

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Brave New World

by Aldous Huxley

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Chapter 1

1. The motto of the World State is “COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY.”

Brainstorm a list of words and images you associate with each word in the motto. Based on your lists, write a one-page prediction of what you think day-to-day life may look like in this society and consider especially how it may differ from your own.

2. If you were to create a perfect society, what would its motto be? Choose three words that summarize your ideal vision of society, and write a paragraph explaining why you chose those words.
3. Re-read the vivid description of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre. List the descriptive words that help you see and feel the room. Then, write a paragraph explaining what impression of the society you have after reading this description.

Chapter 2

4. Imagine that you are a foreign exchange student spending a year in the World State to study with its Alpha students. Write a letter home to your parents describing what you saw and your reactions in the tour of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre.
5. As part of the tour of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, the students visit “Neo-Pavlovian Conditioning Rooms.”

Research Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. Write a paragraph describing his research with dogs and his discoveries on conditioning. Then, write a second paragraph explaining why you think the infant conditioning rooms are labeled “Neo-Pavlovian.”

6. The society of the World State uses the designation A. F. to measure time. In this chapter, we discover that this refers to Henry Ford. Ford’s invention of the assembly line has profoundly impacted the World State society, as you’ve already seen in the tour of the Hatcheries. The death of Ford, therefore, caused the people of the World State to designate a new reference point for measuring time: A. F. for After Ford.

Consider an event in your own life that affected you profoundly. Write an abbreviation for it. For example, if your parents divorced, your abbreviation could be P. D. (Parents’ Divorce). Write a one-page description of how life was different before and after the event you choose. In your writing, use your new time designation to refer to the current year and to specific events that occurred before and after the life-changing event.

For example, if your parents divorced three years ago, it would now be 3 A. P. D. (three years after your parents’ divorce). Something that occurred two years before the divorce would be labeled 2 B. P. D.

Chapter 3

7. The Director tells the students that “in Our Ford’s day most games were played without more apparatus than a ball or two and a few sticks and perhaps a bit of netting.” He contrasts games of their present time, explaining that the Controllers will not approve of a new game that doesn’t require “at least as much apparatus as the most complicated of existing games.” The purpose of games, he says, is not only to provide recreation but also to increase consumption of goods in society.

Consider new games today (electronic games, board games, computer games, etc.). Do you think they are increasingly complex, requiring more expensive and elaborate “apparatus” to play? Do they seem to promote increased consumption of goods? How? Write a paragraph in which you describe your observations based on these questions.

8. When the Director tells the young Alphas that erotic play between children was considered abnormal and immoral in the time of Ford, over six hundred years earlier, they are incredulous. The students cannot fathom life in that kind of society. When they ask him what happened, what the results were of this horrible deprivation, the Director replies only “terrible...terrible.”

What things can you not imagine living without? Make a list of things that you have had as long as you can remember and without which you cannot imagine what life would be like (these may be physical objects or more intangible things such as privileges or beliefs). Next to each item explain why it is valuable to you and what you fear that you would lose if you no longer had it.

Response Journal

9. When the Controller joins the Director and the students on the tour, his conversation and questions shock his companions. He speaks of “viviparous” women and “mothers” – words which embarrass the students.

Look up the word “viviparous” and write a definition in your own words. Then, consider the students’ reactions to the word “mother” as vulgar. Write a paragraph in which you try to explain why this is one of the most offensive words in this society.

10. The Controller tells the boys that society has worked very hard to make sure that they have emotionally easy lives, that they never encounter insurmountable obstacles, or have to wait for the fulfillment of their desires.

Have you ever encountered something that seemed insurmountable but that you worked through and achieved? Have you experienced a significant waiting period between the time you began to desire something and when you were able to get it? In one paragraph, explain the situation. In a second paragraph, explain how you felt during the wait and after you achieved or received what you desired. Do you think there is value in encountering seemingly insurmountable obstacles and in waiting for things you desire? Why or why not?

Chapter 4

11. This society, which engineers its people to be uniform, does not respect or tolerate individuality. Bernard is “eight centimeters short of standard Alpha height.” This makes him very self-conscious and causes his peers to speculate that alcohol may accidentally have been put in his blood surrogate. There is a practical problem related to his height, as well. Because he is shorter than he should be, he has a hard time gaining the respect of members of lower castes.

Have you ever been in a situation in which your individuality disadvantaged you? In which everyone else seemed to be a certain way or do something the same way and your difference made it more difficult for you? Write a paragraph explaining the situation and how it made you feel.

12. Helmholtz laments that he has the ability to invent phrases that make people “jump, almost as though you’d sat on a pin,” but he can only use them to describe Community Sings or scent organs – things which really aren’t important to him. “It’s not enough for the phrases to be good; what you make with them ought to be good too,” he suggests.

Make a list of the things you are good at doing. Is it rewarding to you just to do these things well for their own sake, or do you, like Helmholtz, desire to do or create something more important with your talents? Write a paragraph explaining your feelings.