

Dystopian Novel

- Key:= Language ironically presents society as a wonderful place, vastly improved over past.
- Plot line=horrific experiences happen to characters and they either escape or establishment wins
- Structure- usually in three “Acts”
 - Act I- Exposition =establish parameters of society and introduction to characters- usually some precipitous event occurs at the end of Act I that introduces a central conflict and starts the rising action
 - Act II- Rising Action= follows character’s attempts to escape or change society. Climax occurs at the point that character’s attempts to fulfill a desire and society’s attempts to thwart him/her come to an impasse - one or the other must win
 - Act III- Falling action= the theme is derived from the resolution. Is escape or change a success or failure?

Dystopian Characters include...

- Representative of controlling power
- Representative of “typical “ citizen who is oblivious to or happy with society’s flaws
 - Staunchly patriotic- who could be dissatisfied?
 - Naïve or take for granted that life is just the way it is
 - Passive or philosophical- are aware of flaws, but see no need to or no point in change
- Representative of disenfranchised- desire of escape or change
 - Initially love or hold high position in the society- event(s) precipitate a change in belief
 - Initially hate society because of events prior to beginning of novel or for some personal “quirk” or “defect” which deems them an outcast. Feel powerless to effect change

NOTE: the narrative view (whether first person or other) almost always comes from the inside, e.g. a member of the society or someone who enters and is adopted by the society. Makes sense that an outsider might not be able to offer us a convincing evaluation of the dystopia.

Common Thematic or Philosophical Traits of the Dystopian Novel

- Individual is worth **no more** than his value to the political machine.
- Power can exist in a single dictator or in larger governmental organization.
- Military control may be a factor, but so too are more subtle forms of social control.
- Major forms of control may include, but are not limited to...
 - **Popular culture-** distractions like drugs or alcohol, promiscuity, rampant consumerism are encouraged
 - **Emotional, mental or psychological-** 24 -hour surveillance, assault of auditory and visual images, intervention in marriage and intimacy
 - **Physical-** restrictions in movement, government rations
 - **Education-** schools brainwash perpetuating loyalty to controlling power
 - **Mass media and communication-** dissemination of propaganda, manipulation of time and history, a scapegoat to deflect blame for suffering and turmoil- e.g. a foreign enemy, the rebellious or disenfranchised outcasts, a dissenting political voice