

## ***Brave New World***

### UTOPIAS

1. Compare *Brave New World*, Huxley's bad Utopia, with *Island*, his good one.
2. How does the society prophesied by *Brave New World* compare with today's reality?
3. Why do the creators of Utopias introduce savages into their new worlds? (Hint: looking at ideal states through the eyes of a primitive stranger provides deeper and more colorful visions.)

### COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY

4-5. How is each one achieved in the brave new world? (Hint: see the section of this guide on themes.)

### SCIENCE

4. What scientific developments did *Brave New World* foresee? How much of its scientific prophecy has come true?
5. Why did Huxley emphasize chemical and psychological conditioning rather than make super weapons or nuclear energy elements of his new world? (Hint: he was interested in science that could affect man without killing him, and his Utopia took other advances for granted.)
6. How does the controlled breeding of *Brave New World* compare to the recent changes in genetic engineering in the real world?

### CONDITIONING

7. Why does the Utopia use chemical and physical conditioning on embryos in bottles? (Look at the specific conditioning achieved.)
8. Why does the Utopia use hypnopaedia to condition babies? (Distinguish between teaching facts and teaching moral attitudes while you sleep.)
9. In what ways are we "conditioned" today? By what? Whom? From what motivations? For what purposes?

### SEXUAL PLEASURE

10. Why does the Utopia encourage people to be promiscuous?
11. Would I like to live in a world where everyone belongs to everyone else? (Analyze why and why not.)
12. Would Malthusian drill be something we could borrow from *Brave New World* to deal with teenage pregnancy? (Again, why and why not?)

### SOMA

13. Why is this drug a supreme necessity in the brave new world? (Hint: keep people happy by enabling them to escape.) Why is this a perversion of Huxley's hopes for a perfect drug? (Hint: it doesn't help you achieve knowledge of God; see section on Themes in this guide.)
14. How does the Utopia's use of soma compare with real-world use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and cocaine?
15. In what ways can and are drugs used in a positive way today? In a negative way? What dangers does Huxley want us to avoid?

#### OTHER PLEASURES

16. How would I feel about the Feelies?
17. How would I feel about *Brave New World* sports? (Include your thoughts about Huxley's failure to give details and on his using the names as a joke.)

#### RELIGION

18. In what way is "Ford" in *Brave New World* like "Christ" in our world? In what ways are the two different?
19. Why do you think Huxley chose to mythologize Ford (and briefly Freud) in *Brave New World*?

#### FAMILY

20. Why does the Utopia make family an obscene joke or a crime? (Hint: Huxley says it's because families produce neuroses. Could it also be that the family is a focus of loyalty that might compete with the state?)
21. Compare the idea of family in *Brave New World* with a Utopia you create that redesigns a family to make people happy. (What changes would you make in your own family?)

#### DEATH

22. Death as a natural process- how the Utopia sees it, and how I see it.
23. Why the brave new world tries to eliminate the sense of loss and grief.

#### THE COSTS OF UTOPIA

24. What are the costs of achieving the good aspects of the brave new world? (Describe the benefits of the world and their costs- including costs like the loss of family and the loss of art. Estimate whether the costs are high or low, and compare your estimate to Huxley's.)

#### SATIRE

25. How might Huxley be satirizing American culture through this novel?

## **GLOSSARY**

**1. ANTHRAX**

An infectious, often fatal disease of sheep and cattle that can also kill humans. The Utopian state was established after a war in which anthrax bombs were used as a weapon of germ warfare.

**2. BOKANOVSKIFY; BOKANOVSKY'S PROCESS**

Method to make a human egg bud by arresting its growth, producing up to 96 identical people.

**3. CASTE**

One of the five groups into which all citizens of the brave new world are divided by heredity and conditioning, each with its own rank and intelligence range. They are Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon, from the Greek letters that English schools use as grades.

**4. COMMUNITY SING**

An observance of the Fordian religion for the lower castes. The Arch Community Songster is the equivalent of an Archbishop.

**5. CONDITION**

To put into a desired state by chemical, physical, or psychological action.

**6. DECANTING**

Process by which embryos are removed from the bottles in which they grow; equivalent of birth.

**7. ECTOGENESIS**

Reproduction outside the human body, for example in bottles.

**8. EMOTIONAL ENGINEERING**

Designing propaganda for use on citizens. The Utopia's closest equivalent to writing poetry.

**9. FITCHEW**

A Shakespearean word that John uses to curse Lenina. Literally a polecat, but in Shakespeare's day it also meant a prostitute.

**10. FLIVVER**

An old, small, or cheap automobile. Henry Ford's original Model T was often called a flivver, so the word takes on religious meaning in the Utopia.

**11. FREEMARTIN**

A sterile person; the Utopia makes 70 percent of its females freemartins by dosing the embryos with male sex hormones. They still have female sex organs, but they also have beards that need shaving.

**12. GAMETES**

General term for reproductive cells of either sex.

**13. HYPNOPAEDIA**

Teaching people while they sleep. In the book, suitable only for moral suggestion, not facts or analysis.

**14. OVA**

Female reproductive cells.

**15. PODSNAP'S TECHNIQUE** Method to speed the ripening of human eggs, making it possible to multiply the number a single ovary can produce.

**16. PREDESTINATION**

The process of determining which embryos will grow up to do particular jobs in particular places. The word has religious overtones; it once meant God's decision as to who would be saved and who would be damned.

**17. PREGNANCY SUBSTITUTE**

A medical technique that floods a woman's body with all the hormonal and other physical changes it would undergo during pregnancy, which she will never experience.

**18. SAVAGE**

A person who is born and raised outside the Utopia and does not know how to behave according

to its rules. Savages live on Reservations surrounded by electrified fences. The Savages who appear in the book resemble Indians of the Southwest United States.

19. SCENT ORGAN

An instrument that plays smells the way a piano or a pipe organ plays music.

20. SOLIDARITY SERVICE

A Fordian religious observance for the upper castes, usually 12 people who eventually unite in a sexual orgy.

21. SOMA

A drug that both tranquilizes and intoxicates without hangovers or side effects. It provides citizens of the Utopia with escape from self and surroundings. The word comes from the Sanskrit language of ancient India. It means both an intoxicating drink used in the old Vedic religious rituals there and the plant from whose juice the drink was made- a plant whose true identity we don't know.

22. SPERMATOOZOA

Male reproductive cells.

23. SURROGATE

Something selected as a substitute. Embryos grow in blood surrogate instead of real blood because they grow outside a mother's body. Morocco-surrogate is imitation leather. Violent Passion Surrogate floods the body with the same hormones that fear and rage would.

24. VIVIPAROUS

Bearing live young rather than eggs, as mammals, including humans, do.

25. ZIPPICAMIKNICKS

Women's underwear, one-piece but sexy.

### Themes

1. INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM VERSUS COMMUNITY IDENTITY
2. SCIENCE AS A MEANS OF CONTROL
3. THE THREAT OF GENETIC ENGINEERING
4. THE MISUSE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONING
5. THE CHEAPENING OF SEXUAL PLEASURE
6. THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS THROUGH DRUGS
7. THE THREAT OF MINDLESS CONSUMPTION AND MINDLESS DIVERSIONS
8. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FAMILY
9. THE DENIAL OF DEATH
10. THE OPPRESSION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES
11. WHAT DOES SUCH A SYSTEM COST?
12. THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS THROUGH DRUGS