

# Review Book



## **CATCHING FIRE:** As Good As Hunger Games?

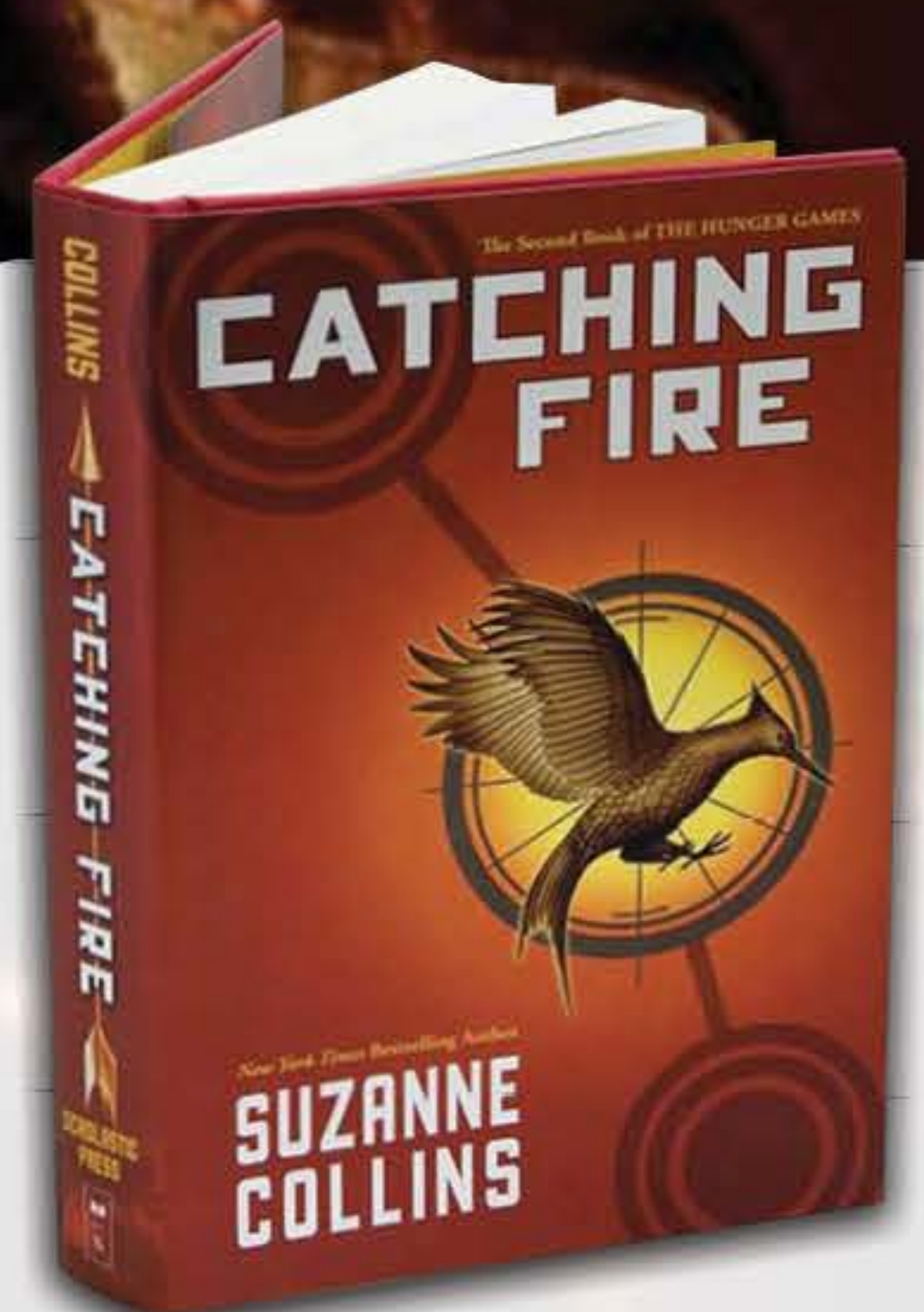
*by Stephen Eldridge*

As the first blockbuster of 2012, the film adaptation of *The Hunger Games* attracted millions of readers to the already phenomenally-successful series of *The Hunger Games* novels. If you or your students are among those new fans of Suzanne Collins's science-fiction sensation, you may be asking yourself: So, is the next book as good as the first one?

Before you read further, remember you're reading about the sequel to *The Hunger Games* and so spoilers for that story will abound.

On that note, let's talk about *Catching Fire*.

First things first, no, you're not going

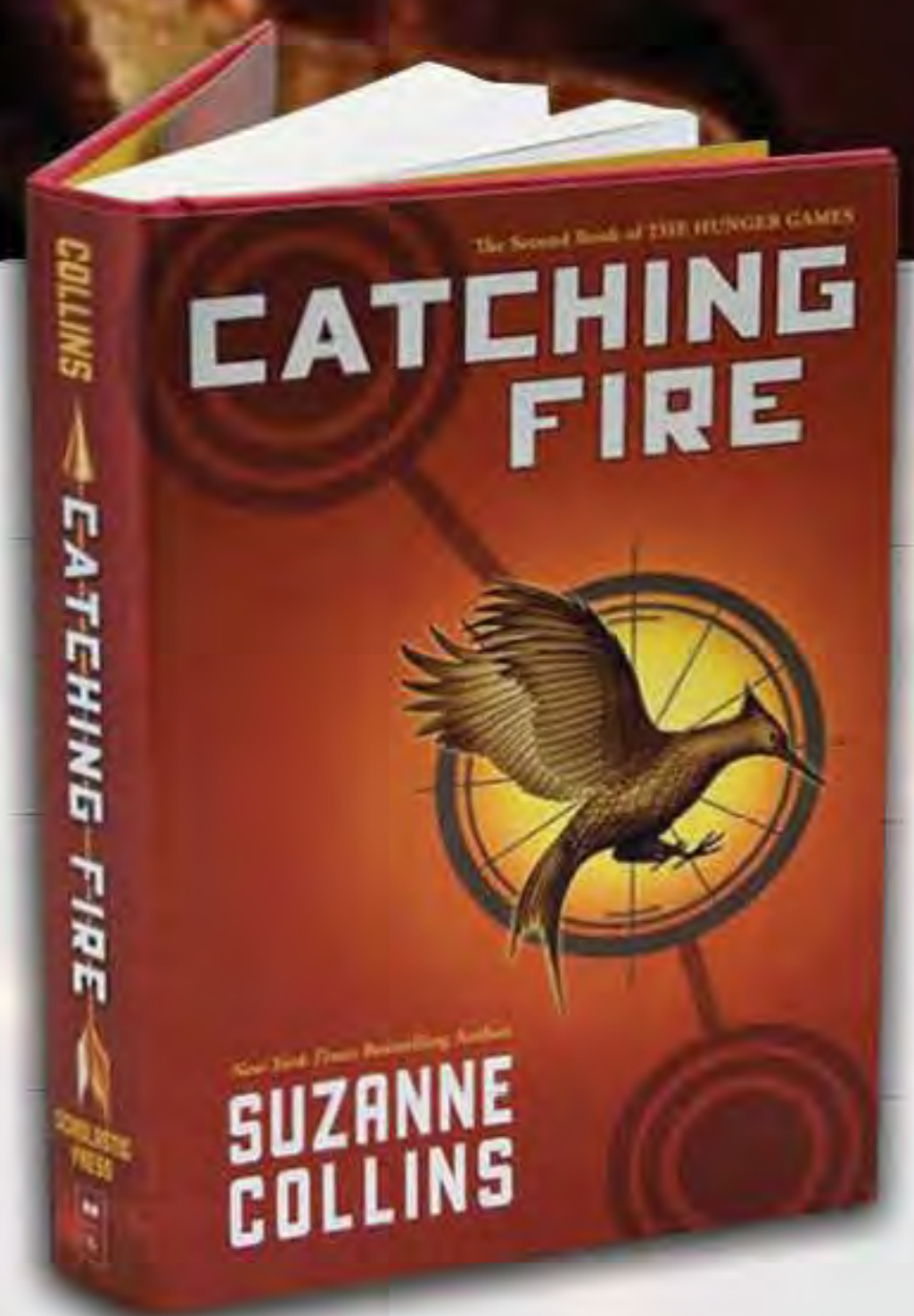


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First things first, no, you're not going to get that same sense of novelty and discovery from the series' second book. Collins continues the story very much where we left off. Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark have returned home to District 12, and their new lives as victors have begun. We're also reintroduced to the rebellious young man Gale, Katniss's closest confidant from her life before the games. Katniss is still torn between her feelings for both Peeta and Gale and her resistance to any romantic entanglements that could make her already difficult life more complicated.

One of the strengths of *Catching Fire* is that the reader gets the chance to explore the world of Panem more fully than before, visiting not only impoverished District 12, but following Katniss on a tour of the other 11 districts of Panem. Unfortunately, this tour also exposes a weakness of the book—and perhaps the series in general—anchoring the narrative to Katniss's perspective means that few people and places are seen in detail. Collins builds a fascinating vision of a future society, but we can only view it through a keyhole. Much of the conflict is distant. Katniss, first and foremost a survivor, rarely lets herself become part of the action and as a result, neither are we.

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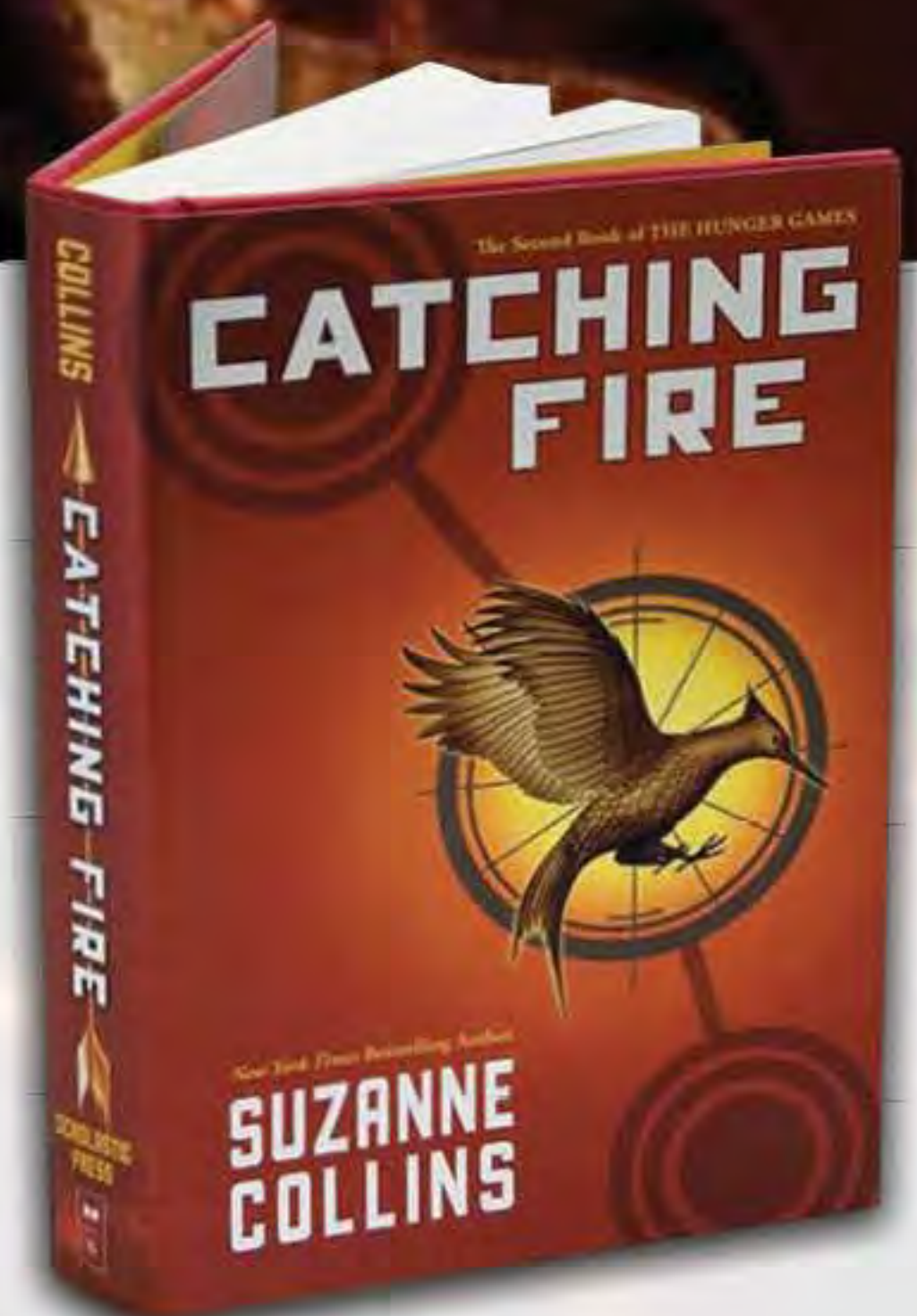
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Catching Fire moves the story forward, introducing new and interesting characters and expanding the scope of the series from Katniss's personal survival to the future of Panem. Although it starts slowly, and sometimes feels overly familiar, the book also contains some of the most exciting action scenes of the series so far. Plus, if you're a fan of the love-triangle tension between Katniss, Gale and Peeta, you will have plenty of drama to keep you entertained in this installment.

Catching Fire doesn't have the same tight, polished feel of *The Hunger Games*, and so no, I can't honestly say it's as good as the first book. But *Catching Fire* isn't meant to stand alone. It moves Collins's story forward, and if you are engaged in that story, this novel is essential. Read it, enjoy and await the next movie eagerly (see *above photos*). *Catching Fire* is an enjoyable step on the road to book three, *Mockingjay*, where everything changes...



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