Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Health and Hunger
Weight of Star Stirs *Hunger Games* controversy

By Paul Asay

What Happened:
The Hunger Games proved to be a massive hit with fans and critics when it was released this March. Moviegoers spent a collective $155 million to see it opening weekend, and reviews have been quite positive.

While the film, based on the best-selling young adult book by Suzanne Collins, has been received fairly warmly, one aspect has come under fire: the weight of star Jennifer Lawrence.

Simply put, some believe Lawrence looks too healthy to play Katniss, a character living in a land where food is scarce and the people risk starvation. "A few years ago Ms. Lawrence might have looked hungry enough to play Katniss…but now, her seductive, womanly figure makes a bad fit for dystopian fantasy about a people starved into submission." Some fans have fretted that Lawrence just looks too healthy.

Given there's so much pressure on girls and women to be super-skinny as it is—many models are severely underweight, according to doctors and experts—the idea of accusing someone of looking too healthy seems crazy to some.

"This criticism is absurd," says Dr. John Sharp, a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School. "She makes a point of being healthy and not too thin, and calling her fat is a great disservice to the healthy body image that she represents."

Some insist Lawrence's healthy look fits Katniss just fine. "The book shows Katniss doing quite a bit of hunting," says Amelia McDonnell-Parry of TheFrisky.com. "She was never written as emaciated—she was thin, but she was also strong."

As far as Lawrence herself goes, she's completely comfortable with how she looks. "I'm totally normal," she says. "You see these 12 and 13 year olds ordering salads with dressing on the side and thinking they need to be on a diet. I want the stick-thin trend to end."

Talk About It:
Have you read *The Hunger Games*? Seen the film? Both? If so, how did you imagine Katniss' appearance?

Are girls overly pressured to be skinny? Where does that pressure come from? How big an impact would a movie such as *The Hunger Games* have on how teens feel they *should* look?

More than 11 million people in the United States suffer from some sort of eating disorder, and many of those millions are teens. Do you know anyone who deals with an eating disorder? Do you think images of skinny stars and models help cause such disorders? Make those disorders worse?

What the Bible Says:
"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment…Instead it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Pet. 3:2-3).

"Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Prov. 31:30).