simply. ‘We want to help.’
‘That’s right,’ said Luna, smiling happily. (Order of the Phoenix 700)

It is not known whether Harry simply wants to protect them or whether he thinks they are not good enough for a possibly life-threatening mission. Nevertheless, by planning to leave without them, Harry betrays the very reason why DA exists in the first place. The members of the DA have honed their defensive skills in order to be ready when necessary. Luna, Neville, and Ginny clearly show that they are ready to risk their health and in the worst case their lives to stand up against the evils ‘waiting out there’.

As already stated in chapter 4.1, Rowling frequently uses the ‘world’ within the castle gates as mirror image to the wizarding world as a whole. This is also true for the DA. While Dumbledore’s Army is a secret resistance group founded by students to teach other students how to defend themselves and to be ready in case of a confrontation with Voldemort’s henchmen, the Order of the Phoenix is a secret society of adult witches and wizards who are “[w]orking as hard as [they] can to make sure Voldemort can’t carry out his plans” (Order of the Phoenix 85). Already in the First Wizarding War—the time Voldemort was at the height of his power before being defeated the first time—the Order was active. Immediately after Harry informs Dumbledore, the founder of the original Order of the Phoenix, about Voldemort’s rebirth, he re-activates the Order knowing that they will have to act as soon as possible. In Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows those members of the DA who have left Hogwarts have become Order members. Therefore, the DA has effectively become a branch of the Order of the Phoenix. The DA is led by Neville and, in addition to provide basic defence training for under-age wizards, serves as resistance group within the school territory while the Order fights outside.

Like the members of Squad 451 in Mockingjay risk everything to keep Katniss alive, the members of the Order of the Phoenix are always ready to put their lives at stake in order to help Harry survive and to weaken Voldemort’s regime. Several Order members help the
six DA members to fend off the Death Eaters attacking them in the Department of Mysteries. When Harry is rescued from his aunt and uncle’s home, six members of the Order even take Polyjuice Potion to assume Harry’s physical form. The only exception to this firm dedication is Mundungus Fletcher, who flees from battle and thus leaves Mad-Eye Moody alone with Voldemort and in this way causes Moody’s death.

‘Right, we’ve got a few questions for you,’ Harry told Mundungus, who shouted at once: ‘I panicked, OK? I never wanted to come along, no offence, mate, but I never volunteered to die for you, an’ that was bleedin’ You-Know-Who come flying at me, anyone woulda got outta there, I said all along I didn’t wanna do it –’

‘For your information, none of the rest of us Disapparated,’ said Hermione.

‘Well, you’re a bunch of bleedin’ ‘eroses, then, aren’t you, but I never pretended I was up for killing myself –’ (Deathly Hallows 177)

In contrast to the other members of the Order, Mundungus Fletcher, adopts the Hobbesian viewpoint of the premium of one’s own self-interest (cf. chapter 3.4). He could have stayed to help Moody fend off Voldemort with an unknown outcome of the battle for both of them. However, he rather saves his own life by Disapparating and, consequently, minimizes Moody’s chances to stay alive.

The most ambivalent character in Harry Potter, however, is Severus Snape, who in literary terms is best described as Byronic hero. During the First Wizarding War, Snape was a fervent Death Eater, but as soon as he finds out that Voldemort is planning to kill Lily Potter and his family, he approaches Dumbledore.

‘The prophecy did not refer to a woman,’ said Dumbledore. ‘It spoke of a boy born at the end of July –’

‘You know what I mean! He thinks it means her son, he is going to hunt her down – kill them all –’

‘If she means so much to you,’ said Dumbledore, ‘surely Lord Voldemort will spare her? Could you not ask for mercy for the mother, in exchange for the son?’

‘I have – I have asked him –’

‘You disgust me,’ said Dumbledore, and Harry had never heard so much contempt in his voice. Snape seemed to shrink a little. ‘You do not care, then, about the deaths of her husband and child? They can die, as long as you have what you want?’

Snape said nothing but merely looked up at Dumbledore.

‘Hide them all, then,’ he croaked. ‘Keep her – them – safe. Please.’

‘And what will you give me in return, Severus?’

‘In – in return?’ Snape gaped at Dumbledore, and Harry expected him to protest, but after a long moment he said, ‘Anything.’ (Deathly Hallows 553)

This passage suggests that Snape is still a selfish and despicable character as he does only care for Lily, whom he has been loving since he was a child, but would not mind let her
husband and child die. However, from the very moment he promises Dumbledore to give him anything in return, he keeps his word until his gruesome death. For the rest of his life, Snape works as double-agent for Dumbledore and “lives lies within lies for seventeen years, risking everything for good as he once did for evil as a Death Eater”, as Lavoie (81) states. During Harry Potter’s time at Hogwarts, Snape openly displays the typical Slytherin behaviour, partly to keep up his disguise, and partly because Harry Potter constantly reminds him rather of James Potter than of his eternal (yet unrequited) love Lily. This love for Lily, even many years after her death, is Snape’s main drive to join his former enemies and protect Harry’s life at a very high cost—without being able to reveal the truth to Harry until the very last moments of his life.

In her novels, Rowling puts a strong emphasis on the power of love. One-year-old Harry is able to survive the mightiest dark wizard’s death spell because his mother has died to save him. Her self-sacrifice has created a powerful and invisible mark of protection. According to Dumbledore, “there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love” (Philosopher’s Stone 321). It is also his love for Sirius that enables Harry to free himself from the clutches of Voldemort when he has entered Harry’s mind in the Ministry’s atrium. Dumbledore explains that the power of love “saved [Harry] from possession by Voldemort, because he could not bear to reside in a body so full of the force he detests” (Order of the Phoenix 776-777), adding that in the end it did not matter that Harry was unable to close his mind and withstand Voldemort’s Legilimency as it was his heart that saved him. According to Bealer (184) “the D.A. and the Order of the Phoenix itself are important not just because they make their members better wizards, or because they are engaged in the fight against evil, but because they institutionalize and strengthen interpersonal bonds, loyalty, trust, and love.” Obviously, one of Rowling’s main messages is that true love and caring is one of the most powerful forces to overcome evil. In the end, Voldemort, who only cares about himself and distrusts even the closest supporters is defeated. Although Harry gives him the final blow and thus fulfils Trelawney’s prophecy, actually his downfall is a joint effort of many witches, wizards, and various other beings. Even Narcissa Malfoy contributes to Voldemort’s defeat by lying to him about Harry being dead. In this scene, she does not act like a Death Eater but like a caring mother for she knows “that the only way she would be permitted to enter Hogwarts, and find her son, was as part of the conquering army”
(Deathly Hallows 594). Narcissa betrays Voldemort and thus risks her own life for Draco. This means that both at the beginning of the first book as well as at the end of the last book of the series, Harry is protected and saved from Voldemort by a mother who loves.

The examples of Severus Snape and Narcissa Malfoy show that in Harry Potter villains are capable of showing love, resistance, and in case of the former even complete and genuine repentance. The analysis of the Hunger Games novels has proved that the reverse can be said about good characters. Gale’s desire to overthrow Snow’s quasi-totalitarian regime turns into anger and, finally, hate. He is oblivious to the wickedness of his plans during his fight for the greater good. Also, in Harry Potter, good characters do not always make morally sound decisions.

Like Bellatrix Lestrange (Crucio) and Voldemort (Avada Kedavra), Harry Potter has a signature move: Expelliarmus. The Disarming Charm can be seen as model defensive spell. It prevents the victim from casting further jinxes but otherwise leaves them completely unharmed. Nevertheless, there are several occasions where even Harry deliberately chooses spells that cause considerable physical pain. In Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, he attacks Malfoy using Sectumsempra without knowing anything about this spell except that it is for enemies. Immediately after speaking the curse, “[b]lood spurt[s] from Malfoy’s face and chest as though he had been slashed with an invisible sword” (Half-Blood Prince 435). Only due to Snape being present to heal Malfoy, he does not end up dead or permanently injured. While this incident might be excused as gross negligence, Harry also uses Unforgivable Curses fully aware of their effect. In the Battle of the Department of Mysteries, Harry tries to use the Cruciatius Curse on Bellatrix but fails. Two years later, however, he succeeds torturing a Death Eater who spits in McGonagall’s face.

As Amycus spun around, Harry shouted, Crucio!’

The Death Eater was lifted off his feet. He writhed through the air like a drowning man, thrashing and howling in pain, and then, with a crunch and a shattering of glass, he smashed into the front of a bookcase and crumpled, insensible, to the floor.

‘I see what Bellatrix meant,’ said Harry, the blood thundering through his brain, ‘you need to really mean it.’ (Deathly Hallows 483)

Even though most readers probably have little sympathy for Amycus Carrow and might be tempted to say that he deserves this punishment, it is still torture. By using the Cruciatius Curse, Harry breaks one of the most important wizarding laws, one of the basic human
rights, and blatantly contravenes the principle of military necessity guaranteeing jus in bello (cf. chapter 3.4, Melançon 229-230). Immediately after that, McGonagall uses the Imperius Curse on Amycus Carrow.

Amycus got up, walked over to his sister, picked up her wand, then shuffled obediently to Professor McGonagall and handed it over along with his own. Then he lay down on the floor beside Alecto. Professor McGonagall waved her wand again, and a length of shimmering silver rope appeared out of thin air and snaked around the Carrows, binding them tightly together. (Deathly Hallows 484-485).

Although she uses an Unforgivable Curse as well, she does not violate the principle of military necessity, but rather uses not more force than absolutely necessary. She does not misuse the absolute power she gets over Carrow, but incapacitates them without doing any physical harm. From an Foucauldian point of view, Harry uses corporeal punishment to demonstrate the triumph of justice and satisfy his need for revenge, while McGonagall uses her curse to target Carrow’s soul and create an ideal docile body: submissive and malleable.

Hence, most of the Hogwarts staff show strong and determined resistance against authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Also, they resist the temptation to abuse power positions and do not throw away their moral principles unlike several characters in the Hunger Games series. Nevertheless, even Hogwarts, the novel’s stronghold against oppressive systems, contains an unpleasant secret deep inside the castle walls well hidden from most students.

‘You do realise that your sheets are changed, your fires lit, your classrooms cleaned and your food cooked by a group of magical creatures who are unpaid and enslaved?’ she [Hermione] kept saying fiercely. (Goblet of Fire 201)

According to Carey (160), the depiction of house-elves in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire shows “that even superficially egalitarian societies conceal deep inequalities and injustices”. Carey fully supports Hermione’s stance towards Hogwarts being a place that tolerates and supports the enslavement of other magical beings. Despite trying to convince as many people at Hogwarts as possible, Hermione’s Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare gets hardly any support. Even those who donate money for the cause do not really believe in her anti-slavery campaign but rather want to “keep her quiet” (Goblet of Fire 201).
In fact, there are two possible readings concerning the house-elves—or more general, all magical beings in the *Harry Potter* universe. The first is that the witches and wizards have indeed enslaved the house-elves and that this inequality is so deeply rooted in the societies of the wizarding world that neither the enslavers nor the enslaved question it. According to this reading, all magical beings able to speak and think are essentially equal to humans in their nature. They should, therefore, not be treated differently than Muggles or witches and wizards. The second reading is that the various kinds of magical beings in *Harry Potter* have fundamentally different natures despite being able to express themselves in human language. The reaction of the centaurs living in the Forbidden Forest when Hermione asks them to help her supports this reading. One of the centaurs proclaims:

‘We are a race apart and proud to be so […] Perhaps you thought us pretty talking horses? We are an ancient people who will not stand wizard invasions and insults! We do not recognise your laws, we do not acknowledge your superiority, we are –’ (*Order of the Phoenix* 696)

If the centaurs see themselves as “race apart”, as fundamentally different beings than humans, it is also plausible that human ethics and values do not apply to house-elves. According to this reading, George Weasley is right when he says that the house-elves working at Hogwarts are truly happy because they “think they’ve got the best job in the world” (*Goblet of Fire* 201). Hermione’s anti-slavery campaign, however, is well-intentioned yet counterproductive as house-elves enjoy having someone they can serve.

However, also through the lens of the second reading, there are numerous passages in the novels in which house-elves are clearly maltreated. Consequently, any resistance movement caring for the elfish welfare should promote treating them with kindness and respect. From this point of view, not only Hermione but also Harry can be seen as resistance fighter against the oppression of house-elves. Although Harry accepts being served by house-elves, he always treats them as equal beings. This is best exemplified by Harry’s reaction to the death of Dobby. Although he and his friends have just escaped death and are still in danger, Harry insists that Dobby get a proper funeral. Harry mourns Dobby’s death in a similar way Katniss mourns Rue’s. Harry is also an example as Ron, Luna, Dean, Fleur and Bill join Harry and Hermione and thus give Dobby all due respect and love when they bury him. While Katniss’s caring for Rue in her last hour is an act of defiance against
the Capitol, their solemn funeral for a house-elf is a powerful act against the deeply rooted supremacism towards other magical beings.

To sum it up, not only the *Hunger Games* series but also *Harry Potter* presents several different forms of resistance against autocracy, supremacism, and systematic oppression. While in the former, the citizens of the districts need to overcome the separation imposed on them by the quasi-totalitarian regime, in the latter the witches and wizards need to overcome their own mistrust against various forms of otherness to overcome the evil that threatens all. Collins’ novel lays strong emphasis on the morality of those who resist Snow’s tyranny. One of her main messages is that also those who fight against evil are capable of making dreadful decisions or, even worse, can become the same evil they pretend to fight against. *Harry Potter* as well warns about the pitfalls of power. Dumbledore neglects his family in search for power and, consequently, loses his sister not knowing whether he is the one who “struck the blow that snuffed out her life” (*Deathly Hallows* 587). Harry, however, understands the danger of power and, therefore, disposes of both the Elder Wand and the Resurrection Stone. Like Katniss, Harry prefers a happy family life to being a powerful leader.

Harry Potter’s main message is that true love and friendship are stronger forces than any other power. Although Harry is the ‘Chosen One’, he can only overcome the forces of evil with help from others. It is his mother’s love and her selfless sacrifice that saves his live. Ron and Hermione, and later also Neville, Luna, and Ginny help and support Harry to overcome all trials he has to pass on his Hero’s journey. On the other hand, Voldemort is defeated in the end because of the mistrust and coldness he shows even towards his closest followers. Also in the *Hunger Games*, the districts can only defeat the Capitol if they stand united.

Both novels have a clear message against supremacism and encourage resistance against authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. The main protagonists are not presented as flawless superheroes but rather as ‘normal’ children and teenagers. Both Harry and Katniss do not chose to be the saviours many others see in them. External forces draw them into this position and they have to make the best out of it. At the same time, the protagonists have the same emotions and passions like most teenagers. As *Harry Potter* also shows the
evolution of the characters from children to almost adults, Rowling’s heroes are much more nuanced than Katniss, Gale, and Peeta. Although it is set in a fantasy world, the fact that it the majority of the plot is related to school life, problems with teachers and fellow students, peer groups, etc. causes the Harry Potter universe to seem very familiar, especially to readers who are still attending school themselves. In Collins’ dystopian novel, however, the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes are much more tangible. The relentless violence of the Peacekeepers is reminiscent of police brutality, a phenomenon not limited to autocratic regimes. Also, social and economic injustice is much thoroughly explored in the Hunger Games trilogy. Despite their different focuses and strengths, both novel series convincingly criticize authoritarianism and praise taking social action against injustice.

5. Teaching Literature in ESL Classes

5.1 The Role of Literature in Austrian ESL Classrooms

Austrian teachers of English as a second language are supposed to base their teaching on the curricula provided by the Ministry of Education11. Due to the length of the Harry Potter and Hunger Games novels and, even more so, the topic of authoritarianism, the curricula for the two major lower secondary education schools in Austria, Neue Mittelschule and AHS Unterstufe, will not be discussed in this. The focus will, therefore, be on upper secondary education institutions. As there are many different types of such schools in Austria, I will limit the analysis to the curriculum for AHS Oberstufe, a type of school focusing on general education instead of providing specific training for certain professions. There are two reasons for this. First, there are many types of vocational schools in Austria so that an exemplary analysis is inevitable anyway. Second, the difference between the respective curricula regarding teaching literature is negligible. The results of the following analysis can be applied to all school forms.

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11 As for April 2020 the full name is Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung (Ministry of Education, Science and Research). It is to note that the responsibilities of the different Austrian ministries shift frequently. Consequently, the full name for the ministry responsible for school matters usually also changes if competences are added or removed.
The curriculum for AHS Oberstufe remains vague in respect of the use of literary works. The section about didactic principles for teaching ESL states:

Die verschiedenen Themenbereiche sind durch möglichst vielfältige Quellen zu erschließen, wobei bei der thematischen Auswahl fremdsprachiger Texte auch literarischen Werken ein angemessener Stellenwert einzuräumen ist. (Bundesrecht Lehrpläne)

It remains up to the teachers to decide how much reading should be done to give literary works the appropriate significance. Moreover, the curriculum does not specify which literary works should or should not be included. As there are many other topics that the curriculum requires the teachers to cover and special emphasis has been put on social, communicative, and intercultural competence, it can be assumed that the creators of the curriculum have not intended much extensive reading in (and outside) school.

In practice, both the amount of reading as well as the choice of literature varies greatly. While some teachers insist that classics such as Shakespeare, Brontë, or Dickens be read in their original version, others focus on more recent and easier literature like Golding’s Lord of the Flies. Some teachers teach classics but use simplified versions or focus on a few chapters from longer classical novels. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that for many Austrian teachers, in particular ESL teachers in vocational schools, reading literature only plays a minor role. The reasons for this are manifold.

Several teachers and students have reported to me that the preparation for the standardised and competence-oriented Matura exams, which have been introduced in the mid-2010s, consumes so much time that extensive literature reading is hard to be included. The Austrian Matura exams for language strictly focus on the competences of reading, listening, writing, speaking as well as language in context, which tests vocabulary and grammar. The reading part of the written examination consists of short texts and standardized test formats like multiple choice which allow no ambiguity. Literature is not tested in any form. (Cf. SRDP) Therefore, it is sad but not surprising that especially in the last few semesters prior to the final exams, teachers prefer to do ‘teaching to the test’ and leave reading literature aside as is irrelevant for the Matura examination (cf. Decke-Cornill and Küster 200-202).
Another frequent argument why some teachers are reluctant when it comes to reading literature in class is the high number of students who are dislike reading. According to the PISA study from 2018 (Suchań et al. 66), 53% of Austrian students aged 15 or 16 years only read if they have to. 35% see reading as waste of time. A comparison to earlier PISA studies shows that these numbers have increased significantly. In 2000, 41% stated that they never read for pleasure while 28% called reading a waste of time (ibid.).

However, both arguments can be countered. If students do not read for pleasure, obviously they have never experienced that reading can be a pleasure. Teachers can reinforce their students’ negative attitude towards reading or try everything to change it. According to Wilhelm (24), often “schools drain away the juicy joys of reading and set out obstacles between children and becoming literate” if teachers use reading as passive act of getting the meaning of the text. He suggests that there is much more to literature and argues that it should be treated “as a highly social, purposeful, and meaning-driven activity” (ibid.). Thus, encouraging students to engage in reading and help them to enjoy it and not see it as chores will make students reconsider whether reading is really just a waste of time. In order to become fervent readers, students need to have a starting point which could be a children’s book, a book of YA fiction, a comic, or any other possible form. This can be the spark to read more, more often, and more complex literature (Wilhelm 48-49). It is safe to assume that students who start reading books in their leisure time, improve their general reading skills, which counters the first argument that engaging with literature in ESL classes means less time to hone the skills necessary to pass the final examination. Moreover, reading literature encompasses many of the competences requested in the curricula like intercultural competence. Books open doors to myriads of worlds to dive into, which leads to many other benefits:

> Literature is transcendent: it offers us possibilities; it takes us beyond space, time, and self; it questions the way the world is and offers possibilities for the way it could be. It offers a variety of views, visions, and voices that are so vital to a democracy. It is unique in the way it provides us with maps for exploring the human condition, with insights and perceptions into life, and with offerings for ways to be human in the world. Literature helps us to define ourselves as we are, and to envision what it is we want ourselves and the world to be. (Wilhelm 53)
Therefore, there are no reasons why reading literature should not play an integral part in teaching ESL. It is, however, important that the way it is taught is oriented towards the needs and desires of the students.

5.2 Engaging Students in Reading Literature

If in Austria and also in many other countries increasingly less students enjoy reading and, even worse, are able to read longer passages, the main question is how this problem can be remedied. Decke-Cornill and Küster (186) argue that reading literature needs to take more time than any other form of reading in ESL classes as it is aesthetic reading. Common approaches for doing reading activities in a classroom context usually consist of three basic phases (Decke-Cornill and Küster 187). Before actual reading takes place, the students should be lead to the text and the topics and themes. Interest and motivation should be generated and students be prepared if necessary. After this so-called pre-reading stage, Decke-Cornill and Küster (ibid.) suggest that the students silently read the text and also work on reading tasks the teacher gives them. This is usually done alone but can also be done in pairs or small groups. They (187-188) also strongly advocate for keeping reading diaries in the while-reading stage. The aim of the post-reading stage is to present and compare the students’ results of the reading tasks and organize them for later retrieval. Moreover, various follow-up activities like acting out parts of the text, writing alternative endings, or doing a discussion on pros and cons of a certain issue related to the text (Decke-Cornill and Küster 187).

The pre-reading stage is crucial for engaging students in literary texts. While some students might be interested in the book or play or novel in the first place, others will show little interest. By activating prior knowledge of students and showing them in which ways the particular piece of literature relates to their lives, it becomes purposeful (cf. Wilhelm 34-36). Landay and Wootton (23) argue that “working with manageable selections such as words, phrases, or short paragraphs [to introduce readers to a literary text] struggling readers gain a sense of confidence”. While for reading activities that involve short texts pre-, while- and post-reading are usually a linear sequence, longer literary works like novels go through these phases more often. Longer texts can be approached best if they are
subdivided in various tasks and activities so that students do not get lost along the way of reading it. Activities like acting out parts of the text, or discussing alternative story paths helps students so immerse themselves in the fictional world of the story they are reading. According to Wilhelm (123-124) it is highly important that reading is not a passive process of getting the meaning of the text but rather an active and creative process. Landay and Wootton (25) argue for “a repertoire of alternate strategies” to tackle texts in class. Wilhelm (47) points out that it is not only important to approach literary works systematically but that teachers should also be aware what literature they use in classroom. He is very critical of working unreflectedly through a literary canon without taking into consideration students’ demands and needs.

What constitutes a literary text is any text that provides a particular reader with a deeply engaging aesthetic experience. This depends largely upon the reader: her interests, abilities, preoccupations, experiences as they are brought to bear on the literary transaction in a particular moment of time. (Wilhelm 47)

It is, therefore, important that teachers know a rich variety of different literary materials from different genres and authors. Also, teachers have to get to know students so that they can react to their needs and work with appropriate material. Involving students in the choice of literary works is essential to keep the interest high. Wilhelm (50) argues that the inclusion of all kinds of literature—from canonical classics to works which many teachers might consider shallow or trash—enables as many students as possible to have a starting point. Someone who starts reading formulaic and superficial romances may outgrow them and progress to more complex works while someone who flatly denies reading does not even have the chance to move up. As long as a considerable part of adolescents considers reading a waste of time, any reading for pleasure is already a remarkable improvement. Aside from that, creative teachers can always find connections and bridges to other (‘higher’) forms of literature.

5.3 Working with Hunger Games and Harry Potter in ESL Classrooms

As already elaborated in chapter 2.4, young adult literature is both interesting and accessible to teenagers. YA books can serve as starting point to familiarize non-readers with literature due to their vivid and easy language and topic that “speak directly to the concerns
of [adolescents]” (Wilhelm 48). YA books come in various degrees of complexity. While some are very shallow and formulaic, others are rich in topics they tackle and contain various allusions and references to other literary works, often also to canonical classics. These are the YA novels which are most suitable for use in class.

Chapters 3 and 4 have shown that Collins’ Hunger Games trilogy and Rowling’s Harry Potter series can serve as rich and fruitful reading sources in terms of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and resistance to oppressive systems. The secondary literature used for the analysis, however, suggests that the books are a cornucopia of ideas to be used in ESL literature teaching.

The Hunger Games and Philosophy. A Critique of Pure Treason, edited by George A. Dunn and Nicholas Michaud, for instance, features among others scholars of philosophy and literature, teachers who analyse Collins’ novel series through the lens of various philosophers. Not only have several of the articles of this anthology proved to be helpful for the analysis chapters in this thesis, but this book also shows that the works of Kant, Plato, Marx and other great thinkers can be applied for a close reading of Collins’ YA books. Moreover, the large amount of different topics addressed allows ESL teachers to use the Hunger Games philosophy in connection with many of the topics which according to the curricula for upper secondary schools should be addressed.

Similarly, the Harry Potter novels address a plethora of topics and can, therefore, be analysed through various lenses. Giselle L. Anatol’s Reading Harry Potter and Reading Harry Potter Again are only two examples of a variety of secondary literature that analyses Rowling’s novels from many points of view. Beatrice Groves’ Literary Allusion in Harry Potter, however, is extremely fruitful in terms of linking the novels to canonical works of literature including Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Milton, and many others. First, it can be used by ESL teachers to establish ‘bridges’ between Harry Potter and canonical works. Second, it is also a rich source of background information to Rowling’s choice of character and place names. Most names in Harry Potter are no arbitrary choices. The meaning of some of the names is relatively obvious as they are related to commonly used English words. For instance, Severus is Latin for ‘severe’. Most spells and curses are based on Latin
words as well. However, many name allusions require more linguistic, literary, or historic background knowledge.

To a lesser degree, also the *Hunger Games* series contains such allusions. Lavinia, for instance, is also the name of a character in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*. Like Collins’ Lavinia, also the Lavinia of the Shakespeare play has her tongue cut out. As already stated in the analysis chapters, the term ‘avox’, which Collins uses for people whose tongues are cut out, is a composition of the negative Greek prefix ‘a-’ and the Latin word ‘vox’ meaning ‘voice’. Also ‘Squad 451’ in *Mockingjay* is an obvious allusion to Ray Bradbury’s dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*. Discovering such allusions and hidden meanings gives new insights into the novels and is also a fun activity that is fairly different to the usual reading tasks students have to do. Moreover, they can arouse interest to read the works alluded to and thus also have the already discussed function as bridge.

To sum up, although both Collins and Rowling’s novel series seem to be fairly easy reading on the surface, they offer much to discover and are, therefore, absolutely suitable YA works for literature lessons for learners of English with intermediate language proficiency. They allow teachers both to build bridges to other novels including many canonical classics and to tackle a large variety of topics by reading passages of the novels through different lenses.

It is safe to assume that this is true for several other pieces of literature not commonly used in classrooms. Language teachers should, therefore, not only have a thorough understanding of the literary canon but should also know about other forms of literature: adult literature, teenage literature, graphic novels, etc. They should show interest in the books their students read and always try to stay up to date in order to create a reader- and reading-friendly environment in classes. It is alarming that a substantial part of Austrian teenagers (and presumably also teenagers from other countries) sees reading as waste of time. Teachers can either reinforce their students’ negative attitude or change it.

5.4 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The CEFR is a model to describe “what language learners have to learn to do in order to use language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to
be able to act effectively” (Council of Europe, *Framework* 1). Therefore, it defines standards in order to describe proficiency levels. They are not language specific but rather very general so that they are basically valid for all human languages. It uses six broad levels to describe the level of proficiency for various communicative purposes ranging from A1 being the lowest to C2 which is a very high level of language proficiency with A2, B1, B2, and C1 levels in between.

According to the CEFR, readers on B1 level “[c]an read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension” (Council of Europe, *Framework* 69). Readers on B2 level “[c]an read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively” (ibid.) Furthermore, readers on B2 level have “a broad active reading vocabulary” (ibid.). These descriptors refer to overall reading comprehension as the CEFR provides no specific descriptors for reading literature although the CEFR points out that national and regional literatures not only have an aesthetic purpose but also “serve many more purposes – intellectual, moral and emotional, linguistic and cultural” (Council of Europe, *Framework* 56).

According to the curriculum for AHS (Bundesrecht Lehrpläne), students in the first and second semester of AHS should be able to read simple literary texts with a satisfactory level of comprehension. The descriptor for the third semester is similar but leaves ‘simple’ out. In the fourth semester of AHS, students are expected to be able to search for information in longer texts related to their field of interests including literary texts. All four descriptors roughly match the B1 descriptor for overall reading comprehension. From the fifth semester on, students are expected to be able to read longer and more complex texts and understand them even if they deal with more abstract topics not related to the students’ field of interests. The fifth semester requires them to be partly on B2 proficiency level. From sixth semester on, students should be able to understand also complex texts which include abstract and less familiar topics. Until the end of the eighth semester, students are

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12 Although the CEFR was initially intended to make the languages of Europe more comparable, the proficiency levels from A1 to C2 are nowadays also commonly used for non-European language learning and acquisition.
required to have reached B2 proficiency in all four competences. Therefore, the last three semesters require them to read texts on B2 level.

6. Exemplary Reading Activities

The following reading activities are designed for students in the sixth semester of Austrian AHS. However, the activities can be used for other school forms of upper secondary education as well. Also vocational schools can and should incorporate literature in their ESL classes. The students for which the activities are intended should be on a low B2 proficiency level in reading according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which corresponds to the level students should have reached by the sixth semester of AHS. The language of Harry Potter and Hunger Games is mostly colloquial everyday English and the sentences relatively short. However, they also contain a number of idiomatic expressions. The difficulty grade as well as the plot complexity of the Harry Potter levels increases gradually through the seven books. Whereas for Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone B1 proficiency is sufficient, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix on which the activity in this chapter is based on, will certainly create many difficulties for learners of English at B1 level.

Nevertheless, language proficiency and prior knowledge vary substantially between students. Moreover, it can be assumed that most students already know something about Harry Potter and the Hunger Games. Even if the following activities are designed for students of the sixth semester of AHS, teachers might decide to use them earlier if they are convinced that students can handle them without problems. The varying degree of prior knowledge of the novels also has another consequence. Teachers have to carefully adapt the activities according to their students’ prior knowledge of the works. While a general introduction might be necessary in one class, it could be boring and pointless in another.
6.1 Hunger Games: Introductory activity – Children as Victims

It is assumed that prior to the activities the students do not know which piece of literature they are going to read. Moreover, it is assumed that the school uses an online learning platform with a forum.

Pre-Reading Activities

In order to get students interested and prepare them for the topic, the first pre-reading activity contains a small excerpt of two sentences taken from the first chapter of The Hunger Games. The teacher does not tell the students from which book the excerpt is. It is deliberately kept very short so that even those who have already read The Hunger Games do not immediately recognise it.

Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last of you. (The Hunger Games 21)

Students are then invited to speculate about this extract. What kind of literature could it be? What are the main topics? Who could be so cruel as to sacrifice children? Could it be based on real events? Due to its provocative character it is sure to elicit immediate reactions. First, the students discuss these questions in pairs or groups of three. Again, this is due to the fact that a student might recognise that it is about the Hunger Games novels and could reveal that to the whole class. After discussing it in small groups, the students present their findings in plenary. At this point it is revealed what the work in question is.

It is to note that the actual reading of The Hunger Games can only follow this pre-reading activity immediately if there are sufficient copies available in school. In case the students have to order the books, the while-reading activity needs to be done a few days after the pre-reading.

6.1.2 While-Reading

The students are asked to read the first chapter of The Hunger Games silently. Longer passages of silent reading usually take place at home, but it makes sense to read the
beginning of a novel in class so that possible difficulties and questions can be solved immediately. The students are allowed to use their mobile phones in order to look up difficult words. The teacher monitors the activity and helps students if necessary. Due to the chapter length of 21 pages, it can be assumed that the silent reading consumes a large part of a typical 50-minute lesson.

Moreover, the students are asked to keep a reader diary. According to Decke-Cornill and Küster (188), the teacher should provide a set of guiding questions for the students, addressing both linguistic difficulties as well as emotional responses to the text. Nevertheless, spending too much time writing the diary interrupts the reading process and does not let aesthetic reading take place. Therefore, I believe it is better to limit the diary entries during the while-reading stage to a minimum.

As not every student has the same reading pace, some will have finished the chapter when others still have several pages to read. It is important not to put slower readers under stress. Meanwhile, faster readers can add further entries to their reading diary or discuss the chapter with their neighbours if they have finished reading too.

**Post-Reading Activities**

When all students are ready, they share their reactions to the chapter in plenary. The teacher might ask cue questions like “What was your first thought when you read about the electrified fence? What purpose does it have?” It is important to ask open questions so that the students do not just say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ but think of own arguments.

As homework, the students are asked to think of countries in which children and teenagers cannot live in safety and do some internet research, for instance to find articles or reports. They should use the forum on their learning platform to post interesting articles and discuss them in the respective thread or threads. Depending on the flow of the discussion, the teacher moderates the discussion and asks them to find possible connections to the *Hunger Games* chapter.
Overall Aim

The overall aim is to spark the students’ interest in the book and to lead them to the problematic of oppressive systems. The second post-reading activity aims to find connections between regimes in our world and the Capitol (of which text of course does not say very much up to this point). It serves as starting point to specifically deal with authoritarianism and totalitarianism. However, this is more fruitful once the students know more about the political situation in the fictional country of Panem.

6.2 Hunger Games: Resistance and Morality

It is assumed that the students know the first two instalments of the Hunger Games series and about the half Mockingjay. They do not necessarily need to have read the two-and-a-half books whole. As the main plot of the film adaption of The Hunger Games does not differ significantly from the novels, teachers might decide to skip sections of the novels and watch the films with the students instead. The activity bases on the part where Katniss, Lyme, Gale, Beetee, and Boggs discuss how to take over the last rebel stronghold in District 2, the mountain called Nut.

Pre-Reading Activity

The students start with a brainstorming about how much pressure and violence is allowed when a tyrannical regime is to be overthrown. The teacher divides the blackboard into three columns—“Justified”, “Not allowed”, and “Who or what defines this?”—where the students should write all their ideas. The students collect everything they see as justified in the first column whereas any act that goes too far should be written in the second column. The third question is probably the hardest to come up with ideas. Therefore, the teacher gives hints to activate the students’ prior knowledge including other subjects such as history, geography, and religion. This aim of this activity is to lead to the topic but also to have the students stand up and walk. Students spend the majority of their school time sitting on their chairs. Encouraging them to stand up and move around occasionally,
therefore, is helpful to raise their level of alertness (Watson 93). Moreover, it also has a positive effect on the students’ health13.

**While-Reading**

The students go to page 224 and read from “Bright and early the next morning, the brains assemble to take on the problem of the Nut.” until the end of the chapter in silence. The teacher informs them that the last two pages will be read again together. She or he either asks for six volunteers or chooses students her-/himself. One of the students gets the role of the narrator, the other five students the role of the five characters involved in the discussion. The students are encouraged to not just read the dialogues but really act them out as if they were on a theatre stage. The more theatrical their performance, the more actively they get involved and the more memorable it is for the whole class. “Reader-response theory argues that personal involvement and imaginative evocation of a text are necessary to the experience of a secondary world.” (Wilhelm 132) Having the students perform or even act out parts of the text helps them to enter the story world and become part of it.

**Post-Reading Activities**

The students apply the results of their brainstorming from the pre-reading activity to text they have read. They are asked to form groups of four or five to do this. The teacher walks around and makes sure that all the groups are discussing. Cue questions can help to keep the discussion going.

As homework, the students are asked to slip into the role of Hazelle Hawthorne, Gale’s mother and write a personal letter (word count 150-200) to Gale expressing how she feels about him. The students are free to choose whether she approves of his plans or, for instance, is disappointed and enraged. The main aims of this follow-up activity are to

13 Although this is no pedagogical or didactical issue, it is nonetheless important for me to point this out. Having been forced to undergo herniated disc surgery, I now know the significance of maintaining a healthy back.
evaluate the morality of using violence in a creative way and to enter the story world by taking the role of one of the novel characters and see the fictional world through her eyes. Moreover, the Austrian curriculum for AHS requires students to be able to express feelings and thoughts in written form (Bundesrecht Lehrpläne).

**Overall Aim**

The overall aim of this activity is to examine the question of morality in rebellions or war situations. The students are already fully aware of the extent of terror the districts have to endure due to Snow’s quasi-totalitarian regime. This text passage, however, marks a critical turning point in the novel as there is definitely no clear distinction between good and evil anymore. Gale is willing to accept the death of many innocent District 2 citizens.

6.3 *Harry Potter*: Pure-blood Supremacism – The Muggle-born Registration Commission

It is assumed that the class has already read some excerpts of *Harry Potter* so that all students know the main characters as well as recurring names and terms (e.g. the four Hogwarts houses, Dementors, etc.). Due to the overall volume of the series, the students cannot be expected to read through the whole heptalogy, although it is likely that a few students in each class have already read all seven books. However, for the following activities it is required to have either read or watched *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* to know who Dolores Umbridge is. As in the 6.1, the students are assumed to have access to an online learning platform with a forum.

**Pre-reading Activity**

The students get together in pairs and draft a scene in which Dolores Umbridge applies for a job; which job is up to the students. They have eight minutes to think about creative and funny dialogues. The student who takes the role of Umbridge has to give good arguments
why she is the best choice. The interviewer has to constantly refer to her former teaching experience at Hogwarts.

This is supposed to be a creative and funny activity to motivate the students and have a good start into the lesson. The topic of supremacism and the connection to the Nuremberg Laws following this pre-reading activity is already sad and serious enough. However, the activity also has a direct literary aim. It should help the students to remember all facets of Dolores Umbridge’s character.

**While-Reading**

The students read a part of chapter 13 of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. They begin on page 209 when Harry enters the courtroom: “And then, abruptly and shockingly amid the frozen silence, one of the dungeon doors on the left of the corridor was flung open and screams echoed out of it.” They are required to read until Harry throws off his Invisibility Cloak on page 213 (“It was Umbridge’s lie [...] He raised his wand, not even troubling to keep it concealed beneath the Invisibility Cloak, and said, ‘Stupefy!’”). The students read to each other in pairs at low voice and may change or stop at any point. Students who have difficulties to understand a certain passage can stop reading or interrupt their partners so that they can help. The teacher walks around to monitor the students and provide help if needed. This form of reading serves as a change to silently reading alone.

**Post-Reading Activity**

The students get together in small groups of three or four and answer the following questions:

- What do the terms ‘pure-blood’, ‘half-blood’ and ‘mudblood’ mean?
- Is Mrs Cattermole a witch? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- In what ways can Dolores Umbridge in this scene be compared to the Dolores Umbridge who took over Hogwarts in *Order of the Phoenix*?
- What are the Nuremberg Laws? When and to what purpose were they invented?
• Which parallels to the Nazi regime can you see in this scene or in *Harry Potter* in general?

They either write the answers on a sheet of paper and upload a picture of it to the forum on their online learning platform or enter them directly on the forum if they have access to computers and internet.

**Overall Aim**

The overall aim of this activity is to make the students aware of the connection between *Harry Potter* and racist or supremacist ideologies. They should see the connection between the blood categories in the wizarding world of *Harry Potter* and the Nuremberg Laws of the Nazi regime. Furthermore, the example of Umbridge should show the students that the most fervent and influential supporters of ideologies of discrimination can be seemingly inconspicuous people. Umbridge, the power-seeking tyrant always dressed in pink and working in a teacher’s office decorated with ornamental plates showing kittens, is of course a grossly exaggerated literary figure.

**7. Conclusion**

The analysis shows that both the *Hunger Games* trilogy and the *Harry Potter* novels are a rich source in terms of authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and supremacism. Although they are young adult fiction, they allow for a fruitful analysis through various lenses. They have a rather complex structure of power relationships.

In the *Hunger Games* trilogy, President Snow’s spatial segregation of the districts and social segregation within the districts exemplify how a quasi-totalitarian regime exerts disciplinary power through dividing up the citizens and putting them into competition against each other so that they will not unite against their oppressors. Experiencing this through the eyes of Katniss, a teenage girl, enables the readers to not just see but really feel what it is like to grow up in an oppressive system. Although Panem is a dystopia and thus fictional, many of the evils presented in Collins’ novels can become reality rather
sooner than later or already exist in some form. The Capitol exploiting the districts can be seen as allegory for governments and corporations from rich countries exploiting poor countries. While in our world children do not have to fight to their deaths in arenas, child labour in factories and mines is real and causes numerous deaths. The novels, however, also give hope that tyrants are not invulnerable and can be overthrown. The examples of Coin and Gale, on the other hand, show up other dangers. While Gale uses the wrong means to stop Snow’s tyranny, he has the right intentions. Coin uses the wrong means and has bad intentions as she does not want to stop the injustice but rather take Snow’s position and create a mirror image of the unjust system the rebels fight against.

The *Harry Potter*, many issues of politics and power can be observed on a smaller scale at Hogwarts. The school context serves to make these issues relevant for and accessible to teenage and young adult readers. Dolores Umbridge’s attempt to take over Hogwarts not only mirrors Voldemort’s rise to power, it also exemplifies the rise of a dictator by annulling democracy by using the means of a democratic state. The novels not only criticize autocratic systems but also take a strong stance against racism and supremacism in general. The protagonists are no flawless super-heroes but ‘normal’ children and teenagers with which readers, in particular those of younger age, can easily identify. The main message of the Harry Potter novels is that the villains are not defeated by becoming even more powerful than them but rather through love, respect, and friendship.

Both novel series offer a variety of opportunities to address authoritarianism, supremacism, and resistance against it in ESL classes. Nevertheless, they are not too difficult to read. They are quick-paced, rich in dialogue and come up with numerous unexpected plot twists. Their language is mostly colloquial everyday English with some idiomatic expressions. Therefore, they are manageable for students having a low B2 proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Both novels also have many allusions, either to historical events or to other works of literature. Discovering and understanding these allusions can be a fun activity, yet it also opens bridges. Teachers can use thematic similarities and allusions as starting point to move on from *Harry Potter* and *Hunger Games* to other novels including canonical classics.
Works Cited

Primary Literature


Secondary Literature


