

It was me and Ma. It always had been. At least for a long time.

My sister, Zea, died in The Hunger Games 6 years ago-she was 16. We were all devastated and distraught, but my Pa even more so.

I still remember that day. We were watching the television, anxiously watching as Zea set up camp on the first night. She was resting, when suddenly she was ambushed by a girl from District 4.

They fought, neither had any weapons yet.

She was brutally beaten to death and stripped of all her belongings apart from her clothes and her token we had given her.

The cannon fired, and my Pa walked straight out of the house. We quickly followed him, begging him to stop. He didn't listen.

Instead, he acted out, disrespected the Capitol. Next thing we know, we've lost him too.

Great understanding of the themes of violence and loss here

Ma tries her best, she really does. We live in District 9, both farming grain from 5 in the morning to 8 in the evening. Every day. Farming, chopping, cutting, planting, day in, day out.

Lovely use of sentence structure here

The Reaping, a dreaded day. A boy and a girl from each district are picked to take part in The Hunger Games, a petty game I and many others associate with pain, suffering, and torment.

'Miller, wake up, dear.' It was my Ma, today was the Reaping. I groaned, pulling the thin, white covers over my head. I wanted to stay there, in the warm, bright light of the candle. But my Ma blew it out, and told me to please get ready.

I got dressed while my mother cried silently in the kitchen. I couldn't bear hearing her so upset.

I finished getting ready, I was wearing my fathers best clothing. Ma had adjusted it for me the day before, judging by the fact that I'm 14, that must have been a tricky task. I walked in the kitchen and we held each other, hoping and wishing I wouldn't get picked, it reminded me of the day Zea was picked. All of us, huddled together in the kitchen...that was the last time we were a whole family. The Capitol took that away from us.

The anger brewed inside of me, but I breathed it out, not letting the Capitol get to me. 'Come now, nothing will happen. We'll be fine, Ma. We'll go home, make some nice food, and watch...the tv.' I said, reassuring her and myself. She swallowed and nodded.

We ate breakfast in completely empty silence, the porridge sticking to my mouth.

Nice detail here to show how he feels

Eventually we reluctantly left the warm, bright house, blowing out all of the candles.

There was a storm brewing, the blackened clouds looming darkly overhead. The mist and fog hung so low it felt like it was choking me, the anxiousness of the day suffocating.

Great setting choices

We walked blindly to the square, and stood among the crowd of people watching, waiting. Ma looked on the brink of crying again, I squeezed her hand and whispered words of reassurance. She took a deep breath and squeezed my hand back. I and the other boys were filed into a large group, all of us looking at each other with sympathy.

Even though I didn't get along with half of these boys, we all wished each other the best. My friend, George, came over to me. Most from District 9 looked similar, dark hair, dark eyes, tanned skin. I wondered if that was the same for other Districts. 'Good luck, Milly.' He whispered faintly, obviously

I like the sense of parity you are using here - this relationship is very much like Katniss and Gale's - this might suggest that all of the districts share similar experiences when it comes to the games.

terrified himself. 'Milly' was a nickname he made for me. He knew I hated it, but it stuck. I've grown to like it to be honest, but it didn't matter now, I had to focus. 'I love you, mate.' I said, almost crying. He gave me a look, so I quickly added 'platonically, obviously.' We laughed quietly, we had to joke, we were scared to lose everything.

I knew George was in danger, he had taken out multiple tesserae. He had to, he had 4 siblings (three younger, one older), both his parents, an uncle, and himself to feed. They all stood with my Ma.

Suddenly, there was a blast of loud music as our mayor, Hans Dent, and our mentor, Garnell Whisk, crossed the large stage. They did the usual introduction, 'We're so excited about this years Hunger Games' 'I wish the best of luck to you all' blah blah blah. Then it came to picking the tributes.

Zea and Pa flashed in my mind. How could the Capitol do this? Why did they choose to make people suffer for standing up to what's right? I clenched my fist and grinded my teeth together. My mind was so caught up in everything that I didn't even hear them say my name.

'Miller Granger!'

Everyone turned to face me. Ma screamed. George shouted. Everything was blurry and confusing.

My breath quickened and my heart rate went through the roof. My throat felt like it was closing, panic washed over me over and over again, flooding my mind.

I was only woken up by the drops of rain plopping onto me. 'Uh, Miller Granger? Kelby Houston? Please both make your way to the stage!' Hans Dent said, beaming, eyes searching for us. It was really happening.

People stepped to the side, making a path for me. George grabbed me desperately 'Please, no! I-I'll volunteer. I-I volunteer as tribute for you...I-' 'N-no. Please j-just don't.' I said, shaking my head.

I hurried up the stage, and was welcomed by the hosts. I questioned whether this is how Zea felt when she realised she was picked. I remember distinctly how she looked desperately at us, but we couldn't do anything. That was one of the worst feelings. Having no power with the situation, because the Capitol held it all. **You show a good understanding of the ideas in the text here**

I didn't listen to what Hans or Garnell said, what they asked. Instead I looked at Ma, who was crying uncontrollably.

Kelby Houston, the girl tribute for District 9, didn't seem to want to speak, she looked so saddened by the fact she knew she was going to die she barely ate too.

The next week was a blur. Saying goodbye to Ma was the worst bit. We sobbed the whole way through. The last words we said to each other were 'I love you'.

On the other hand, George kept on stuttering. I could see he felt immense guilt and pain, I think he knew I couldn't win it. He handed me my token-a badge he had made himself from a beer bottle. He said he had taken paint from his siblings and painted various wheats and grains. I thanked him graciously and he told me he couldn't handle the thought of going home without me, which made it all the more difficult.

The training was tricky. I tried using a sword, though I wasn't very good with it. I swung it around hopelessly, the weight of it far too great for me. Though I was fairly good with the bow and arrow.

Again, fabulous use of sentence structures for effect here

good use of setting to reflect his emotions

Garnell Whisk, my mentor, throughout the entirety of the time was wearing a deep green bedazzled suit with a golden wheat brooch, his short grey hair slicked back.

He approached me that night at dinner while I was eating the luxurious lamb stew, my favourite. He heard me talking about training with my stylists, and how I was thinking of using the sword despite my difficulties.

'No. You are good with the dagger. Don't show anyone how good you are with it though, only the Gamemakers can see how good you are with them.' He said briskly.

He didn't seem to care whether I survived or not, just his reputation. Still, I followed his advice, and ended up with a score of 6. Not bad.

Here in the glamorous Capitol no-one seemed to really care.

There was as much light as you could get, the sparkling, shimmering buildings were blinding. Yet it all seemed *too* bright, the light cold rather than the warm candles at home.

Not a day went by where I didn't wish for my family, not just Ma, but Ma, Pa, Zea, and me. All huddled up, in a big warm hug...

Despite my longing for home, before I knew it I was in the arena.

The pedestals lowered.

I saw everyone. I recognised a few, but most of all the girl and boy from District 12. Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark was it? They were the ones on fire, literally. She had volunteered for her sister.

Sister...I felt a pang for Zea and Pa. I missed them so much. I missed Ma, George, home, everything.

But before I could even think I heard the booming voice of Claudius Templesmith saying 'Let the seventy-fourth Hunger Games begin!'

The loud metal gong went, I heard people's feet scuffling, and my own were taking me into the centre of the arena.

While I ran I noticed the daggers I wanted being taken by the girl from District 2. Instead, I turned to the bright orange backpack sitting on top of its own platform and went straight for it. But that Katniss girl had gotten to it first.

I wrestled with her, pulling with all my strength.

'Please, please I need it!' I pleaded. Her face remained unmoved and cold.

I managed to grab the bread she was holding, much to her annoyance.

Suddenly my mouth flooded with a metallic taste.

I looked down to see a sharp metal point sticking out of my stomach.

The sharp pain was unbearable. I coughed the blood out of my mouth. The girl from District 12 recoiled, wiping the deep red substance off her face with her sleeve.

She looked behind me, her eyes widening. She sprinted off into the forest, running away from something, when I felt the small knife yanked quickly out of my body.

The force was so great and my body so weak that I fell backwards, landing harshly on my back. I witnessed my murderer, the girl from District 2, pulling the bread from my hands. **This is brutal! Good Interesting detail - this minor character within your own story is quite telling** She tried not to look at me, and made off with it, chasing after Everdeen, throwing knives.

I watched as everyone scattered, the Careers staying to raid the place. One, I think he was called Cato, stood above me. 'Aw, first dead I see. Thought you'd put up more of a fight to be honest, oh well.' He said smugly, and walked away.

I coughed out more blood, lying in the pool of it. I felt dizzy, my mind went blurry, my thoughts either racingly fast or painfully slow.

It had all happened so fast, all I could focus on was the pain, when all of a sudden I thought of Ma.

No no no no no no no no. I thought. She was going to be alone, completely alone.

Zea was gone, Pa was gone, and now I was going to be gone too.

I knew the cameras were probably focused on me, I didn't care, I just cared about my mother. 'S-sorry, Ma.' I whispered feebly. 'I-I love y-you.'

At least she'll have George and his family. I thought hopefully.

My breathing was growing slower, my mind more confused, my body weaker by the second. I sighed deeply, succumbing to my fate.

I breathed my last breath, imagining my cannon firing just as Zea's did all those years ago.

This is an excellent effort. You write well and show great understanding of the ideas in the text.

Start trying to think more strategically about your next steps now. You will have around 45 minutes in an exam write a creative response like this. Think about what you can do in that time and try to be strict with yourself so you can master a story in a short time.