

Amnesty Assignment:

Replace test and quiz grades below a 75 from January 6- February 13 with a 75.
DUE on Monday February 23, 2015.

- You must view the film *Wall-E* and compare it to the texts read in class using the following questions and charts.
- You must also read an additional dystopian novel of your choosing and complete the chart at the end about the elements of dystopian and the dystopian protagonist. This can be your choice dystopian novel.

Social Commentary: What is the author REALLY trying to say?

(Adapted from <http://www.robisonwells.com/2011/05/754/>)

-What is "social commentary?"

The expression of one's point of view or feelings towards society (or things going on in society), usually through literature.

SN: What is interesting about this blog is something that a lot of you have missed. The dystopian protagonist is generally a member of society that doesn't quite fit in. **He or she is characterized in such a way that it is evident what the problems of the society actually are.** The dystopian protagonist does not represent the whole society!!! To understand what the author is trying to say about the society, we have to look BEYOND the protagonist, and look at what everyone else is doing...

Think about it....

While the pedestrian is out walking around, enjoying nature and thinking, what is everyone else doing?

While Equality is spending time alone, and making new discoveries, what is everyone else doing?

Which takes us to the next point...

-How do dystopian novels and social commentary work together?

All of the novels/short stories that we have read in this dystopian unit have provided social commentary .The author has focused on ONE element of society, and exaggerated it to the gross extreme. As a reader, we see the negative effects of this element, and are warned of its potential to destroy society as we know it.

<i>Story</i>	<i>Real-World Issue</i>	<i>Negative Consequence</i>
"The Pedestrian"	Dependence on technology/entertainment. Everyone is "plugged-in".	
<i>Anthem</i>	Our desire to be equal. No one's feelings are hurt, because no one is better than anyone else.	

So, looking at the above chart, if you had to jot down a 1-2 sentence **WARNING** that the authors are trying to communicate, what would it be?

"The Pedestrian"
<i>Anthem</i>

Coincidentally, these warnings can also serve as the story's **theme**. We will be talking more about theme in the near future, so you should leave the space below blank for some notes ☺

Social Commentary: *Wall-E*

Part One:

Complete the following while viewing.

1. What is going on on Earth? (What is the obvious problem?)
 - a. **Text-World:** Do we face this issue? Explain.
 - b. **Social Commentary:** What is the warning that is understood just from the first few minutes concerning this issue?
2. **Text-World:** Look at the Buy-N-Large store. Clearly it is huge, and has taken over small business. Do we have anything like this in our own society? Explain.
 - a. **Critical thinking moment:** The CEO of the Buy-N-Large is ONE PERSON. Explain the potential negative side effects of having ONE MAN in control of ONE BUSINESS running the entire economy.
 - b. Would there be a problem if there were no more small businesses? (Think Ayn Rand's commentary on communism)
3. **Text-Text:** This society is dependent on technology. Can we make any connections to other texts that we have read? Explain.

STOP at 44 minutes and answer

4. Literary Strategy: So far, we have seen NO dialogue, yet we understand the messages that the film is trying to communicate.
 - a. What it is that allows us to understand these messages?
 - b. Do you think the messages would be clearer if there was actual dialogue?

While we are stopped... think about the amount of technology we have available to us today...

- What technology do you rely on on a daily basis?
- How would your life be altered if it wasn't available to you?
- If you did not have this technology, what would you do instead?

As you continue the movie, see if you can make some text-world connections between the technology that the citizens in the movie have, and technology that we have... some examples that I saw are:

- Wii
- Electric Wheelchairs/scooters
- SIRI
- I-Pad

Jot them down as you see them... Remember, you want to say what it is in the movie that you see in our world today.... Keep in mind that this society is completely fictional, and that the movie came out in 2008. (Basically, it is crazy to me that we now have something like SIRI, and the people in the movie had something similar 4 years before it was invented...)

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| | <p>7. What happens when people unplug from the technology? (Do we see a bit of social commentary here??)</p> <p>a. Text-World: Are we constantly plugged in? Explain.</p> <p>8. Based on what you have seen, why did the people actually not go back to earth after being on the ship for 5 years?</p> <p>9. In the final showdown, we have a man vs. technology conflict. Who wins? What is the underlying message of this conflict?</p> <p>10. In the end, we are left with a message of hope. Explain how this is evident in other stories we have read.</p> <p>a. Why do you think it is important for us to be left with this type of message?</p> |
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Part Three- After Viewing:

Short Essay: 4-6 Sentences each

1. Is this society dystopian? Explain.
2. How is this society similar to that in *Fahrenheit 451*?
3. What are the problems in society that this movie addresses?
4. What social commentary is this movie trying to make?

Elements of a Dystopian Society: Revisited!

- **The society/social structure plays an enormous role in the story.** I would say that, of all the elements listed here, this one is the most essential to a true dystopia. A society in a dystopia is never merely a backdrop; it is a driving force to both character and plot. I'd go so far as to say that if you've created a society that isn't a central element to your story, then your book probably isn't dystopian: it's likely sci-fi, or post-apocalyptic, or cyber-punk or something else.
- **Strong elements of control, and lack of certain freedoms.** As we talked about on Monday, a true dystopia is a utopia with a fatal flaw. Generally, it is that flaw that allows for the utopia: constant surveillance (lack of privacy) ensures complete safety; lack of individual choices allows for the society to make decisions that benefit the group as a whole. In *The Hunger Games*, the lack of freedom came in the form of mandated entry into the games, and the games were used as a propaganda machine to control and dominate the outer districts.
- **Restricted information.** This is more obvious in some dystopians, like *1984*, where the protagonist's job is to edit and alter history, or in *Fahrenheit 451*, where the firemen burn books for the "good of humanity". But while other dystopias may not be as overtly concerned with censorship or historical revisionism, almost all of them control information, often hiding it from the public. The title character in *The Giver* is one of the only people to know the history of their society. In *Uglies*, characters don't know the negative consequences of what happens when they are made into Pretties (and those negative consequences only increase the society's ability to hide information).
- **Citizens/characters are dehumanized to some extent.** In many dystopias, not only are freedoms taken away, but many of the elements of humanity are taken away as well. In *The Giver*, the citizens have lost the ability to experience pleasure or pain. In *Brave New World*, citizens are encouraged to take drugs to pacify and distract them. In *The Hunger Games*, teens are forced to kill. In *We*, citizens wear identical clothes and have numbers instead of names, losing much of their personal identity.
- **Conformity. Individuality and dissension are bad/immoral/illegal.** In all of these societies, the state/government acts with totalitarian control. While some citizens may ostensibly have more freedom than others, none can freely oppose the philosophies of the regime. The government will act swiftly to ensure that one bad apple doesn't rule the entire barrel, either through "re-education" (as in *1984*), imprisonment, execution, or something similar (characters in *We* get lobotomized for speaking out).
- **There is the illusion of a perfect world.** The ultimate goal of the society, through all of the above elements, is to create a world that is peaceful/stable/equal/etc. And in most dystopias, there is a large portion of the population who believes that the society has succeeded, that this is a utopia. One of my very favorite elements in *Matched* is that, unlike many dystopians, even until we get to the last few chapters (of the first book) the main character really doesn't see the society as evil and wrong. It's the only world she's known, and though she may be discovering disturbing truths, it takes a long time for her to even conceive of the idea that the society as a whole might be bad (rather than have a few isolated problems). Even in *The Hunger Games*, which starts from an outsider's (Katniss's) perspective, we can see that the people in The Capitol view their society as idyllic—they don't even recognize how horrible the games are.

Again, not all of these need to be present to have a dystopia, but these are all very common and important to the genre. (Going back to definitions, I think using these elements as a guidepost, rather than the vague "bad place" definition, will be much more useful if you're thinking of writing a dystopia.)

Dystopian Analysis

Dystopian Characteristic	
A figurehead or concept is worshipped by the citizens of the society.	
Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance.	
Citizens live in a "dehumanized" state.	
Conformity among citizens and assumption that individuality and dissent are bad.	
An illusion of a perfect utopian society.	

Dystopian Protagonist

Dystopian Protagonist Characteristic	
Often feels trapped in their life and is struggling to escape.	
Questions the existing social and political systems.	
Demonstrates behavior or expresses ideas that reflect a belief that something is terribly wrong with the society in which they live.	
Is treated as an outcast by society due to appearance, behavior, thoughts, beliefs, or other characteristics that are in conflict with the norms of the dystopia.	

