



## Brave New World

by Aldous Huxley

### In a Nutshell

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Published in 1932 by [Aldous Huxley](#), *Brave New World* portrays a futuristic society in which the individual is sacrificed for the state, science is used to control and subjugate, and all forms of art and history are outlawed. In short, the book fits into the classic mold of "dystopian" literature. ("Dystopia" is the opposite of utopia. In a dystopian society, everything is bad, and it's generally the fault of government.)

While the novel has certainly been a success, it has also been criticized from many quarters. As a work of ideas and philosophy, it's fascinating. As a work of imaginative fiction trying to be a novel...it actually fails, at least according to the tough critics. You'll find that parts of the novel veer off into philosophical treatise land (Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen, in particular), the plot has some holes, and the characters have some major inconsistencies.

But if you step outside of the realm of the stuffiest of literary critics, you can appreciate the impact that *Brave New World* has made on 20th century literature with its dire warnings about the future. The novel is frequently compared to a much later novel, Orwell's *1984*, because the novels treat the same subject matter but in different light. In 1958, Huxley published an essay called *Brave New World Revisited*, in which he basically says, "I was right" and predicts that his horrifying vision of the future will come to fruition sooner rather than later.

### Why Should I Care?

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In *Brave New World's* new world, there is no God. There's no religion, no Ten Commandments, no spiritual pilgrimages. Why? Because "God is incompatible with machines," we're told. Eliminate suffering, and you don't need God to give you comfort.

OK, now let's back up 532 years to roughly...today. Or maybe, by the time you're reading this, yesterday. If you've turned on your TV in the last few years, you've probably heard something on the news about evolution, creationism, and intelligent design. As we learn more and more through science and can do more through technology, the question is this: Will the need for God disappear once we don't need a higher being to give us answers or comfort?

Comfort, answers...

either way, the topic here is one of unease.

In *Brave New World*, physical ease means God isn't needed.

In today's world, the question can be expanded to ask whether *mental* ease means God isn't needed.

We spent some time looking into what the world has to say about this intelligent design/creationism/evolution debate.

As it turns out, the big debate isn't so much about which is true - it's about which theory we should teach in schools.

Wait a minute...we're having this HUGE, raging argument about God, and it's not even really about God? It's about education?

And now we'd like to turn your attention, once again, to *Brave New World*.

Huxley's novel isn't just a warning about science - it's a warning about education.

The citizens of his future-world-gone-wrong are indoctrinated with irrational lessons in morality and behavior from day one.

Teach them the same mindless platitudes over and over, and before you know it, this indoctrination is a part of who they are.

(Actually, according to Huxley, it drips onto them like wax and forms a big, blobby mess where a person used to be.)

Huxley's "hypnopaedia" (a.k.a.

brainwashing) makes it clear that with education comes a HUGE responsibility.

You Shmoopsters out there might be learning, you might be teaching, but no matter who you are, you're in a position to question, debate, and decide what will be taught.

We all are.

So let's not mess it up.