

Compare brave new world and fahrenheit 451 on utopias essay sample



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Brave New World and Fahrenheit 451 are two novels, both set in the future, which have numerous similarities throughout them. Of all their common factors, those that stand out most would have to be: first, the outlawed reading of books; second, the superficial preservation of beauty and happiness; and third, the theme of the protagonist as being a loner or an outcast from society because of his differences in beliefs as opposed to the norm. Both Ray Bradbury and Aldous Huxley argue that when a society attempts to create a utopia through excessive control over its citizens, the result will be destructive behavior and the ultimate downfall of that society. Bradbury and Huxley warn society of a future where people's lives are controlled by advanced technologies, little value placed on the importance of relationships between people, and the ban on free intellectual thought.

The concept of outlawed reading in most of Western society, today, would be very strange and unacceptable. In both novels the banning of books is a common and almost completely unquestioned law. In Brave New World reading is something that all classes of people are adversely conditioned against from birth. In the very beginning of the novel a group of infants are given bright, attractive books but are exposed to an explosion and a shrieking siren when they reach out for them. This negative conditioning thus prevents them from wanting the books and causes them to scream and shrink away in horror at the mere sight of the books.

In reference to the accomplishment of this conditioning, the Director says: "Books and loud noises...already in the infant mind these couples are compromisingly linked; and after two hundred repetitions of the same or a similar lesson would be wedded indissoluble. What man has joined, nature is

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powerless to put asunder” (21-22). The basic reasoning behind this conditioning against reading in Brave New World is that this society couldn't afford to have people wasting the community's time over books, which might undesirably cause one to use his or her mind and rebel. As the risk of one of them reading something always exists, it is far more efficient to eliminate the risk totally by a complete ban of books for all castes. The results are the loss of intellectual pursuits and knowledge, which causes people to become indifferent drones.

In Fahrenheit 451 the outlawing of book reading is taken to an even greater level. In this novel the whole purpose of a “ firefighter” isn't to put out fires, rather it is to start fires. The reading of books in this society is completely forbidden and if someone is suspected of even owning a book, the firefighters are dispatched to go to that person's residence and start a fire. They start fires for the sole purpose of destroying books, as illustrated here: “ They pumped the cold fluid from the numerated 451 tanks strapped to their shoulders. They coated each book, they pumped rooms full of it...’the whole house is going up” (38). Even though the ban of books in both societies is supposed to create a utopian like aura by eliminating any distressful thinking, life becomes empty and boring. Faber, an elderly wise man, explains to Montag that it isn't the books that he misses, but the ideas that the books stimulate in people. This absence of exchanging ideas has dampening effect on the relationships between people. The loss of thought creates mindless drones, which only listen to what they are told, taught, or what they see on television.

Another common factor of the two novels is the extent to which each society works to preserve its people as both young, healthy, and content. In Brave New World the people have Soma, the “feelies”, they are never alone, they’re conditioned to like their jobs, and life for them is just made easy. Soma is what the people in Brave New World use to go on “holiday.” It is the perfect drug with no side effects. It simply puts its users in a state of euphoria. According to Mustapha Mond himself, Soma is used to: “Calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering...anybody can be virtuous now” (238). The feelies are yet another concept of the Brave New World designed simply for the comfort and enjoyment of the people. The people experience the movies in not only the visual sense, but they also feel and smell what is going on, almost as if it really exists in reality. The structure of their whole lifestyle is made in such a way that a person is never alone.

Mond even says: “But people never are alone...we make them hate solitude; and we arrange their lives so it’s almost impossible for them to ever have it” (235). The different castes are also conditioned to like their jobs. This maintains stability because everyone does their job without complaint and remains happy. According to Mond: “They like their work...It’s light, it’s childishly simple. No strain on the mind or the muscles. Seven and a half hours of mild, unexhausting labour, and the Soma ration and games and unrestricted copulation and the feelies. What more can they ask for?” (224). In Brave New World, Huxley argues the fact of a controlled utopia, in this case the use of Soma, replaces natural feelings and expressions for people. These drugs might appear to be good, but what the drug is actually doing is

suppressing anger, sadness, annoyance, and other important feelings that make man human.

As far as life being made easy for them, Mond says: “ There isn’t any need for a civilized man to bear anything that’s seriously unpleasant” (236).

Similarly, in Fahrenheit 451, the people have television walls. We learn about their purpose, importance, and value from the character Mildred. In regards to the walls, Mildred tells Guy Montag: “ It’s really fun. It’ll be even more fun when we can afford to have the fourth wall installed...it will be just like this room wasn’t ours at all, but all kinds of exotic people’s rooms” (20-21). As far as youth or health preservation, in the very beginning of Fahrenheit 451, Guy comes home to find Mildred in bed, overdosed on pills:

They had this machine. They had two machines, really. One of them slid down into your stomach like a black cobra down an echoing well looking for all the old water and the old time gathered there. It drank up the green matter that flowed to the top in a slow boil...the bloodstream in this woman was new and it seemed to have done a new thing to her. Her cheeks were very pink and her lips were very fresh and full of color and they looked soft and relaxed (14, 16).

Again, in Fahrenheit 451, Bradbury argues that humans lose their privacy. In this world, machines sweep into homes going into human bodies and searching the stomachs out. This scenario is just one of many in Fahrenheit 451, but the terrible news is that right here in the present, the United States government is allowed to tap into citizens phones, the Internet, and mail. If this continues to happen, the privacy of people will be totally abolished and

people will become too scared of giving their opinion. The world will become a terrifying place.

The final and one of the most evident of the similarities in these two novels would have to be the fact that the main character in both books is basically an outcast or a loner from society. In Brave New World this is, at different times, a different character. First, Bernard Marx is shown as an outcast. He thinks just a little more than the average man in his society. He and his friend Helmholtz Watson are two men who stand apart because they actually think rather than drone around like the rest of the people. Bernard is also much smaller than most other Alphas and has a hard time both getting women and getting lower castes to do what he says. When speaking of Bernard, one of the women says: " They say somebody made a mistake when he was still in the bottle - thought he was a Gamma and put alcohol in his blood-surrogate. That's why he's so stunted" (46). It isn't until Bernard gains guardianship over John that he is anything but an outcast. For the first time in his life he can get any woman he wants and he even believes he has power.

However, after things fall apart and the savage is no longer under his control, Bernard goes back to being an outcast and is even eventually sent off to an island alone. It appears that when society takes control over its members' lives, they lose a sense of power, which reduces their feelings of value. The second person viewed as an outcast in Brave New World would be John the savage. He never fits in while he lives on the reservation because of who his mother is and what she has done to the reservation. He is constantly secluded from activities and looked down upon: " He went with the others... <https://assignbuster.com/compare-brave-new-world-and-fahrenheit-451-on-utopias-essay-sample/>

suddenly one of the men stepped forward, caught him by the arm, and pulled him out of the ranks... 'Not for you, white-hair!'" (136). Though he too has his period of acceptance when he enters the society of Brave New World, he ultimately returns to his solitary ways. In the end, despite Mond's wishes to continue with his research, John runs away and moves into an abandoned light tower to live as a recluse. Huxley argues that in a controlled society there will always be an outcast, someone different, who decides to abandon society and choose a life where he or she can acknowledge himself or herself for who they are.

Similarly, in Fahrenheit 451, Guy Montag is pretty much a loner himself. Though he is a firefighter, he secretly steals more and more books and the more he reads, the less he believes in burning them. He cannot tell anyone of this, even his wife, because they will surely turn him in. Eventually, though, Guy's secret is discovered and the rest of the story consists of the chase after him by the police as well as the electronic hound. He makes his get away alone and though he meets others along the way, he travels alone. Montag like Bernard escapes his controlled reality to his own reality. The other loner in this book is Clarisse. Clarisse knew she was an outcast and even said: " I'm afraid of children my own age. They kill each other...I'm responsible. I was spanked when I needed it, years ago. And I do the shopping and house cleaning by hand" (30). Clarisse is seen, like Montag, as different; people her own age view her as an outcast. She abandons her school because she realizes that it is a mindless institution where learning involves sports only.

Outlawed reading, contentment, youthfulness and health of people, and societies outcasts - these examples are the most evident in these two novels. It is incredibly fascinating that two different authors from different times and places, can both write books on the future and have them similar in so many ways. If one looks past their similarities though, both of these books were very well written and leave the reader wondering just what the future will hold. Bradbury and Huxley both accept a utopian society in the future, but they don't accept a utopian society based on controlling the natural aspects of peoples' lives to the extent to which thoughts, feelings, and livelihood are lost. Only when people stand together to build a society that accepts differences amongst its' members and doesn't try to manipulate those differences to eliminate discord, will humans finally see a day where everyone can speak freely and be treated equally, can a real utopia form.