

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Brave New World

by Aldous Huxley

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Brave New World

Notes

When it was published in 1932, critics called *Brave New World* a “novel of ideas” in which Huxley had more interest in ideas than he had in plot or characters. The critics said that Huxley used his characters to voice opinions on the following: the way progress in science affects people; the pursuit of happiness; religion; division of labor in society; love; passion; and freedom, among others.

As utopian fiction, *Brave New World* explores what might or could happen as a result of advancements in science. To explain this concern, Huxley creates a fictional world about 500 years into the future. He uses this future world to comment on the potential dangers he saw in early twentieth-century thought and practice. One of the biggest dangers he saw was the modern world’s mad pursuit of happiness. In *Brave New World*, he explores a world that enjoys an external, materialistic, and sensual happiness, but has lost the sense of internal happiness that comes from passions, intellectual interest, and spirituality.

Another modern scientific development of concern to Huxley was the area of genetic and psychological engineering. Huxley shows a world in which humans, produced in bottles on an assembly line, are bred with characteristics according to predetermined specifications. In addition, he creates a world that demonstrates the power of conditioning human behavior to brainwash people to follow the desires of a strong central government.

The novel is also a work of satire, a piece of writing that exposes and censures foolishness and faults of individuals or groups. The purpose of satire is not only to amuse, but also to correct the flaws that it points out. *Brave New World* is Huxley’s most powerful, well-known, and popular novel.

All references come from the First Harper Perennial Modern Classics edition of *Brave New World*, published 2006.

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Objectives

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

1. discuss the vivid descriptions used in the novel.
2. define and discuss the concepts of utopian/dystopian literature, and point out why this type of literature is considered a sub-genre of science fiction.
3. explain how the author uses characterization, exposition, and dialogue, which drive the plot and develop its themes.
4. distinguish between direct and indirect satire by using examples from the novel.
5. make predictions of future action based on the details of the text.
6. state and support generalizations by citing specific details from the novel.
7. compare and contrast selected major characters in the novel.
8. point out in detail why consumption of goods is an important part of the story.
9. discuss the intended emotional effect the author wished to have on his audience.
10. develop an awareness of the dialogical nature of Huxley's writing style.
11. identify and explain irony; consider how irony engages the reader and develops the ideas in the novel.
12. formulate opinions in response to the ideas presented in the novel.
13. comment on the use of literature to critique societal values.
14. discuss the following themes and provide references from the text:
 - Science can be used to control people.
 - Genetic engineering and psychological conditioning are potentially dangerous.
 - Hardship, which includes experiencing the loss or death of a loved one, illness, disappointment, and related sorrows, increases the depth of understanding of life.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. How much of what is depicted in *Brave New World* do you believe has come to pass?
2. Consider the motto of the World State: “Community, Identity, Stability.” How does this motto relate to the events in the story?
3. What is the significance of the novel’s title *Brave New World*?
4. Does the idea of controlled breeding seem feasible to you in today’s world? How would you argue to support or refute such an idea?
5. How are genetic engineering and cloning presented in the novel? In your opinion, what are the advantages and/or disadvantages of these technologies?
6. There is a great emphasis today on the lack of values in our society and the importance of teaching them in school. What difference, if any, is there between *teaching* and *inculcating* values? What are your thoughts on teaching values?
7. In what way are both children and adults conditioned to respond in our society?
8. Discuss the use of soma in the new world. Who takes it, and why? How addictive is it? In the novel, John argues that soma causes people to be enslaved. Explain why you agree or disagree with his claim.
9. Is the use of soma and the feelies in the novel comparable to anything in our society?
10. Why did Huxley choose Henry Ford as the god of his new world? In what way is Huxley’s Ford like or unlike the traditional notion of God? In your opinion, has belief in the power of science and technology replaced faith in God, as Huxley seems to suggest in *Brave New World*?
11. Define the terms utopian and dystopian literature, and state why these types, by nature, are sub-genres of science fiction.
12. Identify what aspects of his own society Huxley satirizes in the novel.
13. Explain why critics consider *Brave New World* to be a novel of ideas, and point out three ways Huxley presents his ideas to the reader.
14. Discuss those features in Huxley’s style that critics describe as dialogic.
15. Define irony and point out where it is found in the novel.

12. Explain the motto, "Community, Identity, Stability."

13. What are some actual scientific principles presented in this chapter? According to Mr. Foster, what problem exists in the Hatcheries that is "all but solved"?

14. Considering the scientific principles that have been established in the new world, what do you think the State sees for the future of society?

15. Find an example of personification within this chapter.

Chapter 4

Vocabulary

annihilating – wiping out; reducing to nothing
asceticism – the practice of giving up worldly pleasures
beneficent – favorable; kind
bestial – savage; like a beast or animal
cordiality – friendliness
corporeal – bodily, physical
crucibles – large vats used for heating substances at high temperatures
hectares – measurements of land equaling about two and a half acres
hullabaloo – an uproar
imperiously – with great authority
imploringly – in a begging manner
incandescence – brightness; glow
lustrous – radiant, shining
melancholy – sad, gloomy, depressed
plaintive – sad, mournful
queues – [*British*] lines
rapturously – with great joy or delight
reproaches – scoldings; expressions of disapproval
resolutely – in a stubborn or determined manner
revitrifying – repaving
ruminating – chewing
salutations – greetings
simian – resembling an ape
unmalicious – not mean or cruel
wretched – miserable

1. What is your opinion of Lenina? Include some specific examples of things Lenina says or does that have influenced your point of view.

2. State why you think that Lenina can or cannot be any different than she is.

6. In the exposition, what information about earlier events is the reader given in Chapter Six? What can you infer from the Director's story? What two literary terms can you identify in relation to the Director's story?

7. When Bernard learns that the Director is actually going to send him to Iceland, what is his reaction?

8. What can be considered amusing about the scene with the Warden of the Reservation?
