

Brave New World – Student Packet

This module explores British author Aldous Huxley’s dystopian science fiction novel *Brave New World*. Dystopia is a form of literature that explores social and political structures. It is a creation of a nightmare world—unlike its opposite, Utopia, which is an ideal world. Dystopian fiction along the lines of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* has recently exploded in popularity. Dystopia is often characterized by an authoritarian or totalitarian form of government. It often features different kinds of repressive social control systems, a lack or total absence of individual freedoms and expressions, and a state of constant warfare or violence. In his novel, Huxley imagines a World State with a planned economy in which citizens are bred, born, and conditioned in lab flasks to fill the various job niches in the society. The society is a consumerist, pleasure-seeking one, controlled by a benevolent dictator. It serves as a metaphor of the extreme direction society can take as a result of its choices. It is those choices and their consequences that you will be exploring in depth with the reading of this book.

Items needed to complete the module:

- Novel: *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
- Handouts: indicated below
- Binder paper

Instructions: Complete all of the activities on a separate piece of paper unless instructed otherwise. Label each activity so that it is easy for your teacher to check your work.

Activity 1: Quickwrite

Write a paragraph in response to each of the following items.

Brave New World is a work of science fiction. Science fiction asks “What if?” questions and explores possible results. Consider the following questions:

1. In feudal societies, people were born into different social classes with specific roles: nobles who governed, scholars who studied, warriors who fought, tradesmen who made things, and peasants who farmed. Do we have similar classes in our society? Reflect on what life would be like if the government decided what your role in society would be?
2. What if science and psychological conditioning could be used by the government to create different classes of people with different abilities and interests as needed? For example, what if it was possible to grow a plumber, a computer programmer, a manager, or a physicist? Would this be a good thing or a bad thing? Explain.
3. What if babies were grown in test tubes and were raised without parents? What would childhood be like? How would adults raised this way be different from adults in our society?

4. What if sex was strictly for recreation and not for reproduction because all babies were produced artificially? Would there still be love? Commitment?
5. What if the government gave everyone drugs to keep them happy so they wouldn't rebel? Would people actually be happy? Would it keep society stable? Would there be negative consequences?

Activity 2: Surveying the Text

Examine your copy of the book. If you are in a class or group setting, discuss the following questions. If not, record your notes/observations in writing.

- What does (or could) the cover art mean?
- Skim the section “Brave New World: 1932” at the end of the book. Summarize/categorize the reviews that the book received upon publication.
- Read the short biography of author Aldous Huxley on page 261. What strikes you as unusual about him?
- How is the book divided? (i.e., chapters, sections, parts, etc.)

Activity 3: Reading the First Page: Making Predictions

In the absence of chapter titles, one way to preview the book is to read the first two paragraphs of the novel. What details do you notice that seem odd? What predictions can you make about the world of the novel from these details? Record your observations in the space that follows.

Activity 4: Understanding Key Vocabulary

The words in the list below are all related to human reproduction. You may remember some of them from your biology class. Look over these words to see which ones you know and which you don't.

Which words do you recognize as a normal part of human biology? Put a check mark in the box in front of those words.

Which words do you think were imagined by Huxley as a part of this “new world” system? Put an “x” in the box in front of those words.

As you read, pay attention to see if you were right.

- fertilize—a sperm combines with an ova
- incubator—a machine to control temperature for the development of life
- ova— female gametes or eggs
- ovary—a female organ that produces eggs
- gametes—cells that combine for reproduction
- sterilize—make infertile
- salinity—saltiness
- viscosity—thickness of a liquid
- liquor—a liquid containing dissolved components
- spermatozoa—male gametes
- peritoneum—the lining of the abdominal cavity
- morula—a mass of cells that will become an embryo
- embryo—an early stage in the development of a fetus
- placentin—an insulin-like protein
- thyroxin—a hormone of the thyroid gland
- corpus luteum*—a female organ that secretes hormones
- blood-surrogate—blood substitute
- freemartin—infertile female with some masculine characteristics

Read *Brave New World* Chapters 1-6**Activity 5: Questions Chapters 1-6**

Before reading each chapter, read the questions below just to get an idea of some of the items you will be looking for. Then read chapter by chapter, keeping these questions in mind along with the predictions you made in Activity 3. As you are reading, mark the pages with small sticky notes when you find a passage that may be relevant to these questions or your predictions. Don't worry if you don't find something for every question on the first re-through. You will be able to go back later. Also do not worry if you do not understand certain parts or if you only have a partial understanding of what you have read. This is a normal part of the process when reading challenging texts.

Chapter 1

1. What is the purpose of the Hatchery and Conditioning Center?
2. What does the Director mean when he says that “particulars, as everyone knows, make for virtue and happiness; generalities are intellectually necessary evils”?
3. What is Bokanovsky's Process? What is the purpose?
4. What is “social predestination”?
5. Why does the hatchery purposely keep some embryos from developing high intelligence?

Chapter 2

6. What is the purpose of conditioning the Delta babies to be afraid of books and roses?
7. Why is it necessary for the masses to consume transport and other products? Does efficiency of production lead to oversupply?
8. Why is Henry Ford, who invented assembly line manufacturing along with the first Ford automobiles, treated almost as a deity in the World State?
9. Why did early attempts at sleep teaching fail? How did they improve it?
10. What is taught in “Elementary Class Consciousness”? Do we have a similar course in our educational system? Would it be a good idea?

Chapter 3

11. What is “Centrifugal Bumble Puppy”? Why is it important for games to require a complicated apparatus?
12. In the World State, children are encouraged to engage in erotic play. In our society, they are discouraged. Why is the World State society different?
13. Mustapha Mond quotes Henry Ford saying, “History is bunk.” Henry Ford really did say that. “Bunk” in this context means nonsense. What do you think he meant by that statement?
14. What are the “feelies”? Do you think you would like to go?
15. Why is it smutty to talk about mothers and fathers?
16. Is Mond’s description of family life and its problems accurate? Do you think that the World State is a good solution?
17. What is a “Pregnancy Substitute”? Why would someone take one?
18. Why does Mond sometimes call “Our Ford” “Our Freud”?
19. Why does Fanny think that it is bad that Lenina has been going out with no one but Henry Foster for four months?
20. Mustapha Mond says that stability of society is the primal and ultimate need. Do you agree?
21. Why is Bernard Marx considered to be strange?

Chapter 4

22. What is *soma*?
23. What do Alphas in the World State use for personal transportation?
24. What is Obstacle Golf?
25. Why does Lenina hate the color khaki? Why is she glad she is not a Gamma?
26. Why is Bernard Marx insecure?
27. Helmholtz Watson is smart and popular with girls. Why is he dissatisfied?

Chapter 5

28. What happens to citizens of the World State when they die?
29. In what way are all the citizens of the World State equal?
30. Henry and Lenina dance to a song called “There ain’t no Bottle in all the world like that dear little Bottle of mine.” What is this song about?
31. What is “Orgy Porgy”? Is it a religious ritual? Is it a wild party?

Chapter 6

32. What does Bernard like to do with his leisure time? What does Lenina like to do? Are they well matched?
33. When Lenina says, “Never put off until tomorrow the fun you can have today,” Bernard says, “Two hundred repetitions, twice a week from fourteen to sixteen and a half.” What does he mean?
34. What does Bernard mean when he says, “it might be possible to be adult all the time”? Why doesn’t Lenina understand?
35. When Bernard goes to his boss to get a permit to go to the reservation, what story does the Director tell him?

Activity 6: Considering the Structure

Much of the first part of the novel describes a tour of the Hatchery and Conditioning Center by a group of students led by the Director himself. Think of reasons the author may have had for setting up the novel in this way. Readers may be tempted to say that “nothing much happens” in the first six chapters of the book other than getting acquainted with the way this society is designed. However, at closer look, the big themes and conflicts have already been launched.

Complete the “Big Idea” Graphic Organizer Handout. A brief chapter summary is provided for you. For each chapter, explain why the plot (events) are significant (important—what’s the deeper meaning?). Then select a quotation from the chapter—any sentence that captures or expresses an important theme and/or conflict that has been introduced—and copy it. Chapter 1 has been done for you as an example.

Activity 7: Analyzing Stylistic Choices

If you are in a class or group setting, discuss the following questions before writing your responses. If not, write your responses after having spent some time reflecting on the questions.

1. “What man has joined, nature is powerless to put asunder.” What does this mean? What does it parody (imitate)? *Brave New World* has numerous phrases and references like this that echo language from our own world. What is the effect on the reader?
2. What is the stylistic effect of the series of sentences with the subject omitted in the description of Henry Foster’s explanation of the operation of the Decanting Room that begins “Told them of the growing embryo on its bed of peritoneum. Made them taste the rich blood surrogate on which it fed. . .”? Clearly this author has chosen to write all of these sentences without a subject. Why?
3. Chapter 3 begins with a scene of children playing in the sunshine. It says, “The air was drowsy with the murmur of bees and helicopters.” Is this sentence beautiful, funny, ironic, or strange? What effect does it have on the reader?
4. The first part of Chapter 3 moves back and forth from Mustapha Mond’s lecture to the visiting students to Henry Foster’s viewpoint. The last part of Chapter 3 is mostly a series of disconnected thoughts and phrases from the different conversations. What is the effect on the reader of this stream of disconnected consciousness? Is it confusing? Or is it a very efficient way of giving the reader a sense of the whole society?
5. The characters in *Brave New World* have names like Benito Hoover and Bernard Marx that echo famous political and historical figures. Why do you think Huxley does this? What is the significance?
6. Lenina is full of aphorisms and sayings, often about soma, such as “A gramme in time saves nine,” and “One cubic centimeter cures ten gloomy sentiments.” Where does she get these sayings? What is the effect on the reader? Find as many of them as you can. Discuss what they mean and how they are similar to sayings we are familiar with.

Activity 8: Making Predictions

At the end of Chapter 6, the Warden tells Bernard and Lenina that in the Reservation there are

. . . about sixty thousand Indians and half-breeds . . . absolute savages . . . our inspectors occasionally visit. . . otherwise, no communication whatever with the civilized world . . . still preserve their repulsive habits and customs . . . marriage, if you know what that is, my dear young lady; families . . . no conditioning . . . monstrous superstitions . . . Christianity and totemism and ancestor worship . . . extinct language, such as Zúñi, and Spanish and Athapascan . . . pumas, porcupines, and other ferocious animals . . . infectious diseases . . . priests . . . venomous lizards . . . (103)

Lenina responds by saying “You don’t say so?” but that is because she has just taken half a gramme of soma. From what you know of Bernard and Lenina and the world that they live in, how do you think they will react when they actually get to the Indian Reservation? Write a paragraph in the space that follows about your predictions.

Read *Brave New World* Chapters 7-9

Activity 9: Questions Chapters 7-9

Read the questions below to get an idea of some of the items you will be looking for. Then read chapter by chapter, keeping these questions in mind along with the predictions you made in Activity 8.

Chapter 7

1. Why is Lenina so startled by the old man and the women nursing babies?
2. Why doesn’t Lenina want to imagine being a mother?
3. Why does Lenina like the drums even though she doesn’t like anything else?
4. What can you tell about Indian society from the ritual that Bernard and Lenina observe? What does John say is the purpose of the ritual?
5. Who is John? Why is he attracted to Lenina?
6. Who is Linda? Why is Lenina disgusted by her?
7. Why do the Indian women hate Linda? Are they justified?

Chapter 8

8. What kind of childhood did John have?
9. What two books has John read?
10. Why does John try to kill Popé? What is Popé's reaction?
11. Who is Mitsima? What does he teach John?
12. Why can't John go into the Antelope Kiva?
13. Why is John happy that Bernard is not married to Lenina?

Chapter 9:

14. What is a "soma holiday"? Why does Lenina go on one?
15. When Bernard leaves, he asks the pilot if Lenina will be safe.
The pilot responds "Safe as helicopters." What does he mean by that?
16. Why does Bernard go back to the World State? Why does he call Mustapha Mond?
17. John visits the house where Bernard and Lenina are staying.
What does he do?

Activity 10: Character Analysis

See handout

Activity 11: Summarizing and Responding

Write a paragraph comparing life in the World State with life on the Reservation. Where would you prefer to live (if you had to)? Why?

Read *Brave New World* Chapters 10-18

Activity 12: Questions Chapters 10-18

This part of the novel contains several scenes that dramatize and explore the major themes of the novel. Answer the comprehension-level reading questions as well as the analytical questions about each scene.

Chapter 10

1. Why is it important that the Director chooses the Fertilizing Room to meet Bernard?
2. The Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning has decided to get rid of Bernard Marx by sending him to Iceland. He says,

“The greater a man’s talents, the greater his power to lead astray. It is better that one should suffer than that many should be corrupted. Consider the matter dispassionately, Mr. Foster, and you will see that no offence is so heinous as unorthodoxy of behavior. Murder kills only one individual—and after all, what is an individual?” With a sweeping gesture he indicated the rows of microscopes, the test tubes, the incubators. “We can make a new one with the greatest of ease—as many as we like. Unorthodoxy threatens more than the life of a mere individual; it strikes at Society itself.” (148)

The Director accuses Bernard of being an “enemy of Society” because of “his heretical views on sport and *soma*, by the scandalous unorthodoxy of his sex life, and by his refusal to obey the teachings of Our Ford.” Are these accusations true? What does the Director mean by “unorthodoxy of behavior”? Is Bernard an enemy of the World State? Do you agree or disagree that the society is more important than the individual?

3. What are the reactions to Linda’s revelation and John’s calling the Director his father?

Chapter 11

4. Why does everyone want to meet John?
5. What is Linda’s existence now? What will probably happen to her?
6. How has Bernard made himself more important?
7. What does Bernard do during the visit to Eton?
8. Lenina takes John, who is now known as “the Savage,” to a feelie called “Three Weeks in a Helicopter.”

“I don’t think you ought to see things like that,” he said, making haste to transfer from Lenina herself to the surrounding circumstances the blame for any past or possible future lapse from perfection.

Lenina doesn't understand. John calls the film horrible, but she thinks it was lovely. Lenina expects John to come into her apartment, but John says goodnight and leaves. What is going on here? Why are they so confusing to each other? Who is right?

Chapter 12

9. Bernard organizes a party with many important people who all come to see the Savage, but John refuses to come out of his room, cursing at Bernard in Zúñi. Bernard is humiliated, and his guests leave early, including the Arch-Community-Songster, who leaves with Lenina. Why does John refuse to come out? Is he justified?
10. How do the people at the reception feel when the Savage doesn't appear? How does Lenina feel?
11. To whom does Bernard try to turn after this failure? Why?
12. Why does Helmholtz call Shakespeare a "marvelous propaganda technician"? What does he think is the source of Shakespeare's power? Do you agree?
13. What does Helmholtz say his society needs?

Chapter 13

14. What does Henry Foster recommend for Lenina's condition?
15. What does Fanny advise Lenina to do?
16. John proposes marriage to Lenina and declares his love. How does Lenina respond? What is John's reaction? Why is it hard for them to understand each other?

Chapter 14

17. What is Ward 81 like?
18. Linda is dying in the hospital for the dying. Why is there a group of eight-year-olds touring the hospital? Why does John have so much trouble dealing with the children and the Head Nurse?
19. Whose name does Linda speak? What does this do to John?
20. How does the Savage leave the ward?

Chapter 15

21. How do the Delta twins react to the Savage's pushing through?
22. To what does the Savage compare the Delta twins?
23. What causes the disturbance in the hospital? How do Bernard and Helmholtz get involved?
24. How do the police subdue the crowd?

Chapter 16

25. The core of this chapter is the debate between John, the Savage, and Mustapha Mond, the World Controller. John is delighted that Mond has read Shakespeare. He asks why old things are banned even when they are beautiful. Mond says, "Beauty's attractive, and we don't want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like the new ones." John presses the point. He says the feelies are not as good as Othello. Mond agrees, but says:

You can't make tragedies without social instability. The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and the never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there's soma. (220)

Mond says that sacrificing real feelings and emotional attachments is the price the society has to pay for stability. Is this price is worth paying in your opinion?

26. John asks Mond why they have to have whole groups of identical Deltas. Why not make everyone an Alpha Plus like Bernard and Helmholtz? Does Mond's answer make sense from a logical point of view? Are you satisfied with Mond's answer?
27. What does it mean to be sent to an island? Why was Mustapha Mond almost sent to one? Who will be sent to one now?

Chapter 17

28. Mustapha Mond says, "God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness." John makes a number of arguments about why religion is necessary, but Mond defeats each one. Or does he? What do you think?
29. What attitude of society does Mond say keeps the world turning?

30. What has society done with what the Savage calls the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune?”
31. What replaces living dangerously?
32. What does the Savage choose?

Chapter 18

33. Why won't Mustapha Mond allow John to go with Bernard and Helmholtz to the island? What does John decide to do instead?
34. How is the Savage's place found? What is he doing?
35. How does the Savage pay for what he sees as his final sin?

Activity 13: Thinking Critically

John attempts to live by himself away from the World State. He begins to return to an Indian lifestyle, but he is tormented by news reporters and tourists from the World State. Even Lenina can't help; in fact, she makes him worse. Finally, he is too tormented to live. What are the reasons that drive him to take his own life? What, if anything, could have been done to help him? Write one to two paragraphs explaining your view.

Activity 14: EPT Essay

You will be given the prompt the week before you write so that you have time to read and understand it and to think about and begin to formulate your response. You may jot down notes and a rough outline. You may not write the essay ahead of time, however.

Schedule a time to meet with your teacher to complete the timed EPT-Style Essay. You will have 45 minutes to plan and write an essay about the book. This essay will be scored using the EPT Rubric and is intended to mirror the English Placement Test. The essay *must* be completed in front of a teacher.

Turn in your completed Module Packet when you meet with your teacher for the practice EPT.