

Brave New World - Study Guide

Background

Aldous Huxley's Brave New World is a dystopian, or anti-utopian, novel published in 1932. It is a warning against totalitarian governments and some of the values of British and American society, like the heavy emphasis on science to improve people's lives.

The story is set in a London that is about 600 years in the future. People all over the world are part of a totalitarian state, one that is free of war, pain, poverty, and disease. It is a world where people enjoy wealth, pleasure, and recreational time. However, to keep the society running so smoothly, the ten people who run the world, known as Controllers, twist human values and eliminate many freedoms. Human beings are made in factories by a scientific process that can produce ninety-six people from the same fertilized egg. These people are then conditioned for their predetermined role in society.

Children are raised together and are basically brainwashed while they sleep. When they are adults, they fulfill their roles as one of five social classes. The highest and most intelligent class are the Alphas, and they run the factories. The lowest class are the dimwitted Epsilons, who do the most menial jobs in the society. All of the groups spend their free time enjoying mindless entertainment and sporting events. At one point in the story, the Savage, a man from a part of the world that is still uncontrolled, comes to London. He ultimately has to decide whether to conform or to die.

Dystopia

A Utopia is a society that is perfect, a place with no pain or suffering of any kind. A Dystopia, or anti-utopia, is a place that is supposed to be a Utopia but is actually quite dysfunctional. Dystopian literature warns people of the dark side of pursuing a "perfect" society. Essentially, the dystopia will seem "perfect" (to some people) on the surface, but underneath it is seriously flawed. Many dystopias (including Brave New World) seem to warn of the dangers of too much government intrusion on people's lives, no matter how well-intentioned it might be.

Terms

A glossary of terms from the book may be found at: <http://www.gradesaver.com/brave-new-world/study-guide/glossary-of-terms/>

Characters

A list of significant characters with brief descriptions can be found at: <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/bravenew/characters.html>