



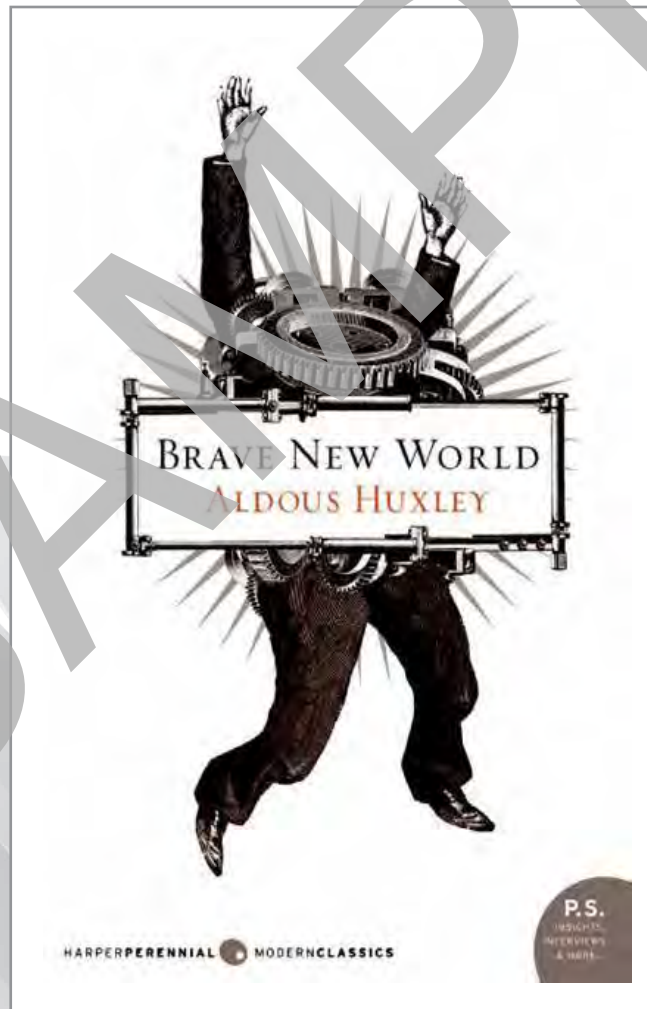
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Brave New World

Aldous Huxley



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Brave New World

Aldous Huxley

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

novelunits.com

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Introduction

Brave New World, Aldous Huxley's great anti-Utopian novel, is justly deserving of the fame it has earned. It is at once a criticism of Western civilization in 1932, a lament for the loss of old values, and a warning about the future. *Brave New World* remains one of the most-discussed and most-taught novels in high schools and colleges.

In a 1961 interview, Huxley expressed his concern that emerging technology, scientific progress, and social conditioning had the potential to destroy human individuality, particularly if a government was "unscrupulous enough" to experiment with genetic engineering. "This is possible: for heaven's sake be careful about it," warned Huxley. He also noted the erosion of values and the resultant lessening of human dignity. *Brave New World* addresses these issues with an irony that is simultaneously hilarious and horrifying.

It may not have been Huxley's intention to be prophetic, but as with many science-fiction novels written years ago, it is impossible to ignore the similarities between Huxley's imaginary world and our real one. "Test tube babies" are now a reality, although they are of course not "decanted" in factories. Fruits and vegetables are now being genetically engineered and irradiated. Our dependence on technology becomes evident when one cannot order a fast-food hamburger "because the computer is down" and when the amusements that interest young people most involve expensive game equipment for the television screen, a violent video for the VCR, or an ample supply of coins for the corner game room.

As students of the novel speculate about the future and design their own Utopias, they must also give careful consideration to their own values systems. *Brave New World* provides fertile ground for discussion of the ills of today's society and for critical thinking about possible solutions—at least in one's own life.

Plot Summary

Brave New World opens with a tour of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, the place where the future citizens of the Brave New World are created in bottles which move down a conveyor belt. Since several types of citizens are needed, each fetus is treated with chemicals so the end result—the "decanted baby"—conforms to certain standards. The babies are classed as Alphas (the most intelligent), Betas, Gammas, and so forth. The babies are then psychologically conditioned to be incapable of resentment of other classes as well as incapable of independent judgement. In the Brave New World, "everyone belongs to everyone else," everyone cheerfully does his or her assigned work and spends leisure hours playing games, engaging in indiscriminate sexual activity, or going to the "feelies," the new-world replacement for the movies. No one ever gets upset because there are daily rations of soma, a drug which provides an instant holiday and escape from reality.

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20. What is *soma*? (a drug which provides an escape from reality with no side effects) Does it remind you of anything you've heard of? (Answers vary.)
21. Why does Huxley have the Controller say, "Suffer little children"? (This is a play on Jesus' words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." In the *Brave New World*, the children merely suffer.)

Writing Assignment

Write an essay describing the perfect world you would like to create. You should consider solutions for problems of housing, food, education, medical care, religion, race relations, rules, etc. Include illustrations if you wish.

Prediction

Stories need conflict in order to advance. Can you see any sources of conflict that may develop further in the next few chapters?

Chapters IV-VI, pages 57-106

Vocabulary

simian 58	annihilating 59	imperiously 59	manifest 60
ruminating 60	*revitrifying 62	imploringly 68	plaintive 70
*pullulation 73	*deturgescence 76	atonement 80	plangently 80
quaffed 81	exultant 82	galvanic 83	liturgical 85
blasphemy 91	solecism 96	indecorous 98	*brachycephalic 101

Vocabulary Activity

Finding definitions. The words on the list preceded by asterisks probably will not be found in standard classroom dictionaries. The word "deturgescence" is not even listed in *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*. Ask the students if it is always necessary to have a concise dictionary definition for a word. The answer is that if one can get enough of the meaning from context, it isn't worth a trip to the library to consult the unabridged dictionary or the *O.E.D.* The word "deturgescence" is defined in context as a *diminuendo*, which is further contextually defined as "a sliding gradually, through quarter tones, down..." "Pullulation" requires a little more work on the part of the reader. If the approaches to the monorail station were "black with the ant-like pullulation of lower-caste activity," we can gather that the people were swarming and teeming like ants. As a group, define the remaining asterisked words from context or from clues within the word. [For example, "brachycephalic" has something to do with arms (brachy-) and head (-cephalic). The actual definition is "having a skull short in proportion to its width", but if students get the general idea that the Warden's head was oddly-shaped, that is probably enough.]

Discussion Questions

Chapter IV

1. How does Lenina surprise Bernard? (*by asking him about the New Mexico trip on the crowded elevator*) How does she view his reaction? (*She thinks he is funny, doesn't understand his embarrassment at being "propositioned" in public.*)
2. How is Bernard's "abnormality" rumored to have happened? (*It is said that alcohol was put into his blood-surrogate when he was an embryo.*) Does this remind you of anything in our society? (*Warnings about fetal alcohol syndrome now appear on liquor bottles.*)
3. How does Huxley use the Red Rocket to satirize the perfection of the new world? (*It is seven minutes late, which is considered "scandalously unpunctual."*)
4. Who is Helmholtz Watson? (*Bernard's friend, Helmholtz is a professor and writer at the College of Emotional Engineering.*) What do he and Bernard have in common? (*They are "individuals," different from the others. Helmholtz, though handsome and almost too able, finds that sport and all the women he wants are not enough.*)
5. How does Bernard define the "something inside that was only waiting for you to give it a chance to come out" that Helmholtz tries to describe to him? (*Bernard thinks Helmholtz is talking about feelings and emotions.*) Is Bernard right? (*Partially, but Helmholtz feels a strong need to write about something other than "nothing."*)

Chapter V

6. How are the bodies of the dead disposed of in the new world? (*in large crematoriums*) How does even this process have its practical, productive side? (*The phosphorous from the bones is recovered and used for fertilizer.*) Why would the idea of a cemetery be repellant to the new world citizens? (*Answers vary, but students should realize that there are no families, there would be no mourning or feelings for the dead.*)
7. What does everyone have with their after-dinner coffee? (*soma*) What happens afterwards? (*Henry and Lenina go to the Westminster Abbey Cabaret and dance to Synthetic Music.*) Do we have synthetic music today? (*Yes—synthesizers, music written by computers.*) If the couples were five-stepping, what do you imagine the beat of the music was like? Could you imitate a five-step?
8. We have a lot of words for "inebriated." What are Lenina and Henry? (*"bottled"*)
9. The Solidarity Service is somewhat like what ritual in our society? What clues tell you? (*It seems to be similar to a religious service. The President "makes the sign of the T," Bernard foresees his own failure to achieve "atonement," hymns are sung, a Greater Being is invoked, and there is a sort of communion service involving soma passed in a cup.*)

**Sample Framework:
Concept Attribute Web: Freedom**

