

Introduction to *Brave New World*

O wonder!

*How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in't!* (Tempest, Shakespeare)

General Introduction: Utopia or dystopia? Ironically *utopia* means “no place” and a *dystopia* is an “anti-utopia”; this begs the question, which is more realistic? Aldous Huxley, in his novel *Brave New World*, writes, like Bradbury and Orwell, of a future in which a utopian society, at least to the characters in the novel, ostensibly exists. Huxley’s utopia/dystopia mirrors many of the historical issues present at the time of the publication and even those yet to come (issues that are pertinent to modern day society).

Brave New World: This “brave new world” is one in which members of society are put into groups at birth. Some are treated with specific toxins to stunt their growth so that they can grow up in the lower caste. As a group from the Central Hatchery in London visit a reservation in New Mexico, they realize the restraints of their civilizations and the discrepancy between their World State and the savage reservation. Their trip initiates a self reflexive survey of their society and their position within it.

Major Characters:

John-his entire worldview is based on the knowledge of Shakespeare’s plays
Bernard Marx- Although he is supposed to be an alpha male, his lack of size alienates him

Linda-John’s mother, and former wife to the Director of the Central Hatchery

Major themes:

- technology and society
- the danger of a totalitarian government
- happiness and truth
- consumer society

Symbols

- soma
- Shakespeare
- Ford
- Sex

Major Questions

How “brave” and “new” is this world?

Is it innocence or ignorance that leads to the belief in this society?

What are the ideal traits of a civilization and of people in a civilization?