Brave New World

Major Assignment 1: Essay Topics

Directions: Choose ONE of the following topics and write a 3-4 page essay in response. Your essay does NOT need to follow the strict 5 paragraph essay, but it should have an introduction with a thesis, several body paragraphs, and a striking conclusion. You must incorporate at least 3 quotes from the novel to help you prove your point. I would suggest that you write an outline to help you better organize your thoughts, but only the final copy of your assignment will be graded.

1. One of the problematic elements of World State is that each person plays a role in propping up the state’s maladaptive values through their complicity with its rules and systems, and the more people conform, the fewer are likely to rebel. Analyzing specific characters in Brave New World, to illustrate precisely how complicity functions in a domino effect. Although almost all of the major characters have some physical or personality trait that makes them unconventional, most of them do not emphasize or exercise their difference in a way that challenges the reigning order. Write an essay analyzing how the citizens of World State serve to perpetuate the very conditions that cause them distress.
2. Write an essay examining the ways in which the ideas of the happiness in Brave New World are associated with consumption and how this society is attempting to create a consumer utopia. What does Huxley say about the interface between happiness and consumption?
3. Write an essay in which you analyze the purpose that soma serves in presenting the theme of the novel. Avoid mere plot summary.
4. John is shocked by the degree to which the members of the World State are conditioned.  He considers them to be less "free" than he is. However, it is not completely clear whether he is correct in his assumption.  It could be argued that he is simply conditioned to a more Romantic notion of his own self-importance.  Is anyone more free than anyone else in this book, and is one kind of freedom preferable to another?  Why? Cite specific examples from the book to support your contention.
5. Aristotle said, “Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”And happiness is nearly universal in the World State. Only a few isolated citizens, like Bernard and Helmholtz, have complaints about the quality of their lives. If people are happy, and not hurting anyone else, does the origin of their happiness matter? Consider what, if anything, is wrong with the World State’s society.
6. Consider Lenina Crowne. Does she belong to the class of characters who are truly struggling with what it means to be free, or is she hopelessly an unthinking member of the World State? Are her feelings toward John a hint of self-realization or merely another impulse that she seeks to gratify?
7. Propose your own essay topic. It MUST be approved by me before you start writing.

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**Major Assignment 2:Creative Projects**

**Option 1:**

**Create a PSA (Public Service Announcement) for Mustapha Mond’s Department of Propaganda** Your group needs to pretend you are currently living in Huxley’s vision of 26th century London. You need to videotape a PSA that will **“**be polished and smooth, upbeat yet to the point, and simple but catchy.  It must effectively and dramatically convey the message that obedience to the values and organization of our society leads to individual virtue and sanity, thereby bringing about stability and happiness for all.  The broadcast should last between [one to two] minutes and should be perfectly understandable and equally digestible to both an Alpha-Plus and Delta-Minus” (Geib).  You should also think about including the slogans of this society in your presentation. In addition, make sure you have answered the following questions in your videotaped presentation:

* How can you fashion your message so as to gain maximum acceptance by the target audience?
* What tricks can you use to make your message seem reasonable and not overbearing?
* What techniques can you use to influence people without their feeling manipulated or controlled?
* Is your message upbeat and is the tone appropriate to our brave new world?
* Will your slogans and/or jingles stay in people's minds afterwards?  Are they simple? Are they catchy?
* Is the video broadcast polished and attention grabbing?
* Does it reinforce the core values of the society?

You should consider covering one of the following aspects in your PSA:

* Encourage people to shop
* Explain why being a test tube is so wonderful
* Encourage people to take soma
* Other ideas?

In fact, you must run your idea by me before you film. Since aspects of this novel are adult in nature, you do not want to film a PSA that will A. Get you into trouble or B. Have your parents ask “What on earth are you filming?”

**Option 2:**

**Stage a debate:** Towards the end of the novel, John Savage argues with the World Controller about the nature of happiness, the usefulness of art, religion, and literature, and basically everything that the society has destroyed in its effort to maintain stability. Your assignment will be to create a debate in which you play the roles of John Savage and Mustapha Mond, taking up their arguments and pushing the further.

* This assignment can be completed by groups of no more than three people: one to be the moderator, one John Savage, and one Mustapha Mond.
* Each of the debaters should prepare a written list of arguments, and planned rebuttals. This will be turned in after your presentation.
* The moderator should prepare a typed list of questions that will be used in the debate.
* The debate itself can take place in class or filmed and then played in class on the day of the presentation.
* The debate itself should last at least 5 minutes long.
* Each member of the group should write a 1 page reflection of your role in the debate. What did you learn from it?

**Option 3:**

**Illustrate a theme:** Choose a major theme of the novel and create an illustration of it, incorporating elements of the society into it. Then, write a 1 page (typed) reflection of your illustration, explaining your theme and the elements of your picture that you used to develop your theme.

* This is an individual activity and cannot be completed in a group.
* This needs to be an original piece of artwork; not a collage of pictures found on the internet. Remember, this is a major grade, so your illustration should show your time, effort, and thoughtfulness.

**Option 4: Argumentative Essay**

Write a 2 -3 page paper in which you argue whether or not our world is headed to a society like Brave New World. Consider every aspect of the society and make an argument connected to our own world.

**Option 5:**

**Propose your own creative project.** Considering everything that we discussed with this novel, the themes, structure, and connections to our world, what sort of extension project would you like to do? How can you show your understanding of this text and the arguments that it makes?

* All proposals must be typed and submitted to me by September 30. If not approved, you must complete a different project.