

Course Name: ELD 12—The Dystopian Society

Introduction:

The dystopian novel evinces a strong theme common in much science fiction and fantasy fiction, the creation of a future time (usually), when the conditions of human life are exaggeratedly bad due to deprivation, oppression or terror. This created society or 'dystopia' frequently constructs apocalyptic views of a future using crime, immorality or corrupt government to create or sustain the bad quality of people's lives, often conditioning the masses to believe their society is proper and just, and sometimes perfect. It can provide space for heroism in disrupting the dystopian setting (e.g. John Savage in *Brave New World* or Catniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*). Most dystopian fiction takes place in the future but often purposely develops contemporary social trends taken to extremes. Dystopias are frequently written as commentaries, as warnings or as satires, showing current trends extrapolated to nightmarish conclusions.

This course explores the concepts of Utopia and Dystopia. Sir Thomas More coined the term utopia as a combination of Greek words meaning happy place and no place/nowhere. Far from describing a never never land, utopias often represent cultural protest against unjust institutions or policies and propose political or social reforms. In recent years, there has been increasing attention to dystopic visions representing oppressive totalitarian regimes, environmental degradation, and/or technological oppression.

Students will read literature, watch films, and look at artistic portrayals of utopia and dystopia. The films we will discuss may include (but is not limited to): *Nineteen Eighty Four*, *Blade Runner*, *Gattaca*, *Hunger Games*, *Soylent Green*, *Demolition Man*, *The Complete Metropolis*, *Brazil*, *Minority Report*, *A Clockwork Orange* (clips, not the entire film), *Escape From New York*, *Animal Farm*, *Elysium*, *THX-1138*, *V for Vendetta*, *The Village*, *Forbidden Planet*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Pleasantville*, *Strange Days*, *Logan's Run*. Other film examples may be added to this list. Note: Not all of the above mentioned films will be viewed during the semester/term.

A premise of this course is that Utopian Studies is directly relevant to contemporary social problems and important to thinking creatively about solutions. In our discussion of texts and films and in student projects, we will focus on the connection between utopian thought and contemporary challenges such as ethnic and racial conflict, economic inequality, the dehumanizing effect of technological dependence, and alternatives to traditional nuclear family relationships.

Course Description:

Students will investigate dystopian themes in literature, exploring how authors from various cultures and time periods have attempted to answer the question: Could a utopian society ever exist, and why does such a search for the perfect world typically backfire? In reading a variety of dystopian novels, short stories, news/magazine articles and blogs, as well as in viewing some dystopian films, students will identify and analyze how dystopian authors turn an inquisitive eye on their own societies in answering this question. Critical and analytical discussions will be required.

Essential Questions:

How can utopian thought or utopian experiments help us address contemporary challenges?

What warnings are provided by dystopian literature, film, and art?

What does an author communicate about the relationship between the individual and the group in a dystopian society?

How does an author develop an “authentic” dystopian society?

How do authors portray women in a dystopian society?

Instructional/Learning Objectives:

Students will...

- Utilize stages of the writing process (pre-writing, outlining, drafting, editing/revising, publishing reflection)
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes and how authors take varying approaches
- Write in multiple formats, including creative, persuasive, personal/narrative/memoir, poetry, and reading reflections
- Identify components of utopian and dystopian societies
- Identify and evaluate authorial intent through dystopian texts
- Identify and analyze key literary terms and elements
- Write arguments to support analytical claims of texts
- Integrate/evaluate, and analyze a variety of types of propaganda
- Provide critical analysis, both written and oral
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words and phrases based on Dystopian Literature course reading, choosing flexibility from a range of strategies
- Utilize speaking and listening skills through Socratic seminars and oral presentations

On completion of this course, students will be able to...

- Define the terms utopia and dystopia and trace the historical development of these concepts
- Identify recurring questions that are investigated in utopian and dystopian thought such as the optimal means of structuring society and government, economic distribution, gender equality, and coexistence with technology
- Demonstrate how utopian thought fostered social change
- Critically examine the rhetoric embedded in utopian and dystopian literature and film
- Discuss the evolution of significant utopian communities, and evaluate the contributions made by these communities and the obstacles that they faced
- Compare historical utopian communities with similar contemporary social experiments
- Understand the contribution of gender and race-related utopian thought
- Discuss the intersection of utopian thought and justice theory
- Discuss recent dystopian investigation challenges posed by technology, environmental degradation, and advances in genetic engineering

Thematic Concepts (may include but are not limited to):

Power/Responsibility

Fear and Propaganda

Authority

Utopia

Societal Conformity

Technology Serving Man/Man Serving Technology

Topics (may include but are not limited to):

Utopia and Dystopia: What's the Difference?

Visions of Utopia (Film support: Logan's Run)

Utopia and Satire (Film support: Fahrenheit 451, Gulliver's Travels—excerpts)

Frankenstein: Then and Now (Film support "Now": Blade Runner)

The Challenge of Poverty

Feminotopia: A Feminist take on the topic

Dystopia and Surveillance (Film support: 1984)

Dystopia and Genetic Engineering

Dystopia and Crime (Film support: Minority Report)

Dystopia and the Robot

Dystopia and Disability (Film support: 2081—based on "Harrison Bergeron", Gattaca)

Family Values in Dystopia

Cloning: Means to an End

Totalitarian Dystopia (Film support: Handmaid's Tale)

Additional Film Support suggestions: Soylent Green, Animal Farm, Pleasantville, The Village, Disturbing Behavior, Oblivion, Elysium, Hunger Games, Twilight Zone #42--episode 6(Season 2), Star Trek: Next Generation (season 1) episode 7, Brazil, Escape from New York, The Complete Metropolis, I,Robot, The Terminator, The Matrix, Running Man, Demolition Man, Forbidden Planet, Planet of the Apes, V for Vendetta, THX 1138, Equilibrium, Strange Days, The Truman Show, Lord of the Flies, Wall-E

Types of Dystopian Control:

Corporate Control: one or more large corporations control society through products, advertising, and/or the media. (Minority Report, Running Man)

Bureaucratic Control: society is controlled by a mindless bureaucracy through a tangle of red tape, relentless regulations, and incompetent government officials. (Brazil)

Technological Control: society is controlled by technology—through computers, robots, and/or scientific means. (The Matrix, The Terminator, I, Robot, Oblivion)

Philosophical/religious control: society is controlled by philosophical or religious ideology often enforced through a dictatorship or theocratic government. (*Handmaid's Tale*)

Film	Problem the Utopia Seeks to solve	Human Nature that caused problem	Dystopic solution
Pleasantville	Disorder (esp in Wom & Minorities)	Individuality, freedom, Creativity, exp W & Minor	rigid tradition
Brazil	disorder	freedom & individuality	Control By Bureaucracy
Harrison B Animal Farm	inequality	natural genetic inequalities	equality via handicapping
Gattaca	inequality	natural genetic inequalities	genetic engineering
The Village	violence/crime	aggression	communal agrarian non-Technical simplicity + myth
Forbidden Planet	physical limitation	physical & mental limits	ultimate, god-like technology
Equilibrium	war, violence	aggression	drug-induced emotion-less-ness
Handmaid's Tale, V for Vendetta, Truman Show	disorder	freedom & individuality	Strict control by religion
THX 1138	disorder	aggression	rigid socioeconomic classes Controlled by corporations
Lord of the Flies	rules	desire to dominate	total anarchy
Planet of The Apes	Violence & war by humans	human aggression	enslavement or extinction of all humans

Unit 1—The History of Utopia and the rise of Dystopia

1. Plato—The *Republic*
 - a. Definitions: utopian literature, dystopian literature
 - b. Lessons 1-4
2. Sir Thomas More—*Utopia*
 - a. Lessons 5-10
 - b. Satire
 - i. Intro to Satire Unit
 - ii. Film: Shrek
3. H.G. Wells—*The Time Machine*
 - a. Lessons 11-13

Segway to Unit 2--Propaganda

Unit 2— Oppressive Government

1. Intro to Propaganda
2. George Orwell—1984
 - a. Lessons 1-14
3. Film “V for Vendetta”

Segway to Unit 3—Short Story: “The Euphio Question”, “Harrison Bergeron”, “The Lottery”, “All Summer In A Day”, Twilight Zone #42—Episode 6 (season 2)

Unit 3—Freedom and Individuality

1. Margaret Atwood—The Handmaid’s Tale
 - a. Lessons 1-7
2. Aldous Huxley—Brave New World
 - a. Lessons 8-12
3. Film “Gattaca”
 - a. Designer Children Activity
4. Film “The Island”
 - a. Identify the Dystopic elements

Lessons: Course of Study

Unit 1—

Utopia, *Republic*, and *The Time Machine* aren't large texts, but they are old texts. While teachers may love reading this kind of stuff, students can find this writing style too archaic to enjoy or comprehend. This will be approximately a 3 week unit—space it out. Give these text and new concepts room to breathe. Also, we won't be reading the entirety of any of the texts. We're interested in Plato's conception of an ideal society, so basically its books II and III of the *Republic*. We especially want to focus on the caste system that places producers on the bottom, warriors in the middle, and the philosophers at the top. We're not concerned with how More got to Utopia, but we do want to know what he's doing when he gets there. And the same goes for the Time Traveller. We're getting up close and personal with the Eloi, and kind of close and not-too-personal with the Morlocks.

The goal here is to show the students that utopias aren't all they're cracked up to be. In fact, many literary dystopia have stemmed from someone's version of utopia.

Summary

- Even in B.C. days, people fanaticized about a perfect society. Plato describes his perfect republic in the *Republic*
- He laid out guidelines for everything—a social class system, education, jobs, arts, and censorship
- Plato's ideas were based on the teaching of Socrates
- After a few hundred years, Thomas More came along and coined a word for the perfect place: utopia. It literally means “no place”
- He mapped a place out, and created guidelines for dress, work, leisure, and slavery
- More's *Utopia* may have been meant as a Satire, a warning for the way thing might become.
- H.G. Wells spins utopian conventions around and depicts a world where everything has gone wrong
- His Time Traveller's vision of the future is pretty scary. The upper class is complacent, fragile, and lazy, while the working class has devolved into a tribe of bloodthirsty cannibals living underground

Objective

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Navigate Thomas More's *Utopia*
- Know the true meaning of words like “apology” and “utopia” and “Morlock”
- Create your own perfect society, and realize that what's perfect to you might be a nightmare to someone else
- Trace the history of the utopian romance from Plato's *Republic*, to Thomas More's *Utopia*, and how it all goes downhill from there, starting with H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*

- Tell the difference between a utopia and a dystopia

Study guide questions for Unit 1:

1. What is Plato's ideal society? What is Thomas More's ideal society? How are they similar? How are they different?
2. What belief system was Socrates defending and explaining? What do we learn about it?
3. Are utopias possible? Would you want them to be? Why or why not?
4. Is More's Utopia a fantasy or a warning? How can you tell?
5. What does the word "utopia" really mean?
6. Why do utopian societies have social classes? Why do some have slaves? What's the overarching message here?
7. Who do the Eloi represent in *The Time Machine*? What about the Morlocks?
8. What makes *The Time Machine* a dystopia?
9. Do people still fantasize about utopian societies today?

Lesson 1

Plato's *Republic*, Book 2, pages 1-10

Assignments/Activities:

- 1.1 Find an example of a perfect (or near perfect) society in popular culture. It can be a cartoon, a TV show from past or present, a video game, a book, anything in which people are happy and generally unconcerned about the ills of the world. Describe the society as though it were real.
 - Who lives there?
 - What do they do every day?
 - Do they have any concerns or problems?
 - Would you want to live there? Why or why not?

400-500 words.

Lesson 2

Plato's *Republic*, Book 3, pages 11-20

Consider the following questions:

- What place does war have in the State?
- What social classes are being created here?
- On the social ladder, where do the speakers fit into the world they're creating?
- Where does religion fit in the State?
- Who receives education? Who is left out of education? What becomes of them?

- What are the grounds for censorship?
- What are the punishments for those who defy these rules?

Activity:

- 1.2 On your computer, create a graphic depiction of the castes as described by Socrates and Co. in *The Republic*. It might be a rectangle, a circle, or even a pyramid. Below it, include a short paragraph (200 words max) explaining why you shaped your graphic the way you did.

Things to shape your thinking:

- Which class might be the largest? The smallest?
- Which class is the most important? Which class supports others?

B. Grab a myth name-dropped by Socrates. Then, change the story to meet Socrates' standards of decency. Here are some thoughts to get your censorship motor running:

- Why doesn't Socrates approve of these texts?
- Are there aspects of them he wants removed outright?
- Are there things that might be changed to allow them into the *Republic*?

Rework enough of the myth to fill 400-500 words worth of text. You will then respond to two classmates' rewrites in a respectful manner. Why do you think they made the changes they made? Would Socrates approve?

(You might try The War of the Titans or Agamemnon, but you can also choose any myth you'd like.)

Lesson 3

Plato's *Republic*, Book 3, pages 21-28

Focused reading: Ponder the following as you read:

- What are the guidelines for love? Is it a 1960s love fest or a chaste Puritan village or somewhere in between?
- What guidelines should doctors abide by? How does this compare to our healthcare system today?
- How are music and physical training related?

- 1.3 As a class, we will watch excerpts from YouTube and/or Google search regarding Vincent Ocasla's Sim City 3000 perfect game. Using Vincent Ocasla's quotes (provided as an excerpt from VICE Magazine) and the questions above as inspiration, write a 500-word essay that compares and contrasts Magnasanti with Plato's *Republic*. Be sure to include specific evidence from your reading and from the video as you make your claims.

As you watch, consider the following:

- What standards of life are the same in each society? Which are different?
- How many people do you think the Republic could sustain?
- It took Ocasla four years to complete his city. How long do you think it would take to achieve Plato's *Republic*?
- Are these cities "perfect"? What does it mean to be perfect? Is perfection the end? Is perfection possible? Is perfection a good thing, or is it scary?
- Would it be possible for either civilization to exist in a real world? Why or why not?

Vincent Ocasla—an Interview with VICE Magazine...Quotes

"The economic slave never realizes he is kept in a cage going round and round basically nowhere with millions of others."

"There are a lot of other problems in the city hidden under the illusion of order and greatness—suffocating air pollution, high unemployment, no fire stations, schools, or hospitals, a regimented lifestyle—this is the price that these sims pay for living in the city with the highest population. It's a sick and twisted goal to strive towards. The ironic thing about it is the sims in Magnasanti tolerate it. They don't rebel, or cause revolutions and social chaos. No one considers challenging the system by physical means since a hyper-efficient police state keeps them in line. They have all been successfully dumbed down, sickened with poor health, enslaved and mind-controlled just enough to keep this system going for thousands of years. 50,000 years to be exact. They are all imprisoned in space and time."

"Health of the sims was not a priority, relative to the main objective. I could have enacted several health ordinances which would have increased the life expectancy, but I decided not to for practical reasons. It shows that by only focusing on one objective, one may end up neglecting, or resorting to sacrificing, other important elements. Similarly, [in the real world] if we make maximizing profits as the absolute objective, we fail to take into consideration the social and environmental consequences."

Lesson 4

Note: For the following lesson/assignment, you'll want to go to a PC lab with Internet access.

In the address bar, type in the following:

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>

1.4 You will not have to read the whole thing. Simply pick an issue that you care about and that you read in Books II or III (social class, religion/gods, love, the economy, etc.). Then, hit CTRL + F on your keyboard and use this “pop-up” as a means to search this document to see what Socrates (according to Plato) has to say about this topic in his apology.

- What is Plato apologizing for, anyway? (trick question!)

Now that you've read Plato's idol Socrates' opinion on the world, and you know how Socrates met his end, do you think it's possible that Plato wrote his perfect society to counter an imperfect one he saw in his own reality?

Before you get started pondering this question, you must understand that apology may not be what you think. Apology comes from *apologia*, which is Greek for “defense.”

Now, answer the following questions:

- What topic did you choose?
- What did Socrates have to say about it?
- Where do you see the influence of Socrates' trial on Plato's *Republic*?
- Which of the ideas in The *Republic* are Plato's alone?

Write 1-3 sentences per question, and make sure each one is clearly labeled in your response. **Be prepared to present your findings in class.** You will not have to defend your choices!

During presentations:

- Take general notes on what others have to say about their topics (different ones).
- Be prepared to respond to their presentations
 - How did their findings differ from yours?
 - Do they say anything that makes you change your mind about the last question?

This is a good activity to divide students up to groups. Possible group topics: religion/gods, love, wealth, economy, social class, etc.

Lesson 5

More's *Utopia*, from Book 2, pages 29-31

1.5 Drawing More's *Utopia*—the drawing should convey the following:

- What does it look like?
- How many cities are there? Farms? Meeting centers? Malls?
- Where are the residential zones? Commercial zones?
- Where are the people concentrated? What might they look like?

Your drawing should be clean and well thought out. It must indicate that an effort has been made in the production of the art work.

Next, your poster/drawing will include a 200 word paragraph explaining why you made the decisions you made, and why you think More was so detailed in his description. The written component must address the following:

- Why is it necessary to know what *Utopia* looks like?
- Do you think his book would have the same effect if you couldn't place *Utopia* in a real world?
- Does having a tangible map make *Utopia* seem like it might be possible? And if it were, is this a good thing?

Next, prepare a short response to your classmates' work by answering the following questions:

- What does their drawing do differently than yours?
- Do you agree with their map or not?
- Why is their map different than yours?

Teacher notes:

It is not necessary to get every single detail so long as the student gets the basic idea. They must not stray from the meaning of the text though creative freedom is always allowed. A simple picture of an actual town or city is way off base. More did provide an illustration but it is only a sample.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/46/Isola_di_Utopia_Moro.jpg

Lesson 6

More's *Utopia*, from Book 2, pages 32-36

Basic info regarding this section:

Their Officials

- Remember how every thirty households has a "community leader"? This person is called the phylarch, or in their ancient language, the syphogrant.
- These leaders are in charge of electing a prince using a secret ballot. The prince rules for his whole life, but can be removed if people think he's a tyrant.
- They have all kinds of open and democratic processes by which the prince deals with day-to-day business, and everything is conducted in the open so that the prince and his advisors don't do anything sneaky or oppressive.
- The senate isn't allowed to debate something the same day it's brought up, since it's always better to have time to think things over.

1.6 What would your day be like as a citizen of *Utopia*? Pick a career described by Thomas More, and write a journal of your day as that person that addresses the following

- Describe your family. Are you married? Kids? Pets?
- Do you have hobbies?
- What do you do for work? What do you do after work?
- If there is a TV, what do you think you'd be watching?
- What are you wearing?
- What if you get sick?
- What do you eat?
- What do you think about the *Utopia* in which you live? Is it awesome? Would you want to invite people? Would you want to get the heck out of there?

Next—Consider: Why you are being asked to complete this project? What are you discovering about utopias?

Teacher Notes:

Artistic freedom is highly encouraged though they must keep in mind More's details and try to include them in their work. For example: everyone works six hours, everyone wears the same clothing, no one does hard labor unless they are a slave, they talk about morals before meals. Students could be leaning either way at this point. We haven't covered the "Slavery" talk, so working only six hours a day might seem okay. Also, since they are writing as a citizen of *Utopia*, they might not see the imperfections yet

Lesson 7

More's *Utopia*, from book 2, pages 37-44

The more we read, the more we learn about the rules and regulations that govern the lives of the Utopians, even when traveling on vacation.

- Why does he go into so much detail? Is it for the same reasons Plato went into such detail?
- Do the rules seem to be excessive? Why?
- Should we take *Utopia* at face value or is it trying to tell us something?

As you get lost in the sea of rules and regulations, start thinking about whether this utopia is all it's cracked up to be.

- Does it really sound like an ideal society, or are we straying into dystopian territory?
- What's the difference?

1.7 In a small group, develop a list of Rules and Regulations for *Utopia*

Saying one thing and meaning something completely different? That's Satire, and it is the key to reading the dystopia within the utopia.

Utopia Genre

Fantasy; Philosophical Literature; Dystopian Literature

Utopia essentially invented a new genre: Utopian, or Dystopian, Literature.

Have an idea of what that might mean? It's when you use elements of fantasy and science-fiction to describe a place that doesn't exist (usually it's far, far away or in the distant future) as a way to think about current issues of government, society, justice, etc. Although More's *Utopia* coined the term for this literary style, Plato's *Republic* is arguably the first Utopian/Dystopian work of literature, so it definitely has some pretty serious roots in the world of philosophy.

Dystopian is a term used to specifically describe fantastic worlds that are clearly meant to be horrible: Do Not Live This Way! Unlike Utopian literature, which suggests that the world being described might be better than our world, dystopian literature is definitely not. *The Hunger Games*—a perfect dystopian example.

But once you read *Utopia* (and, for that matter, the *Republic*, too!) you'll probably start to understand that this distinction isn't so clear. Is *Utopia* really better? Many characters in the book don't seem to agree. Maybe all utopias are also dystopias...?

- **Give students the definition of Satire for vocabulary list.**

The Travels of the Utopians

- To travel in the country, you need permission, although it's usually granted without any problems.
- You don't even need to bring anything, because you'll be provided for wherever you end up. Not having to pack for vacation?
- Traveling without permission is a big no-no; second time you do it, you become a slave.
- If you don't want to stay at home, you have to work wherever you are in order to be fed.
- People don't avoid work because there aren't many places to avoid it. No bars, no brothels, etc.
- When all the leaders get together annually in the capital, they assess how many goods they have, save a lot, distribute some, and then trade whatever is left over. They've gained a lot of gold and silver, so they don't mind lending to other cities on credit.
- They only really use money to hire soldiers, so that they don't have to fight in wars.
- They actually keep their gold and silver for totally wacky stuff, because they don't think it's very valuable. They use it for chamber pots (primitive toilets), chains for prisoners, and gold chains that criminals are forced to wear.
- Only children, before they become more mature, enjoy playing with diamonds and pearls.
- Anemolian is another made-up place, coming from the Greek word for windy.
- The Utopians just don't get the appeal of jewels and fancy stuff—they think it's all completely useless. Naturally, they also don't understand the concept of wealth and why rich people hold positions of prominence.
- They learn about the foolishness of wealth not only from their whole community, but also from reading good books which every child does during their education.
- They haven't heard of any of our famous philosophers, but have still come up with most inventions and discoveries in learning on their own. In fact, they are probably better off without some of our philosophy, which is confusing instead of helpful.
- They study the stars, but only to observe, not to engage in astrology which they think is ridiculous.
- They like to debate all kinds of philosophical topics, and believe happiness is the greatest goal in life. Hythloday, by the way, doesn't seem very impressed with this part.
- Their religion is based on this principle, too, but teaches them that the truest kind of happiness is honorable and good pleasure, not just greedy and self-interested pleasure.
- For them, virtue means following Nature as closely as possible, which means being good to yourself and to others.
- This is why it's good to follow laws that help you to be virtuous and not to do anything that will harm another person.
- They believe that God will ultimately reward those who act virtuously.
- Good pleasure, Hythloday repeats, is following what Nature lays out for us.
- For example, following bad pleasure is caring too much about (1) fancy clothes, (2) big honors, (3) jewels, (4) money for its own sake, (5) gambling, (6) hunting. These kinds of things have nothing to do with Nature and lead people to be way too into themselves.
- Good pleasures are (1) functioning body and health (despite the fact that some people don't think health counts), (2) sensory experiences like music (eating and drinking should only be pleasurable if they're healthy), (3) beauty, strength, and agility.
- Hythloday then stops his narrative briefly for a little caveat: He's not saying Utopians are better, just reporting what they do. And, they happen to be incredibly happy all the time...
- Utopians are super healthy and athletic because they take care of themselves.
- They're also very relaxed and friendly and love thinking about important things. For example, when they were introduced to ancient Greek learning, they were all over it. They learned the language super quickly (Hythloday suspects Greek and Utopian are somehow distantly related).
- Hythloday, who you might remember was himself a huge Greek-buff, brought a bunch of Greek books with him to Utopia.

- He did also give them two nifty inventions: the printing press and the ability to make paper.
- Utopians love meeting travelers, learning from them, and hearing their stories, but not many merchants come to Utopia since they don't trade much.

Lesson 8

More's *Utopia*, from book 2, pages 37-44 (con't)

What's wrong with this picture? More's describing Utopia—a picture –perfect civilization with no problems, worries or issues. Doesn't that sound great?

Hopefully, you're starting to "question" Utopia and the concepts of utopias.

1.8

- Write a 300-word paragraph in which you argue that More's *Utopia* is either a utopia or a dystopia. You will need to back up your claims with specific quotes and details from the text. Before you start, you will want to revisit our working definitions of utopian literature and dystopian literature

Teacher note:

This assignment is geared towards connecting the readings to one of the overarching themes of the course—where dystopias come from. You're looking for responses that include detailed textual evidence, and that make a strong, defensible claim about the genre.

Lesson 9

More's *Utopia*, from book 2, pages 45-48

The trickiest part about *Utopia* is that it's never entirely clear whether what we're hearing about is supposed to sound great, horrible, or a little bit of both. Working only six-hours a day? No hard labor? That sounds great! But then we get to the slavery part. What kind of utopia is this? We finally get to see the dark side of *Utopia*. Everyone knows about it and everyone seems to be fine with it. Many slaves in *Utopia* are P.O.W.'s, and most are Utopians who have been punished. They're the ones that get to do all the hard labor, and while their chains and shackles are made of gold, it is not a status symbol we'd like to promote.

- Summarize the section, "Of Their Slaves...".

Utopia: Theme of Society and Class

Utopia is not your average island for many a reason, but its social organization and hierarchies are probably the most obvious difference between there and, well, anywhere else. Often considered to be proto-Communist, *Utopia* depicts a society that seems to have almost no class-system, no hierarchies (aristocracy, plebs, etc.), and very rigid family structures. By imagining such a radically different conception of how people live together, More is thinking hard about whether everyone should have equal social standing or whether having some degree of social hierarchy is actually helpful. But wait, what's the answer? Don't hold your breath—More definitely doesn't give us one.

Questions About Society and Class

1. Are there any kinds of hierarchies in *Utopia* or is everyone actually equal? If there are hierarchies, are they at all similar to ones we know, or are they completely different, too?
2. What holds the community together in *Utopia*? How does the government fit into community? What about family?
3. How do people interact with each other in *Utopia*? Can we relate this to its unique social organization?
4. Where, if anywhere, does Hythloday fit into Utopian society? Does he have a specific role, or is he perpetually an outsider?

1.9—The Theme of Utopia

Assignment:

Review the Utopia Theme of Society and class and Questions About Society and Class.

Choose **one** of the statements below. Do you agree or disagree? Be sure to include a quote or two to back up your argument. Your goal is approximately 200 words.

- Utopian society isn't that radical; many aspects of its day-to-day organization are super similar to Europe.
- Utopia couldn't exist without social hierarchies. After all, they are a natural part of how people live together. They aren't good or bad; they're just a reality.

Option/alternative:

Break class into small groups. Have these groups discuss the questions above and then present their findings in a class setting. Groups can comment on each other's findings

***Utopia* Book 2, Section 6—Of Their Slaves, Summary**

Slaves

- Slaves are prisoners from Utopian wars, but the children of slaves are not born into slavery. Most are Utopian citizens being punished.
- A few slaves are actually volunteers, who were being treated really badly in their own country. These guys get the nicest treatment (but they're still slaves...)
- Sick people are taken very good care of and the Utopians believe in euthanasia (the killing of someone terminally ill, with their consent, to spare them from chronic pain).
- Women can't marry until they are 18, men until they are 22. Oh, and pre-marital sex is absolutely not allowed. They enforce this quite harshly because they believe that no one would agree to marry otherwise. (Hythloday doesn't seem to have a very happy view of marriage in general).
- So, how do they marry? This part is pretty weird. After two Utopians are engaged, they see each other naked once before they have to marry. This way, the Utopians claim, each partner can get an accurate sense of their fiancé/fiancée's physical appearance before they commit 100%. (Possibly helpful to remember here how much more clothing they would have been wearing back in the day compared to the present).
- Utopia is the only country in that area where they practice monogamy (only being married to one person) and they do allow for divorce if there's any cheating going on or things are really, really miserable. However, this can't just be some natural flaw in the person or old age; you need to stick marriage out if that's the case.
- Cheaters are forced into slavery and if they are caught again, they are executed.
- Speaking of punishing, there aren't actually fixed punishments in Utopia. Every particular situation is considered by the senate. They find slavery a useful punishment because everyone can see them and it serves as a “warning”
- Seduction, even *attempting* to seduce someone, is also punished harshly.
- Fools are very popular in *Utopia*. Utopians like everyone to have a sense of humor and not take themselves too seriously.
- However, making fun of people with disabilities is hugely looked down on.
- Everyone is expected to take care of their appearance, but they don't believe in make-up.
- To encourage good behavior, they advertise honors in the main square so everyone can be impressed.
- You can't campaign for political office and officials aren't arrogant and don't go around wearing special clothing or badges.
- There are only a few laws in *Utopia* to avoid any legal confusion or the need for lawyers. Everyone can be a legal expert and defend themselves when the legal system is nice and simple.
- Some of the surrounding countries admire the Utopian government so much, they have their own leaders and officials sent over from *Utopia*. These Utopian officials are all much more honest than your average official since they don't care about money and as result can't be bribed.
- They also don't have any use for treaties; everyone just breaks them anyway. Although treaties are popular in Europe for both political and religious reasons, Utopians think that they don't actually secure an agreement well.
- Also, they think treaties assume that people will cheat each other. They'd rather assume people are trustworthy until proven wrong. That's optimistic.

Lesson 10

More's *Utopia*, from book 2, pages 49-59

Even Utopia has war. While the Utopians don't particularly like war, they do have to engage in it as a global necessity. The neighboring nations are all clamoring to get their hands on the riches of *Utopia*. Utopians, thus, have to defend themselves. They don't have an official religion either. They're free to worship whomever or whatever they want. While many are into the idea of Christianity, some worship the sun, moon, and other planets, and all of them have a monthly airing of grievances. In this lesson, we'll wrap up *Utopia* with a discussion on religion and war.

Reconsider the term: utopia. The word is a combination of two Greek ideas and it literally means "no-place". Our next readings will come from H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*. Start thinking about whether or not it's even possible to have a perfect place where everyone would be happy.

- Why did Thomas More name his ideal society "no-place"?
- *Utopia* sounds nice, but, consider the future of this civilization. Can it sustain itself?
- Can it last the way it's structured?
- Is it headed for doom?

1.10 War and Peace in Utopia

In a 300 word response, imagine the fate of *Utopia* 100 years into the future. Will a disaster befall it? Will there be an uprising? Or is it so well functioning that it's still operating as it is and all is well?

Teacher Note:

To get their imaginations flowing, point to some current events in which a group of people were trying to create a world to their liking and wound up harming others. In other words, students should be looking beyond the borders of *Utopia* and seeing where a place like this would fit in the real world, if it did exist. Look for responses that acknowledge that, as good as it sounds, *Utopia* isn't quite sustainable, given the pattern of human history.

Notes on Warfare in *Utopia*:

Utopia Book 2, Section 7, Of Military Discipline, etc. Summary

Warfare

- Utopians hate war.
- They don't think it bestows any glory, and they only go to war to protect their own land, their friend's land, or to free people being oppressed.
- For example, when Hythloday's ship was there, they fought a war on behalf of the Nephelotes against the Alaopolitans since the Nephelotes had been wronged.
- In general, the Utopians react much more harshly to harm done to their friends than to harm done to themselves.
- They don't celebrate their accomplishments in war because they think don't consider them particularly impressive.
- They never try to win more than they had before the war started, only to return everything to the way it was.
- Once war begins, they send in secret agents who try to execute the big officials before any fighting starts; they either do it themselves or try to turn their own people against them. This way, those actually in power are punished, and innocent lives lost in fighting can be spared.
- They'll also try to stir up conflict within the enemy's own forces to make them less unified.
- When they offer to help another nation, they are very generous with money, but not with soldiers.
- In general, they prefer to hire other people to fight for them, especially a neighboring people called the Zapoletes. These guys are rough, mountain-dwellers and, if the price is right, they fight loyally for anyone who needs them. They love money so much that they will engage in the most intense and dangerous fighting if the price is right.
- *Utopia* contributes its own men to fight only as a last resort, and when they do, their wives are allowed to go with them to make the whole thing easier.
- Even though Utopians don't like to fight, when they do, they're awesome: brave and devoted.
- Once they win, they certainly don't massacre the enemy, but instead take prisoners.
- They are very sneaky about ambushing the enemy, and pretty great at avoiding ambushes themselves.
- Because they're all completely willing to work together, fighting and defending goes quickly and efficiently.
- They have great armor that both protects and easily allows for moving around—even swimming!
- If there is a truce, the Utopians take it very seriously and don't ruin enemy land or people. They do collect a certain amount of money and land to make up for what the war cost them.
- If another nation tries to invade *Utopia*, they immediately stop them and never let another army set foot on their island.

Religion

- *Utopia* has a bunch of different religions and different people worship different things: sun, moon, planets, a virtuous man of the past. Most, however, believe in a great, unknowable power that was the origin of the world and they call this power Mithra.
- Note: Mithra is actually the name of a god in the Persian religion. In fact, there are a good number of similarities Hythloday mentions between Utopia and Persia.
- Anyway, once the Utopians were told about Jesus and Christianity, they were very impressed, particularly by the important role community plays in Jesus's teachings. Some were even baptized.
- While Hythloday was in Utopia, two of his crew died and were not able to be buried according to Christian ritual.

- When King Utopus first conquered Utopia, he saw what damage was being done by all this fighting about religion, so he made it a law that everyone could practice whatever they wanted. He thought it was likely that God was present in all kinds of different beliefs and that true faith would be revealed by its own qualities, so fighting is never necessary.
- The only belief they really look down upon is the idea that there is no justice in the afterlife. Still, people who think this aren't punished, they just can't hold public office.
- Since they think of death as having lots of rewards after it, they don't really mourn those who die unless it was way before their time. After someone dies, they also think it's important to recognize all their good qualities.
- They don't believe in fortune-telling, but do believe in miracles.
- Most Utopians show their respect for God by studying science and literature. Others, however, devote themselves to helping the needy. Some of these people are celibate and live together while others still choose to be married.
- They only have a small number of priests, who are considered very holy. They are responsible for leading religious services and monitor who's being naughty or nice. If someone is extra bad, they can be turned away from religious services, which is a big disgrace. They also teach children.
- Women can also be priests, usually older widows.
- Priests are considered to be the most honorable position in the whole country. Even if a priest does something wrong, he isn't punished, just left to God's justice.
- Priests accompany soldiers to war and spend the battle praying for peace. Once the battle is over, they are responsible for making sure the Utopian soldiers are merciful.
- Every first and last day of the month is a holiday.
- They have beautiful churches, big and dark to keep people focused on the service going on.
- Although the details of various services are different, they essentially all worship this unknown, powerful force. Churches don't have any images of God; that way, people can imagine him/her as they wish.
- On one of their holidays, they all make sure to go home and tell everyone in their family things they've done wrong or things they're angry about. That way, family life runs smoothly.
- Men and women sit on separate sides during church and children never sit with each other, only with other grown-ups.
- They don't believe in any animal sacrifices, they just burn incense and wear white clothing to services.
- They all bow when the priest enters the services and then sing beautiful hymns in which the topic of the song always matches the feeling of the music.
- While praying, they thank God for what he gives and hope that everyone will be inspired by him. They also pray that for an easy death and a good afterlife.
- After church, they either play games or engage in military training.
- Hythloday thinks Utopia is the best country in the whole world. It's also actually a commonwealth (unlike places in Europe that just call themselves that), because the wealth is literally shared in common.
- And really, life is better in Utopia because people aren't worrying about money and property all the time, says Hythloday. In other countries, the predominance of money creates all these useless jobs, like noblemen and goldsmiths that make lots of money, whereas useful jobs like carpentry make nothing.
- In Europe, the rich not only get richer, but also spend their time trying to get more money out of people who are already poor.
- And what's worse? All this is completely legal. If you got rid of money, everyone would be so much better off. People would finally understand that it's better to have just enough in this life than to have too much. It

would also prevent people from becoming conceited and proud, the biggest obstacle to Utopian laws becoming common in Europe.

- Why is Pride so awful? Because, as Hythloday describes, "Pride measures her advantages not by what she has but by what other people lack" (page, line) and he goes on to list a whole bunch of destructive aspects of Pride. He ends, however, by worrying that Pride is a difficult failing to get rid of.

Lesson 11

Wells' *The Time Machine*, an introduction, pages 60-61

Note: For the following lesson/assignment, you may want to go to a PC lab with Internet access.

If you've ever dreamed of a flying car, moving sidewalks to carry you around the shopping mall, or clothes that transform into a bathing suit at the push of a button, you've been watching too many *Jetsons* cartoons. But you've also been engaging in a wee bit of science fiction.

Flying cars, moving sidewalks, and transforming clothes have one thing in common: taking something that exists and improving upon it. Sci-fi does this all the time. It takes existing technology and makes it new. And tons of new things were happening at the end of the 19th century: streetcars, telephones, aquariums, even doorknobs. No, there weren't any time machines, but it was an era of modern conveniences.

1.11 Ahh, Progress!

- A As a research assignment, take a quick look at some of the conveniences, many of which seem quaint by today's standards, were cutting edge back then here. (**research only...no written req**)
- B Then, think of a technology, invention, or convenience that has been invented in the last ten years. Imagine what that object will do to/for us as a society were we to live with it for 100 years.

In fact, fast forward to that very future, and tell us, in 200 words:

- What does the world look like?
- How has the object you've chosen permanently changed society?
- Has it changed things for the better or for worse? (Basically, is the world a utopia or a dystopia because of it?)
- Remember: it can be a utopia to some a dystopia to others. Which side will you be on?

Teacher Notes:

Here are some recent (2013) things your students can think about: smartphones, Twitter, FaceBook, hybrid cars, Google Glass, e-readers, Splenda, pizza vending machines, Doritos tacos, 3D printers, drones, Roomba, and the list goes on. Consider a web-search: "recent inventions" for more to keep up to date.

Students should take their concept and run with it. Since we are still balancing between utopia and dystopia, they can make it something that saves the world or something that ends it. The more extreme the better!

The idea here is to lay groundwork for the experience the Time Traveller undergoes in the Wells novel. With this foundation, they'll be better able to understand the significance of the novel's events and the future it predicts

Lesson 12

Wells' *The Time Machine*, chapters 4-7, pages 62-81

***Note:** For the following lesson/assignment, you may want to go to a PC lab with Internet access.

In *The Time Machine*, Wells creates something that's the complete opposite of the utopian romances of the past. Where Plato and More were, in their own ways, dreaming of a perfect future (regardless of its possibility), Wells is all but saying that perfection will *never* be achieved and, in fact, it's all downhill from here. In other words, these are the golden days, so enjoy them while you can.

Wells is playing with the expectations readers might have from reading Plato's or More's utopian literature by turning those conventions on their head. By doing this, he's creating a dystopia: a world where everything has gone wrong, even as it was striving to do right.

In this lesson, we'll take a look at the horrors humanity might become if we continue down the same path.

1.12 (After Reading): The people of the future?

You have met the Eloi and Morlocks, and you've become familiar with their ways of life. Are either of these societies utopian? Or dystopian?

See also the **Character Analysis** that follows on the next two pages

To answer that question, you'll need to write down your own definition of both "utopia" and "dystopia." Ponder what you have learned so far. 150-200 words.

*Make a T-chart titled *The Time Machine*, one side is "utopia" the other is "dystopia". Make a list of characteristics that make *The Time Machine* a "utopia" or a "dystopia". You can include pictures to represent the characteristic, with a short caption, instead of writing them all out. This should have several examples of both. You will want to keep this list in mind with every book and/or movie we discuss. You'll be adding to it as you go.

Teacher Notes:

Students will be updating this throughout the term. You may want to have them submit these electronically and remind them to keep them on a flashdrive or, if you're computer savvy, you may want to develop a website or wiki document to have a running tally. Since this is an evolving document, it's critical to helping students with their final project.

Be aware, for all lessons and texts, certain elements can appear on both utopian and dystopian lists. That's the tricky thing with dystopias. From certain perspectives, they're utopias, and vice versa. If/when students seem unsure, feel free to offer your own perspective as an example. Furthermore, you, the teacher, may want to have a running list like this as well.

The Eloi and the Morlocks

Character Analysis

Would you rather be weak and fragile or brutish and disgusting? In Wells's vision of the year 802,701, those are pretty much your only options. (If you prefer, skip to the far, far future, where you can be a butterfly monster or a crab monster.) The Eloi and the Morlocks are the two species that have evolved from humanity. The Time Traveller isn't very subtle about their characteristics – he calls them like he sees them:

Eloi:

- Very beautiful and graceful (ch 3, paragraph 14)
- Hectic beauty (3.14)
- Fragile thing (4.1)
- Pretty little people (4.2)
- Dresden-china type of prettiness (4.3)

Morlocks:

- Human spider (5.32)
- New vermin (6.2)
- Nauseatingly inhuman (6.12)
- Human rats (9.9)
- Damned souls (9.16)

Now the Time Traveller does make it clear that the Eloi are not just pretty, but also lazy and idiotic. And he even has a few nice things to say about the Morlocks, who, though disgusting and inhuman, "retained...more initiative" and even "some little thought outside habit" (10.4). That's faint praise, but it's enough to show us that the Eloi and the Morlocks serve as mirror images of each other.

Let's run through the list of things we know about them:

- The Eloi are pretty and the Morlocks are not
- The Eloi are dumb and the Morlocks are not (or, at least, not as dumb)
- The Eloi wear clothes, the Morlocks do not
- The Eloi eat fruit, the Morlocks *seriously* do not.
- Perhaps most important, the Morlocks work and the Eloi do not.

This is central to the Time Traveller's theory that the Eloi are descended from the idle rich and the Morlocks from the working poor. The Eloi-Morlock ecology is the centerpiece of the novel's interest in how social class evolves over time: those on top now may find themselves on the bottom later.

What's in a name?

It takes a long time for the Time Traveller to finally name these two species – he meets them in Chapter 3 and doesn't name them until Chapter 5. Frankly, it's not clear where he gets the name "Morlock"; he says that "Morlock" "was the name by which these creatures were called" – which raises the question: who is doing the calling?

Anyway, regardless of how he learns them, the Eloi and the Morlocks have very distinctive, attention-getting names – the sort of names whose meanings you might wonder about. It's not entirely clear what they mean, but critics have noted that Morlock sounds a lot like Moloch, which is the name of a Phoenician god associated with child sacrifice in the Bible. ("Mors" is also a Latin root for "death"; if you watch any *CSI* sort of show, think "rigor mortis.")

There's also a possible biblical root for Eloi. First, Eloi sounds a lot like Elohim, which is a Hebrew word for god. Second, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus yells out from the cross "Eloi Eloi lema sabachthani?": "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This makes it sound like the Eloi are also named after a god.

Lesson 13

1.13—A Common, or not so Common, Theme

Wells' *The Time Machine*, chapters 8-Epilogue, pages 82-93

Review the themes for *Utopia*—pages 28-32 of Course of Study. Pick one you like or for one that interests you.

Now, discuss that theme as it applies to *The Time Machine*. Compare and contrast the two titles (*Utopia* and *The Time Machine*) and the concept you have chosen in a 1000-1500-page essay.

Here are some ideas to get your essay started.

- Did Thomas More and H.G. Wells have the same idea about your chosen theme?
- If your theme isn't in *The Time Machine*, how might Wells have handled it had he chosen to include it?
- What would The Time Traveller had thought about this theme had his time machine taken him to 1516, the year *Utopia* was written?

Be sure to include quotes and support them with analysis. A quote must be introduced and analyzed/explained. It cannot stand alone.

Teacher Notes:

Your evaluation should be based on how well they bring the texts together. Do they simply say “dissatisfaction” is a theme shared by both *Utopia* and *The Time Traveller* or do they express how different the dissatisfaction is?

Themes

Utopia Theme of Dissatisfaction

Hythloday doesn't get any satisfaction from the current state affairs in Europe. The more we get to know the protagonist of *Utopia*, the clearer it is that he just isn't happy with how things are going in his home continent: corruption, poverty, inequality, and violence abound. And while he finds temporary relief in the radically different society of this unknown island called Utopia, it just doesn't last. In fact, when he returns to Europe and realizes how few people are open to the kinds of social systems Utopia uses, things only get worse for him.

Questions About Dissatisfaction

1. Does there seem to be one experience in particular that made Hythloday so dissatisfied with European governments? Or is this a general feeling that arose from some deep thinking? What would be the difference between those two reasons for dissatisfaction?
2. How does Hythloday express his dissatisfaction? Does he just go out and say things are bad, or do we have to piece those feelings together as readers?
3. How exactly does the island of Utopia free Hythloday from his dissatisfaction? Does it offer him hope? Does it offer him escape? What kinds of experiences does he have there?
4. Is Hythloday the only dissatisfied character in the book? Who else might be?

Consider This

Hythloday is just having a case of "the grass is greener." If he had actually stayed in Utopia, he'd start to find faults with all kinds of things there, too.

Utopian society is designed so that no one can ever feel dissatisfied—it's impossible.

Utopia Theme of Pride

Pride is the problem. At least for Hythloday it's that simple. In *Utopia*, Hythloday sees Pride as public enemy #1, the main contributor to every political, social, and economic issue facing Europe. Poverty? Pride's fault. Bad kings? Pride. Even though you might think of pride as just one of those seven deadly sins, Hythloday goes out of his way to claim that it's at the root of all other sins. And guess what makes Utopian society so successful? Pride is never rewarded, so it doesn't really exist.

Questions About Pride

1. What exactly is Hythloday's rationale for attacking pride? What behaviors does he see it directly cause? Why?
2. According to Hythloday, what specifically is it about Utopian society that discourages pride? What is it about European society that makes it so common?
3. What are some examples of proud behavior in *Utopia*? Do our three main characters act proudly or do we just hear about pride in other situations?

Consider This

Hythloday is wrong; pride may not always be great but it isn't all bad. In fact, having some pride is necessary in order to accomplish good things.

Hythloday is the one with the pride problem here, not the rest of Europe.

Utopia Theme of Society and Class

Utopia is not your average island for many a reason, but its social organization and hierarchies are probably the most obvious difference between there and, well, anywhere else. Often considered to be proto-Communist, *Utopia* depicts a society that seems to have almost no class-system, no hierarchies (aristocracy, plebs, etc.), and very rigid family structures. By imagining such a radically different conception of how people live together, More is thinking hard about whether everyone should have equal social standing or whether having some degree of social hierarchy is actually helpful.

Questions About Society and Class

1. Are there any kinds of hierarchies in Utopia or is everyone actually equal? If there are hierarchies, are they at all similar to ones we know, or are they completely different, too?
2. What holds the community together in Utopia? How does the government fit into community? What about family?
3. How do people interact with each other in Utopia? Can we relate this to its unique social organization?
4. Where, if anywhere, does Hythloday fit into Utopian society? Does he have a specific role, or is he perpetually an outsider?

Consider This

Utopian society isn't that radical; many aspects of its day-to-day organization are similar to Europe.

Utopia couldn't exist without social hierarchies. After all, they are a natural part of how people live together. They aren't good or bad; they're just a reality.

Utopia Theme of Wealth

Utopia is chock full of social commentary. And when Hythloday gets to Utopia, he's pretty taken with their unorthodox way of eliminating wealth: no private property. Without private ownership, there is no such thing as wealth—or poverty, for that matter—and people just don't care about being rich. This works out well, says Hythloday, because then there's no greed; and when there's no greed, everyone is happy. Everyone except him, of course, because it reminds him of how money-driven European society really is.

Questions About Wealth

1. Does the question of wealth come up in places other than in the description of Utopia? If so, when and how?

2. What exactly is the Utopian attitude toward wealth and precious things? Do they serve a function in their society at all?
3. Hythloday sees wealth and private property as directly related—but are they? Are there examples in the text where they could be different?
4. While it's very clear how Hythloday feels about wealth, do we get a sense of what other characters think about it? If so, do they agree with him?

Consider This

Like it or not, ownership of things makes us happy; it's completely unrealistic that people could be happy in Utopia.

If Hythloday hates wealth so much, he shouldn't be hanging around with his wealthy friends all the time enjoying their food and beautiful gardens.

Utopia Theme of Religion

Sure, Hythloday spends a lot of time discussing religion, but it's also one of the subjects that keeps his readers guessing. Why? Well, it's a pretty hot topic, and since More was writing *Utopia* at a time of major religious upheaval (think Reformation, burning at the stake, etc.) you didn't want to be caught saying something too controversial on the subject. What we do know about religion in Utopia is that most people believe in a single, God-like, all-powerful being who instills in us a moral code. But there's religious freedom to believe what you want. What do you make of that?

Questions About Religion

1. What are the specific connections between religion and morality that Hythloday describes? How do Utopians see those two things as connected?
2. What's the relationship, if any, between the Utopian religion and these religious characters we meet, specifically the Friar and Cardinal Morton?
3. Compare and contrast Utopian religious customs with the customs of other major religions. How different is Utopian religion? Why?
4. What is Hythloday's opinion on religion? Other than reporting the practices of the Utopians, what else, if anything, do we learn about his own belief and feelings on the topic?

Consider This

The Utopians don't actually have a religion; they just follow a collection of philosophical observations.

The fact that Utopians aren't Christian (the only acceptable religion in More's world) is proof that he didn't actually intend *Utopia* to be a model society.

Utopia Theme of Power

Think *Utopia* is just a story about three regular guys having a little chat in a garden? Fine, it is. But it's *also* a profound examination of the power: who should have it, how they should get it, and how they should use it.

It's no accident More starts the whole book by praising the King of England (his employer). This book was written during a time when the people who were powerful were extremely powerful. It's also no accident that this model of extreme power is totally different from the way power exists in Utopia, which has a semi-democratic government. So, which is better?

Questions About Power

1. What are the specifics of how power is distributed in Utopia? Does one person have most of the power? Many people? No one?
2. What kinds of power dynamics do we see depicted in Book 1 (i.e., not in Utopia)? Are all the characters equally powerful, or are some under the authority of others? (you'll need to research this chapter/book)
3. What kind of power does Hythloday have? How does he describe his power, or lack thereof?
4. Considering that the book is organized as a series of conversations, what, if any, is the connection between conversation and power? Is conversation ever powerful? What can it do or not do?

Consider This

Hythloday, More, and Giles are all pretty privileged people; they can't have an honest discussion about power.

Utopia can't call itself a semi-democracy—after all, it was founded by some king.

Utopia Theme of Exploration

Despite being concerned with lots of Big Important Themes, these are also books about exploration: the benefits—and drawbacks—of discovering new places and new ideas. What if, like Hythloday, everyone who leaves Europe to go exploring comes back preferring the new place? Will it help us improve or just make everyone miserable? What ethical responsibilities do we have toward these new people? What if they don't believe in our laws and moral ideals? Even though no one is directly voicing these concerns, you can bet that they would have been on everyone's mind.

Questions About Exploration

1. What kind of an explorer is Hythloday? How exactly does he make it to Utopia and why might this be important?
2. Are any other characters in the text explorers of some kind? How is travel to new places other than Utopia described?
3. Do Utopians explore? Why or why not?

Consider This

Utopia is not a book about exploration; it's just a convenient context for some philosophical speculations.

In the Renaissance, exploration and travel would have been luxuries only an elite few could have taken advantage of, so morality and exploration are actually incompatible.

Segway to Unit 2—Propaganda—Appendices 1

Unit 2—1984

Introduction for Teachers: 1984

Big Brother is bad. Orwell hammers that into our heads over and over again. Obviously, this unit is not endorsing totalitarianism. Consider that all dystopias are built on an idea of utopia. Our goal is to try and figure out where exactly the utopia is in the society and where it went wrong. Consider watching “V for Vendetta” at this time and try to determine what were they attempting to do and what went wrong.

You can also draw parallels to our own world:

- We have freedom of information, but do we use it? Or do we let the party line dictate how we interpret information?
- Do we have the power to prevent the military action of our government? Perhaps U.S. history suggests otherwise? How much power do the people have?

Maybe the difference between our world and these dystopias is not a matter of night and day but simply degrees. Of course, *1984* isn't the future anymore, and never was for today's students. This unit will be discussing how *1984* was the future in Orwell's day (1940's) by taking a look at WWII propaganda to put things into context. Another approach, for those having a difficult time grasping the ideas or caring, ask them to think about what the world will be like in 45 years. Not just their lives, but the world. Science Fiction and the Utopia/Dystopian Genres are about speculation, and just because it doesn't come true doesn't mean it doesn't have value.

Important note:

Not all of the chapters from the book are covered in these particular lessons. It skips from time to time. It would behoove you to look ahead and determine which chapters are represented and which are not. It will be up to you to determine if you want your students to cover every chapter or just follow this set of lessons. If you choose to cover every chapter, then you'll need to add “activities” where needed. Time permitting, I'll include an appendices section that will cover the whole book.

1984—Study Questions

1. What is George Orwell's personal political philosophy? How does he demonstrate it in *1984*?
2. Why is *1984* still studied today, more than sixty years after its publication date?
3. How does Orwell's dystopian society differ from the utopian societies of Plato and Thomas More? How is it similar?
4. What things did Orwell predict in *1984* that actually came true?
5. Would it ever be possible for a world like the one depicted in *1984* to come about? Why or why not?
6. What similarities and differences do you see between real-world government policies today and the policies of The Party in *1984*?
7. What historical events does *V for Vendetta* draw inspiration from?
8. How do the societies depicted in *1984* and *V for Vendetta* differ? How are they the same?

Lesson 1

Orwell's *1984*, chapter 1, book 1

Activity 2.1: Propaganda

You will want to go to a PC lab with Internet access for the first part of this assignment.

If you ever find yourself in the middle of an ATOMIC HOLOCAUST, don't worry: just duck and cover. You'll be safe! Right?

We certainly don't believe this now. However, back then, people were serious. That's the point of government propaganda: to make people think what you want them to think, and fear what you want them to fear. This is a hallmark in dystopian societies. Hopefully, we are not foolish enough to be tricked by propaganda. Orwell wasn't! He saw the prevalence of propaganda trying to control the public's thoughts, and he took it to the extreme with his book, *1984*.

Step 1: Check out these WWII propaganda posters courtesy of the BBC. Choose one of these, or do an image search for more.

Site:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwtwo/war_adverts_gallery.shtml

Step 2: Print a copy and prepare to post it in class for discussion. Be attentive to your classmates and do not choose an image that has already been chosen. You will write a short response comparing/contrasting the image you've chosen to the images you see in the first chapter of *1984*.

Step 3: Pick a classmate's image and written response. Taking the poster, re-imagine it *1984*-style. Write a paragraph on how you would change it to fit Orwell's grim dystopia.

Teacher Notes:

Students haven't gotten too far into *1984* yet, but they know how it begins. They should know about Big Brother and the Party's motto: War is Peace; Freedom is Slavery; Ignorance is Strength. Propaganda pretty much hinges on a few ideals: "War is Good!" and "The Only Information You're Going to Get is What We're Giving You." Students who realize this are doing well. Students who turn the poster into a happy ad for fast food or something are missing the mark.

Lesson 2

Orwell's *1984*, chapter 2-3, book 1

Activity 2.2: They're Watching You!

You will want to go to a PC lab with Internet access for the first part of this assignment.

Big Brother is alive and well today in two forms: the NSA and the CBS reality show Big Brother (is this still on?).

Depending on your opinion of reality television, the show Big Brother might be relatively harmless. Depending on your opinion of government observation programs, the National Security Agency's (NSA) requisition of civilian data might also seem relatively harmless. Everyone has a different view on the matter.

First, you will want to do a little research into what the NSA has been up to as of late. Try searching for the agency on Google News, or poking into the PRISM scandal of 2013. The more research you do, the better, because it's going to help you complete this activity.

The NSA's Website:

<http://www.nsa.gov/>

Now that you've done your research, create a video, Big Brother confessional-style convincing your class that the NSA either is or isn't Big Brother. Either upload your video to a flash drive or email or send it via a smart phone to the teacher. You must provide a Works/Source Cited page. Be sure to use quotes from the text and an online resource about the NSA. See below for some usable quotes from the text and a few links to articles. You may also locate your own.

Note to Teacher: You may want to go online and create a special account so that you can view student work in class—either a website, blog, YouTube, etc.

Consider some of these things as you plan and prepare your video:

- What role does technology play in the book? In what ways does the Party employ technology? In what ways does technology make the overall themes of this book possible?
- How is technology today similar? How is it different?
- Is privacy important today? How much information do people willingly give up? Is this different than the government obtaining data?
- Which is worse: mind control or physical control? In what sense are they one and the same?

When your video is filmed and posted, we will watch them in class. Be prepared to respond to two of your classmates who have an opposite opinion from you. Which of their points do you agree with? Have they persuaded you to the other side?

Articles of interest:

"Facebook vs. NSA: which is worse?"

<http://www.zdnet.com/facebook-vs-nsa-which-is-worse-7000017178/>

"Netflix, Facebook—and the NSA: They're all in it together."

http://www.salon.com/2013/06/14/netflix_facebook_and_the_nsa_theyre_all_in_it_together/

"NSA Prism program taps in to user data of Apple, Google and others."

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/us-tech-giants-nsa-data>

Notes to teacher:

Student videos should make mention of tech companies (anything from Facebook to phone companies) turning over data to the NSA. Student opinions can be either pro or con; however, they need to be drawing parallels between Big-Brother-is-Watching-You dynamic in the book, and the fact that we're being watched today.

If students realize that a lot of the information being collected today is pretty much public anyway, versus the fact that Big Brother in *1984* is a massive invasion of privacy watching everything they do, that's an exceptional connection. If they think what they do on the Internet stays on the Internet, they might get "voted out of the house" before they know it.

Note: If any of your students lack the ability to film a "confessional" video, this activity can be adapted into an essay assignment.

Lesson 3

Orwell's *1984*, chapter 4, book 1

Activity 2.3: New News

You will want to go to a PC lab with Internet access for the first part of this assignment.

In chapter 4, we see Winston at work. He's kind of like a reporter in retrograde, taking news stories from the past and re-writing them to fit Big Brother's failed predictions. For example, Big Brother says there's no reduction to chocolate rations, but they reduced them anyway. We want our chocolates! However, Winston changes the news story to read that Big Brother said there would be a reduction to chocolate rations.

This is what happens when one person controls the media. But to be fair, our world isn't much different. Six companies control a large portion of our media. Check out the link below:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/these-6-corporations-control-90-of-the-media-in-america-2012-6>

Now...It's time to pretend that you have Winston's job.

Step 1: Find a news story in which a public figure (politician, celebrity, etc.) either makes a statement that is wrong, clarifies a statement, apologizes for something he or she said, etc. If possible, find the original story in which the original erroneous or problematic statement was made.

Step 2: Before anyone catches on, rewrite the original news story so that it seems like the public figure was right all along.

Step 3: print a hard copy of your rewritten news story, along with a copy pasted version of the original. Don't label which is which (but be sure to include a link/citation so your teacher knows where you got the story).

Step 4: In small groups of 3, you will share your stories with two other classmates, and try to guess which of their stories is the real story, and which is the doctored one.

- Did they succeed in tricking you?
- How did you know which of their stories was real?
- Did you do an online search to confirm the facts?
- How do you know that source was telling the truth?

Teacher Notes:

If you need some guidance, politics and economics are the best places to go here.

- You might remember the first George Bush's "Read My Lips: No New Taxes" error.
- Then there's Montel's favorite psychic, Sylvia Browne, who said that Amanda Berry was dead...when she later turned up alive.
- Finally, there are also incorrect economic predictions almost every day. They're almost always wrong, yet they keep predicting. See the link below.

<http://money.msn.com/investing/9-really-wrong-economic-predictions>

The assignment is pretty easy to check. Did your student re-write a news story to accurately reflect a different outcome? Great!

Did they simply predict that "name your random, sci-fi or action movie" was going to win an Academy award and the news story hasn't altered or changed, they need to work on their critical thinking skills.

Lesson 4

Orwell's *1984*, chapter 5, book 1

In Chapter 5, Syme says to Winston, "Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?" Read Chapter 5 of *1984*.

Be sure to check the back of your book. It should have a Newspeak Appendix. If it's not in your edition, do not fear, there are plenty available online.

Activity 2.4: U Spk Newspk 4 Us

Newspeak might be alive and well today. Listen to this NPR podcast (or read the excerpt) and think about the following questions.

Podcast:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4761169>

Questions:

- What do the Burmese call Orwell and why?
- How is modern-day Burma different from the society that Orwell depicts in *1984*? How is it similar?
- What are some ways that the Burmese (especially those who work in the media) get around government censorship?

Now it's time to create your own Newspeak news column.

Step 1: Take a real news article (you can use the one you used in the last activity if you want) and rewrite it using the techniques of newspeak as laid out in *1984* and discussed in the podcast.

Step 2: Then write a short, 200-word paragraph on the same document about your newspeak experience. Consider these questions:

1. What challenges arose in changing the real message of the article to a coded one? How did you address these?
2. How does your piece deviate from/is similar to the examples of "Newspeak" in *1984*?
3. Does writing in Newspeak affect your thought process? What is the totalitarian government trying to achieve by making people use newspeak? Are they successful? What would this dystopia look like if they didn't try to affect the language?
4. Do you think Newspeak exists today? Think about texting or twitter. How does the texting language differ from standard English? How is it similar to Newspeak? Compare and contrast a new slang language with Newspeak.

Step 3: Print a copy of your rewritten article. In your group of 3, respond to your two partners' articles, and consider the following questions:

- Could you understand their article?
- How did thinking in Newspeak (or its modern equivalent) change the way you thought in general?
- Can you really narrow the range of thought by narrowing vocabulary, as the Party seeks to do? What does that mean for people with small vocabularies—would they think less? Why does the Party think so? Can you think of counterexamples to the Party's proposition?
- What is the role of slang in a society adopting a systematized language base? How and why does some slang make it into the dictionary?
- Why does the English language have many vernaculars and colloquialisms? What is the purpose for each? Do you have an argument for why they should be eliminated or encouraged?
- What is the role of synonyms and antonyms in language, if, as Syme and Winston reasoned, all they are good for is taking up space in the dictionary?

Step 4: Now that you're experts in Newspeak, take a step back and think about the big picture. Write a 200-word paragraph, in which you answer the following question:

How is Newspeak dystopian?

Submit your re-written article, your response from Step 2 and your response Step 4

Teacher Notes:

These assignments might be hard to understand, but that's a good thing. The more difficult it is for us to understand, the better. Newspeak isn't exactly easy. Key words like "ungood" or "doubleplusgood" are good indicators that the student did a little research into Newspeak. If they're writing like they text their friends, they're not quite on track. For the paragraph in Step 4, make sure they connect with the themes of dystopia and utopia from the previous unit. How does Newspeak attempt to create a utopia? And why does it result in a dystopia instead?

Lesson 5

Orwell's *1984*, chapter 1-4, book 2

You may want to go to a PC lab with Internet access for the first part of this assignment.

We are going to skip ahead to the beginning of book 2. See Chapter 6-8 summaries in the Reader (pgs. 102-3).

In today's activity, you'll be mapping or illustrating a setting in *1984*. See page 103 in your reader for a general description of the setting.

Activity 2.5: Setting

It's time to illustrate the setting of *1984*. You can use your own artistic skill, or cut and paste images from online or magazines, or a combination of both. You don't need to map the whole world, but pick a part of the setting to do:

Winston's home. His work. Winston and Julia's secret love nest. Etc.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- What is the setting of the story? The time period? Season? Geography? Climate? Historical era? Sociopolitical context?
- How important is the setting? Why?
- What is the genre? Does the setting help us identify it?
- What is the author trying to convey to the reader about the setting?
- How would the story change if some of the elements of setting were different?
- How does the author reveal or provide details about the setting?
- How does the historical context influence the story?

When you're all done setting your illustrations, paste/glue them to a poster board no larger than 2'x2' (no smaller than 8 ½ x 11"). Your poster/image should include a brief paragraph to explain why you made the decisions you did, and why this is a good setting for a dystopia.

Teacher Notes:

1984 is a pretty bleak place. If students are posting pictures of IKEA stores...well, they may or may not be on the mark. It's all in the justification. Does IKEA represent the uniformity of society? That works. If IKEA represents how happy and colorful and affordable everything is...not so much!

Lesson 6

Orwell's *1984*, chapter 8-10, book 2

You may want to go to a PC lab with Internet access for the first part of this assignment.

We are going to skip ahead to the beginning of chapter 8, book 2. See Chapter 5-7 summaries in the Reader (pgs. 103-104).

Activity 2.6: No Strings Attached

Imagine that you're Big Brother and you want to crack down on Winston's little safe house. In order to do that, you've got to write a 400-word governmental memo outlining their crimes, and the procedure of capturing them. This is Serious Business. Address the following questions in your memo, plus anything else you think you should include:

- Which Ministry (Ministries) is your memo addressed to?
- What is Winston and Julia's crime (in the eyes of Big Brother, of course)?
- How will you catch them? Why do you want to catch them?
- How have they managed to evade authorities so far?

Check out the following link for tips on how to write an effective business memo:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/04/>

Remember, the memo is probably the most boring piece of bureaucracy ever created. Sparking, gripping, descriptive writing would be counterproductive here. You can even utilize newspeak if you want, but that's not required.

Teacher Notes:

While creativity is nice, this memo's also supposed to be boring. Students should be thinking like Big Brother here, too: sneaky, conniving, but ultimately tech savvy. By this point, they should understand the psychology of Big Brother. Basically, BB wants everything to be uniform, for people to do what he says, and to always be right. If students for some reason think Big Brother is a hero...well, that's not only a bad grade, but you'll want to keep them from pursuing a career in politics.

Lesson 7

Orwell's *1984*, chapter 1-6, book 3

Activity 2.7: 1985

You will want to go the PC lab for the research part of this assignment—research major world/political/cultural events of 1985 and the following couple of years.

See also pp. 107-108 in the supplemental reader for Plot Analysis and Book as a Tragedy

Now that you know how *1984* ends, what do you think 1985 would look like?

Write a plot summary (using the examples from the supplemental reader) and write a “sequel” to *1984*, 1985! What does life look like for Winston now?

Since you have the benefit of hindsight, utilize real-life historical contexts from 1985.

Keep the following in mind as you plot your sequel:

- Which of the seven basic plot structures (Overcoming the Monster, Rags to Riches, the Quest, Voyage and Return, Comedy, Tragedy, and Rebirth) would 1985 be?
- What will Winston and Julia's relationship be like?
- Will Winston continue loving BB or will he go back to rebellion?
- Remember: keep it Dystopian in style. The world is still an unhappy place.
- Your chapter can take place anywhere in the book—just make sure it's clear to the reader where we are and what's going on.

When you're done writing, be prepared to share your plot structure with the class/groups and provide comment/feedback to at least two other classmates' work. What did you like about their summary and chapter? Did they take the story in a direction you didn't expect? What does your sequel do differently?

Teacher Notes:

Make sure that the students read the end of *1984*. It ends with Winston being convinced that he loves Big Brother, $2 + 2 = 5$, etc. The plot of 1985 should focus on Winston's love for Big Brother, but it can be any kind of love affair. He could be wholeheartedly working for them (this could be Tragedy or Comedy, really), or he might try to rebel again (Overcoming the Monster).

Lesson 8

Introduction to the *1984* Essay assignment

Now that you've finished *1984*, you can see how Orwell goes back and forth between a tightly plotted sci-fi novel and a straight-up political treatise. As if his views weren't apparent enough already, he also wrote an essay called "Why I Write." The short answer? To promote his political ideals. The long answer is a little more complex.

In today's lesson, we'll find out why Orwell writes straight from the source: George Orwell.

Why He Writes

1984 shifts into philosophical mode throughout the majority of Book III, as O'Brien reveals Big Brother's plans and the reasoning behind them. Read Chapters 1-3 of Book III (and then check out the summaries in your reader, pp 104-105). Then, let's figure out about Orwell's plans for writing, and the reasoning behind why he does it. Read Orwell's essay "Why I Write" in preparation for today's activity (pp. 155-159, reader).

Lesson 2.8

While reading the essay, take notes on the following critical questions:

1. When did Orwell know that he should be a writer? How old was he when he gave up on this?
2. Why did Orwell make up imaginary stories? How did this affect his social life?
3. What was the first historical event that prompted a written response from Orwell? What genre of writing did he produce? What was the title?
4. What "continuous story" did Orwell make up about his own life?
5. When he was sixteen, what kinds of novels did Orwell decide he wanted to write? How does this image compare to *1984* and its themes? Did he get his wish?
6. What are the four reasons Orwell lists for writing? Do any of these resonate with why you write? What about with how you express yourself in other ways, through art, music, blogging, texting, or talking with your friends?

Lesson 9

Orwell's *1984*, chapters 1-3, book 3 (Reader Summaries pp. 104-5); Orwell's Essay "Why I Write" (reader pp. 155-159)
You may want to go to a PC lab with Internet access for the first part of this assignment.

Activity 2.9: Why?

In "Why I Write," Orwell claims that "Looking back through my work, I see that it is invariably where I lacked a political purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally."

Question: Does writing have to be political to be good or do politics only succeed in messing things up?

Objective: Select a point of view and defend or argue against Orwell's claim in an essay of 500-600 words. Also consider if it's even possible to write a dystopia without being political. Are dystopias inherently political? Do they all have to make a statement? Structure an argument and provide specific examples (from the essay, novel, your own life, and other sources) to support your stance. For ideas, see 1985 Themes section on "Philosophical Viewpoints," "Power," and "Warfare" in your reader, pp. 110-112.

Teacher Notes:

1. Yes, books need to be political to be good! There are tons of examples, not just *1984*. Pretty much any dystopian book is political. So are almost any Pulitzer Prize or National Book Award winner: *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Salvage the Bones*, even *The Great Gatsby* are sizzling social commentary.
2. Politics stink! At least this is true when it comes to government, but it can also be true when it comes to literature, too. After all, *1984*'s plot grinds to a halt when Orwell goes off on his political tangents. No one likes to be preached to.

You're looking for responses that include a coherent argument with lots of evidence to back it up. This is a formal essay and it should look the part.

Expository Essay Rubric - 60 Points

	Outstanding	Proficient	Developing	Needs Improvement
Introduction	Grabs reader's attention effectively. Presents effective context for thesis, including background and significance of topic. (9)	Presents topic clearly. Presents some context for thesis, including background. Attempts to discuss significance. (8)	Presents topic. Includes some background and context. May be trite and unfocused. (7)	Does not present topic clearly and/or does not contextualize thesis. (6)
Thesis	Has clear, supportable, and interesting perspective on topic with clear rationale. (12)	Has clear and supportable perspective on topic with sense of rationale. (10)	Has supportable perspective on topic. (9)	Has no evident perspective on topic, or has one that is not supportable. (8)
Evidence / Support	All support is clearly and logically connected to the topic. Examples, evidence and details are thorough and relevant with effective explanation. (18)	All support about the main topic is relevant. Examples, evidence and details are explained. (15)	Most support is related to the topic. Examples, evidence or details are given. (14)	Insufficient examples, evidence, or details. Support may be irrelevant. (12)
Organization	Has a logical organizational scheme. Each piece of information flows logically and smoothly to the next. (6)	Has a clear organizational plan. Information is presented logically with some sense of connection. (5)	General sense of organizational plan. Information makes sense within it, but transitions are lacking. (5)	Information appears disconnected or illogical. (4)
Conclusion	Logically and effectively synthesizes information in an interesting way that shows the larger implications of the topic. (9)	Synthesizes information persuasively and shows larger implications somewhat. (8)	Restates information with some attempt at showing larger relevance. (7)	Restates information. (6)
Style	Language is clear and interesting. Enhances presentation of information. No errors. (6)	Language is clear and appropriate to topic. Minor spelling or grammatical errors. (5)	Language is occasionally unclear, but meaning is generally understandable. Frequent spelling/grammar errors that do not impede comprehension. (5)	Language use makes writing very difficult to understand. Frequent spelling or grammar errors that impede comprehension. (4)

Lesson 10

Activity 2.10: *1984*: The Movie!

Be sure to get permission slips signed...the film is Rated R

As you're watching, write a short answer to each of the following questions:

1. This movie was made in *1984*. The real-world 1984 was nothing like the dystopia in the book *1984*. Does the fact that the book didn't come true invalidate Orwell's story, or make it "wrong"? Why make the movie if the book didn't actually come "true"?
2. If the movie were made in 1949, when Orwell wrote the book, how would it have been different? If the movie were made today, even farther past the real 1984, how would it be different?
3. What are the differences between the book and the movie in terms of setting? Characters? Tone? What is left out or added? And, what effect do these omissions and additions have on the viewer? Are the themes the same? How about Winston's journey?
4. Does the movie match your vision of Orwell's dystopian society or not? What did the filmmakers get right? What about their interpretation did you not like?

Teacher Notes:

The movie is rated R, so if students are unable to watch it, or you don't want to show it, they can read reviews of the movie instead. They will need to research the internet for movie reviews. They might look at reviews from Rotten Tomatoes or New York Times articles.

Lesson 11

V for Dystopia

Although *1984* and *V for Vendetta* share a similar oppressive-governmental feel that's all the rage in dystopian fiction, there is one major difference: in *V for Vendetta*, they blow stuff up. *V for Vendetta* is kind of what would happen if the citizens of *1984* didn't just sit back and take like they do, but if they stood up and fought for what they believed in.

Activity 2.11 Watch *V for Vendetta*

As you watch, take notes on the following:

- Similarities and differences you see between *1984* and *V for Vendetta*
- What is the prevailing government system in *V for Vendetta*?
- What is *V* fighting for?
- What historical contexts and events are depicted in *V for Vendetta*?

Lesson 12

Activity 2.12: Superhero or Supervillain?

There's one key difference between *1984* and *V for Vendetta*. Where Big Brother lurked in the shadows, and may or may not have existed, *V* is real. But, does *V* stand for Villain or Hero? How does the inclusion of this Super-character alter a theme shared in both texts?

Step 1: In order to explore this, pick a theme both novels share. One from your last essay, like "Philosophical Viewpoints", "Power," or "Warfare" would be perfect, but any shared theme will do.

Step 2: Rewrite a section of *1984* (1-2 pages) with *V* in it. Pluck *V* from his movie and drop him in the middle of *1984*. Using the theme sections for *1984*, make sure to include quotes from the text, and alter them as to what would happen if *V* were there to wreak havoc.

Think about the following when it comes to your new chapter:

- How does a central hero (or anti-hero) like *V* change your idea of dystopia?
- What kind of harm or good would he cause?
- Would *V* be for Big Brother or against?
- How would *V* and Winston get along? *V* and Julia?
- Would *V* be able to organize the Proles against Big Brother? If so, how?
- Would the Proles be able to live without Big Brother?

Teacher Notes:

V for Vendetta is also rated R. If there are any objections to the content, there are plot summaries online or perhaps the graphic novel compilation of the comic series would be more appropriate. Regarding the assignment, students have a lot of creative freedom here; however, unless they're really able to convince you, *V* would not be allying with Big Brother in any way. He probably wouldn't like Winston either, although he might be able to inspire him to work for his cause.

Lesson 13

Activity 2.13—Graphic Organizer/The List

Revisit the list of utopian/dystopian elements we created for *The Time Machine*. Based on your reading of *1984* and viewing *V for Vendetta*, go over the list and add any new elements and themes you've discovered and highlight anything else that seems particularly highlight-worthy.

Remember, your list doesn't just have to be a boring sequence of texts. You can include images, drawings, and links to videos if you like. When you're done with your revisions, submit an updated list to the teacher.

Teacher Notes:

While this is mainly a participatory activity, it will come in handy for the next activity, which is more of a formal compare and contrast. Make sure students understand that each work has both dystopian and utopian elements. By this point, they should have it down that the two are very similar.

Lesson 14

In this lesson, you'll be looking at the big dystopian picture. What vision of our future society do these works provide? Where did it all go wrong?

Activity 2.14: Write it Up

Write a 1000-1250 word essay comparing and contrasting the societies in *V for Vendetta* and *1984*.

Remember to focus on the dystopian and/or utopian aspects of both works. Elements can be shared by practically any story do not apply. As always, make sure you back up your claims with ample evidence from the works—quote dialogue, descriptions, scenes, etc. And make sure your paper has a strong thesis to focus and narrow your argument.

Here are some suggestions:

- Is each work a critique of the government or the people?
- Who are the protagonists? The antagonists?
- What are the settings?
- When does each story take place? Where? How does each story compare to real-life historical events?

Teacher Notes:

This is the time for students to put together everything we've talked about in this unit: government control, grim settings, current events, manipulating the news, they can even talk about book to movie adaptations.

This is deliberately open-ended so that students can take any angle they choose. However, leaving things open-ended means that your students might hand some papers that lack focus. Be sure to offer them advice as they write to narrow their arguments and zoom in on the details. Emphasize organization, too.

Literary Essay Rubric - 100 Points

	Outstanding	Proficient	Developing	Needs Improvement
Introduction	Grabs reader’s attention effectively. Presents effective context for thesis, including background and significance of topic. (10)	Presents topic clearly. Presents some context for thesis, including background. Attempts to discuss significance. (9)	Presents topic. Includes some background and context. May be trite and unfocused. (8)	Does not present topic clearly and/or does not contextualize thesis. (7)
Thesis	Has clear, supportable, and interesting perspective on topic with clear rationale. (15)	Has clear and supportable perspective on topic with sense of rationale. (13)	Has supportable perspective on topic. (11)	Has no evident perspective on topic, or has one that is not supportable. (10)
Analysis of Text	Creates insightful, meaningful interpretation of texts. Analyzes author’s use of language, structure, and literary elements and how they contribute to larger meaning of text. (20)	Creates logical interpretation of text. Discussion of author’s use of language, structure, and literary elements mixes analysis and description. (17)	Creates reasonable but limited interpretation of text. Discussion of language, structure, and literary elements is primarily descriptive. (15)	Interpretation of text is not reasonable, or discussion of text never extends beyond description. (13)
Evidence / Support	All support is clearly and logically connected to the topic. Examples, evidence and details are thorough and relevant with effective explanation. (15)	All support about the main topic is relevant. Examples, evidence and details are explained. (13)	Most support is related to the topic. Examples, evidence or details are given. (11)	Insufficient examples, evidence, or details. Support may be irrelevant. (10)
Organization	Has a logical organizational scheme. Each piece of information flows logically and smoothly to the next. (10)	Has a clear organizational plan. Information is presented logically with some sense of connection. (9)	General sense of organizational plan. Information makes sense within it, but transitions are lacking. (8)	Information appears disconnected or illogical. (7)
Citation	All citation form is accurate. Goes beyond required integration of sources. Paraphrase and quoting is used effectively. (10)	All citation form is accurate. All required sources are used. Has examples of both paraphrasing and quoting. (9)	May contain minor citation form errors. May be missing required source. Direct quotes are over utilized and/or paraphrasing is occasionally inaccurate. (8)	Major citation errors, or correct form is used, but most of paper is quoted directly. (If paper is plagiarized, it automatically gets a zero in total.) (7)
Conclusion	Logically and effectively synthesizes information in an interesting way that shows the larger implications of the topic. (10)	Synthesizes information persuasively and shows larger implications somewhat. (9)	Restates information with some attempt at showing larger relevance. (8)	Restates information. (7)
Style	Language is clear and interesting. Enhances presentation of information. No errors. (10)	Language is clear and appropriate to topic. Minor spelling or grammatical errors. (9)	Language is occasionally unclear, but meaning is generally understandable. Frequent spelling/grammar errors that do not impede comprehension. (8)	Language use makes writing very difficult to understand. Frequent spelling or grammar errors that impede comprehension. (7)

Segway to Unit 3—The Short Story Unit—Appendices 2

Unit 3—*Brave New World* and *The Handmaid's Tale*

Introduction

Dystopias have to be caused by something, right? In most cases, it's people. This unit is going to face reality...taking a close up look at how these societies ended up the way they did.

In Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, women's rights are taken away in the name of fertility. Women no longer hold jobs, create art, read, write, or do anything without an escort. And, it's not all the men who are at fault for this. In this tale, both sexes had a hand in the decline of society.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* takes a different angle: here, we get a dystopia (or is it a utopia?) in which society has taken it upon itself to limit people's freedoms and rights. And, no one seems to care! They're too busy taking drugs and playing ridiculous games to give much thought that anything could be wrong.

Finally, the movie *Gattaca* brings the genetic engineering of *Brave New World* into the real world. In this classic, people decide their children's traits before they're even born by manipulating their DNA. In fact, all these societies have a fixation on babies.

Summary

- We're going to start this unit with *The Handmaid's Tale*. Unless you're a woman...Then you're banned from reading. You can go cross-stitch or something.
- Angry about that? You should be. Some dystopias, like the one in *The Handmaid's Tale*, show what happens when groups of oppressed people fail to stand up for themselves, and the oppression gets even worse.
- Both *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Brave New World* are the author's way of getting their point across. It may or may not be political, but they definitely have a message to convey. These are not just fun reads—they're conversation starters.
- These works can be considered either science-fiction or speculative fiction. Sci-fi explores science and technology and how it changes us. Speculative fiction? It considers what "could" happen. Almost all Sci-fi is speculative, but not all speculative fiction is Sci-fi.
- One tactic nefarious dystopian leaders use to control their populace is to limit their ability to communicate. *The Handmaid's Tale* is no different.
- *Brave New World* is one of the older texts for this course. Yet, it is still relevant today: dealing with a strict caste system and genetic engineering before "genetic engineering" was even a term.
- *Gattaca* is a dystopian movie that also deals with genetic engineering.
- One thing in all the works in this unit have in common: babies. They all use babies as a symbol in one way or another, whether it's through making babies (and there is more than one way to do it!), caring for babies, or electrocuting babies. In dystopias, even babies have a hard time.

Objectives

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- Argue about the political ramifications of dystopian novels and maybe prevent dystopias from happening
- Communicate ideas without words...though, maybe not very effectively
- See just how terrible Atwood's dystopia can be
- Understand Huxley's personal philosophy and see how much of it went into *Brave New World*.

- Compare and contrast Plato’s utopian caste system with the caste system created by Huxley in *Brave New World*
- Intelligently contribute to the hypothetical, “if you were on an island and can only bring five things” conversations.
- Genetically engineer your own children and rule the world!

Introduction for Teachers

Brave New World and *The Handmaid’s Tale* will discuss several racy issue: sex, gender and class. It appears that they come at these issues from both sides of the table and that makes the discussion all the more difficult.

Atwood’s world looks like a terrible place to live for both the women and the men. She doesn’t beat around the bush when it comes to explaining how her society came to be. Both men and women campaigned to limit the rights of women, including abortion rights. In stark contrast, Huxley’s *Brave New World* feels almost like a walk in the park. People get to take recreational drugs, sleep with whomever they want, and play ridiculous games all day long. Well, except for the people who do all the menial labor, but even they are happy working their butts off...because they were programmed that way!

Finally, Gattaca explores the issues of genetic engineering when it comes to designing our own children. The whole unit will lead up to an essay. There are many laws, rules, and regulations regarding babies and children in the works we will explore and Gattaca ties into both of these texts in regards to lab babies.

Study Questions for Unit 3:

1. What are the caste systems in *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *Brave New World*? How do the characters in Gattaca manipulate the caste system? Do all dystopias have a rigid caste system? Can a place have a caste system and not be a dystopia?
2. What role does science play in *Brave New World* and Gattaca? What are the scientists hoping to achieve?
3. What does the dominant governments ban in these works and why? Do people fight to get these things back? Why or why not? Why is limiting communication a tactic frequently employed by dystopian governments?
4. What effects does soma have on different users in *Brave New World*? Compare and contrast the settings in which the drug is used: who uses it, why, and why, and what the results/implications are of doing so.
5. What role does propoganda play in both *Brave New World* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*? Compare their propoganda to what you saw in *1984*. What do these works have in common? Are they all the same type of dystopia?
6. Is *Brave New World* a utopia or a dystopia?
7. Compare and contrast the way Huxley treats the issue of power and class with the way Margaret Atwood handles these issues.
8. Take a look at different covers for both *Brave New World* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*. How do the covers reflect the novel’s themes? Do they look dystopian? How does something look dystopian?

Important note:

Not all of the chapters from the book are covered in these particular lessons. It skips from time to time. It would behoove you to look ahead and determine which chapters are represented and which are not. It will be up to you to determine if you want your students to cover every chapter or just follow this set of lessons. If you choose to cover every chapter, then you’ll need to add “activities” where needed. Time permitting, I’ll include an appendices section that will cover the whole book.

Unit 3: Terms

Aunt: Not necessarily your mother or father's sister. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the Aunts are the female disciplinarians of Gilead.

Caste: A rigid social structure. Whatever caste you're born into, chances are you won't be getting out.

Freemartin: Huxley's word for sterile female

Handmaid: A role in Gilead for fertile females. They are placed in the house of a man, and their job is to have sex with them until they get pregnant. Then they're moved to another man. It's basically factory farming, but with humans instead of cows.

Particution: Public execution in *The Handmaid's Tale* in which the women are allowed to kill the criminal themselves, like a public stoning. Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" is a particution with a name.

Prayvaganza: Atwood's word for the giant wedding ceremonies for the Wives' daughters, who are fourteen.

Soma: The iconic drug in *Brave New World* that the government used to control its population. It sedates, calms, and most importantly distracts a person from realizing that there's actually something very wrong. Soma = "sleep in Latin.

The Handmaid's Tale

Step 1: Read the historical context with “Nutshell” and “Why Should You Care?” sections in your reader, pages 113-114.

Step 2: Read the first seven chapters of the book.

You will want to revisit the article “Aliens have taken the place of angels”: Margaret Atwood on why we need science fiction. Also, re-visit your reader, pg. 114 (on Genre)

<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2005/jun/17/sciencefictionfantasyandhorror.margaretatwood>

As you read, think about the following:

- What is science fiction? What is speculative fiction? Is there a difference between the two? Does it matter?
- What is the purpose of sci-fi and speculative fiction?
- How would you categorize the books we’ve read so far (*1984*? *The Republic*? *Utopia*? *The Time Machine*?)

Lesson 1

Read: *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 1-7

You may want to go to a PC lab for the first part of this lesson

Activity 3.1

You've done some reading about science fiction and speculative fiction, so it's time to put that knowledge to work. Your task: make a graphic representation of the characteristics of each genre. A Venn Diagram would work but you are welcome to use another graphic organizer of your choosing.

Step 1: Before you start, head over to a search engine of your choice (Google?) and research speculative fiction. Consider what you will need to be comfortable with the topic.

Step 2: Now, here are a few things you might want to consider as you put your graphic organizer together:

- Which genre deals with topics like aliens, robots, and artificial intelligence?
- Which genre deal with things that humans can't yet do?
- Which genre explores changes in social organization?
- Which genre often serves as a warning story?

Step 3: Take a look at your beautiful creation, and reflect on the following questions in 100-200 words (you can put them on the bottom of your poster/graphic:

- Are speculative and sci-fi all the different? Can one do something the other cannot? What are the differences? What are the similarities?
- Is all sci-fi also speculative fiction? How about the other way around?
- Which category does dystopian fiction fall under? Can there be a dystopia that isn't sci-fi or speculative, or is dystopia always a subset of these genres?

Teacher Notes:

There are no right or wrong answer's here. As long as students are using their sources, including the information on Genre from their reader. In the end, most students will realize that science fiction and speculative fiction are pretty similar. In fact, one of the only reasons people talk about this at all is because dystopian novels are, in general, great conversation pieces.

Lesson 2

Read The Handmaid's Tale--chapters 8-13

Step 1: In this section, you will get to know about the controlling society in which Offred lives, one where politics as we know it has ceased to exist.

Step 2: go to the following article and read a brief interview with Margaret Atwood from 1986, shortly after the book was published. As you're reading, pay specific attention to this passage:

"*The Handmaid's Tale*" has been compared to other cautionary tales, such as "*Brave New World*" and "Nineteen Eighty-Four." You've already read *1984*, and you'll be reading *Brave New World* next. Be sure to keep notes and make comparisons.

<http://partners.nytimes.com/books/00/09/03/specials/atwood-gilead.html>

Activity 3.2: Atwood for President

In his essay, "Why I Write", George Orwell made the claim that politics make the novel:

" And looking back through my work, I see that it is invariably where I lacked a political purpose that I wrote lifeless books and was betrayed into purple passages, sentences without meaning, decorative adjectives and humbug generally."

In the article you read for this lesson Atwood claims that novel "aren't just political messages."

Assignment:

Make a case of Atwood as a politician, based on what you know so far of *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Your Task: Make a campaign poster for her presidential bid. Consider the following questions as you design it:

- What would her platform be? Her slogan?
- What quote from *The Handmaid's Tale* would she use in a speech?
- Would George Orwell be running with Atwood (as Vice President perhaps) or against?

You can make your poster by hand or on the PC. When it is finished, submit it to our classroom for posting.

Teacher Notes:

This activity is flexible and students might take it in a few directions. But when it comes down to it, candidate Atwood would probably run on some sort of Women's Rights platform. And chances are, Orwell would be running against her, if only because he wants to pioneer his own brand of socialism (although the attitudes toward women in *1984* don't exactly suggest equality).

Lesson 3

Step 1: Read *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 14-23

Step 2: Read the sections of analysis of the theme of reading, writing and storytelling in your reader (pg. 114-117).

Activity 3.3a: An "exercise" in Symbolism

Why are women forbidden from reading in this society? Here's the catch: You're going to answer this question without using words. Women are forbidden from writing in Gilead, so you'll join the club and answer the question: remember, no words! Here are some suggestions, but feel free to think outside the box on this one.

- Do an interpretive dance
- Create a photo collage
- Play a song on a musical instrument
- Draw an illustration
- Make a sculpture
- Cook a meal
- A pantomime

It has to be something that can be shared with the class and it also has to attempt to answer the question: why are women forbidden from reading in this society?

Your project will be graded on participation only. Your best effort is expected! Be prepared to present to class in 2-3 days.

Teacher Notes:

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, women are the only ones who aren't supposed to read, but Gilead seems to have taken away from everything, so this project is even more fitting. We've made the question purposefully difficult to convey in pictures. And therein lies the point: it is difficult to communicate without words. Lack of communication means lack of connection.

If students are having trouble with their images...good. They should. That is kind of the point.

Lesson 4

Activity 3.3b: An “exercise” on symbolism, continued

1. Now it's time to translate your picture/piece into words. This should be approximately 100 words. Try to explain what you were trying to communicate with your project.
2. Which was easier? Communication without words or with them? Why?

Write 300 words answering the following questions:

How does being forbidden to read and write affect the way communication is carried out?

Consider the following as you write:

- What was the most difficult thing about communicating without words? What were you not able to express that you wanted to do?
- Was there anything you could only express in your non-verbal project and not when you were writing it out?
- Why do dystopian governments try to confuse and/or limit communication? What do they achieve by doing this?

Teacher Notes:

Make sure students are connecting this reflective process back to the big picture of dystopia: how central is communication in a society, and what do dystopias do to control it?

Lesson 5

In the chapters students will read in this lesson, you'll see that magazines take on a symbolic meaning for Offred. As you might imagine, they're pretty scarce in Gilead—what with people not reading and all. But the content isn't all that heavy.

Consider the following questions as you read chapters 24-30

What if magazines actually had something more important to say? Something other than how to have glowing skin or what to wear for spring? Imagine if they tackled serious issues? Would the world of *The Handmaid's Tale* be different if people put down the fashion magazines and stood up for what they believed in?

Read *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 24-30

Important quote alert...In Chapter 28:

"If Moira thought she could create Utopia by shutting herself up in a women-only enclave she was sadly mistaken."
(28.7)

It has been referenced in the Genre section and the theme of Women and Femininity sections of your reader. It would behoove you to re-read those sections before you start the next reading assignment.

Activity 3.5: Dear Offred

Imagine that you work at one of the Gilead Magazines, and Offred has written a letter to the editor. She has seen the signs..she knows what her world heading for—and it isn't good! Her Question: "How do I stop my world from becoming a dystopia?"

How do you respond?

Write a 300-word answer to Offred, making sure to keep it magazine appropriate.

Consider the following as you give your advice:

- What magazine will your magazine article appear in?
- What is the audience of that magazine going to be most concerned with? i.e., What can you say to them that will spur them to action to fight against dystopia?
- Who else might be reading the magazine? i.e., What do you need to be careful about saying so you don't get in trouble?

Students: You may want to research advice columns before you start so that you get the hang of what they are all about. Do read them...some are quite funny.

Teacher Notes:

For this activity, students can definitely take a familiar tone with their readers, so don't judge them on formality (spelling should not be overlooked). Make sure students are thinking about their audience. An advice columnist would probably encourage their readers to speak up or lose access to a wide array of cosmetics. A men's magazine, on the other hand, might warn its readers about losing sports teams or not being able to date because they'll be assigned a wife. Bottom line: magazines generally are not places for complex thought.

Lesson 6

Quick recap:

- Women can't have jobs
- Women have basically no freedoms
- Women don't have their own names

Pay special attention to the line from Offred at the end of chapter 32:

"Better can never mean better for everyone. It always means worse, for some."

That's a pretty loaded comment on dystopia

Read *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 31-39

Consider the following question as you read:

What about all the women who aren't handmaids? How do they have it?

Activity 3.6: Flip It and Reverse It

So, what if Moira got her wish from Chapter 28—"If Moira thought she could create Utopia by shutting herself up in a women-only enclave she was sadly mistaken," how would the world be different?

Write 200 words describing what the world of *The Handmaid's Tale* would look like if the role of the sexes were reversed.

Consider the following questions:

- What power would women have over men? How would they keep men oppressed?
- Would women want to be in the position of the oppressor?
- What would the women's roles be? What do you think Offred would be doing? Would she even be called Offred? What would the men's roles be? How would the Commander's life change? Or Nick's?
- Would there be a fertility problem? Who would take care of the children? Whose responsibility would it be to reproduce?
- Would a female-dominated world be a dystopia, too, or would it be something different?

Teacher Notes:

Students can take their answers in a bunch of different directions here, but just be sure it's all rooted in the text. Ideally, they'll tie their answer back to this quote:

"Better can never mean better for everyone. It always means worse, for some."

Lesson 7

Read *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 39-end and Historical Notes...(see also page 118 in your reader for a summary on the Historical Notes).

Activity 3.7a: Speak Up

At the end of *The Handmaid's Tale*, we find out that a group of scholars has discovered Offred's narration. They found what you just read.

The question: What other artifacts might have been unearthed from the civilization of Gilead—and what would they tell us?

1. Think of an artifact of Gilead that could have been found in addition to Offred's cassette tapes. Some suggestions: a basket, coins, and embroidered pillow, a red robe...anything that fits in with the society. Name the item at the top a new page and be prepared to explain.
2. Write a 300-word historical report on your item. What can you infer about Gilead from this item? Also, be sure to mention how your report was influenced by Offred's narration. Think about the following questions:
 - Would you have thought differently about this object had you not read her story?
 - What would have been lost had she never told her story, or if the tapes had been destroyed?
 - Do dystopias run the risk of being repeated if people don't speak up?
 - Would Gilead have existed if Offred and women like her had spoken up in the first place? Could the dystopia have been avoided?

Teacher Notes:

There are plenty of symbols in the book to choose from, so it shouldn't be hard for students come up with an artifact. Once they choose, students should be thinking about the importance of Offred's story. For example, they might choose an egg as their symbol. But would they know how symbolic it is without Offred's narration?

See notes on symbols in the reader, pages 119-121 (These are just a few)

Lesson 8

Read *Brave New World*, chapters 1-3

You will need access to online video for the class

Go to the following website and listen/watch the interview with Aldous Huxley and have students take notes on the following questions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ePNGa0m3XA>

- According to Mike Wallace, to which genre of writing does Huxley’s novel belong?
- What theme does Huxley’s collection of essays address?
- What are the two main issues that the author links to freedom? What specific examples of these issues does he provide?
- What is Huxley’s stance on technological “devices”? How do you see this opinion play out in *Brave New World*?
- Politically speaking, what kind of regime does Huxley claim will result from the social events of the day?
- What comparison does Huxley draw between propaganda in the United States and in other countries?
- What media could/do governments typically use for propaganda? Can you think of examples from your own life?

Activity 3.8: Thematize

Review the themes section in your reader (122-129) and pick one in which to focus. Now answer the following: Based on what you learned in this interview, how do you think Huxley would summarize his use of the theme? (100 words or more)

Teacher Notes:

While the term “agenda” generally has a negative connotation, we can be pretty sure that dystopian novels are intended as conversation starters—usually, they’re novel-length persuasive essays. We want to keep students aware of this, so we thought hearing it from the author himself. The activity is just to acclimate the students with *Brave New World*.

Lesson 9

Brave New World...That Has Which People in It?

Caste systems operate by a simple philosophy: a place for everything and everything in its place. The problem? It is “everything” not “everyone”. Caste systems treat people as objects. The issue is that people have the ability to think, hope, and dream. And when thinking enters the caste system, people start thinking that they should be in a different caste. Like that caste one, two, or three rungs higher. Huxley figured it all out with *Brave New World*, though. His citizens are genetically engineered not to care. They’re at the bottom of the social ladder, and they don’t mind being stepped on and climbed over by others on their way to the top. Everyone is happy in their place...right?

Social Order:

Brave New World, read chapters 4-6 for the “Order of things”

Activity 3.9: Caste Away

Plato came up with his idea of the perfect caste system for a utopia—and you charted it. So does Huxley live up to Plato’s ideal of perfection?

Step 1: Pull out the chart you did of Plato’s caste system from unit 1, and modify it to match *Brave New World*’s caste system. Because Huxley’s world is divided into five castes—Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons—you might need to change the shape of your chart a bit. Remember to add quotes, and feel free to add images, to get your point across.

Step 2: After modifying your chart, what a short paragraph below the chart explaining why you made the changes you did. Make sure to address the following questions:

- Which class might be the largest? The smallest?
- Which class is the most important? Which class supports others?
- What about people who do not fit into the caste? Where do they belong?
- What does Huxley do differently than Plato?
- Could *Brave New World* be a utopia?

Teacher Notes:

Plato thought that a perfectly ordered society was perfect. And, Huxley has created the perfect society. The lower classes don’t even know they’re lower class. Students should start to realize the sheer perfection of Huxley’s society here and hopefully, they should start to question it. *Brave New World* is so utopian that it’s rolled back around to the dystopian side of things.

Lesson 10

“O, brave new world that has such people in’t!” Where have we heard that before? Shakespeare! If you’ve ever “broken the ice” to start a conversation, “gone full circle” and ended up right back where you started, or known someone with a “heart of gold”, you’re borrowing a phrase from Shakespeare. And if you’ve ever blurted out the first phrase, you’re channeling Miranda from *The Tempest*. Was Huxley too unoriginal to come up with his own title? Not likely!

Step 1: Reading: *Brave New World*, chapters 7-12. Look for the title in chapter 8.

Step 2: Check out your reader regarding the title. (pg 129)

Activity 3. 10: Titular

Like almost everything in *Brave New World*, even the title has to do with simmering sexual desires barely kept under the surface.

Step 1: Check out the Theme section in your reader “On Sex” (pp 123) and be sure to read the questions and “Chew on This” statements.

Step 2: Now take everything you know about sex in the novel and answer the following question:

How does Huxley’s treatment of sex in *Brave New World* contribute to the novel’s dystopian atmosphere?

Hint: if you’re stuck, you may want to compare/contrast Huxley’s attitudes toward sex with contemporary attitudes:

- How have things changed from his time?
- How are our attitudes similar or different?
- Do we live in a sexual dystopia today?

Be sure to incorporate some thought about the title. Appx 200 words.

Teacher Notes:

Some students might be shocked by the sexual content of this book, which is pretty racy even by today’s standards. But when you point them toward Shakespeare, hopefully they’ll see that it’s nothing new. Shakespeare was the king of racy innuendo, after all. Is it possible that we’re more prudish today than we were over a hundred years ago?

Lesson 11

Toward the end of *Brave New World*, we learn about an island with “all the people who have got too self-consciously individual to fit into community life. All the people who’ve got independent ideas of their own.” Basically, it’s a place where those who don’t fit in with all the brainless sheep of the world get sent off to. Is that a paradise or purgatory? They seem to think it’s a punishment, but it might just be a welcome vacation from the masses of cattle-like people that inhabit *Brave New World*.

Brave New World, Reading chapter 13-end. You may want to re-visit some of the themes in your reader, specifically, on Dissatisfaction.

Activity 3.11: The Island of Misfits

Step 1: Imagine that an island like the one described in *Brave New World* existed today. Now...describe it. In a brief written response, write 100-200 words, thinking about the following questions:

- Who would go to this island?
- What would the rest of the world look like with these people taken away from it?
- Since the island is jam-packed with “great things”, would it be a utopia or a dystopia?

Step 2: In your small group, share your response with two other people. Additionally, you will respond (100 words) to their thought considering the following questions:

- Would you want to visit their island? Would you be welcome if you did?
- Do you think their island is a utopia or a dystopia?
- What does the world look like without the people your classmate chose to put on the island?

Teacher Notes:

This should be a fun assignment, but make sure students don’t lose sight of the prompt: the island they’re describing should resemble the one from *Brave New World*, just transferred to today’s world. That means that students might choose celebrities, scientists, clothing designers, and other such innovators to their island. Bottom line: anyone who creates an image for themselves as an “individual” would be a perfect candidate to send. Anyone who tries to fit in? Well, they likely wouldn’t fit in on the island.

Lesson 12

Everyone has an opinion about idiots—even Shakespeare. Check out the section in your reader, *Brave New World* Allusions and Cultural References, pages 130-139. Huxley has no exceptions. He believed that idiots have their place: at the very bottom of the caste system. Hopefully, this brings up some very dicey questions...Think about it:

- Discriminating against someone because of their gender? Not okay!
- Discriminating against someone because of their race? Not okay!
- Discriminating against someone because of their sexual orientation? Not okay!
- But, discriminating against someone because they can't pronounce, spell, or define discrimination? *Brave New World* would say, yes!

Now that you've finished *Brave New World*, check out the section on Animal Imagery in *Brave New World* in your reader, page 139.

Activity 3.12a: Cattle Drive

Consider the following question:

Of the savages and citizens, who is more human, and who more animalistic?

Respond to the question in a short essay, 500-700 words (1 – 1 ½ pages)

Keep in mind all the dystopias you've read about so far while writing. Here are some a "guiding questions" to think about as you brainstorm the question:

- Do animals take pleasure in the suffering of another? Do humans?
- Do people have free will? Do animals?
- Can people with free will be manipulated the way they are in these dystopian novels?
- Are the oppressed characters in these dystopias mindless to begin with? Or are they made mindless through conditioning? If they're mindless: how? And why don't they resist?
- Are animals able to resist their instincts? Are people? Which characters in the book resist their instincts? Which give in?
- Do people need to overcome their "primal" instincts in order to be considered civilized? If they do not, does the world devolve into chaos?

As always, be sure to utilize textual evidence/quotes to prove your point.

Teacher Notes:

The man vs. beast issue is all around in dystopias—not just *Brave New World*. Women in *The Handmaid's Tale* are treated as breeders, and pretty much everyone in *1984* is monitored and punished and expected to be a loyal dog to Big Brother.

Generally, "animal" or "primal" means acting on instinct and avoiding any sort of higher thought whatsoever, so hopefully students will make the connection and realize that that's what dystopias actually encourage: the avoidance of thought. The less people think, the easier it is to keep them under control.