Brave New World
First Harper Perennial Modern Classics Edition
Concept Analysis

Plot Summary and Organizational Patterns:

Brave New World, a novel about the future condition of the world in 2540 A.D., describes the so-called advances society makes as it does away with personal agency, accountability, and freedom. Characters have been bred into social caste system; a system that they have no ability to move from. The story takes a new turn when readers are introduced to the “savage reservation”—the only place in the world that is “uncivilized.” Here families, religion, and freedom are still intact. The story climaxes when a few of the characters from the reservation come to live in the civilized world. It is their reactions that teach about the value of individuality, self control, and reality that are missing from this future world at hand.

The novel is divided into chapters, which in some places, are subsequently divided into parts. The parts tend to begin anew when either a different character or a new event begins to guide the story. This organizational strategy helps to keep the novel structured so as to show change of perspective without confusion. For the majority of the story it is clear to readers who is speaking, however in the third chapter (pages 30-56), every line contains new dialogue or information about a different situation. While it can be confusing, it is one way the author shows connection between the characters and events talked about in the section. The Controller is describing how the world came to be “stable,” Lenina is talking to a friend about her sex-life, and Bernard is becoming irritated with men talking about Lenina like she is meat(. These three different situations intertwined give information about the workings of the world in this futuristic period, while showcasing characters and how their lives are effected by the ways of the new world. This part is a little difficult to follow and may require assistance in order for students to comprehend what is happening on those pages.

Issues Related to This Study of Literature-

Themes:

Individuality- Loss of individuality is one of the consequences of the “stability“ of the new world civilization. Everyone does what they’re

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told, stays within their caste, and follows all the rules. Gender and
class are the only major differences between the people living in
London’s World State. The lack of individuality is made clear when
Bernard meets up with Helmholtz, and readers learn that “what the two
men shared was the knowledge that they were individuals” (Huxley 67).
From this information it is easy to infer that realizing one’s
individuality was something rare in this particular society.

Real vs. Counterfeit- The characters in the novel have all been
purposely created to fit in a certain caste and achieve a specific
purpose: happiness. While the creation of this happiness is
counterfeit, no one complains. However, when the “savage,” John, is
brought back into civilization he asks questions about the difference
between reality and happiness. When John tries to change the
structured society by force, the Controller meets with John and
explains, “We prefer to do things comfortably” (240). To which John
replies, “But I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want
real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin” (240). John
sees the value in the pains of reality, so much so, that he kills
himself in order to get out of the counterfeit world.

Stability- The purpose of the “civilized world” portrayed in the book,
is to maintain stability. The Controller, tells students at the
hatchery that stability is “the primal and the ultimate need,” and for
the cause of stability the world is not “under control,” literally
(43). The novel raises questions as to what stability implies, for the
events in the novel as well as in life today.

Control- Two forms of control are questioned in the
novel, world control and self-control. While world
control has regulated the population, done away with
sickness and crime, and prevented misery it has also
taken away any practice of self-control. Everyone gets what they want
all the time, and if they don’t, they turn to soma, the happiness
drug. Because no one needs any self-control, no one has a sense of
character or individuality. John is the foil of exaggerated self-
control as he whips himself in order to maintain his.

Setting:

The book is physically set in London, England; however, time period
plays the most important role in the setting. The story takes place in
2540 A.D. or 632 A.F. (according to the book). The characters in the
story are living in the distant future, where helicopters are used to
travel everywhere, family units no longer exist, and the social system
is manufactured. The reason behind this new way of life is the goal to

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achieve stability. The resident controller for Western Europe, Mustapha Mond, explains why everyone prefers this counterfeit lifestyle: “...We have our stability to think of. We don’t want to change. Every change is a menace to stability” (224-225). The people of the world have finally achieved “stability”, where everyone in every class is assigned certain roles. And even if something goes wrong everyone has access to soma, which is a drug always available, which induces happiness (77).

An important shift in the story comes when Lenina and Bernard travel to New Mexico to visit a “savage reservation,” otherwise known as an Indian reservation. This setting change is critical because they witness on the reservation how life used to be before the world obtained “stability.” They meet John, the son of a former member of the new world, who they bring back to London with them. John is a foreigner to the new world and through his presence the flaws of “stability” are exposed.

Point of View:

The story is narrated in third person omniscient point of view. The narrator is unknown, but is able to view both thoughts and actions of the characters. However, the majority of the story is either from Bernard’s or John’s perspectives.

Irony:

Brave New World is an example of dramatic irony. The characters are all trained to believe that their lives are reality. They never realize the horror of being so controlled, or the connotations associated with the most powerful men, called incidentally, controllers. It is ironic that those they call savages, live in the natural and real world. They are horrified by this and the true “savage,” John is horrified by life in outside of the reservation.

Situational irony is used when Bernard brings John to London. He originally does so to rescue him from savagery, give him a better way of life, and use him for his own promotion. Contrary to the character’s expectations this decision ironically proves to be the downfall for both characters. Bernard is exiled and John eventually kills himself.

Another example of situational irony occurs when Lenina comes to seduce John. Readers know that John is infatuated with Lenina and vice
versa. However, as she undresses in preparation to be intimate with him, he becomes violent and demands that she leave. The expectation is that the two of them will get together, but the outcome is ironic because the opposite occurs.

Allegory:

*Brave New World* is an exaggerated allegory of the modern world. Ford has taken the place of God, representing the way modern man looks to man for answers instead of religion. The controlled lifestyle saturated with *soma* represents the artificial happiness the modern world is trying to find in drugs and other forms of escape. The lack of family corresponds to the disintegration of the family—divorce, abuse, neglect, abortion—that Huxley saw in his time and foresaw in the future. The technical and complex forms of entertainment are a sign of the intense commercialism that has potential to destroy moral values. Helping students understand these allegorical points will make the novel less “weird” as they begin to see it as a lens Huxley uses to see the modern world with. The teacher might have a discussion or writing assignment based on the question, “How much nearer are we to being in the world that Huxley envisioned?” and “What cultural, technological, social, and spiritual things evidence this progression into Huxley’s envisioned world?”

Tone:

The tone of *Brave New World* is one of irony, pessimism, and warning. While the story is an extreme and negative exaggeration of what society is becoming, it warns people to hold on to their own individuality, values, morals, and democratic rights.

Affective Issues Related to the Work:

One of the questions this story asks is about individuality and sameness. One example of this comes from the Director right before Bernard gets him fired. The Director says, “Murder kills only the individual—and, after all, what is an individual?” (148). The new world depicted holds a common belief that stability and happiness should result from instant gratification and everyone coming from the same background. Students could easily relate to these ideas as they live in a world all about “fitting in.” Teachers could lead students in a discussion about the pros and cons of sameness vs. diversity and reality vs. the created. They could compare these ideas with situations and issues faced in their own lives. Additionally, students could discuss, write about, or question the message of instant gratification in the novel.

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Does instant gratification bring happiness? Why or why not? Why do the controllers believe it to be a good idea? Is self-control important or valuable, why or why not? These issues not only relate to student situations, but also may help students make better choices in critical moments of future decision.

Vocabulary Issues:

- There are a lot of difficult words throughout the novel. Teaching it would provide a great opportunity for a vocabulary list and quiz because the students would be able to see how the words work in context.
- Teachers might also use the novel for a chance to encourage annotation. Every time the student comes across an unfamiliar word they can make a note of it and look it up.
- A lot of the difficult words in the book are a result of its British author and culture. This could provide a great time to talk about dialects. While the British speak English, it is a different dialect with words foreign to Americans.
- Some good words to discuss:
  - Viviparous
  - Pneumatic
  - Ruminate
  - Teeming
  - Magnanimity
  - Cajolery

Implications for Student Diversity:

Recognizing and discussing the loss of individuality in Brave New World would highlight, for diverse students, the power of being different. All students are diverse in some ways and this novel can help students appreciate their differences, because they get a glimpse into a world without diversity.

It would also be valuable to discuss the prejudices that the people have against “savages” as well as the prejudice the Indians have against Linda as a “civilized” person. This is a way for students of diversity to relate to the text and to share similar experiences they may have had. It also opens nicely into a discussion about acceptance and tolerance of differences.
Background Knowledge:

“Brave New World”- *Brave New World* references a lot of significant historical figures and written works. The title comes from Miranda’s speech in *The Tempest* Act V Scene I. The phrase “brave new world” is used to describe the island which she and her companions are deserted on. They are later rescued and brought back to civilization. It is appropriate that John is the one who introduces the phrase, not only because he is the only one who has any sort of traditional education, but also because he is supposedly being rescued and introduced to civilization.

**Henry Ford**- Henry Ford is the most prominent historical figure in the novel. To the people in 2540 A.D. he is God. Instead of making the cross, the people make the sign of the “T,” referring to the Model T created in the early 1900s. Ford created the assembly line, which made mass production and numerous jobs a reality. In the novel, however, the people are mass producing people instead of cars. Everyone has a job and everyone is a mass consumer. This reflects Ford’s belief that consumerism was the way to obtain world peace.

**Historical Context**- The novel was published in 1932, a time of depression, post-war disillusionment, and general loss of religious faith. Many of the themes i.e. extinction of Christianity, happiness over truth, stability, are warnings to everyone to be careful what you wish for. The world population in 1932 was around two billion, but in 2540 A.D. only two thousand million. Knowing about the events surrounding the time of publishing gives great insight to historical context Huxley is writing from.

**Thomas Malthus**- The contraceptive belt women carry around is called a “Malthusian Belt.” This refers to Thomas Malthus, a political economist from the 17th century who believed that exponential population growth was a threat to survival and health of the world. The belt is named after him, because it is the way the people are keeping the population regulated.

**Gender Roles:**

One motto of individuals in London’s World State is “Every one belongs to every one else” (40). This means that every one can have sex with anyone. Promiscuity is a critical, encouraged, and expected thing of both men and women in society. Every one is meat for every one else. Bernard is the only “civilized” person that seems to realize that
something is amiss with this belief system. Yet, even he plays into it when he gains popularity.

The time spent on the Indian reservation does present gender issues. Linda, trained to be promiscuous in the “civilized” world, continues this lifestyle even when she enters the savage world (121-122). The women on the reservation hate her and hurt her for it. The men she sleeps with—on the other hand—face no consequence and receive no stigma(126). This reflects inequality in judgment between men and women.

Research Projects:

1- Considering elements of the novel, students—either grouped or individually—create a utopia of their own. What would they do if they were in control? Where would people live? Family structure? Employment? Government? Have them create a constitution for their utopia, keeping in mind the problems of the utopia in the novel and how those will be addressed in their own creations.

2- Students create a collage or map including pictures, written information, and symbols about what makes them an individual. Accompanying the project is a short essay about why or why not they feel individuality is important.

3- Assuming the school has accessible computers for students, teach them how to create a movie or podcast. Using these technologies students will gather music, words, images, and/or voiceovers and create a movie or podcast that represents the themes and tone of Brave New World.

4- Have students research Henry Ford and his contributions to the world. Why did Huxley choose him to be the “god” of the future? This project could take the form of a research paper and a creative project. In addition to writing an essay, students build models or present examples of Ford’s creations i.e. Model T., assembly line etc.

5- Have students participate in a reader’s theater. Using the semi-confusing and sporadic dialogue from the third chapter students will stay engaged in the material and have a better understanding of what is happening and who is speaking.

Enrichment Texts:

1- Population Census (information and/or graph): growth from 1932 to now: Gives census information that allows students to compare the population from when the book was written (1932) and the population now, to the population in Brave New World.

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2- Articles about cloning: Students can learn to form their own opinions about this topic? Is it moral? How is it helpful to society? How is it harmful?

3- Popular Magazines (Does the media “brainwash” society?): This can be used to relate to student schema. What are ways the media influences culture? How does it influence you? What is brainwashing?

4- 1984 by George Orwell: This novel about the future can be used to make text to text connections. What makes Orwell’s vision different from Huxley’s? Which is more correct in your opinion?

5- Shakespeare plays or other works, i.e. The Tempest: Use to help students find answers to why Huxley chose Shakespeare to be the representation of literature in Brave New World. Analyze the use of the passage beginning, “Brave new world…”. Why would Huxley choose this? What it mean in the play vs. What it means in the novel.

6- Biblical passages relating to the replacement of God by Ford: Why would Huxley use direct references from the Bible in a religion-free world? What is the significance of the specific phrases?
   - “What man has joined, nature is powerless to put asunder” (22)
   - “Suffer little children” (56).

7- My Life and Works by Henry Ford: Students can learn about Ford himself, answering questions like, Why is Ford chosen as God? What accomplishments or innovations make him so great?

8- Biography of Aldous Huxley: Helps students get a feel for Huxley’s life and what many have influenced him to write Brave New World.
   - http://www.litweb.net/biography/266/Aldous_Huxley.html
   - Aldous Huxley: A Biography, by Nicholas Murray


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