

Novel kindred by octavia butler and brave new world by aldous huxley is the signi...

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



A recurring theme throughout the novel *Kindred* by Octavia Butler and *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley is the significance of literature in society.

Literature and literacy, in both novels, are limited in order to maintain social order and prevent rebellion. Both set in dystopian societies, the two books primarily emphasize how freedom is obtained through literacy and literature; however, while *Brave New World* emphasizes intellectual freedom, *Kindred* focuses more on opportunities for physical freedom.

Both dystopian societies restrict literature in order to preserve social stability. In *Brave New World*, the intellectual freedom of citizens is severely limited. World State's inferior citizens are conditioned to have barely intact mental capabilities to prevent them from realizing their unjust position in the social order. Trained for a purely occupational lifestyle, they lack the ability to think for themselves and rarely are literate. This is because, in the eyes of Mustapha Mond, the only way to prevent rebellions from the lower caste is to take away their ability and resources to form such ideas altogether. The entire social order of World State depends on the ignorance of the lower caste, as shown when Mustapha Mond says, "It would upset the whole social order if men started doing things on their own". Additionally, certain books are strictly forbidden even to those of a higher caste in fear that books contradicting their "modern" way of life will influence the citizens of World State. World State's strict guidelines for literature clearly has a prominently negative effect on the intellectual freedom of their citizens, as most cannot even fathom a world outside of World State. John, as a person with extensive intellectual freedom, clearly does not fit into the atmosphere and lifestyle of World State because of his knowledge of literature. Upon entering World

State, he notices several of its practices that he finds bizarre and dehumanizing in comparison to the world of Shakespeare, which he regards as the norm. When he voices his concerns about the morals of the World State, he is expelled to prevent further conflict. This demonstrates how the World State ultimately limits its citizens of intellectual freedom in order to prevent ideas contradicting that of its strictly regulated society. In *Kindred*, masters restrict literature from their slaves almost entirely. For slaves, literacy opens up many opportunities for freedom. For example, maps are powerful literary materials that slaves can potentially use to escape their plantations and gain their freedom. For example, Dana is blackmailed by Rufus to "...put the map in the fire..." in exchange for him sending a letter to Kevin. Due to his growing attachment to Dana, he selfishly forces her to burn her map in order to prevent her from having a tool that may aid her in escaping. Not only this, literacy is strictly prohibited since "they might escape by writing themselves passes". In *Kindred*, literature is essential for slaves to create opportunities for freedom.

In both *Kindred* and *Brave New World*, there are people with intellectual or physical freedom who attempt to challenge their society with contradicting ideas. John from *Brave New World*, who possesses a rare amount of intellect from literature, utterly believes that the World State is unnatural and dehumanizing and challenges its perfect stability with his contradicting ideas. Disgusted by the World State's unnatural and artificial society, he draws on his extensive knowledge of old literature to create his own ideas about "natural" life. For example, his idea of love and relationships, a topic

he views through a very Shakespearean viewpoint, completely differs from the World State, where relationships rarely last and sexual activity is not regarded as intimate as well as starts from a very early age. He expresses this to Lenina when she tries to seduce him, screaming “‘ Whore!’... ‘ Impudent strumpet!’”. John also expresses a deep dislike for soma after his mother’s declining health is completely clouded from overdosing on the drug. He is blinded with rage and throws away the hospital workers’ soma after his mother’s death, asking them if they “ like being slaves?”. However, Dana from Kindred uses a different strategy; she challenges her society by teaching other slaves to read and write in hopes of giving them new opportunities to potentially gain freedom. Though this is a punishable offense that could result in her being whipped and possibly killed, she does this selflessly in order to provide other slaves new possibilities. She also passively challenges her society with her education, as most slaves and even masters of her time period are illiterate or have little education. Weylin seems to feel uncomfortable and unusually harsh towards Dana, to which Nigel says, ‘ That’s one reason he seemed so suspicious and mistrustful. Educated slaves aren’t popular around here’, meaning that Weylin felt uncomfortable because of her superior education. Masters of plantations not only maintain the illiteracy of their slaves to prevent escape and rebellion but also do this for a sense of superiority, which Dana challenges with her ability to read.

Ultimately, Dana from Kindred and John from Brave New World do not succeed in their endeavor to create change in their societies with their

literary knowledge. Though John's idea of how society should be is far more fair and natural as opposed to the World State's heavily artificial way of life, his attempt to persuade the rest of the citizens in the World State does not work because of the individuality of his stance as well and previous conditioning of all the citizens. Because of how alone John is in thinking that the World State is not the ideal society, citizens do not take his ideas seriously, such as when he attempts to dissuade the hospital workers from taking soma. Additionally, the extensive amount of mental constraint in the World State's citizens both before birth and after birth simply allows for little change in mindset. The fixed ideas of the World State are firmly embedded in each citizens' head, as shown when Mustapha Mond says, "' Try to imagine what ' living with one's family' meant.' They tried, but obviously without the smallest success'. Clearly, despite his efforts, John does not create lasting change in his society. Dana, however, creates a slightly more lasting impact in her society by teaching slaves how to read and write to expose them to opportunities for freedom. However, this did not necessarily change her society in a substantial way; though Carrie and Nigel became literate under her guidance, they did not necessarily act upon their skill and remained slaves on the plantation up until presumably when Rufus's plantation burns down. Therefore, Dana is only partially successful in challenging her society because while she did succeed to teach multiple slaves how to read, she was not able to make lasting change in society with her literacy.

In both dystopian societies, literature is limited to maintain social stability. In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, we see the effects literature has on intellectual freedom, while in Octavia Butler's novel, *Kindred*, literature plays a larger role in physical freedom rather than intellectual.