

SUZANNE COLLINS

Author of the
HUNGER GAMES
TRILOGY

by Melissa Ferguson



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A Writer on Fire

Suzanne Collins was living her dream. She was working as a writer for several TV shows at Nickelodeon in New York City. Then a friend encouraged her to try something new.

That encouragement led Suzanne to write a children's book in 2003. About a boy and a fantasy underground world, *Gregor the Overlander* launched Suzanne's career as a best-selling writer.

After *Gregor the Overlander*, Suzanne wrote one book a year for the next four years. She finished the Underland Chronicles in 2007. Then in 2008 she wrote the first book in the **series** that would make her famous—*The Hunger Games*.

WRITING TO STARDOM

The Hunger Games was a **phenomenon**. It soared to the top of best-seller lists. Readers were buzzing. In 2009 and 2010, Suzanne published *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*. The **trilogy** has sold more than 65 million copies in just the United States.

For Suzanne writing isn't about the money or fame. It's about creating stories that ignite her readers' imaginations. With her books flying off shelves and into the hands of readers of all ages, Suzanne is a writer on fire.



series—a number of things coming one after another

phenomenon—something very unusual or remarkable

trilogy—a series of three literary works that are related and follow the same story or theme



Suzanne Collins

Growing Up Military Style

Suzanne was born in Connecticut in 1962 to Michael and Jane Collins. She had three older siblings—Kathy, Jeanie, and Drew. Her dad was an officer in the U.S. Air Force. Because of his position in the military, the family moved a lot.

YEAR OF CHANGES

In 1968 the Collins family packed up and moved to Indiana. It was a year of big changes. Six-year-old Suzanne had to get used to living in a new place. Then her dad left to fight in the Vietnam War (1959–1975).

Suzanne missed her dad. Sometimes she would see images of the war on TV. She was too young to understand the dangers he faced. Still, she worried about him being so far away.

When Suzanne's father returned, he talked openly to his children about what he had seen. He told them about the consequences of war, such as fear, loss, and death. Her dad had many nightmares after he came home. This made Suzanne anxious. Later, war would become a main **theme** in her books.



theme—a central idea that a story addresses

✓ FACT

Children of those in the military move on average six to nine times between kindergarten and grade 12.

*members of the
United States Army
in Vietnam, 1969*



THE NEXT MOVE

When Suzanne was 11, the family moved again. This time it was across the Atlantic Ocean to Brussels, Belgium.

Suzanne adjusted to life in Europe. She enjoyed exploring the continent's many battlefields and castles with her family. Michael Collins taught his children about the history of these places. Once the family visited a field of red poppy flowers. Michael reminded his children that although the field was pretty to look at, many soldiers had died there. The way he spoke made Suzanne feel as if she was traveling back in time.



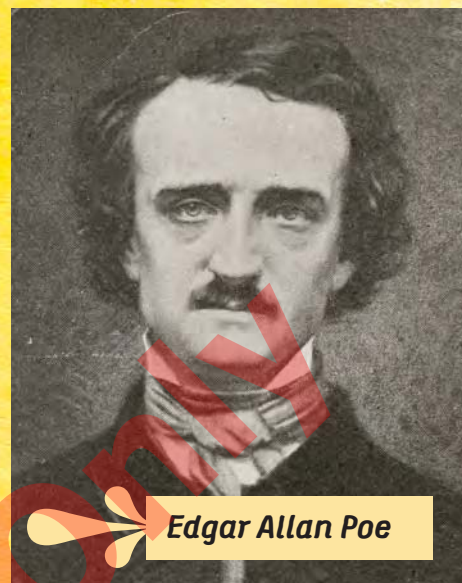
HOOKED ON READING

In Belgium Suzanne attended a school for American children. Her favorite teacher was Miss Vance, who taught English.

Miss Vance read stories to her class that are not usually told to kids Suzanne's age.

One was the **short story** "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe. In this scary tale, the main character murders an old man and buries him under the floorboards.

Later, the murderer begins to hear the heartbeat of the man he killed. The stories Miss Vance shared with her class helped Suzanne get hooked on reading.



Edgar Allan Poe

short story—a short piece of fiction with few characters and one event

SUZANNE'S BOOKSHELF

Curious to know what books Suzanne read when she was your age? These were some of her favorites:

- * *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle
- * *Myth and Enchantment Tales* by Margaret Evans Price
- * *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith
- * *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster