

Sir thomas more's utopia: a text of universality

[Politics](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Sir Thomas More's Utopia (1516) is a text of universality in which has fascinated and influenced countless writers. It is a novel, in which its primary motif and desire is to attack the ills of society and to point direction for the amelioration of humanity. It is a text of value in which it communicates, educates and criticizes Thomas More's opinions and concerns as a political satire. It is the novel's use of Utopic/Dystopic conventions, intermingling of fact and fiction and comparison, which heightens the believability of Utopia, in that it arises on the emphasis of his concerns on the concept of the rich vs. poor, and religious tolerance. More's Utopia is a response to a specific historical time, which reflects on the many social, political and religious injustices of early 16th century England through means of satirical critique and contrast. During a milieu, where power was directly proportional to money, the 16th Century was an era in which the rich had perpetual power and both dominated and exploited the society and the poor. Thomas More emphasises and enunciates this concern, through the equality of justice and the uniformity of his Utopian Society and the contrast between the corrupt and ideal world. The homogeneity of the houses and the law acts as a polemic to dispute against the injustices of the rich who did nothing productive yet lived in luxury, while the poor were left in poverty and hard labour, essentially, it was an attack to the nobles of his time. Thomas More's Utopian society was characterized to be the ideal world, a place of uniformity where "when you've seen one of them, you've seen them all" Thomas More contrasts between the corrupt (contextual time) and the ideal (Utopia) society to accentuate on the notion of the inequality between the rich and the poor. An example of this is through the description of the identical houses; Thomas More describes the house through the use of Burlesque to <https://assignbuster.com/sir-thomas-mores-utopia-a-text-of-universality/>

reflect on the situation of England at the time, " Each house has a front door leading into the street, and a back door into the garden. In both cases they're double swing doors, which open at a touch, and close automatically behind you. So anyone can go in and out — for there's no such thing as private property. " The humorous satire alludes to the private properties in England, which allowed for rich men to reside in their wealthy and prosperous life, without doing anything and look down upon the poor who were drowning in the pool of poverty and distress. Through the use of paradox and metaphor Thomas More in essence, describes the rich to being "[dug] ... in behind a barricade of enormous wealth" and the poor were "[men] who contribute[d] most to society... who [got] least in return". Additionally the injustice of the rich to the poor is expressed in the law of the Utopian society, the utopians were not allowed to " waste their time in idleness or self-indulgence, but to make good use of it in some congenial activity", this law is a satirical comment of the unproductiveness of the vast number of the European population; more directly to the rich who lived in luxury doing nothing productive. The satire and allusion to More's context, juxtaposes to Raphael's question of animosity " For what sort of justice do you call this? ". Through the use of Socratic dialogue and rhetoric, verisimilitude is achieved and thus highlights Thomas More's concerns of the inequality between the rich and poor. Religion is an another contextual concern Thomas more conveys in Utopia through conventions of Utopic/Dystopic literature. In Utopia, justice for ones belief is achieved. The Utopian society believes in one Supreme Being who in which " is also the great Essence to whose glory and majesty all honors are ascribed by the consent of all nations." and tolerates all religions including their doctrine and <https://assignbuster.com/sir-thomas-mores-utopia-a-text-of-universality/>

ceremonies. Thomas More applies this Religion to the Utopian society to stipulate to the circumstances faced in England. The point difference between the two Religions was that the Christian denomination did not allow liberality and insisted on the principle belief of one church and one authoritative doctrine; it was a generation where other religions were persecuted. Paradoxically, Thomas More preached Religious toleration in Utopia and yet methodically persecuted Protestants, he applied this religion because he later understood that religious toleration leads to peace unlike the Dystopic society of England where it was static and resisted change in religion which lead to chaos. Thomas More uses antithesis of the two different societies; peace vs. chaos/good vs. evil to portray that religious toleration is needed. Furthermore, Raphael preaches using aphorism that "the most ancient principles of their constitution is religious toleration" further justifying his concerns, this leads to verisimilitude of the Utopian society as audience are swayed by its truth. Under the rule of King Henry, it was against to not support the dominant church, heresy was evident all around in England. Overall, the Utopian religion is an attack to a society driven by narrow doctrinal passions. This is achieved through the means of humorous satire, the Utopian religion states that "wives kneels down before their husbands" and 'confess all their sins of omission and commission, and ask to be forgiven", this stereotypes the men being more superior to women thus satirically reflects the England which was driven by narrow doctrinal passions. The priests in Utopia, were regarded as high noble people who in which were all men of eminent piety. They were "universally regarded as a sacred and inviolable even among the most savage and barbarous nation", Thomas More uses oxymoron and the allusion of the the laxity and

<https://assignbuster.com/sir-thomas-mores-utopia-a-text-of-universality/>

corruption among the clergy in Europe being " most savage and barbarous nation" as an indirect thrust at the Christian priesthood. Through a critical study of Utopia, it can thus be concluded that the novel serves as a medium to convey his contextual concerns through the conventions of Utopic/Dystopic literature and various literary techniques. Thomas More illustrates the inequality of the rich vs. poor and the religion toleration through Utopia's conventions and also gives insight into people's thoughts and history of the context. The idea of Utopia, in which has become a familiar designation for such states, was More's creation and introduced the recognition of the manifold stupidities, corruptions, and inequities current in their society and gave great impetus to the movement.