

Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Brave New World

by Aldous Huxley

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Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the extent to which this novel meets the criteria for a dystopian novel.
2. discuss the use of this novel as commentary on industrialization and science.
3. discuss how the author uses irony to critique and examine society.
4. trace the development of the major themes of this story as it applies to:
 - John the Savage,
 - Bernard Marx,
 - Helmholtz Watson.
5. understand the use and purpose of allusion, especially to Shakespeare, in this novel.
6. understand and analyze the various motifs in the novel.
7. discuss the use of this novel as an allegory and develop an understanding of what each character portrays.
8. discuss the ways in which this novel comments on contemporary society.
9. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
10. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
11. offer a close reading of *A Brave New World* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.

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Background Information and Historical References

Two Worlds Collide

In most of Europe and America, the post-World War I world was vastly different from that which had begun the century. Not only had the carnage and destruction of lives and property shaken the ideas of what civilization was, but the modern world, as it would come to be known, was defined by speed, science, technological advances, and radically new ideas of government and culture.

- **The fall of the last great empires and the rise of totalitarianism:**

World War I saw the last great empires of Russia, Austria, and Britain fall to pieces. Ways of life that had earlier seemed absolutely stable were now left crumbling and in ruins. In countries that had suffered defeat, resentment grew over what they considered to be harsh, unfair treaty agreements. The 1920s and 30s saw the rise of new totalitarian leaders: Joseph Stalin in Russia, Benito Mussolini in Italy, and Adolph Hitler in Germany, charismatic leaders who would rule by fear and force, becoming the heads of quasi-democratic states while asserting absolute control. Stalin's Russia and communist vision, inching ever closer to western Europe, set off a battle of ideas and power that would culminate in World War II a few years later and would create waves that echoed throughout the twentieth century.

Germany:

Initially, however, the rise of many dictators would largely be due to simply being in the right place at the right time. The Weimar Republic, established in Germany after World War I, was more heavily favored by most Germans than the Nazi party of Hitler. In 1925, the Nazis had fewer than 50,000 members; most Germans were more inclined to vote towards the center. Inflation had wiped out most of Germany's middle class in the mid-1920s, increasing agitation towards the new, democratic government. Even though Germany eventually won membership into the League of Nations in 1926, any prosperity felt in those years would vanish by the end of the decade.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Discuss the characteristics of a dystopian novel that are prominently illustrated in *Brave New World*.
2. Discuss how Huxley uses actual historical names as character names in the novel. In what ways do the characters reflect their historical names?
3. How does Bernard Marx's physical description match his personality?
4. Compare and contrast Bernard Marx with his friend, Helmholtz Watson. Who is the stronger character and why?
5. In what ways is John the Savage consistently the outsider?
6. What aspects of modern life can you infer that Huxley dislikes? What do you think his ideal society would look like?
7. Cite incidents in the novel to support this theme: He who controls and uses knowledge wields the power.
8. In the novel, how have science and technology made the world better? Worse?

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Chapter 1

1. What are the tone and effect of Huxley's description of the Fertilizing Room in the first two paragraphs of the book?

2. How does the Fertilizing Room's description fit the purpose of the novel?

3. What is Bokanovsky's Process?

4. What effect does the repetition of the phrase "straight from the horse's mouth" have?

5. According to Henry Foster, what is the ultimate goal of decanting the lower castes?

Chapter 5

1. Why does Lenina feel that Epsilons should provide less phosphorous after their cremation?

2. For what reason does Huxley include the dance club scene?

3. Briefly describe the Solidarity Service.

4. What has the Solidarity Service replaced?

5. Why does Bernard consider his Solidarity Service experience a failure?

Chapter 8

1. What is the effect of not introducing John until the middle of the novel?

2. What memories does John describe?

3. What do John's memories tell us about his character?

4. What are the limits of what Linda can teach John?

Chapter 9

1. What is ironic about the phrase “safe as helicopters”?

2. What does John do when he discovers Bernard has gone?

3. What is the significance of quoting *Romeo and Juliet* in this scene?

Chapter 10

1. Why does the Director believe that the Fertilizing Room is the appropriate place to announce Bernard's transfer to Iceland?

2. According to the Director, why is Bernard's talent all the more reason to let him go?

3. What "reason" does Bernard give for proof of his innocence?

4. How does unorthodoxy threaten the World State?

5. What is the effect of the detail in the first three paragraphs of this chapter?

6. What is most humiliating to the Director?
