

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	George	School:	OLHS
Book Title:	Brave New World	Genre:	Fiction
Author:	Huxley, Aldous	Pages:	264
Publisher:	Perennial Classics	Copyright:	1932

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and summary citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

Plot Overview

THE NOVEL OPENS in the Central London Hatching and Conditioning Centre, where the Director of the Hatchery and one of his assistants, Henry Foster, are giving a tour to a group of boys. The boys learn about the Bokanovsky and Podsnap Processes that allow the Hatchery to produce thousands of nearly identical human embryos. During the gestation period the embryos travel in bottles along a conveyor belt through a factorylike building and are conditioned to belong to one of five castes: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, or Epsilon. The Alpha embryos are destined to become the leaders and thinkers of the World State. Each of the succeeding castes is conditioned to be slightly less physically and intellectually impressive. The Epsilons, stunted and stupefied by oxygen deprivation and chemical treatments, are destined to perform menial labor. Lenina Crowne, an employee at the factory, describes to the boys how she vaccinates embryos destined for tropical climates.

The Director then leads the boys to the Nursery, where they observe a group of Delta infants being reprogrammed to dislike books and flowers. The Director explains that this conditioning helps to make Deltas docile and eager consumers. He then tells the boys about the “hypnopaedic” (sleep-teaching) methods used to teach children the morals of the World State. In a room where older children are napping, a whispering voice is heard repeating a lesson in “Elementary Class Consciousness.”

Outside, the Director shows the boys hundreds of naked children engaged in sexual play and games like “Centrifugal Bumble-puppy.” Mustapha Mond, one of the ten World Controllers, introduces himself to the boys and begins to explain the history of the World State, focusing on the State’s successful efforts to remove strong emotions, desires, and human relationships from society. Meanwhile, inside the Hatchery, Lenina chats in the bathroom with Fanny Crowne about her relationship with Henry Foster. Fanny chides Lenina for going out with Henry almost exclusively for four months, and Lenina admits she is attracted to the strange, somewhat funny-looking Bernard Marx. In another part of the Hatchery, Bernard is enraged when he overhears a conversation between Henry and the Assistant Predestinator about “having” Lenina. After work, Lenina tells Bernard that she would be happy to accompany him on the trip to the Savage Reservation in New Mexico to which he had invited her. Bernard, overjoyed but

embarrassed, flies a helicopter to meet a friend of his, Helmholtz Watson. He and Helmholtz discuss their dissatisfaction with the World State. Bernard is primarily disgruntled because he is too small and weak for his caste; Helmholtz is unhappy because he is too intelligent for his job writing hypnopaedic phrases. In the next few days, Bernard asks his superior, the Director, for permission to visit the Reservation. The Director launches into a story about a visit to the Reservation he had made with a woman twenty years earlier. During a storm, he tells Bernard, the woman was lost and never recovered. Finally, he gives Bernard the permit, and Bernard and Lenina depart for the Reservation, where they get another permit from the Warden. Before heading into the Reservation, Bernard calls Helmholtz and learns that the Director has grown weary of what he sees as Bernard's difficult and unsocial behavior and is planning to exile Bernard to Iceland when he returns. Bernard is angry and distraught, but decides to head into the Reservation anyway.

On the Reservation, Lenina and Bernard are shocked to see its aged and ill residents; no one in the World State has visible signs of aging. They witness a religious ritual in which a young man is whipped, and find it abhorrent. After the ritual they meet John, a fair-skinned young man who is isolated from the rest of the village. John tells Bernard about his childhood as the son of a woman named Linda who was rescued by the villagers some twenty years ago. Bernard realizes that Linda is almost certainly the woman mentioned by the Director. Talking to John, he learns that Linda was ostracized because of her willingness to sleep with all the men in the village, and that as a result John was raised in isolation from the rest of the village. John explains that he learned to read using a book called *The Chemical and Bacteriological Conditioning of the Embryo and The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, the latter given to Linda by one of her lovers, Popé. John tells Bernard that he is eager to see the "Other Place"—the "brave new world" that his mother has told him so much about. Bernard invites him to return to the World State with him. John agrees but insists that Linda be allowed to come as well.

While Lenina, disgusted with the Reservation, takes enough soma to knock her out for eighteen hours, Bernard flies to Santa Fe where he calls Mustapha Mond and receives permission to bring John and Linda back to the World State. Meanwhile, John breaks into the house where Lenina is lying intoxicated and unconscious, and barely suppresses his desire to touch her. Bernard, Lenina, John, and Linda fly to the World State, where the Director is waiting to exile Bernard in front of his Alpha coworkers. But Bernard turns the tables by introducing John and Linda. The shame of being a "father"—the very word makes the onlookers laugh nervously—causes the Director to resign, leaving Bernard free to remain in London.

John becomes a hit with London society because of his strange life led on the Reservation. But while touring the factories and schools of the World State, John becomes increasingly disturbed by the society that he sees. His sexual attraction to Lenina remains, but he desires more than simple lust, and he finds himself terribly confused. In the process, he also confuses Lenina, who wonders why John does not wish to have sex with her. As the discoverer and guardian of the "Savage," Bernard also becomes popular. He quickly takes advantage of his new status, sleeping with many women and hosting dinner parties with important guests, most of whom dislike Bernard but are willing to placate him if it means they get to meet John. One night John refuses to meet the guests, including the Arch-Community Songster, and Bernard's social standing plummets. After Bernard introduces them, John and Helmholtz quickly take to each other. John reads Helmholtz parts of *Romeo and Juliet*, but Helmholtz cannot keep himself from laughing at a serious passage about love, marriage, and parents—ideas that are ridiculous, almost scatological in World State culture.

Fueled by his strange behavior, Lenina becomes obsessed with John, refusing Henry's invitation to see a feely. She takes soma and visits John at Bernard's apartment, where she hopes to seduce him. But John responds to her advances with curses, blows, and lines from Shakespeare. She retreats to the bathroom while he fields a phone call in which he learns that Linda, who has been on permanent soma-holiday since her return, is about to die. At the Hospital for the Dying he watches her die while a group of lower-caste boys receiving their "death conditioning" wonder why she is so unattractive. The boys are simply curious, but John becomes enraged. After Linda dies, John meets a group of Delta clones who are receiving their soma ration. He tries to convince them to revolt, throwing the soma out the window, and a riot results. Bernard and Helmholtz, hearing of the riot, rush to the scene and come to John's aid. After the riot is calmed by police with soma vapor, John, Helmholtz, and Bernard are arrested and brought to the office of Mustapha Mond.

John and Mond debate the value of the World State's policies, John arguing that they dehumanize the residents of the World State and Mond arguing that stability and happiness are more important than humanity. Mond explains that social stability has required the sacrifice of art, science, and religion. John protests that, without these things, human life is not worth living. Bernard reacts wildly when Mond says that he and Helmholtz will be exiled to distant islands, and he is carried from the room. Helmholtz accepts the exile readily, thinking it will give him a chance to write, and soon follows Bernard out of the room. John and Mond continue their conversation. They discuss religion and the use of soma to control negative emotions and social harmony.

John bids Helmholtz and Bernard good-bye. Refused the option of following them to the islands by Mond, he retreats to a lighthouse in the countryside where he gardens and attempts to purify himself by self-flagellation. Curious World State citizens soon catch him in the act, and reporters descend on the lighthouse to film news reports and a feely. After the feely, hordes of people descend on the lighthouse and demand that John whip himself. Lenina comes and approaches John with her arms open. John reacts by brandishing his whip and screaming "Kill it! Kill it!" The intensity of the scene causes an orgy in which John takes part. The next morning he wakes up and, overcome with anger and sadness at his submission to World State society, hangs himself.

From Sparknotes.com

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s): (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

Identify similar and recurring themes across different works. 10RALD

Compare and contrast literary elements focusing on plot and conflict, literary styles in diverse literary works. 10RALC

-As this text will be used as a summer reading book, its purpose is for comparison and connections throughout the year. Interdisciplinary Studies is a humanities course with a focus on the human nature of society, past and present. This book is a critical satirical look at where we are going as a culture (or at least the culture of 1932). The work follows the themes of Lord of the Flies, Animal Farm, and other philosophical essays we will discuss throughout the year (Locke, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Bacon, and Montaigne).

4. Explain how an author uses rhetorical devices to achieve purpose. 10RAIB

12. Explain how figurative language expresses tone. 10RALF

-Students will discuss the tone of the author to explain his purpose and his opinions on human nature. Also we will discuss how this novel effected other works of fiction that followed.

10. Explain how symbolism enhances a literary text. 12RALD

Students will discuss the symbolism and real life parallels of the elements of this text, as well as reflect on the modern equivalents or usage of the themes in the novel.

Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be "cut and pasted" (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

Brave New World

by Aldous Huxley

Rationale by Roger Dennis

When an author takes issue with an approach to life, he may attack it directly, clearly exposing the faults as he sees them. Such a straightforward style leaves little in doubt about his attitude. Yet, more subtle writers may disguise their attack as support; that is, they pretend to favor a position when, in fact, they are exposing the failings of the topic under discussion by presenting absurdities as virtues. With this form of writing, the reader must use caution not to misread. The works of Jonathon Swift--particularly Gulliver's Travels and "A Modest Proposal"--are prime examples of this form of literary attack.

Aldous Huxley in Brave New World depicts a future society which has abandoned the verities of our society. Huxley adroitly delineates a world which, in its quest for social stability, negates individual choice, individual freedom. Mechanized slavery of conditioned human beings is this society's goal; by using science to its own advantage, the directors of this future London efficiently create people who are chemically and psychologically conditioned to love their slavery.

"I'm glad I'm a Beta. I'm glad I'm not an Epsilon."

People in this "brave new world" are decanted clones for whom private agonies and aspirations alike have been made biologically and psychologically impossible. A common attitude prevails toward natural conception, the family, religion and all forms of emotional expression: they were facets of an earlier, primitive life which has been replaced by a scientific utopia that has "Community, Identity, Stability" as its motto.

Yes, this is what has been created by these devotees of Ford, a scientific utopia which espouses the economic theory that "Ending is better than mending;" "The more stitches the less riches," a utopia wherein intimacy has been replaced by the idea that "Everyone belongs to everyone else" and where it is remembered vaguely, that in the old world "There was a thing called the soul and a thing called immortality, and a man called Shakespeare. You've never heard of them, of course."

The reader is tempted to discard Huxley's utopia as a realm of madmen whose aim is social destruction, but according to Huxley himself, this isn't the case. "The people in Brave New World are not sane (in what may be called the absolute sense of that word); but they are not madmen, and their aim is anarchy but social stability . . . achieved by scientific means . . ." They fervently believe this stability (which by our viewpoint reduces the human being to a robot) enriches life by eliminating complexities of reality. There will be no square pegs in round holes in this society: eugenics, here, assures human standardization and this standardization is maintained by removing controversial, thought-provoking materials from the new people; therefore, the "...old fashioned books (are) hidden in a safe Controller's study. Bibles, poetry ____." Censorship, a locking up of alternate ideas, becomes a means by which a single point of view is maintained.

The reader's shock--and fear--of a world so constructed is no greater than Huxley's. The views of the Controller are not the views of the author (confusion on this point has led to misevaluation of Brave New World). The propaganda slogans are those of a conditioned, nonfree populace. Huxley has created these characters vividly, but they do not present his message. What is his message? Does Huxley present an alternate view--one which opposes social conditioning? Yes, in the

depiction of Bernard Marx and John Savage, Huxley gives us two characters who voice the failures of this scientific utopia, giving clear warnings to the reader.

Bernard Marx is different. By some chance, Bernard thinks. He is not thoroughly conditioned; something went wrong during his decantation, and he questions the perfections of his society. For one thing, he stands eight centimeters short of the standard Alpha height, making it difficult for him to get due respect from the lower castes, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons. Bernard is different enough to feel, to be ashamed about his society's love of social conditioning. He knows, unlike his peers, that he isn't free; they are none of them free. He would like to know "what would it be like if I...were free, not enslaved by my conditioning." When reminded that all people in his world are conditioned to be happy, he replies, "But wouldn't you like to be free to be happy in some other way? In your own way, for example: not in everyone else's way? Yet, rather than break away from the constraints of his world, Bernard simply takes soma, the peace-inducing drug supplied by the establishment. Here, through Bernard, Huxley speaks out for individual freedom, clearly identifying the major defect of this new world.

Because of his "heretical" views, Bernard is ruled "...an enemy of Society, a subverter...of all Order and Stability."

John Savage, a young man born on a reservation outside "civilization," is brought into the stable order of Brave New World. He had educated himself by reading the works of Shakespeare, and he was not decanted; he was born of woman and was reared by a mother (an obscene term) outside civilization. Through his eyes, the reader sees clearly the defects of the scientific Eden: natural responses are deemed vulgar and individualism is rejected in favor of uniformity.

John Savage is treated as a freak; citizens of Huxley's new society flock to parties where John--with his natural responses--is used as entertainment. John amuses and shocks the citizens when he refuses to be impressed by the speed of the Green Bombay Rocket saying, "Ariel could put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes." Shortly after his arrival in London, John commits the unforgivable crime of saying that he doesn't like society, quoting lines from Shakespeare to explain his disdain. The Controller, who has dared to read Shakespeare, explains that the plays are out of date; Shakespeare made tragedies out of society's instability. This new society has total stability; hence, no one can appreciate Shakespeare. The Controller has also read the Bible. He tells John that it, too, has been ruled "old" and the God it presents has been replaced by the new God who manifests himself in absence. John questions how one is noble without a God. The answer is that this "civilization has absolutely no need of nobility or heroism. These are symptoms of political inefficiency. In a proper society like ours, nobody has any opportunity for being noble or heroic. If there is no instability, there's no need for a God. People who are conditioned are stable."

Both Bernard and John are threats to a stable society. Bernard is exiled by the Controller, and John flees of his own accord. Bernard is quickly forgotten by society, but the curious pursue John to his hermitage, making him and his primitive way of life objects of jeers, laughter, photographs. Suicide releases John from the new civilization. John was different; he was natural; he was critical; he was an individual. Like the reader, John could not exist in the world depicted in Brave New World. This is Huxley's point.

Huxley does not advocate the way of life he has drawn. He fears it. He warns us that uncontrolled knowledge, separated from the verities of human life, can lead us to a fate second in its horror only to total annihilation. In a society where diverse opinions are exchanged for a single mode of thought, where books and art expressing a variety of philosophies are locked away, where human distinctions are made genetically impossible, it is the Calibans and monsters of Shakespeare's world that flourish, not the brave new people of a brave new world. This is Huxley's message.

Reviews

Chamberlain, John. *New York Times*, Feb. 7, 1932, p. 5.

Cushing, Edward. *Saturday Review of Literature* 8:684 April 23, 1932.

The *Boston Transcript*, Feb. 13, 1932, p. 2. *Nation*, 134:204 Feb. 17, 1932.

[At the time of original publication] Roger Dennis teaches and chairs the English Department at Avon High School.

From Rationales for Commonly Challenged Taught Books. Themed issue of Connecticut English Journal, Diane P. Shugert (Ed.), vol. 15, no. 1, Fall 1983. Used with the permission of the Connecticut Council of Teachers of English.

Review #2

From Library Journal

Grade 8 Up-Brave New World by Aldous Huxley is a classic science fiction work that continues to be a significant warning to our society today. Tony Britton, the reader, does an excellent job of portraying clinical detachment as the true nature of the human incubators is revealed. The tone lightens during the vacation to the wilderness and the contrast is even more striking. Each character is given a separate personality by Britton's voices. As the story moves from clinical detachment to the human interest of Bernard, the nonconformist, and John, the "Savage," listeners are drawn more deeply into the plot. Finally, the reasoned tones of the Controller explain away all of John's arguments against the civilization, leading to John's death as he cannot reconcile his beliefs to theirs. The abridgement is very well done, and the overall message of the novel is clearly presented. The advanced vocabulary and complex themes lend themselves to class discussion and further research. There is sure to be demand for this classic in schools and public libraries.

Pat Griffith, Schlow Memorial Library, State College, PA

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

Title: 1984

Author: George Orwell

Title: Fahrenheit 451

Author: Ray Bradbury

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Discussion of sex without responsibility

-breast: (8 pages) This word appears in a description of a woman, in description of a mother, and in brief sexual situations.

-"having a woman" This phrase is used to describe the freedom and lack of attachment or extreme personal relationships in the futuristic society.

drug/alcohol usage

-soma: This is the term for a pill humans can take in the society to go on mini-vacations, forget about stresses, relieve stress in awkward situations.

-peyotl: equivalent of alcohol used in the "Reservation" by "savages".

genetic engineering and social classification

-In this society, all humans are bred in a laboratory, and engineered to be of a certain working class and intelligence.

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated Regular At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading level of this title (if applicable):

Date Submitted to Department Chair: May 1, 2007

Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults