



Cody Schaefer

30 April 2019

English 8A / English 102

Mrs. Connolly

Dear Reader,

If you are reading this, you must care what I've written here. This place is not as perfect as they try to make it seem. They have control over us. They can see everything we do, and they can hear everything we say. Inside this document contains all the information you need to know. In here is everything you need to know to take down our oppressors.

We cannot do this alone. We need to work together or we will not accomplish anything. Read this document carefully, as a lack of its knowledge could result in your demise.

If you are still reading, you must really care about what I have written. What you need to understand is this: you are not alone. There is plenty of us. Everywhere. We are global. We have created a network that has stood untouched by political leaders for a very long time now.

I hope you find what you are looking for in this document. Once you read this, there is no going back. You are one of us now.

- Cody J. Schaefer

Attention all citizens. We bring you a message from the Government:

We have appreciated your tolerance of our policies. We are glad to announce we have now entered war with our neighbors down south. We expect full patriotism in this new time of conflict. It is also expected for any citizen to report any treasonous action they may witness, as allowance of such crime will result in termination.

Cody Schaefer

Mrs. Connolly

English 8A

3 April 2019

What's the Deal with Dystopia?

Dystopian fiction has been around for close to a century now, and people today still love to see a good story about a cruel world with a hero against it all. What started as a way to commentate on the state of politics or war has become sort of a setting builder. Though the purpose of the genre seems to have transformed since its creation, it still reigns as a genre that audiences continue to find interesting and innovative.

But the question remains, why do people like the genre so much? Why does a dystopia, a word which by definition is somewhere that is undesirable, create such a powerful vessel that engages audiences to listen to a particular theme or message? Well, it may lie in the possibilities allowed with a dystopian setting and the characters placed inside of it.

Dystopia is derived from its perfect, older brother, the utopia. Coined by Sir Thomas More and the title of his book in 1516, utopia comes from the Greek words for "good place" and "no place" (Shiau, 3). More was skeptical of the possibilities of their existence, because the idea of a perfect society just seems so illogical. What about a society that has gone horribly wrong? The interesting thing is this: it seems a lot more possible.

George Orwell's *1984* is probably the most popular example of dystopian literature. It hits all the points and created some of the tropes of dystopian fiction that exists today. Themes of constant surveillance, totalitarian governments, and a single man against a regime were all used in Orwell's novel and set precedents for works of the future. He created the world that many other forms of dystopias are based upon.

That is where the appeal for the genre begins to form. The setting plays a big role in an audience's attachment to a dystopian world. Suppression of knowledge like in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984* create a world where people are hidden from the truth to achieve dystopia. Meanwhile, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* creates a world where people are so distracted by the need to be entertained that they don't care to have information. The differences in world building not only allows for creativity in pieces in the genre, but it also allows the audience to get a glimpse as to what a world gone bad in so many ways could look like. It becomes engaging because the setting makes the story feel so much more honest to the audience (Astor, 2). The idea of having such a raw, harsh story to some people allow them to become more immersed, allowing them to grasp on the themes of the story even better.

Any great story starts with a great main character. Dystopian stories open up a lot of doors for potential in how the protagonist acts. Many novels like the idea of the main character working for the very organization that they despise. Guy Montag in *Fahrenheit 451* is a fireman that burns books, and Katniss in *The Hunger Games* participates in the games more than once. It allows for a great story to be told since no one can ever always predict the actions of the protagonist. It allows for a hero to stand up for what is right, and that is what allows the audience to get so close to these characters. Dystopia has this weird effect where it engages the audience so much more than other genres. The audience can relate to the struggles of these characters. It makes it so much more captivating to read and learn if they stand up courageously or wince in fear. Seeing how they react to conflicts makes the story incredibly all the more real (Astor, 2). Dystopia creates a vessel for people to think about what they would do if they were in the shoes of the protagonists.

Dystopian fiction is all about reflection. Its creation is directly related to reflecting fears of real-world events into a story to cope with the issues. Orwell wrote his *1984* out of the fear he had of the Soviet Union at the time, and Margaret Atwood wrote *The Handmaid's Tale* after Ronald Reagan was

elected (Locke, 3). These writers are not the first ones to use the medium as a way to cope with problems, but did it in such a way that made lasting impressions on readers.

Dystopia has a way of connecting the reader to a story that other genres cannot. This does not mean every book should force a dystopian setting, rather a dystopia should form naturally. In all the dystopian classics, the world is built up in the same way any other character is. It changes and develops like other characters in the story. This is what separates the great dystopian novels from the mediocre ones. The world playing a vital part of the story is what allows the narrative to come alive in the way that was not possible before its inception.

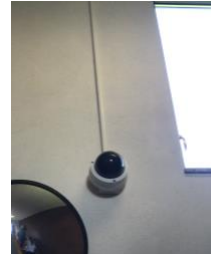
Attention all citizens. We bring you a message from the Government:

We strive to protect our citizens. Any and all media deemed unfit for our citizens will be eradicated at once. Much of the literature created before our uprising was made with intent to work up the mind and create fear. The Government takes great pride in its expulsion of these harmful materials.

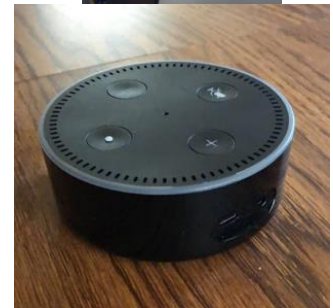
How to Survive in a Dystopia

So, you're stuck in a dystopian society, eh? I've been there. You are going to need to know the do's and don'ts for living in one of these hell holes.

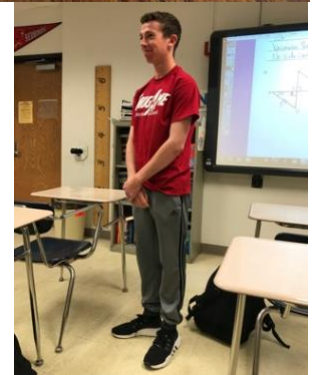
First thing's first, those stupid cameras. They are everywhere. They've got every building, street corner, and back alley on constant surveillance. When looking for them, look at them only in quick glances, as staring at them will make the guy on the other side suspicious. If you want to do any reading or writing, make sure you are out of their line of sight, and if you and your rebellious friends are trying to find a place to gather, make sure there are no cameras!



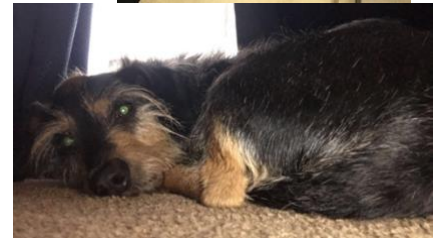
¹So, if now you're thinking, "Well, at least my house is safe", think again. Though they didn't try and hide it (at least not very well), they were not very vocal about when the government bought out all the largest corporations in the country. This means all those fancy gadgets have their eyes and ears on you while you're in your humble abode. That means every internet search you have made, social media post, and what television shows you watch they take note and put that into their database to analyze you. So, make sure anything labeled "smart" is fully unplugged before you do any acts of treason.



²One thing a lot of people don't think of is their appearance. You need to make sure you present yourself in a way that doesn't draw any unwanted attention. The best advice I can give you involves maintaining perfect posture. I have provided a picture of a young boy with impeccable posture as an example. No government would think he's scheming a way to take down their regime. The perfect angle of his spine makes the rulers believe that their constant oppression and torture has given him a sense of fear.



³Lastly, I'm only adding this because I think it could be a genuine concern. I have been hearing rumors that some governments have been working to create cybernetic canines that can be used as another form of surveillance. I would advise making sure your dog is not some kind of drone that could be feeding the government information that could lead to your death.



Attention all citizens. We bring you a message from the Government:

Resistance is not an issue the Government takes lightly. We would like to remind all citizens if they feel uncomfortable with any of our policies, they may come forth, it will be taken care of accordingly. All laws placed by the Government is meant to ensure the safety of our people, and any attempt to protest is seen by the Government as an attack on the safety of the people.

The Snake Burrows⁴

Three days ago, the accident occurred. It still replayed in her head as vividly as when it happened.

The incident made national news, as it was practically an act of terrorism. On a Thursday night, in the middle of a very intense game of Augmented Cybertennis between her and her friends, Margaret was one of the few people who had an encounter with snakes that trespassed onto the game patio.

Snakes are betrayers of the Union. Mostly people who resisted the new set of policies put out by the Union. Instead of imprisoning them, the Union decided to just separate them from normal society, letting them fend for themselves. Snakes began to come about shortly after the Union took control, and numerous rebellions have been attempted by snakes with none doing much more than efficiently lower the snake population.

The snake grabbed hold of Margaret by the shoulders, ripping the game visor off of her eyes, and while her vision was still adjusting spoke to her just quietly enough so only she could hear,

“The Union is a sick and cruel organization. They limit our access to information and feed off our obliviousness. I fear-”

That was all he could say before he was shot three times by a Union police officer. The other snakes began to run away as the bystanders all began to stand and applaud the officer. Margaret sat there on the ground doing the one thing the Union would not want her to do.

She was thinking.

Though not just thinking, but analyzing, reliving, even making assumptions. It was the first time she had ever done something like this. She was terrified. She didn't understand why she felt what she

did. She knew she couldn't tell anyone about what she was going through. She knew the minute she opened her mouth she was a snake.

The Union takes great care to make sure the minds of the people are never left alone to allow for such thoughts to occur. When the waves of censorship of literature and film began to take effect, the Union began pumping billions of dollars into various forms of entertainment corporations. Replace the meaningful pieces of work with mind-numbing spectacle fluff. The connection between art and emotion had to be broken. The idea was: why would someone care to read Romeo and Juliet and feel sad at the end when they could just go out and stare at a bunch of flashy, twinkly lights and end the night happy and thoughtless?

It worked phenomenally.

When statisticians for the Union calculated the estimated response of the people to the reformatations, they agreed fifty-eight percent was a generous number and would allow the Union to scrape up a foundation to build off of. The initial numbers peaked at around seventy-three percent. The Union had already won.

Now Margaret sat there wondering about what kinds of things were being kept hidden by the Union. The concept ate her alive. She understood if a snake would be willing to die just to tell a few people his beliefs, they must mean something. She settled on what she wanted to do.

She wanted to be enlightened. She wanted to know all the information that the Union not dare allow the people to know. She knew of a way to find the information, but if she did her life would change forever.

The Union decided that if anyone for any reason wanted to speak with a snake, they should be allowed easy access to the snake burrows. The catch, however, is no person should ever have a reason

to speak to such foul creatures. The Union has no other choice than to assume you are trying to acquire knowledge banned by the Union and you shall be deemed as a snake forever.

A quick ride in the Union train took Margaret to the southernmost district that was separated from the snake burrows by a wall. In the wall was an office with a door surrounded by two guards. She made eye contact with one of the guards and she whipped her eyes back onto the door. The other guard understood and opened the door. As she walked through, both guards took off their hats and placed them over their hearts and bowed their heads.

Attention all citizens. We bring you a message from the Government:

There have been theories circulating that some form of “revolution” is being arranged among some of our people. The Government wants to verify that no rebellious action will be tolerated if it were to arise. Punishment will be in order for those who seek it.

How to Bake the Perfect Dystopian Society⁴

Ingredients:

1 Totalitarian Leader (could be substituted with an authoritarian government)

A Generous Amount of Limitation of Freedom

Constant Surveillance (the more the merrier)

Decades of Harsh Oppression

Suppression of Thought (either by torture or brainwashing, or both!)



Process:

The first thing you want to do is get your society prepped to be taken over. Begin slowly mixing in the harsh oppression. Make sure to not go too fast or your society might become unsettled. This step is crucial as it lays the foundation your dystopia will be standing on.

Right after beating your society down, you should now elect a leader to become the face of the new society. When looking for the right leader, remember to pick someone that can look menacing on the hundreds of billboards that will remind citizens who is in control.

Now is when you begin mixing in the good stuff. You are going to want to implement a system that can assure constant surveillance of the members of your society. This will allow you to keep any form of uprisings in your dystopia from destroying your hard work. Cameras and microphones should do the trick. It also helps to rise that sweet, sweet fear that will keep your people from turning on you. (That would be the last thing you'd need, right?)

At this step in the process is when you will start to notice that there seems to be a lot of thoughts going through the heads of those people of yours. We are going to need to get rid of that as soon as possible as those thought could cascade into the downfall of your society. You're going to need to a method of suppressing those thoughts in the way that works best for you. While torture is a great way to beat your people down into submission, it doesn't implement well for children. The best thing to do for the kids is to put them through a series of brainwash sessions. This will make sure they don't act up when they get older. (If you want to be safe, add both!)

Now that it is all prepared, go ahead and let that bake for a couple decades. While you are waiting, you could pass the time by starting a nuclear war or two. When it is done, you can rest easy and bask in the immense power you have created.

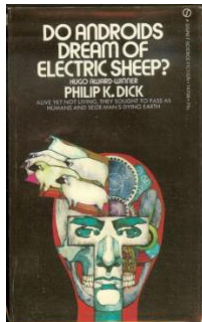
My Top 5 Dystopian Novels

5.) A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess

Although probably more known for the Stanley Kubrick adaptation, the book, in my opinion, is far better. Set in a future Britain where crime is rampant, teenage Alex and his “Droogies” spend their nights drinking spiked milk and breaking into people’s house and destroying their belongings. After being caught for his crimes, Alex is subjected to a new form of therapy to stop his violence. This book contains some of the cleverest writing I’ve ever seen and does a great job of creating the atmosphere of the story. A simple story with an ending that will make you be glad you read it.



4.) Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? By Philip K. Dick



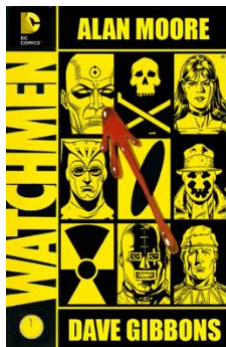
Before being played by Harrison Ford, Rick Deckard was the protagonist of Dick’s with the philosophical name. The book does an amazing job of setting up a world where the rich can colonize other planets to avoid living on a planet where dust from nuclear war kills the people of Earth. People on these other planets are gifted with androids that are almost indistinguishable from humans. Deckard's job is to track down androids that flee to Earth and kill them. His job is easy until he begins to sympathize with the things he has to eliminate. It is beautifully written and begins to make you think from the second you read the title.

3.) 1984 by George Orwell

Probably one of the most iconic dystopian novels ever written. Orwell set the bar for what a dystopian novel should be. Reading it leaves you with a fear that Big Brother could really be watching us right now. Orwell wrote about a future (well, at least when he wrote it that was the future) where everyone is constantly watched and no one is allowed to think. We read as our main man, Winston Smith, has to find a way to live a life of thought and free expression. If you are looking for somewhere to start, this is where.



2.) Watchmen by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons



Now, before you say, “Wait a second, this isn't a dystopian novel,” hear me out. Wouldn’t you consider a 1980s America where Nixon has been president for 20 years a dystopia? Add onto that the fact that he used a superhuman to win the Vietnam War, is rumbling up a nuclear war with Russia where his only plan of defense is a godlike superhuman who feels no compassion for humans anymore, and outlawed masked heroes allowing crime to flourish in America. I wouldn’t want to live there. Moore’s storytelling of these former masked heroes and learning about their pasts is enhanced by Gibbons’ beautifully drawn and colored comic panels. It is amazing how it can switch from one genre to another so effortlessly. At one-point it’s a crime

drama, then a murder mystery, then a political commentary. This is easily the best graphic novel I have read and probably will ever.

1.) Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Guy Montag is a man who wants to read whose job is to burn books. Bradbury's world has banned books so people don't think and instead replace it with mind-numbing entertainment. Coming from a guy that rarely ever reads, this book is phenomenal. It is the first book in a long time to show me how important literature is to us, and did it in such a way that made me feel compelled to read more. This book alone is the reason I want to keep reading for the rest of my life. It demonstrates the perfect way to use a dystopian setting in a way that enhances the story that you do not see in the young adult dystopian novels that come out these days.



Attention all citizens. We bring you a message from the Government:

Though attempts have been made in recent times, the Government cannot fall. This rebellion that is forming is fighting a losing battle. Our forces will stand strong with our loyal citizens watching. The Government has done nothing but make a world that is safe for the people and they come at the Government with nothing but violence and hatred. It should be of utmost importance to destroy this rebel campaign and obliterate any possibility of its return.

My Top 5 Dystopian Movies

5.) Ready Player One



Though I have heard the book is not very spectacular, I had a lot of fun watching this movie. Ready Player One takes place in a world that has become run down, but the people don't necessarily care because they are able to spend most of their time in the OASIS: a digital world where anything is possible. When the creator of the game died, he left an Easter egg in the world that would grant complete control of the OASIS to the person who found it. The main character, Wade Watts embarks on a journey through pop culture references and all things nerd to find the egg. The journey is not easy, and he has to face enemies in both the real and digital world. It is a fun movie that someone like me enjoys understanding all the references.

4.) The Matrix

A science-fiction staple, The Matrix boasts some of the most advanced visuals of the time and very clever cinematography by the Wachowskis. I remember watching this for the first time and being blown away as a little kid. Keanu Reeves plays a hacker called Neo who learns that the world is actually a simulation called the Matrix. The story follows him as he tries to learn how to control the Matrix and free the people trapped in it. A classic movie that everyone should watch at least once, and anything with Keanu Reeves is a win.



3.) Wall-E



Probably the most adorable dystopia there is. Something about watching a little trash-collecting robot who finds a living plant and makes an attempt to repopulate the Earth is so humbling. In Wall-E, the Earth has become uninhabitable and human have become extremely lazy and overweight. Robots fully service them, and they no longer have the need to walk due to floating chairs that carry them. As well, one gigantic corporation makes all goods and was likely the reason people could no longer live on Earth. A great movie by Pixar that probably everyone has seen.

2.) Blade Runner 2049

The Oscar winning sequel to the 1980s cult classic. Blade Runner 2049 takes place thirty years after the original and follows a new blade runner, K (played by Ryan Gosling), who is trying to find Rick Deckard after he finds a replicant that can now reproduce. He needs Deckard's help to stop a plan that could end whatever is left of their world. The film does an amazing job staying faithful to the original film, and this film is one of the most visually stunning movies I have ever watched. This film won two Oscars for both its visual effects and its cinematography.



1.) TRON: Legacy



A film that, in my opinion, should get way more praise. It is also a sequel to a film from the 80s that gave it a visual upgrade for a new age of cinema. It follows Sam Flynn, whose father, Kevin Flynn, created a game called TRON, as he tries to figure out why his father went missing when he was a child. He learns that his father has been trapped in "The Grid" and enters it himself to try and save him. He learns that the digital world has been overtaken by Clu, a digital clone of Sam's father who has turned the people of the digital world against Kevin. The film is so fun to watch and has some amazing visuals. It also boasts a soundtrack by Daft Punk, which is the best movie soundtrack I have ever heard.

Attention all citizens. We bring you a message from the Rebellion.

The Government has fallen. We won. We will restore freedom to everyone. We can be free to read and think and love again. Fair and just democracy will be practiced from now on where people can choose who leads and who does not. Those who died for this freedom will be forever remembered. May they see that their sacrifices were worth it.

Long live freedom.

The One Place I Am Safe⁶

Living in this place
Is a nightmare.
Every step I take through these streets
Is just another chain on my ankles
That keeps me here forever.

I can't *escape*.

They watch us from **every** angle
Like we're statues on display.
They take note of every movement of my body
And every twitch of my face.
Every word I speak is analyzed
Like scientists with an experiment,
And all I want to do is **SCREAM**,
But I can't.

I can't *scream*.

But I can here.
Here no government organization
Or political dictators can track my words
Or murder me for what I say.
Here I am free

I'm only safe inside my head.

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End Abstracts

¹Shoutout to Nick Grote for letting me take a picture of his Amazon Echo.

²Anyone who knows Brennan knows he has amazing posture.

³That is my dog, Rascal. He is almost 11 years old and is a dachshund-terrier mix.

⁴ The idea of the games came from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and I wanted to have some form of discrimination like in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Blade Runner*.

⁵Credit goes to Damaliha for this awesome idea! This piece was actually the most fun to write.

⁶I took a lot of inspiration from how Orwell describes thinking in *1984*. I was fascinated about how the thought Police could tell if you were thinking by looking at your face.



About the Author

Cody Schaefer has never been one to pick up a book and give it a read. Being more of a numbers guy, he focused his time in subjects like math and physics. He used his strengths in extracurricular activities like Scholar Bowl and the Robotics Team. His participation in Scholar Bowl eventually brought him to playing as Varsity captain of the team. It was not until his senior year of high school that he began to take reading seriously. Although starting slowly, he started to set time aside in his day to read whatever book he was reading. He found dystopian and science-fiction novels to be his favorites. Cody hopes to continue reading throughout his life and allow it to become one of his passions.