Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for
Brave New World
by
Aldous Huxley

Book Information

Aldous Huxley, <u>Brave New World</u>
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This novel is a shocking look at a frightening tomorrow.

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Main Characters

<u>"Tomakin"</u>   the Director of the Hatchery (D.H.C.), who likes to use the power associated with his position; John's father

<u>Bernard Marx</u>   a member of the Psychology Bureau of the Central London Hatchery who is considered small and ugly for an Alpha-Plus; finds fault with the Utopian system that made him a misfit

<u>Fanny Crowne</u>   a friend of Lenina's who works in the bottling room of the Hatchery

<u>Helmholtz Watson</u>   a friend of Marx who is an Emotional Engineer and also finds fault with Utopia

<u>Henry Foster</u>   a junior executive at the Hatchery who loves statistics; enjoys harassing Bernard Marx

<u>John, "the Savage"</u>   a young man born on the Savage Reservation and brought to Utopia; finds "civilized" life unbearable

<u>Lenina Crowne</u>   a beautiful, voluptuous nurse at the Hatchery who tends to be flighty and sentimental

<u>Linda</u>   John's mother, a Beta, who was left behind on the Savage Reservation

<u>Mustapha Mond</u>   the Resident World Controller for Western Europe, who knew the old world but chose to live in Utopia

Vocabulary

brachycephalic   having a short, broad skull

freemartins   sterile females

pneumatic   sensuous; voluptuous

soma   a mind-altering drug without negative side effects

viviparous   giving birth to live young that have developed in the mother's body rather than hatching from an egg

Synopsis

The story begins in the year 632 A.F. (after Ford, the deity of Utopia). After a terrible war, order and stability was brought to the world. Power is in the hands of ten World Controllers who maintain stability by controlling the number and types of citizens brought into the world. Marriage is forbidden, and promiscuity and materialism are encouraged. Children are created in test tubes and are cared for by the state. The system allows for five castes. Higher castes do the more difficult, thought-provoking jobs. Menial tasks and physical labor are done by the lower castes. To ensure peace, people are conditioned to think alike. They are also given a type of tranquilizer called soma to make them happy. They are encouraged to take part in government-sponsored sports and entertainment. Spending time alone is discouraged. The state's motto is "Community, Identity, Stability."

As the story opens, students are receiving a tour of the London Hatcheries. Henry Foster and Lenina Crowne, two of the employees there, have been dating each other quite regularly. Since courtship is discouraged by the state, Lenina's friend nags her about dating Henry. Lenina tries to make amends by dating Bernard Marx who is a rather small, homely man. She agrees to vacation with him at a Savage Reservation in New Mexico. The people confined there by the state are thought unworthy of conversion to Utopian ways. The place and its

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inhabitants are crude and dirty. When they arrive at the Reservation, Bernard learns that trouble is brewing. He has often spoken out against the methods and rules of Utopia in the past. Now the Director of Hatcheries, Tomakin, is threatening to exile him to Iceland if he doesn't change his ways.

At the Reservation, Bernard and Lenina find John, the Savage, and his mother Linda, a Beta from Utopia. Bernard discovers that Linda was brought to the Reservation by Tomakin and was left behind after having an accident. She gave birth to Tomakin's son, John, a crime which prevented her return to Utopia. Bernard gets permission from World Controller Mustapha Mond to bring John and Linda back to Utopia. When the others learn that John is Tomakin's son, the Director of Hatcheries is forced to resign in disgrace.

Bernard becomes popular because of his discovery of John. He introduces John to many people, including his friend Helmholtz Watson. Bernard and Helmholtz show Utopia to John, but he seems repulsed by it. John worships Lenina, but when she makes sexual advances toward him, his image of her as an object of worship is destroyed. He calls her a whore and spurns her.

John's mother dies, and he goes berserk. He tries to warn the people about the dangers of their lifestyle. He starts a riot when he throws their soma rations out the window. The police calm the rioters, and John, Bernard, and Helmholtz are called before Mustapha Mond. Bernard and Helmholtz are exiled to an island, but John must remain as an object of further study. He decides to escape and flees to a deserted lighthouse outside London. He is found by the press, however, and falls victim to the very things which he hated. When he regains his senses, he commits suicide as the only way out.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding
When John first came to Utopia, he felt confused. Everything was foreign to him. Have you ever felt this way? What caused you to feel this way?

Students will probably describe feeling confused when they were in a strange place or were trying something new.

Literary Analysis
Brave New World was first copyrighted in 1932. What are some of the things that may have been different in the story had the book been written at the present time?

At the hatchery, computers would probably have been used to do the menial tasks and to keep track of all information. Music would be stored on CDs instead of on paper. Students may find other things they think would be different.

Inferential Comprehension
Why do you think the author chose Ford as the deity of Utopia?

Reasons might include that Ford sounds like Lord when used as an expletive. Ford used the assembly line to mass produce cars in much the same way people were mass produced in Utopia. The "T" of the model-T became a religious symbol instead of a cross.

Constructing Meaning
When Lenina and John went to the "feelies," the last kiss was compared to a dying moth. The author wrote, "But for Lenina the moth did not completely die." Explain the meaning of this figurative language.

Lenina was attracted to John and was experiencing the pleasures of her physical attraction for him.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Plot John resolves the conflict he faced by committing suicide. Have the students write a different ending to the story. As a class, students could also brainstorm other options

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John could have chosen.

Understanding Literary Features *Brave New World* describes a futuristic society under heavy government controls. Students may enjoy reading other books with similar themes such as Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-four*. Students could compare and contrast these books.

Understanding Literary Features *Brave New World* is a futuristic fantasy about a utopian world. Students may find it interesting to create their own Utopia and write about it. They should describe the government, available jobs, transportation, and entertainment. This could also be done in small groups. They would become the "World Controllers."

Identifying Persuasive Language Throughout the book, the conditioning process is described as a way that was used to control the people. Discuss the various ideas that were planted in the people's minds through the use of this conditioning. For example, "Every one belongs to every one else." Discuss some modern methods of persuasion. In what way are commercials like the conditioning described in the book? Doesn't peer pressure cause many people to act in certain ways? What are some ideas or values that have changed over the years due to conditioning?