

Power, Resistance, and Transformation:  
A Leadership Studies Analysis of Dystopian Young Adult Literature  
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This paper presents an argument about the depiction of female protagonists in young adult dystopian fiction, while simultaneously establishing leadership studies as a theoretical framework for literary study. Leadership studies is a relatively young branch of academic inquiry, using interdisciplinary approaches to investigate the phenomenon of leadership. From psychology, sociology, and philosophy to education, business, and history, leadership studies has both drawn from and provided insight into a variety of disciplines; however, these theories have not yet found their way into conversations about literature. This paper pulls leadership studies away from its traditional context to establish it as a valid and valuable addition to our literary analysis repertoire through a demonstration of its potential to further conversations about texts and their relevance for broader consideration.

I position my discussion within the contexts of children's literature and feminist theory, anchoring leadership studies in already-established modes of inquiry while demonstrating how it offers valuable insight into both. My focus on dystopian and fantasy YA novels reflects the recent surge in dystopic/postapocalyptic texts that feature strong female protagonists, presenting potential leadership strategies for young girl readers during an important stage of development. Next, I introduce several key leadership theories through an examination of *The Hunger Games Trilogy* (2008-2010) by Suzanne Collins; I contrast Collins' depiction of Katniss with the characters in Kristin Cashore's *Graceling Realm Trilogy* (2008-2012), which provides a much more nuanced overarching ideology in terms of power and leadership: that those who possess the power over others that comes with leadership have a responsibility to those they lead, and abusing that responsibility not only reduces the validity of that power, but it also invites followers to rebel. Thus, this paper adds leadership studies into a broader conversation to further our analysis of how agency, power, and gender are represented within children's literature.