

Classroom Pack

a play by Christine Béziat & Xavier Hock



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MULTIPLE CHOICE EXERCISES

DESCRIPTION

You have now discovered the plot of the play "Smiland" and its different protagonists. Let's see what you can remember.

TASK

Read the sentences and mark the correct answer(s).

1. Smiland is a peaceful place.

- True
- False

2. The people thinking differently are

- Executed
- Sent to a retraining centre

3. FAB controls its citizens'

- Behaviour
- Love life
- Financial income

4. Smiland citizens need to work hard

- For the community sake
- For their own financial benefits

5. Ogre is

- A monstrous person checking citizens are working hard enough
- The "concrete" representation of FAB: its voice, its ears and its eyes

6. 14D is

- A young woman who is fascinated and enthusiastic about the unknown
- A rebel from the very beginning

7. The Disconnecteds dream of

- Freedom
- Power

8. 04CR used to be George's ID when he was living in Smiland

- True
- False

9. 17FP is

- Faithful to her friends
- A traitor

10. The Disconnecteds call "Smiland"

- Sadland
- Smogland

ORAL EXPRESSION

ADVOCACY WHY SHOULD WE ... ?

CONTEXT

Voicing one's opinion and defending one's ideals can be a challenge. George and Jill have already understood the importance of fighting for one's dreams and ideas and thanks to their enthusiasm 14DA embraced their cause.

You think your ideas are also relevant enough to be fiercely defended. It's your turn to make a plea for a subject which is important for you.

TASK

Make a speech in front of your classmates or show them the video you have made while defending your ideas.

The title of your speech will be: "Why should we + your subject?"

Explain why you think your cause is worth defending, which event(s) convinced you about the importance of getting involved, how you, the young generation, could make things evolve, illustrate, ...

WRITTEN EXPRESSION

THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

CONTEXT

People change, the society evolves, technologies are developing, things have to be done automatically, quickly and digitally. This is the logical evolution of the world... or is it?

The 21st western society seems to sometimes lack a key point when dealing with climate change, sanitary crises, data privacy policies, racism, fairness, ...

Some people are convinced the world of tomorrow will be ruled by artificial intelligence, technologies and progress.

Others dream of a fairer society where everyone will stop rushing and get back to ancestral values.

TASK

Write a text in which you explain your vision of the world of tomorrow:

Will you be in favour of progress and development? In which domain(s)?

Will you be in favour of a society where human beings and nature are the main interests of the authorities?

Can the society of tomorrow combine respect for people and the environment and progress?

CULTURE

DESCRIPTION

If some people like 17FP are truly satisfied with their life; others, like George, Jill and eventually 14DA, will question the functioning of the world they live in. This seems to be a common characteristic of human beings and this is what makes society evolve. Politics, economics, scientists and others help develop new theories. Nonetheless, artists play an important role in this process too.

FAB has been overthrown. George, Jill and Alice, hoping such a society won't exist anymore, have decided to share their story. They need some inspiration.

TASK

Have a look at the documents presenting some of the literary and cinematographic works which portrayed a fictional world. Take some notes if necessary and be ready to answer your teacher's questions.

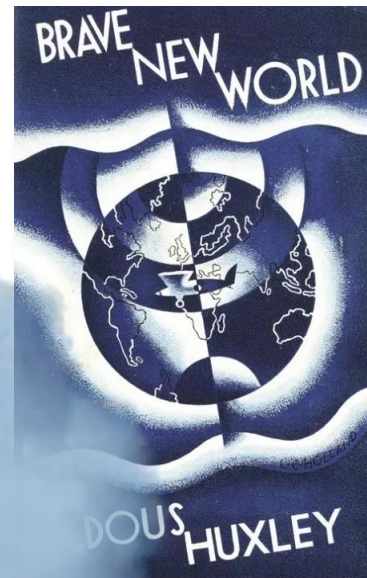
1. DYSTOPIA AND LITERATURE

A. Reading comprehension: Brave New World - ALDOUS HUXLEY

In Smiland, people beam, they are happy and healthy, they work for the community in perfect harmony, It looks ideal but progressively it appears that people who are singled out as different are not allowed to take part in this seemingly perfect world and are set apart. Free thinking is synonymous with treason and democracy becomes a pipe dream.

In this, "Smiland" can easily be identified as a dystopia. This term, which literally means "bad place" in ancient Greek, depicts an imaginary society where citizens have lost their freedom, where injustice is the norm, where the authorities control every action and legislate on everything, ... It is the opposite of a "utopia" which refers to a perfect society.

Dystopian societies have been at the heart of various masterpieces in English language novels. Fiction then often raises readers' awareness about the weaknesses and dangers of projects like Smiland which, officially, only extol happiness and solidarity... until things go wrong.



When mentioning dystopian novels, the first title which comes to mind is Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Although it was published almost a century ago, in 1932, the English writer's work is still extremely relevant today.

The story takes place in a futuristic world where human embryos are created artificially, growing in some sorts in bottles in a factory-like environment. Before birth, the *Brave New World* y are conditioned to belong to one of the 5 castes of the society.

The Alphas, belonging to the most prestigious class, are considered to be the most intelligent and fit citizens and are expected to become the thinkers and leaders of London whereas the Epsilons, the lowest considered caste, are the least skilled people of society and will be limited to low-grade jobs.

CULTURE

Children are programmed to dislike books and flowers and the values of the state are recited while the kids sleep. This method is called “sleep-teaching” and this is part of Bernard’s tasks. As a psychologist, Bernard, an Alpha, should be happy but being smaller than the other Alphas, he doesn’t fit perfectly in his class and this makes him dissatisfied. This adds to his disapproval of the authorities’ methods of sleep-teaching and “drugging” the citizens with pills called “soma” which help people temporarily unhappy to be joyful again.

Bernard leaves London to visit a Savage Reservation where the inhabitants are living in the way people used to live: women get pregnant, books are valued, technologies don’t exist, ... He meets John and his mother Linda who used to be Bernard’s boss’s girlfriend and he decides to take them back to World State.

Progressively “John the savage” is going to question the functioning of this “brave new world” along with Bernard and one of his friends. They will denounce the brainwashing methods of the dictatorial government and the use of drugs making people blind to their lack of freedom.

The ending of the book should of course not be spoiled. However, if you want to watch an animated version of the plot before reading the book, have a look at the 10-minute following

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raqVySPrDUE>

Published in 1932, Brave New World foresaw significant scientific discoveries in reproductive technology, sleep-learning and psychological manipulation.



B. Reading comprehension: 1984 – GEORGE ORWELL

Aldous Huxley’s work is often compared to Nineteen Eighty-Four, a famous dystopian novel written in 1949 by the English writer George Orwell.

Like in Brave New World, the story takes place in an imagined future, the year 1984. War is raging and the world has been split in 3 different superpowers. Winston Smith, the main character, lives in Airstrip One (formerly known as Great Britain), which is part of the totalitarian state of Oceania ruled by the Party. Big Brother, the leader of the Party, is greatly feared. Watch the video and be ready to answer your teacher’s questions. You will learn information about Winston and Julia as well as about the political organization of Airstrip One.

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKJDbvxJ4RO>



CULTURE



As in Brave New World, books are seen as dangerous as they offer a perspective on events, a perspective which might be different from that of the leading party. In 1984, words are thoroughly controlled and a new language has been created: the Newspeak language. It consists of simplified grammatical structures and restricted vocabulary. This limits the freedom of thought which would threaten the ideology of the regime of Big Brother and the Party. A new concept is born: “thoughtcrime”!

To ensure propaganda, the Party invents 3 mottos: War is peace, Freedom is slavery, Ignorance is strength. If these seem paradoxical, they actually reveal the manipulation of language and make words meaningless.

The plot of this novel published in 1989 begins in a near-future America where the leaders have been overthrown by religious extremists, The Sons of Jacob. It is now called The Republic of Gilead. The new government can be considered as a totalitarian theocracy, meaning a dictatorship led by a religious group. In this the Canadian writer’s book is different from Brave New World and 1984 as the religious dimension is extremely present. Another contrasting element is that the main protagonist is a woman, Offred, a handmaid.

Extreme pollution and radiation have had an impact on Gilead and the birth rate as many people are now sterile. Reproduction is at the centre of the Sons of Jacob’s concerns. At the top of the hierarchy are the “Commanders”, the men who lead Gilead. Handmaids are hired to bear their children as many of their wives are sterile.

Depending on their age, their fertility and the way they used to live before the creation of Gilead, women are dressed in different colours making their belonging to one “category” or another clear. For instance, the commanders’ wives are dressed in blue, handmaids in red with white veils around their face.

Offred, as the narrator, tells the readers about the few rights women enjoy as they may not work, own property, read, write or go out unaccompanied.

The novel was adapted several times on stage and in a movie. In 2017, the American series inspired from the novel was a hit and had a huge impact on the American society.

The red-dressed maid is a recurrent symbol in some women’s-rights activists’ demonstrations.



C. Reading comprehension: The Handmaid’s Tale – MARGARET ATWOOD

War is an important element in 1984 as it encourages fearful and misinformed citizens to patriotism rather than distrust in their government. Military actions are also to be found in Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale.

CULTURE

2. DYSTOPIA IN SERIES AND MOVIES

A. Reading comprehension: Brazil

Many dystopian novels have been adapted into blockbusters such as Suzanne Collins's four books *The Hunger Games* and Veronica Roth's trilogy *Divergent*. Both stories feature a young woman as one of the main characters, like in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The categorization of people into different districts in *The Hunger Games* or in classes based on people's personality and social background in *Divergent* can remind us of the way citizens were classified in *Brave New World*.

Most of the dystopian artistic productions have of course common points and illustrate recurrent themes such as the need of being an individual in a conformist society, the fight for survival in a world which has been damaged or destroyed because of a war, a natural catastrophe, a nuclear destruction or any other phenomenon. Protagonists, like, for example, the heroes of *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner, have to get used to a new reality in order to survive and fit into an absurd or inhabitable world.

Characteristics of science fiction are repeatedly found in dystopian works.

This is the case of *Brazil* which has become a cult movie since its release in 1985. Directed by Terry Gilliam, the movie tells the story of Sam Lowry, a man trying to find a woman who appears in his dreams. He regularly imagines himself as a winged superhero saving the young woman in distress. In reality, Sam works as a low-level government employee and as a result of an unfortunate misprint he is completely innocent of, he finds himself involved in a speed chase with the police, a suspected terrorist, an innocent man's widow.... And a woman who looks very much like the heroine of his dreams.

The absurd film has often been considered as a satire of bureaucracy and totalitarian government.

Watch the movie trailer to discover the unique atmosphere of Brazil.



Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Mw8duweQdg>



CULTURE

B. Listening comprehension: Black mirror

Nowadays most Netflix series are very successful. *Black Mirror* is no exception and, in spite of its dark atmosphere, it is one of the most emblematic series for (young) adults today. The different episodes, which are not interconnected, offer an insight into a variety of subjects all related to a futurist dystopian world. The dangers of technologies, social media and loss of privacy are recurrent themes.



Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Mw8duweQdg>

14DA will always remember the pressure the inhabitants of *Smiland* would feel every time they had to take the socio-economic review. This can be compared to the constant evaluation protagonists of *Nosedive*, the first episode of *Black Mirror's* third season, have to undergo when interacting with people. Lacie, the heroine, values this process as she knows having a highly-rated social profile will guarantee her some advantages: having access to luxury accommodation, faster access to public services, ... and being invited to Naomi, her childhood friend's wedding. To put all the chances on her side, she even asks the advice of a consultant of "Reputelligent", a firm which analyzes its clients' social media activity and recommends ways to improve their rankings. Unfortunately, when people can praise you to the skies, they can also denigrate you and ruin your life.

Watch the extract below after Lacie's arrival at the airport, ready to take off for Naomi's wedding.

Most episodes of *Black Mirror* are thought-provoking. Among others, *Playtest* (season 3, episode 2) can be mentioned as it portrays a young man who, needing money, will accept to test video games. Because of a small device implanted in his neck, the realistic dimension of the video game is increased making it difficult for Cooper to make the distinction between the horror virtual game and reality.

The *Entire History of You* (season 1, episode 3) is also an awareness-raising episode as it tells the story of a couple living in a futurist world where a small device records everything people see, enabling them to re-watch and share their memories indefinitely. This of course has an enormous impact on the way people interact and emphasizes the fragility of privacy. Have a look at this video ranking some of the top ten episodes of *Black Mirror*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwUA9JB8iYg> (subtitles available)

Be it in classic novels, American blockbusters; the disturbing atmosphere of the British Anthology series of *Black Mirror* or in *Smiland*, one should not forget the warnings about the evolution of society.

Ogre said: "From tomorrow new rules and new systems will be in place. And so a new type of oppression and injustice. Whatever happens once *Smiland* is destroyed, there will be others dissatisfied with their world who will dream of freedom. These are the people who must be surveyed and controlled. The Disconnecteds will create their own form of FAB to help them control everything."

Let's hope he was wrong.



CULTURE QUIZ

1. DYSTOPIA AND LITERATURE

A. **Brave New World** - ALDOUS HUXLEY

READING COMPREHENSION

1. What is a dystopia?
2. What does Bernard think about the society he lives in?

B. **1984** -- GEORGE ORWELL

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

1. What is Winston's job?
2. Who is Julia?
3. Was Winston successful in his rebellion?
4. What is an oligarchical government?
5. How does Big Brother control the citizens (2 elements)? Why?
6. What does the Ministry of Truth represent?
7. What does the Ministry of Love represent?

READING COMPREHENSION

1. Why did Big Brother invent a new language?

C. **The Handmaid's Tale** – MARGARET ATWOOD

READING COMPREHENSION

1. What kind of government leads Gilead?
2. Name a difference between Brave New World, 1984 and The Handmaid's Tale.
3. What is the role of handmaids?

2. DYSTOPIA IN SERIES AND MOVIES

A. **Brazil**

READING COMPREHENSION

1. What genre is often chosen by authors/directors to deal with the theme of dystopia?
2. What is particular regarding Sam?

B. **Black mirror: Nosedive**

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

1. What is the problem when Lacie arrives at the airport?
2. Why can't she take another plane?
3. What's her reaction?
4. What's the reaction of other people?