

Propaganda in the brave new world and the handmaid's tale essay sample



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Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, both portray a dystopian society in the extreme end. A Dystopian society is a form of totalitarian dictatorship as its prototype, a society that puts its whole population continuously on trial, a society, that is, in disenfranchising and enslaving entire classes of its own citizens, a society that, by glorifying and justifying violence by law, preys upon itself. A Dystopian society is what we today would call dysfunctional.

(Ebsco-Points of View). In this type of society, the regime uses propaganda to gain control over the society. Similarly, in *The Brave New World* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, the leading political regimes use propaganda in the form of cultural references, altered language and through the principle of utilitarianism, in order to gain control over the people.

Alteration of language is one of the main forms of propaganda in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Brave New World*. Language is a powerful form of rebellion, which can break through the strongest influences. By eliminating or altering words that can lead to rebellion, the regime can ensure stability and power over the state. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the political regime forbids handmaids from reading, writing or conversing with other maids. By doing so, they isolate the handmaids within the walls of Gilead. They create a barrier between ideas and possible actions. When Offred first walks into the commander's room, she is amazed by what she sees, "But all around the walls there are bookcases. They're filled with books. Books and books and books, right out in plain view, no locks, no boxes. No wonder we can't come in here. It's an oasis of the forbidden" (Atwood 172).

By oasis of the forbidden, Offred means, a place preserved from the laws of Gilead. Offred's reaction is sudden due to the strict laws of that society that are engraved through the means of force. By forbidding reading or writing, the regime is indirectly preventing the formation of ideas leading to rebellion. Similarly, in *The Brave New World*, the leading regime eliminates commonly used phrases that can trigger questions relating to the artificial method of their creation. This is done through sleep talks that occur regularly between certain ages. One of the major alterations of words in *The Brave New World* is the word "Ford" altered from god. Henry Ford was the creator of the automated assembly line, a major breakthrough in mass production.

In our society, mass production is used for consumer goods. The religions in our society are based on the belief that god created this universe and the people. However, in *The Brave New World*, due to Ford's technology being used for mass producing humans, he is considered the creator of that society and thus the god. This can be observed when Bernard Marx walks in late at the Sunday night ritual, "Thank Ford! He was not the last" (Huxley 79).

When Bernard Marx said "Thank Ford", in our society, it would be more like "Thank God". However, due to Henry Ford being their creator, the idea of god has been wiped out of their minds. This was done purposely to avoid citizens from questioning the validity of their creation.

Another method the regimes use propaganda is through the principle of Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is the moral worth of an action determined by its contribution to overall utility, i. e. its contribution to happiness or pleasure as summoned among all persons (Wikipedia-Utilitarianism pars. 1-2). In <https://assignbuster.com/propaganda-in-the-brave-new-world-and-the-handmaids-tale-essay-sample/>

Handmaid's Tale, the regime uses the principal of utilitarianism in order to justify the use of Handmaids as the reproductive organs of Gilead. When Handmaids are brought to Gilead, they are sent to the Red Center, where they are brainwashed towards being subservient to men and concerned with bearing children. These reasons are justified through the means of social attributes. They are told that their subversive nature will earn them respect and safety, which will contribute to the greater good of Gilead. "Blessed are the meek" (Atwood 125) is what Aunt Lydia tries to engrave at the Red Center. It simply signifies over submissiveness as the path to respect and security in the society.

Similarly, in The Brave New World, the principle of utilitarianism is the basis for mass cloning humans. In the novel, the controller justifies cloning as a way of eliminating emotions, desires, and human relationships from society. According to him, which means according to the regime, emotions and relationships are waste of time and life on earth. When the controller is talking to the students at the factory tour, he describes the Pre-Ford days where "Mother, monogamy and romance existed. High spurts the fountain; fierce and foamy the wild jet. The urge has but a single outlet. My love, my baby. No wonder these poor pre-moderns were mad and wicked and miserable. Their world didn't allow them to take things easily, didn't allow them to be sane, virtuous, happy" (Huxley 41). According to the regime, the functions for humans should be defined in a society, and time should not be wasted on emotions with family and friends. According to the regime, by eliminating normal human behavior and replacing it with artificial behavior solely for the purpose of creating a society where humans are turned into

machines for production and consumption, everyone will be happy. The actions are result oriented, and everyone is brainwashed with the same motto repeatedly, i. e. everyone belongs to everyone else, that's why everybody's happy nowadays.

Religion is another major reoccurring method of propaganda in both novels. Religion is the body of persons adhering to a particular set of beliefs and practices (Oxford Dictionary). In *The Handmaid's Tale*, religion plays a major role in brainwashing the Handmaids. Gilead has a government where there is no separation between state and religion, or in other words, a theocracy. The official language in Gilead consists of religious terminology and biblical references. The caste system is based on biblical terms.

Servants are referred to as *Marthas*, the police officers are called *Guardians of faith*, soldiers are called *Angels* and Commanders are known as *Commanders of the faithful*. The store names are derived from biblical terms. The bakery and fishery store is called *Loaves and Fishes*, the meat store is called *All Flesh* and the dairy store is called *Milk and Honey*. Since these words are used everyday, it is a method of brainwashing the Handmaids into thinking that Gilead is acting on the authority of the Bible (Quotations- Atwood).

In *The Brave New World*, religion is used as propaganda in a unique way. In the world state, everyone is required to take doses of Soma, which is an intoxicating and a hallucinogenic beverage, used as an offering to Henry Ford. The controller's justification to the use of Soma is; *In the past you could only accomplish things by making a great effort and after years of hard moral training. Now, you swallow two or three half-gramme tablets, and*
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there you are. Anybody can be virtuous now. You can carry at least half your morality about in a bottle. Christianity without tears—that's what soma is (Huxley 234). The controller describes Soma as a tool that allows everyone to be morally aware. In this case, Soma is a symbol of sacrament similar to offering to god, which represents the use of religion to control society. It is a symbol of gratification to control society, because an intoxicated person is not in the right mind, and it is a way the regime clouds over the truth.

Margaret Atwood and Aldous Huxley portray a totalitarian state where propaganda is the main source of control over the society. The citizens in Gilead and the World State are brainwashed into believing the goals of their respective society. Religion is the emotional form of propaganda used in the novels because religion is a connection between a person and their beliefs. When these beliefs are incorporated into a regime's ultimatum, the person is wrongfully deceived into believing that religion plays a role in the goals of that regime. Language is also an important form of propaganda used in both novels, because it is hard to brainwash people when they are aware of the results. It is easier to convey messages in an altered form of language, where only the conveyer knows what is being said. Last but not least, the principle of Utilitarianism is an important form of propaganda because people will not submissively agree with a regime's sudden takeover unless their justification is result oriented and for the welfare of the society.

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