

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Brave New World Revisited by Aldous Huxley

---

## Book Information

Aldous Huxley, Brave New World Revisited

Quiz Number: 7104

Harper & Row, 1958

ISBN 0-06-080984-1; LCCN

147 Pages

Book Level: 11.4

Interest Level: UG

This somber reflection examines threats to humanity from internal forces and presents a plea for self-education.

**Topics:** Character Traits, Self Improvement; Community Life, Freedoms; Mysteries, Threats

## Main Characters

This book is an extended essay and, therefore, has no fictional characters.

## Vocabulary

**demagogue** politician who appeals to emotion and prejudice

**despotism** government in which unlimited power is vested in a single, usually severe and oppressive, ruler

**inculcate** instill by repeated teaching

**oligarchy** government by a few people

**verisimilitude** appearance of truth

## Synopsis

This book is a sequel-of-sorts to *Brave New World*. In this book, Aldous Huxley explores what he believes to be the frightening future that is in store for mankind. He explains that punishment does not work to restrain individuals; it temporarily stops the undesirable behavior, but it does not permanently reduce the offender's desire to perpetrate the behaviors. He describes other countries and/or governments which have used physical punishment as a way to control its people. He asserts that a better alternative would be reinforcing good behavior instead of using punishment.

Huxley believes the two main problems in society are over-population and over-organization. These deprive people of a fair chance to govern themselves and, instead, put power into the hands of a few, who are known as the Power Elite. He criticizes the lack of available birth control. He seems to have mixed feelings about vaccinations and medical advances as well because they have saved countless lives, and fewer people are dying and more are being born. The "death control" is not what it used to be, and population is out of control. Overpopulation drains the earth's resources as well as forces governments to become dictatorial. The other problem is over-organization. This is man's desire to bring meaning and organization to chaos. Such problems caused by over-organization include technology, which has also fostered more control being placed into the hands of a few, and less control and power into the hands of most.

Huxley writes that propaganda is very rampant in American society, not just during the reign of such tyrants as Hitler. He explains that there are two types of propaganda: rational and non-rational. Rational propaganda is "in favor of action that is consonant with the enlightened self-interest of those who make it and those to whom it is addressed." Non-rational propaganda is "not consonant with anybody's enlightened self-interest, but is dictated by, and appeals to, passion."

Huxley then spends some time discussing various types of propaganda used and man's susceptibility to them. Hypnopaedia is used to suggest things to people when they are in a light-sleep stage. It is useful only for moral teachings and is highly controversial. There are also strobonic injections which flash subliminal messages or images to people, usually to sell products or promote something. He ponders the effect of such methods in the hands of cruel dictators. He claims, with the right methods and conditions, virtually anyone can be made to do about anything.

Education seems to be a key in combating the events that he foreshadows. People need to resist. He proposes legislation that would prevent such

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Brave New World Revisited by Aldous Huxley

---

methods as sleep-teaching and "poisonous propaganda." He also endorses universal birth control. He encourages living in small communities and dividing people into small self-governing groups.

## Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

### Initial Understanding

The author explains certain factors which affect a person's susceptibility to manipulation. Some of the factors listed are illness, fatigue, negative emotions, and the time just prior to a nervous breakdown. Can you think of a time when you were susceptible to manipulation? What are some examples?

*Students may choose examples involving peer pressure. A student may have been persuaded to smoke or drink by someone for fear of not being accepted.*

### Literary Analysis

Huxley mentions deep-seated fears that advertisers exploit to sell products. What are some current examples of this?

*Endless beauty product ads prey on women's fears of not looking young and pretty. Lingerie and underwear ads seem to suggest the consumers will look like the models if they wear them. Car and clothing ads prey on peoples' fears of not fitting in or impressing others.*

### Inferential Comprehension

Is it acceptable for governments to use methods such as hypnopaedia if their intentions are noble, such as for the reform of prisoners?

*Some students may agree with Huxley's assertion that, if given the power to use such methods, there is no guarantee the users' intentions will remain good. Any law allowing for this would be too great a temptation for malevolence and abuse. Other students may disagree with Huxley, believing the benefits would outweigh the dangers.*

### Constructing Meaning

Some solutions Huxley gives to the bleak future he predicts are preventative legislation to outlaw "the psychological slave trade," mandatory use of birth control, and redistribution of the wealth. Can you think of any other solutions?

*One answer might reflect home life. One might argue that the structure of the American family has so deteriorated that it seems to foster deviance and emotional problems. Parents and children must have good relationships to create children who will become strong and confident adults.*

## Teachable Skills

**Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors** Huxley discusses the horrific treatment of prisoners and the nightmarish world in which they live. They are physically and psychologically abused or tortured to obtain confessions or information. Have students research the treatment of prisoners of war and political prisoners, from the Nazi concentration camps to Vietnam. What atrocities were perpetrated against individuals to make them talk?

**Drawing Conclusions** Huxley mentions the sociological problem of the Power Elite, which controls most of the world's wealth and power. Have students research this sociological perspective, made famous by sociologist C. Wright Mills. Essentially, the theory states that the United States is not a democratic society. Instead, America is dominated by a group of elites, which consist of big business and the corporate rich, the military as a bureaucratic entity, and the executive branch of the federal government. Ask students to define the word democracy, and then form two debate teams, one to support the claim that America is a democracy and one to support C. Wright Mills's claim that it is not. Have the students debate and determine which team has the most convincing argument.

**Making Predictions** In 1931 and 1958, Huxley's books predicted such things as worldwide

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Brave New World Revisited by Aldous Huxley

---

declining health, lower IQs, psychological manipulation, and increase of despotic governments. There is another man who predicted many events for our world -- Nostradamus. He is said to have predicted such events as world wars and Hitler's reign. Apparently, he predicted the rise of the anti-Christ in the near future. Have students examine the predictions of both men. Are they similar? Do they seem realistic? Have they come true?

**Identifying Reading Strategies** Huxley suggests a controversial solution to his predicted bleak future -- birth control. Have students write argumentative essays concerning the government's right, or lack thereof, to enforce birth control. Address such topics as: a woman's (or man's) right to choose whether or not to use contraception, and the teachings of the Catholic church or other religions who oppose birth control. Would increased birth control really solve the problems Huxley mentions? How could birth control actually be enforced? What would the penalty be if people refused to use birth control? Would there be a limit placed on the number of children as well, as in China?