

***Brave New World* Assignment**

Utopia or Dystopia?

Choose a Topic:

- Genetic Engineering
- Elimination of Family
- Elimination of Science, History, and Art (China's Censorship)
- Elimination of Religion
- Elimination of Privacy
- Elimination of Discomfort: Euthanasia, Abundance of Comforts v. Scarcity
- Emotion-Numbing Drugs and Distracting Media

Assignment:

1) Write down your thoughts and opinions about this topic and how it affects our society. Utopia or Dystopia?	50%
2) * Research . Look up one article on your topic. (Put the article and the novel in Easybib and export a Works Cited page to Google Docs.) Explain what the article says. What are your thoughts and opinions about this article?	15%
3) Connect this issues to scenes in <i>Brave New World</i> . Where is this portrayed as a positive? Where is it portrayed as a negative?	15%
4) What would you give up in our society for security? Relate this to the topic you chose. "And you all know security / Is mortals' chiefest enemy (<i>Macbeth</i> 3.5.32-33).	15%
5) Works Cited page: Copy and paste the exported Works Cited page at the end of your paper.	5%

*This links to a page of articles about these topics.

BRAVE NEW WORLD UNIT: Creating the Perfect Society?

- How is technology changing who we are as humans? Should there be limits to scientific advancements?
- How do advancements in technology affect human relationships?
- How do we determine the responsible use of technology individually and as a society?

Brave New World, by Aldous Huxley was published in England in 1932 as a dystopia, a vision of a society that arose as humans followed technology towards perfection, and found it led them instead, to hell. When this novel was written, there was no possibility of in vitro fertilization, no genetic engineering, no cloning, no birth control pills, no television, no computers, no nuclear weapons, and no mood-altering drugs in pill form—although the novel contains all of these promises in some form. Audio recording was in its infancy, although there were films. There were very few houses that had electricity, automobiles or telephones. There was no regular civilian air travel, and no cell phones. World War I had been called “the war to end all wars” although World War II was just a few years away. The Age of Technology, as the twentieth century is often called, was in its beginning. This novel was a warning of some of the things to come.

The novel raises philosophical questions that still resonate in the 21st century. Perhaps more intensely than ever before, we are the mirror of the modern society in the novel in social and scientific ways. We have also advanced to the verge of changing our own human genome. Will technology change us for the better?

Extra Credits: 1) Find five quotes in the book from *different* Shakespeare plays. Identify the quote and the play. Cite the page number in the novel. 2) Translate the French epigraph at the beginning of the novel to English.

VOCABULARY WORDS: There are so many! Choose thirty of the ninety listed. The list is linked here.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT: Over the break, as you read the novel. Choose either A or B.

- Find sections of the story that illustrate either topic A or B. Keep track of the page numbers for citations.
- Find two articles that discuss this topic from reputable newspapers, scientific journals or magazines.
- In EasyBib, begin a project for this novel and cite the book and both of your articles.

A) Genetic Engineering or Euthanasia for the Imperfect or Elderly

- 1) From the novel describe a scene that illustrates why the society depicted in the novel believes that genetic engineering or euthanasia is *beneficial*. Provide an in-text citation with the page number.
- 2) From the novel describe a scene that illustrates the *detrimental* side of genetic engineering or euthanasia. Provide an in-text citation with page number.
- 3) Find [two articles](#) that describe this issue in society today. In separate paragraphs, describe what each article says and what you think. Provide in-text citations. Use the points the articles make to discuss the positives or negatives of this issue.
- 4) Provide a Works Cited page that includes the novel and the article as sources.

B) Elimination of Emotion: No family, no art, no love, no religion. Drugs, pregnancy substitutes, random sex and virtual films take the place of emotion.

- 1) From the novel describe a scene that illustrates why the society in the novel believes that the absence of emotions or family ties is *beneficial*. Provide an in-text citation with the page number.
- 2) From the novel describe a scene that illustrates the *detrimental* side of not having any real feelings. Provide an in-text citation with the page number.
- 3) Find [two articles](#) that describe this issue in society today. In a separate paragraph, describe what each article says and what you think. Provide in-text citations. Use the points the articles make to discuss what you think about a society where people seem to escape through drugs, sex or the virtual world of the Internet.
- 4) Provide a Works Cited page that includes the novel and the article as sources.

GRADED DISCUSSION: Choose one of the topics below. 1) Respond with your own thoughts and opinions. 2) Comment on how the topic shapes the modern society in *Brave New World* and how the primitive society seems to suffer due to a lack of these advances. 3) On the other hand... is the modern society *really* a utopia? Explain what is wrong with it.

- Does engineering humans to be free of disease result in greater happiness?

- Are human emotions and human sexual love simply the breeding grounds of discontent? Are marriage and parenthood outdated modes that only cause psychological stress and violence?
- Should people be discouraged from learning about history or experimental science so that no one will ever question how the world is ruled or try to change things? Should art that prompts emotion or rebellion be censored? Should religion be eliminated as well?
- Is a world without any pain and suffering ideal? Should humans choose death (euthanasia) rather than become old and unattractive or infirm? What about disabled humans?
- Is a consumer society better than a one where people need to work hard to survive? Is a society of abundance happier than a society of scarcity? Is the world of Linda and John better than the world of Lenina and Bernard?
- Would life be better if everyone were brainwashed and placated in their lives – through mass entertainment, advertisement slogans, games, consumer products, sex and drugs? No need to think too hard. No learning, no striving. No questioning. (Is this *our* society!???)

Perfect Humans: In Huxley's time there was a eugenics movement that strove to improve the human race through selective breeding and selective euthanasia. This wasn't a new horror, because slave masters also instituted similar practice in America. We also have a history of racism that classified people by skin color as fit or not fit for certain jobs. In *Brave New World*, labs create humans to perform specific tasks. There are Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons—representing people with different levels of intelligence and different abilities to tolerate different environments. "All conditioning aims at making people like their inescapable social destiny." In the novel, genetic manipulation is used to create "perfect" Alpha embryos that are "decanted" in artificial wombs. While we don't yet have [artificial wombs](#), today we do have the availability to use in vitro fertilization (IVF) to choose sperm and eggs, and have the ability to selectively choose the embryos that are made through preimplantation diagnoses. There is nothing legally to prevent people from choosing the sex of the baby this way. The United Kingdom has recently approved a method that results in children being born with [three](#) genetic parents, creating a human chimera. The genomic repercussions are unknown. For reproductive purposes, does it make sense to simply choose the very best human material available, and avoid reproducing someone who might have a genetic disorder? Should there be legal limitations to IVF? While recombining DNA for the purposes of creating "more perfect" humans has not yet been done, scientists are calling for regulations to limit this attempt.

No Disease: Genetic engineering is already in clinical trial to treat diseases such as sickle cell anemia, immunodeficiency, hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and other disorders. Should there be legal limits to changing the human genome? This field has exploded with the development of [CRISPR](#) technology that uses bacterial functions to edit all of our cells, not only somatic, but germ cells. Also, today scientists are experimenting with using human stem cells to [print replacement](#) tissues for people who have lost functions in cells or organs through genetic disorders, aging, disease or accidents. Eventually, the replacement parts could include limbs. Stem cells were once derived from human embryos, but now scientists can derive them from your own skin cells. (If an embryo is created with the nucleus of one of your somatic cells, it would be a perfect DNA match to you and would develop into a clone of you.) This type of therapy could potentially extend life, treating ailments such as degenerative heart disease and Alzheimer's. How might it change us as humans if no one is old or infirm? Will we encourage euthanasia?

Genetically Engineered Animals and Plants: In the novel, animal parts are used in the processing of human embryos. In medical technology today, animals are being genetically altered for a variety of purposes. Scientists have created a goat-human hybrid to manufacture a human hormone to prevent blood clots. Before this people who could not produce it due to a genetic disorder often died. This "human-goat" chimera will save lives. We have genetically modified salmon to grow faster than natural salmon – why not? Mice have been genetically altered for experimentation purposes to have human brain cells. We have [a human-pig chimera](#) that might be used to grow human organs. We have genetically modified plants to be disease and pest resistant, without really knowing how these new life forms will interact with the environment. Is this ethical? Should there be laws to govern genetically engineering new forms of life?

Free Sex, Drugs, and Consumer Pleasures: Another question raised by the novel focuses on placation of people with physical and sexual pleasures, consumer products, mindless entertainment and "soma". Soma is not a real drug, and while we don't have exactly similar ones, we do have a lot of beneficial drugs that people take to help with [depression](#). People also take a lot of drugs recreationally, or because they are [addicted to opioids](#) that were once prescribed to them. Is it OK in our society to feel pain? The emotional tangles (and value) of family relationships are denounced. Religion is dead. When nothing means that much to us, what do we lose as humans? Are we being numbed and brainwashed in the same way, saturated as we are with advertisements and media that promotes superficial values and empty pleasures?

Psychological Control Through Media: Finally, Huxley doesn't imagine the "Big Brother" of George Orwell's 1984, but he does include "feelies" as particularly absorbing distractions. He did not imagine virtual reality or the ubiquity of cell phones, which often pull us out of our world into another visual realm, and [perhaps cripple us emotionally and psychologically](#) more than we realize. Is this particular form of technology actually taking away our ability to think and function independently? Is it crippling our ability to interact in real ways with other human beings? Is the constant barrage of media images in our pockets skewing our reality and self-image?