

Bernard marx a hero
in his dreams
philosophy essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

How many of us would like to be a game changer in a world leading to nowhere but a place lacking ethics and morals, where god is forgotten and mankind is led in the wrong direction? This society created by Aldous Huxley in his novel “ Brave New World” is not exactly favourable. The reader is disgusted at the morals and lifestyle of this society. Then, as Bernard enters the story, a glimmer of hope is seen. Bernard appears to be the voice of reason. He seems to see the problems of his world. Because he is different, Bernard is the source of considerable speculation and suspicion. Even Bernard’s surname recalls Karl Marx, the nineteenth-century German author best known for writing “ Das Kapital”, a monumental critique of capitalist society. But it is soon seen that unlike his famous namesake, Bernard’s discontent stems from his frustrated desire to fit into his own society, rather than from a systematic or philosophical criticism of it.

When we first meet Bernard we see him as a rebel, a protestor, “ an individual.” He wants to stand up for his rights, to battle against the order of things. We later learn that Bernard questions the conformity of life in the World State and the values it teaches, but that his dissatisfaction seems to stem from his not being accepted. Up until his visit to the Reservation and the introduction of John, Bernard Marx is the central figure of the novel. Bernard’s first appearance in the novel is highly ironic. Just as the Director finishes his explanation of how the World State has successfully eliminated lovesickness and everything that goes along with frustrated desire, Huxley gives us our first glimpse into a character’s private thoughts, and that character is lovesick, jealous, and fiercely angry at his sexual rivals and the new world. Thus, while Bernard is not exactly heroic he is still interesting to

the reader because he is human. He wants things that he can't have. When he returns from the Reservation with John and Linda, he becomes celebrity, the girls who formerly ignored him become attentive, important personages in the World State curry his favour, and Bernard is happy and enthusiastic about his life in the World State.

“‘ And I had six girls last week,’ he confided to Helmholtz Watson. ‘ One on Monday, two on Tuesday, and two more on Friday, and one on Saturday. And if I'd had the time or the inclination, there were at least a dozen more who were only too anxious...’”

The quote used by Bernard completely shows his willingness to use pleasure and fame of the new world he had earlier resented. John and Linda for his own gain further helps to portray him as someone who will do anything to gain social standing. Huxley indicates that Bernard's protest is not intellectual or moral, but personal and social; he willingly accepts life in the World State when he is accepted. When John refuses to become a tool in Bernard's attempt to remain popular, Bernard's success collapses instantaneously. By continuing to criticize the World State while revelling in its “ pleasant vices,” Bernard reveals himself to be a hypocrite. John and Helmholtz are sympathetic to him because they agree that the World State needs criticizing and because they recognize that Bernard is trapped in a body to which his conditioning has not suited him, but they have no respect for him.

While both Bernard and Helmholtz share dissatisfaction with the state of things, Bernard merely whines about it while Helmholtz actually thinks about

it intensely, working toward a solution instead of harping on the problem.

The most revealing test of character comes when the chips are down.

Bernard in front of the controller turned inferior in contrast to John who opposes every aspect of the new world in front of Mustapha Mond, one of the ten world controllers in the story. Instead of showing his discomfort of the new world he kept silent. Both Bernard and John are living out parallel situations in opposite worlds. Both are isolated from their peers because of physical differences (John because he's white, Bernard because he's shorter than the other Alphas) and because of dissatisfaction with the status quo.

But the way they react to these situations is very different, and that's where the foil comes in handy; John's fortitude highlights Bernard's lack of courage.

Looking at Bernard's reaction to the threat of Iceland it is clearly shown he wasn't a real rebel. He's cocky at first, but as soon as he realizes the threat is real, he freaks out. He doesn't have the courage of his convictions. He shows attitude of a loser as seen from his quote "' He pointed accusingly to Helmholtz and the Savage. ' Oh, please don't send me to Iceland....'"

Eventually he even starts crying and wails like a kid.

And as much fun as it would have been for us to figure this out, Huxley tells us:

" He [Bernard] had imagined himself courageously resisting, stoically accepting suffering without a word. Now that it looked as though the threats were really to be fulfilled, Bernard was appalled. Of that imagined stoicism, that theoretical courage, not a trace was left."

Helmholtz, on the other hand, laughs and remains calm in the face of the very same threat. He's ready to face the consequences, and the novel rewards him for this - banishment to an island, the Controller explains, is a gift, not a punishment.

The repulsive nature against the conversation between the assistant predestinator and Henry Foster, reveals much about Bernard Marx.

Conditioning has not made him accept life as it is. He is not satisfied with his life and often refuses to take Soma, a drug which produces a feeling of happiness and well-being. Although at this point it seems genuine of Bernard's revolt against these things it is later found out that he behaves this way only because less attention is paid to him and also cause he is physically inferior to the other Alphas. His own interest in Lenina also provokes him against this conversation. Rumours regarding his physique further make him criticize the new world. Bernard is considered odd not only because he is physically smaller than the other members of the Alpha caste, but also because he likes to spend time by himself, and he does not like to participate in sport activities. (In the World State one should always be with others, always busy, never alone.) When discussing Bernard, reference is often made to the rumour that alcohol was accidentally put in his blood - surrogate - and this supposedly accounts for his oddness. Because individuals are decanted according to specification, any deviation would seem to be the result of some mistake, some chemical imbalance. Though he says no to soma and physical pleasures he ultimately ends up using soma and having sex with Lenina. He ends being amateur and behaving to the terms of the new world, unlike John who represses all his thoughts and

feeling and does not give up to the terms of the new world. In a conversation between Helmholtz and Bernard, when Helmholtz is approached by three women to go to a picnic with them and he disapproves, Bernard agrees with Helmholtz with a strong emotion of desire in his heart.

“‘ Too awful.’ Bernard hypocritically agreed, wishing, as he spoke the words, that could have as many girls as Helmholtz did, and with as little trouble. He was seized with a sudden need to boast. I’m taking Lenina Crowne to New Mexico with me,’ he said in a tone as casual as he could make it.”

As seen from this quote Bernard’s only grudge against the New World is his loneliness, awkwardness and his weak physique and personality. Given a chance he would enjoy the New World to the fullest as he does during his little moment of popularity.

While Bernard Marx is clearly one of the main characters in Brave New World, Huxley does not present him as “ the hero” or even give him any heroic qualities except, perhaps, intelligence. In spite of this - or perhaps because of it - Bernard is closer to the reader than any other character except, later on, John, “ the Savage.” In some ways it seems that Huxley uses Bernhard as a means to help the reader understand the “ New World” society better. John has an outsider’s view -almost everything shocks or disgusts him. Helmholtz Watson, much closer than Bernard to being a typical “ hero” is such a forceful character that he always seems to be in control - the reader is invited to admire him rather than feel with him. But Bernard is bright enough to question his society, individual enough to rebel in small ways but - until the last conflict - not brave enough to reject it fully. So one

can see Bernard as a kind of hero for a society without heroes - scared, confused and critical - an Everyman with whom the reader can sympathize even while finding him flawed and comical.