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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Brave New World

by Aldous Huxley

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Brave New World

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.

Brave New World

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.

1. What are some indications within the first several pages that suggest *Brave New World* is a futuristic novel?

2. In *Brave New World*, Huxley provides the necessary exposition by having the expert explain the situation to the novice who knows little about it. Specifically, the Director is explaining the activities of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre to a group of students. At the start of the novel, why do you think the reader is not told directly what is being hatched?

3. In a short summary, explain what happens in the Hatchery. Include details about the process as well as definitions for any of the terminology.

4. The process that each egg undergoes is not only related to the work that particular individual eventually will do, but it is also directly related to the **type** of person he or she will become. List the five types of people in this world.

5. Explain the differences among the five types of people. How is a person's classification determined? What is the reason for categorizing people this way?

1. Throughout the novel, Huxley uses names symbolically and satirically, often referencing notable thinkers, politicians, and historical figures within his characters' names. For example, as previously noted, Lenina's first name resembles the last name of Communist leader Vladimir Lenin. What other significant names can you identify up to this point in the novel?

2. What is meant by the paragraph following the Controller's declaration, "History is bunk"?

3. Throughout Mond's lecture, Huxley switches back and forth to other scenes and conversations that are happening elsewhere at the same time. How are these other scenes and dialogues related to Mond's lecture?

4. What contradictions do you see between what Mond says and what the others are expressing?

5. Find an example of something in this society that you find disturbing. Explain the reasons this idea disturbs you.

Chapter 5

Vocabulary

ambergis – a substance used in certain perfumes
atonement – the act of making up for a sin or wrongdoing
benevolence – kindness, goodwill
exultant – joyful; triumphant
fortnight – a period of two weeks
galvanic – thrilling
imminence – nearness, closeness
impenetrable – incapable of being broken through
incarnation – a representation in physical form; materialization
inconspicuously – without being noticed
indispensable – crucial, essential
liturgical – relating to religious rituals
perennially – constantly; never ending
plangently – in a loud and echoing manner
pullulation – a teeming or swarming
quaffed – drank
resounding – echoing
satiety – the state of being full or satisfied
supine – lying face up
transfigured – changed, transformed

1. Briefly summarize the Solidarity Service that Bernard attends. What happens at the service? What is the goal of it? Include details from the scene in your description.

9. At this point in the novel, Bernard, John, and Helmholtz have all exhibited unorthodox behavior. Give examples to support this statement.

10. What do you predict will happen to Bernard, John, and Helmholtz?

11. The power of great art to influence and affect people is a theme in this chapter. For example, Helmholtz views *Romeo and Juliet* as a “superb piece of emotional engineering.” He later describes Shakespeare as a “marvellous propaganda technician” and tells John that a person has to hurt to write “penetrating, X-rayish phrases.” Do you think that great art or writing can impact or control people’s feelings? Do you agree with Helmholtz that great art is necessarily related to passion and pain? Illustrate your opinion with real-life examples.
