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English Professors Reflect on Popularity of The Hunger Games Series

Winthrop University

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English Professors Reflect on Popularity of The Hunger Games Series

Quick Facts

- "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part I" opens in theatres Nov. 21.
- Prickett teaches an English education course that focuses on multiple young adult (YA) novels.



Prickett

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA -- Winthrop University [English Department Acting Chair Robert Prickett](#) takes a group of students to the **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)** conference each November.

And for the past two years, the students have asked him the same question: "We're going to see the new 'Hunger Games' movie at midnight, right?"

"**The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I,**" the highly anticipated sequel in "The Hunger Games" trilogy by Suzanne Collins, hits theatres Nov. 21.



Cothran

One of Prickett's English education classes focuses on young adult (YA) literature. He has been interested in the genre since high school, and it was part of his doctoral course work at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Step into his office, and you can see bookshelves full of YA novels, YA movie adaptation posters and an autographed Veronica Roth bumper sticker (Roth is the author of the popular "Divergent" series).

"The YA course was the number-one reason I took the job," said Prickett, in his fifth year at Winthrop. "I've seen it used in high school classrooms effectively. I've seen students who don't read pick it up."

Prickett and [Assistant Professor of English Casey Cothran](#) presented a panel on "The Hunger Games" two years ago last year at the **Dragon*Con** pop-culture convention. He and Cothran also recently published a piece on young adult literature in the SIGNAL Journal of the International Reading Association.

Prickett jokes that he was "five seconds ahead of the curve" about "The Hunger Games."

"The Hunger Games' hadn't blown up yet when I started at Winthrop," he said. "It was the one I hyped, saying 'You've got to read this book.'"

The series has straddled the line between pop culture and the media, Prickett said.

Cothran commented on how the market has become saturated with bleak takes on the future. She noted that, even though publishers feel the need to label stories like these as young adult, they are read by people of all ages.

"What about these stories resounds with society?" she said. "It's so tragic for different reasons. When we read these narratives, what is it about the hero that attracts us? The [dystopian YA] novels really question the ability of the hero to make a difference. Do we love the hero for trying? Do we feel the

despair of oppression? Even great heroes can't bring about happy endings. That's what's fascinating to me."

Prickett said the directors have done a great job adapting "The Hunger Games" from books to movies. At the end of "Catching Fire," the second movie in the series, he said the ending scene caused his students to both scream and clap. He looks forward to taking them to opening night next week in Washington, D.C.

Having a "Hunger Games" hangover? Start these YA series:

- "Divergent" by Veronica Roth
- "The Lunar Chronicles" by Marissa Meyer
- "Legend" by Marie Lu
- "Shadow and Bone" by Leigh Bardugo
- "Wither" by Lauren DeStefano
- "Delirium" by Lauren Oliver

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