

# [Utopia and dystopia: definition and characteristics](https://assignbuster.com/utopia-dystopia-definition-and-characteristics/)

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You may have heard the expressions utopia and dystopia before. These terms, are two forms of worlds that are favoured in speculative fiction orsciencefiction stories. If you haven't heard the term speculative fiction, then you've come to the right place! It is just a extensive term that comprises of science fiction, fantasy, apocalyptic, horror, supernatural, alternative history, or other varieties of fiction that is not exactly realistic.

In other word speculative fiction is a genre that powerfully considers worlds unlike reality. As you've probably guessed, it involves a vision upon the future or alternate world, which we will later discuss. Authors use this to effectively comment and combine ideas concerning their own society. Speculative fiction often asks 'What if?' What if robots controlled the world? What if we were re-living the past? What if the world ends tomorrow? What if women were controlled by men?

In Margaret Atwood's 1985 speculative novel, The Handmaid's Tale. Powerfully explores a speculative world by the name of Gilead, in which Atwood challenges her readers to comment and reflect on her context of the imagined world. Atwood is one of many writers who demonstrates a clear warning through the influence of social, cultural and historical context. In the text, Atwood's intentions to confront her readers of the human tragedy, craftly imagines a society worse than our own, warning readers of where our own society could end up if individuals and communities fail to address similar dystopian tendencies.

A world gone mad:

Ever had the thought of living in a world under a totalitarian regime? Well, Atwood provokes Gilead as a regime which enforces obedience, through brutal punishments. Torture is seen in the public exposure of bodies on the wall, which is witnessed by Offred and Ofglen on their usual shopping walks, and what Offred imagines is happening to luke, " I want Luke here so badly. I want to be held and told my name. I want to be valued, in ways that I am not.". This is part of Atwood; s comment on the judicial punishments given out in certain societies. Her strong interest in promotinghuman rightsin her novels provides her readers to think about the concern.

Being a satire, readers are positioned to be aware that Atwood is making demands on them. She essentially asks to consider existing social attitudes and to reflect on the manner in which we observe and treat other people according to similarities and differences between their backgrounds and beliefs as well as our own. Atwood occasionally displays both sides of an issue: Gilead may be appallingly repressive in numerous ways, but Atwood suggests that such a regime could ultimately arise out of reaction to questionable areas of personal liberty. As Aunt Lydia says in chapter 5; " There is more than one kind of freedom.... Freedom to and freedom from."