

# Lesson: Panem et Circenses - The Hunger Games & Ancient Rome

## Introduction (15 mins):

Start by discussing the student's interest in 'The Hunger Games'. Ask: What aspects of Panem's society seem most unfair or controlling? Introduce the Latin phrase '*Panem et Circenses*', meaning 'Bread and Circuses'. Explain that this phrase was used by a Roman poet to criticize the Roman people for being easily appeased by free food (bread) and spectacular entertainment (circuses, like gladiatorial games), ignoring larger issues like political corruption or loss of freedoms. Ask the student if this reminds them of anything in 'The Hunger Games'.

## Activity 1: Comparing Worlds (45-60 mins):

Guide the student to research key aspects of Ancient Roman society, focusing on the period of the Empire. Topics include:

- Social Structure (Emperor, Senate, Patricians, Plebeians, Slaves)
- Government and Control
- The Role of the Colosseum and Gladiatorial Games
- The concept of 'Bread and Circuses' in practice

As they research, help them create a comparison chart (digital or physical). One side lists features of Panem (Capitol vs. Districts, President Snow, The Hunger Games, Tribute system, control methods), and the other side lists corresponding features of Ancient Rome. Discuss similarities and differences as the chart develops.

## Activity 2: Propaganda Power (30-45 mins):

Define propaganda: information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view. Discuss examples from 'The Hunger Games':

- The Capitol's broadcasts and portrayal of the Districts.
- President Snow's speeches and justifications for the Games.
- The required viewing of the Games.
- (Counter-propaganda: The Mockingjay symbol).

Then, briefly explore Roman propaganda. Show examples (if available) like imperial coins with the Emperor's face, statues celebrating military victories, or the grandeur of buildings meant to showcase Roman power. Discuss: How did both the Capitol and Rome use media, symbols, and spectacle to control the narrative and influence people's thoughts and feelings?

## Activity 3: Discussion & Reflection (15-20 mins):

Engage in a discussion using guiding questions:

- Why do you think entertainment (like the Games or gladiatorial contests) is such an effective tool for control or distraction?
- How are the citizens of the Capitol like the Roman citizens receiving 'bread and circuses'? How are the Districts different?
- Can you think of any examples of 'bread and circuses' or propaganda in our world today? (Be

sensitive and age-appropriate).

- How does understanding Ancient Rome enrich your understanding of 'The Hunger Games'? How does 'The Hunger Games' make history feel more relevant?

### **Assessment:**

Assess understanding based on:

- The completed comparison chart (accuracy and detail).
- Participation in discussions and ability to analyze propaganda examples.
- (Optional) Ask the student to write a short paragraph explaining the connection between 'Panem et Circenses' and 'The Hunger Games'.

### **Extension (Optional):**

Research other historical periods or events that resonate with themes from 'The Hunger Games' (e.g., historical rebellions, totalitarian regimes, resource inequality).