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## **A Comparative Study of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Hunger Games* as Fantasy Fiction**

(With Special Reference To *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe*,  
*Prince Caspian*, *Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*)

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### **Abstract:**

The following paper deals with a comparative study of the two fantasy novels which are *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian* by C.S Lewis which and *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* by Suzzane Collins.

The paper makes a comparative assessment of the genre, style, language and theme between both the novels. *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S Lewis which is considered as a classic of children's fantasy literature and *The Hunger Games* by Suzzane Collins which comes under the category of Dystopian fantasy fiction, share the common features of fantasy fiction and as works of literature hold a mirror to the virtue and vices of the contemporary world. Hence the research revolves around finding similarities and dissimilarities between the two works.

**Keywords:** comparative, assessment, fantasy fiction, features, genre, style, language, similarity and dissimilarity.

*The Oxford English Dictionary* defines fantasy fiction as 'an imaginative piece of literature set in strange places with unusual characters. It is a pleasant situation that one enjoys thinking about what is unlikely to happen, or things which are unusual'. A comparative study of both the novel series, i.e, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Hunger Games* has been done on the basis of the elements employed in a fantasy fiction; techniques; language and style. Both the series have some similarities and dissimilarities as discussed below.

Setting is an important element of fantasy fiction and both the writers make use of an imaginary setting in their own fantasy world like *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*, are set in an imaginary world of Narnia, where there are talking animals, beasts, witch, magic and elements of surprise and wonder which attract both the young and the older readers.

Likewise, *Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, by Suzzane Collins are set in an imaginary place known as Panem with thirteen outlying Districts and the concept of the Hunger Games has also been created by the writer through her faculty of imagination. The writer has made use of science and technology in the novels using her creativity. The novel includes man made created objects like tracker jackers (Tracker jackers are genetically engineered wasps, coded to attack anyone or anything that disturbs their nest), Mutations, modified animals; the jabberjays; Mockingjays; Mandrill monkeys that are used as a tool for destruction in the society. “There are swords, bows and arrows, knives, deadly bees, dense forests, computerized beasts, tree climbing, balls of fire, do or die instincts, a (not-so-happening) romantic plot”. *Times of India*, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2016, writes about *The Hunger Games*.

Unusual characters, like, witch, ogre, talking animals and beasts are the hallmark of a fantasy novel. The characters in a fantasy fiction are often not ordinary characters but are born or later realise that he/she has some magical power. The characters in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*, though are children, yet the readers can relate with them. They have magical powers which they use to change the society and the worldview. The most loveable character in the novel is Lucy, as she symbolizes purity and goodness; Edmund is shown to be the most spiteful, bitter and a treacherous character. Lewis portrays Peter and Susan to be the most mature and sensible siblings. All these characters later realise that they had come to Narnia with a purpose of killing the White Witch and helping Prince Caspian to acquire his rightful throne and later were rewarded by gifts and became the Kings and Queens of Narnia.

In *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, the female protagonist Katniss Everdeen is a young adult heroine. Collins purposefully chose the young female protagonist to make her young readers realise that they should know how to distinguish between right and wrong and that they have a power to change the world.

The protagonist Katniss is strong-willed, stubborn and physically tough. The only emotions she seems to possess are the desire to stay alive and take care of her mother and younger sister Prim. In Katniss, Collins created the ultimate teen female lead. Katniss does not wait to be saved by anyone, rather later in the series she is the one who saves the male lead. So, Collins gives her heroine something new: Katniss doesn't melt because of love. She melts because she sees injustice and it burns her until she decides to risk everything in order to bring about a change. She does it not by fighting but by acting and speaking from the heart.

Complex plot, life threatening challenges and intrigues are an intricate part of a fantasy fiction. In *The Narnia* series, there is a complicated plot as the White Witch creates trouble for the four Pevensie children. She first takes advantage of Edmund's temptation for the Turkish delight and asks him to scheme against his siblings. Again, the four Pevensie children are in constant struggle with the antagonist Uncle Miraz in *Prince Caspian*, as he creates trouble for the children as well as Caspian by plotting against them. Similarly, in *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, the plot is made complex by the antagonistic characters, President Snow and the Game makers, who constantly create trouble for the main protagonist Katniss Everdeen by plotting against her. Hence the plot of the novel is made complex by the writers by using intrigues, where the protagonist is in constant struggle with the antagonistic character.

Writers who are inclined to write fantasy work take up issues which drive home a simple universal theme by blending magic or supernatural elements, to their worlds which not only provides an aesthetic pleasure but also enlightens the readers by passing on the accumulated wisdom of our ancestors, mapping boundaries of behaviour and challenging our preconceptions of what is right and true. The writers' imagination makes even ordinary things look extraordinary. The *Narnia* series is set in an imaginary universe which is created by the writer. *Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* are set in a post-apocalyptic, futuristic, fictional, dystopian world which serves the purpose of Suzanne Collins to highlight the conditions of a post-apocalyptic and dystopian world scenario. Though their works are set in an imaginary world, yet they are rooted in reality and highlight the simple moral message i.e the triumph of good over evil. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* shows how the Pevensie children fought the White Witch which symbolizes Satan and brought back peace into Narnia. In the same way, in *Prince Caspian* again the four children come back to Narnia and help Caspian to win back his rightful throne from his Uncle Miraz. In

*The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, Katniss Everdeen fights against injustice done by the tyrannical Capitol regime ruled by President Snow. She is called the girl on fire who raises her voice against the suppression done by the Capitol, again fighting evil. Thus, the recurring theme of both the novel series is good versus evil.

Magic is one of the most frequently found element of a fantasy fiction which makes the fantasy fiction different from the other novels. Both novels make use of magic which lends an element of surprise and suspense. The use of spell, witchcraft, black magic, sorcery, etc., are common in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*. The White Witch uses her magical spell to make a Turkish delight for Edmund so that he can satisfy his cravings. In *Prince Caspian* the children suddenly feel a supernatural force pulling and dragging them from the platform to an isolated island. Similarly, in *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* the writer makes use of futuristic scientific devices which renders a magical touch to both the novels, like the use of bioengineered Mutt; jabberjays; tracker jackers and various other creatures which come like a surprise to all the contestants.

Adventure and quest play an important role in any fantasy fiction. It is often a journey of the hero towards fulfilling a mission or an age-old prophecy. In *the Chronicles of Narnia* series, the four Pevensie children fight both the White Witch and Uncle Miraz in order to bring back peace in Narnia. In the *Hunger Games* series, the Capitol every year organises a perilous and adventurous Hunger Games where the contestants have to struggle for their life under harsh circumstances and have to kill other contestants in order to survive.

Modern fantasy authors have often been inspired by the wealth of folklore and mythology which they use in their fantasy works. *The Chronicles of Narnia* contains stories that the author included numerous allusions to literature of medieval times, and even critical insights into politics that secretly mocked the political situation of Lewis' time. Similarly, in several interviews Suzanne Collins cites the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur as a significant influence on the world of Panem.

A comparative study of both the novel series has been done on the basis of language, techniques and style used by both the writers. Both Suzanne Collins and C.S Lewis have used song and rhyme in their novels. A rhyme is employed for the specific purpose of rendering a pleasing

effect to the work, which makes it recitable and enjoyable. It also deviates from the prosaic style of the novels, making it more entertaining.

“Deep In The Meadow” (also known as “Rue’s Lullaby”) is a song that is sung by Katniss to Rue, who was on her deathbed after Marvel speared her in the stomach. Rue’s last request was to hear Katniss sing. Upon hearing this, Katniss did not know what to sing. She remembered a lullaby that she would sing to her younger sister Prim when she was ill. The words are easy, soothing, and calming. This song was taught to Katniss Everdeen by her father, Mr. Everdeen, when she was young. She eventually understood that the person singing the song was a dead man calling for his lover to come join him in death, the thought at first seemed disturbing to her, but then she remembers how earlier she was about to kill Peeta with a syringe to keep him safe from the Capitol. It meant that a life of torture must have not been worth living. At one point in revelation, Katniss really understands what this means, because she knows that being tortured by the Capitol is a much worse fate than death. The song goes like this:

Deep in the meadow, under the willow

A bed of grass, a soft green pillow

Lay down your head, and close your sleepy eyes

And when again they open, the sun will rise.

Here it’s safe, here it’s warm

Here the daisies guard you from every harm

Here your dreams are sweet and tomorrow brings

them true

Here is the place where I love you.

Deep in the meadow, hidden far away

A clock of leaves, a moonbeam ray

Forget your doubts and let your troubles lay

And when again it's morning, they'll wash away.

*(Hunger Games, 234)*

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, there are actually three prophecies that Mr. and Mrs. Beaver relate to the children written in verse; all of them can be found in Chapter 8, which address the end of evil as represented by the White Witch's reign. The first tells about the coming of Aslan, and how he will set all things right. The prophecy is told in rhyme, which Mr. Beaver recites, saying,

Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,

At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,

When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,

And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.

*(The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, 85)*

The second prophecy continues along the same theme, and is also told in rhyme. Mr. Beaver again recites,

When Adam's blood and Adam's flesh

Sits at Cair Paravel in throne,

The evil time will be over and done.

*(The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, 87)*

The technique of foreshadowing serves the purpose of letting the readers know that some unusual event is about to happen. It is widely used in the fantasy genre in order to create suspense. Most of the fantasy fiction use foreshadowing which enables the readers to take interest in the further reading of the text. Foreshadowing warns the readers that the situation is about to get dangerous for the protagonist. In this form, foreshadowing serves two purposes. It

indicates upcoming conflict and hooks the readers as they realize that some kind of trouble is in store for the main character.

Book one of Suzanne Collins' trilogy introduces Katniss and the Games. Katniss has been repeatedly adding her name to the Games in order to feed her family, so her chances of being chosen are high. Since Prim is her primary reason for living, losing her would be devastating. Inevitability hangs over Katniss like a shadow. From page one, the readers knew that no matter how hard Katniss tried, she couldn't avoid the Hunger Games. Her fate had already been sealed and all the readers could do was flip pages while gnawing their fingernails in apprehension.

Similarly, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* series the readers come to know through an old prophecy that when the son of Adam and the daughter of Eve will sit on the throne of Cair Paravel, the evil time will be over, which comes true when Peter kills the White Witch. The following technique is also used by Lewis at the end of both the novels and reminds the readers that they would have to read the next adventures of the Pevensie children for example when he writes—"And that is the very end of the adventure of the wardrobe. But if the Professor was right it was only the beginning of the adventures." (*The Lion, the Witch and the wardrobe* 206) In *Prince Caspian* Edmund says in the end that, "Brother. I've left my new torch in Narnia," (223) reminding the readers that their adventures will continue.

Symbolism also plays a huge role in fantasy literature. It helps the writers express ideas that would be almost impossible to convey and brings about a fresh view on the real world. The archetypes such as the hero, the princess, the witch, the wizard, the ogre, etc., are often present in fantasy novels. Symbols foreshadow what will happen in the novel; it is part of the foreshadowing process, the element that adds mystery and anticipation to a story. Both novelists make use of symbols in their works.

In *Catching Fire*, the symbol of 'fire' plays different roles throughout the story, but most often it represents Katniss. Her first dress, for example, is covered in synthetic flames. Katniss's fire dress earns her the epithet "the girl who was on fire," and this title comes to pertain to more than just her dress. After Katniss' training score is announced, Haymitch explains that the judges

must have liked her “heat.” Cinna calls her “the girl who was on fire” again, this time using “fire” to highlight Katniss’ spirit and temperament.

*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* represents the power of Satan, Aslan which symbolizes goodness and Jesus himself, Turkish Delight represents sin and temptation, and the Stone Table is symbolic of the end of the old law and the beginning of freedom, as well as Moses' stone tablets that held the Ten Commandments.

Exaggeration and elaboration are also one of the features of fantasy fiction. The authors of fantasy fiction tend to exaggerate certain features and details in order to make the novel even more impressive. *The Narnia* series features fantastic and unusual characters; the writer makes use of magic and the supernatural simply to drive home a simple universal theme of good versus evil. Lewis has given exaggerated as well as highly elaborate details of the last battle between the White Witch and Lion Aslan and finally all the statues are shown coming back to life. Similarly, in the *Hunger Games* series, Suzzane Collins has exaggerated abject poverty and misery in the Districts due to which the contestants are propelled to take part in the Hunger Games, a game of life and death. The contestants cannot resist the Games and it is compulsory for everyone to watch. Katniss says, “ But I'm stuffing myself because I've never had food like this, so good and so much, and probably the best thing I can do between now and the Games is put on some weight.”(*Hunger Games* 44).

Besides these similarities there are some striking differences also found in both the novel series.

Both the novel series represent two different genres. As mentioned earlier, there are many sub genres in a fantasy fiction, and *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*, fall under the category of High fantasy whose features are as follows; the Narnia series is set in an alternate universe; the series is inspired from the Norse mythology; there are arduous quests; and gifts and objects play an important role in a High Fantasy. Whereas, *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* come under the category of Dystopian Fiction where the society is ruled by a totalitarian government where the people are oppressed, poor, starving, terrorized by the Capitol and lack many freedoms like of speech and access to information.

Though both the novel series share the common feature of a fantasy fiction, yet, they differ in the use of magic in the novel, as *The Narnia* series uses gifts and objects like, bows, swords and arrows to conquer the White Witch and Miraz, but the *Hunger Games* series, uses futuristic scientific devices like the Cornucopia; creatures like Mutts, tracker jacker, Mockingjay, and modern technology as a means of destruction in a post-apocalyptic society.

The two novel series also show divergence in the use of characterization like, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* all the four children, Lucy, Edmund, Peter and Susan play an important role in the creation of the land of Narnia. They are flat characters as they do not develop till the end of the novel, whereas in *The Hunger Games* series, the whole story revolves around a sixteen-year-old teenager, named Katniss Everdeen. Katniss Everdeen is a round character who in the beginning was submissive and scared but as the novel proceeds, becomes 'the girl on fire' who rebels against the Capitol.

We find the usage of different techniques and language in both the novelists. C.S Lewis makes use of parataxis, for instance: stringing sentences together with the word "And" at the beginning of each sentence. Gripping narrative is usually Lewis' forte. There are lapses, notably in the first half of *Prince Caspian*, where the readers and the Pevensie children are required to listen to the dwarf Trumpkin narrating Caspian's ordeals. However, this long description creates a sense of wonder and surprise in the minds of the readers. "There's no time to waste!" Jill is told by an owl soon after she has been snatched from her world and thrown into a Narnian adventure in *The Silver Chair*. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Edmund, Lucy and Eustace find themselves simply plunged into the sea near King Caspian's ship. In medias res is a technique how most of the novels begin, with children hurried into a story that has already begun. It is easy to notice the linguistic quaintness of his children - "Perfectly splendid", "O Lor!", "Rather!", "You're a brick", etc.

Suzanne Collins writes the *Hunger Games* series in the first-person narrative, so that we see the world through the eyes of the teenaged Katniss Everdeen. Katniss is a flawed but highly sympathetic young woman, and Collins quickly enlists the reader on Katniss's side: this girl is tough and angry but compassionate, competent, and caring. Katniss has to struggle with a high level of adversity as she lives in the poorest district of Panem, a dystopic future world. The readers quickly come to identify with Katniss, who must use her wits to survive and protect her family,

and who sacrifices herself to save her little sister Prim from the Hunger Games. Collins uses plain, declarative sentences and a simple vocabulary for the readers to understand, “This is the day of the reaping”. (*Hunger games* 6) Many moral lessons can be imbibed from the novel like, friendship which is a form of resistance in the world of the Hunger Games and Katniss' friendships with Gale, Peeta, Cinna, and Rue help her survive the Hunger Games. In the novel, a character's ability to survive involves his or her psychological, emotional, and physical endurance and prowess. In the Hunger Games arena, all of Katniss's thoughts center on how to stay alive—what friendship she forms, how she acts in front of the cameras, and her strategies and plans. One of the central aspects of Suzzane Collins style is the use of cliff-hangers in order to engage her readers. *The Hunger Games* ends with Katniss and Peeta stepping out of the train onto the platform in District 12. They've just won the Hunger Games, but in order to avoid punishment from the Capitol for their act of rebellion, they are holding hands for the cameras – one last time. Such an ending to a chapter introduces a new element of danger that makes the reader fear for the life of the protagonist and insists that the readers continue to find out how the protagonist survives the latest danger.

Flashback acts as an important stimulant in most of the works of fantasy fiction. By using flashback, the author can time exactly when she wants to reveal certain facets of the character's past. The reader may wonder, 'why is she like that, or what happened to her?' and the flashback allows the author to address those concerns, even in the middle of all the action. An example of flashback can be cited in *The Hunger Games*, when Katniss and Peeta are both announced as the tributes of District 12. This flashback in the book gives the readers a background connection between Peeta and Katniss. Below is a small excerpt from this scene. “The boy never even glanced my way, but I was watching him. Because of the bread, because of the red weal that stood out on his cheekbone. What had she hit him with? My parents never hit us. I couldn't even imagine it. The Boy took one look back to the bakery as if checking that the coast was clear, then, his attention back on the pig, he threw a loaf of bread in my direction. The second quickly followed, and he sloshed back to the bakery, closing the kitchen door tightly behind him.” (*Hunger Games* 14) However this flashback technique is not been employed by Lewis.

This is how both the novel series are contrary to each other.

It is said that literature is the mirror of the society. A piece of literary work always reflects the true image of the society and hence both the novel series as works of literature have a great

relevance at present time, like, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian* as literary works, help the readers form behavioural codes and developmental path and provide them with an insight into what is happening around them. Religious implication of these novels is about the temptation which leads to sin and downfall; political implication is the importance of the establishment of democracy; and the social relevance of the novels is the importance given to establishing community living among the members of the society.

Even futuristic novels such as *The Hunger Games* reflect life, despite the fact that its world is alien to the present man. The relevance of *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* at present time can be analysed by the commentary given by Suzzane Collins on the socio-political condition of the situation in Panem, that is social inequality and the tyrannical rule of the government; the poor condition of the weak, suppressed and unemployed are shown in the novel, the role of media in today's world and how it brainwashes, desensitizes and distracts the people by favouring the powerful are highlighted and are the bitter facts of the present life.

Thus to sum up it will be appropriate to state that *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S Lewis which is considered as a classic of children's fantasy literature and *The Hunger Games* by Suzzane Collins which comes under the category of Dystopian fantasy fiction, share the common features of fantasy fiction as mentioned above and as works of literature hold a mirror to the virtues and vices of the contemporary world. Hence the endeavour of making a comparative assessment of the two-fantasy works was both interesting as well as fruitful.

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