UTOPIA / DYSTOPIA
SOME DEFINITIONS

**Utopia:** Greek “ou” (not) + “topos” (place)
An imaginary perfect world where everyone is happy. The socio-political order ensures human well-being, often combined with a democratic and classless form of government. No evil exists.

**Dystopia:** Greek “dys” (bad)
An imaginary place where life is extremely difficult and a lot of unfair or immoral things happen. Dystopias often present a society deprived of human rights and under the control of a totalitarian socio-political system.

**Science Fiction:**
A genre that is concerned with future technological innovations, changes in the environment, space travel and life on distant planets.

**Cyberpunk:**
A genre that deals with the conflict among hackers and artificial intelligences within a society controlled by mega-corporations.

**(Post-) Apocalypse:**
A genre that is preoccupied with the final destruction of our world or the new era after the apocalypse has struck.

PRE-READING TASKS

1. Make a list of any novels, films and songs that would fit into any of the categories listed above.
2. Make a DINA3 poster that captures your vision of the future. Present your ideas, fears and hopes to the class.
3. What should be the ideals of a utopian society?
4. Comment on the following quotes:
   - “All paradises, all utopias are designed by who is not there, by the people who are not allowed in.” (Toni Morrison)
   - “A utopia is a dystopia forced upon you by a madman.” (Sam J. Lundwall)
THOMAS MORE - UTOPIA

Sir Thomas More (1478-1535), also known as Saint Thomas Morus, was an English lawyer, scholar, author, statesman, and a saint within the Catholic Church. Sir Thomas More wrote *Utopia* in the years 1515-16, when men's imaginations were stirred by the sudden enlargement of their conceptions of the world, and Amerigo Vespucci's account of his voyages westward, first printed in 1507, was fresh in every scholar's mind. In More's *Utopia*, a mariner tells of a distant island he has visited, describing its organisation and society. The work was not printed in England during the reign of Henry VIII, and could not be, for its satire - which mocked English policy with ironical praise - was too direct to be misunderstood.

PRE-READING TASKS
1. Who was Amerigo Vespucci?
2. In what way did Vespucci stir the imagination of an entire generation?
3. Find definitions for the following words: satire, irony, sarcasm and euphemism
4. What do you think did More criticise about politics in England at the time?
5. What do you know about Henry VIII and his reign?

EXTRACT FROM MORE'S *UTOPIA*

Thus I have described to you, as particularly as I could, the constitution of that commonwealth, which I do not only think the best in the world, but indeed the only commonwealth that truly deserves the name. In all other places it is evident that, while people talk of a commonwealth, every man only seeks his own wealth; but there, where no man has any property, all men zealously pursue the good of the public. In other commonwealths every man knows that unless he provides for himself, how flourishing soever the commonwealth may be, he must die of hunger, so that he sees the necessity of preferring his own concerns to the public but in Utopia, where every man has a right to everything, they all know that if care is taken to keep the public stores full, no private man can want anything; for among them there is no unequal distribution, so that no man is poor, none in necessity; and though no man has anything, yet they are all rich; for what can make a man so rich as to lead a serene and cheerful life, free from anxieties; neither apprehending want himself, nor vexed with the endless complaints of his wife? He is not afraid of the misery of his children, nor is he contriving how to raise a portion for his daughters, but is secure in this, that both he and his wife, his children and
grandchildren, to as many generations as he can fancy, will all live both plentifully and happily; since among them there is no less care taken of those who were once engaged in labour, but grow afterward unable to follow it, than there is elsewhere of these that continue still employed.

I would gladly hear any man compare the justice that is among the Utopians with that of all other nations, among whom may I perish if I see anything that looks either like justice or equity. For what justice is there in this, that a nobleman, a goldsmith, a banker, or any other man, that either does nothing at all, or at best is employed in things that are of no use to the public, should live in great luxury and splendour upon what is so ill acquired; and a mean man — a carter, a smith, or a ploughman — that works harder even than the beasts themselves, and is employed in labours so necessary that no commonwealth could hold out a year without them, can only earn so poor a livelihood, and must lead so miserable a life that the condition of the beasts is much better than theirs? [...] 

Therefore I must say that, as I hope for mercy, I can have no other notion of all the other governments that I see or know, than that they are a conspiracy of the rich, who, on pretence of managing the public, only pursue their private ends, and devise all the ways and arts they can find out; first, that they may, without danger, preserve all that they have so ill-acquired, and then, that they may engage the poor to toil and labour for them at as low rates as possible, and oppress them as much as they please; and if they can but prevail to get these contrivances established by the show of public authority, which is considered as the representative of the whole people, then they are accounted laws; yet these wicked men, after they have, by a most insatiable covetousness, divided that among themselves with which all the rest might have been well supplied, are far from that happiness that is enjoyed among the Utopians; for the use as well as the desire of money being extinguished, much anxiety and great occasions of mischief is cut off with it, and who does not see that the frauds, thefts, robberies, quarrels, tumults, contentions, seditions, murders, treacheries, and witchcrafts, which are, indeed, rather punished than restrained by the seventies of law, would all fall off, if money were not any more valued by the world?
COMPREHENSION

1. Explain what is meant by “the only commonwealth that truly deserves the name”.
2. Make two lists of key words contrasting the conditions to be found in Utopia and those existing in the real world of More’s time.
3. Examine the connection between human behaviour and economic security in Utopia. According to the author, what effect does the guarantee of material welfare have on the attitudes and behaviour of the Utopians?
4. What, according to More, is the major source of injustice in society?
5. For what reasons does More despise noblemen, goldsmiths and bankers?
6. Discuss More’s ideal society. Do you think his model could really work?
7. Would you like to live in More’s perfect world? Why? Why not?

ESSAY TOPICS

1. Do you think More would arrive at the same conclusions if he lived in our time? Discuss and give solid evidence for your claims!
2. “More’s utopian ideals are incompatible with human nature”. Discuss!

PROJECT

1. In the movie “The Matrix” machines have taken over the world. Mankind has become a natural resource for the artificial intelligences (AI). Humans are grown in fields and their bodies are used as organic power sources (batteries) for the machines. In order to keep the humans under control, their minds are plugged into a virtual world (the matrix) they believe to be the reality. In the following two clips, Agent Smith, an AI, reveals what he thinks about the human race. Summarise and discuss the main ideas of his analysis.
   Clip A: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM1-DQ2Wo_w
   Clip B: http://www.metacafe.com/watch/anWZsCuJt24hbb77/the_matrix_1999_agent_smith_speech/
2. Imagine you are an alien observer who has come to earth to study the human race. Report back to your alien commander and focus on the following aspects: virtues / vices / behaviour / habits / religion / politics / technology / intelligence.
3. Find out what the Occupy Movement is and in how far More’s ideals are relevant for their struggle.
4. More’s utopian ideas are said to have influenced Communist ideas of a classless society with communal ownership of property. Read through the 10 main points of the Communist Manifesto of 1848 and record similarities and differences between Thomas More’s and Karl Marx’s vision of society. Is Communism a utopia?

PRE-READING TASKS

Literary Theory – Theories of Reading

**Literature and history**
Dystopian novels often have a closer connection to reality than their utopian counterparts. This is because they are based on the principle of extrapolation. Hence, exploring the historical background that influenced and shaped an author’s work leads to a deeper understanding of it. Most literary critics argue that literature and history cannot be separated.

**Activity 1:**
Try and work out the most relevant economic, social and political forces that could have influenced the following novels, based on the information below. Then guess what dystopian fears might be dealt with in these literary works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Novel</th>
<th>Published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aldous Huxley</td>
<td>Brave New World</td>
<td>1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Orwell</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender, class and roots**
According to literary theorist Wolfgang Iser, literature generates effects of meaning for the reader in a virtual space created between reader and text. In this virtual space, the worlds of the text and the reader clash. So, what the reader brings to a text is just as relevant as what the author offers. Our gender, class and roots automatically influence the way we read and have an impact on our meaning-making process. As a result, each reader experiences literature differently.

**Activity 2:**
Set up a timeline with 6 events of the 21st century that you think were the most relevant ones for the course of human history. Justify your choice.

Make a list of 5 people who you believe to have had the biggest impact on our society in the last 15 years. Justify your choice.

Compare your findings in class. Draw conclusions.
Aldous Leonard Huxley (1894-1963) was a British writer widely known for his novel *Brave New World* (1932). The story is set in London in the year 2540 and is concerned with the impact of developments such as reproductive technology, social conditioning and sleep-learning on a future society. In the following extract, the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning (D.H.C.) is conducting his new students round the various departments.

MR. FOSTER was left in the Decanting Room. The D.H.C. and his students stepped into the nearest lift and were carried up to the fifth floor.

INFANT NURSERIES. NEO-PAVLOVIAN CONDITIONING ROOMS, announced the notice board.

The Director opened a door. They were in a large bare room, very bright and sunny; for the whole of the southern wall was a single window. Half a dozen nurses, trousered and jacketed in the regulation white viscose-linen uniform, their hair aseptically hidden under white caps, were engaged in setting out bowls of roses in a long row across the floor. Big bowls, packed tight with blossom. […]

The nurses stiffened to attention as the D.H.C. came in.

"Set out the books," he said curtly.

In silence the nurses obeyed his command. Between the rose bowls the books were duly set out—a row of nursery quartos opened invitingly each at some gaily coloured image of beast or fish or bird.

"Now bring in the children."

They hurried out of the room and returned in a minute or two, each pushing a kind of tall dumb-waiter laden, on all its four wire-netted shelves, with eight-month-old babies, all exactly alike (a Bokanovsky Group, it was evident) and all (since their caste was Delta) dressed in khaki.

"Put them down on the floor."

The infants were unloaded.

"Now turn them so that they can see the flowers and books."
Turned, the babies at once fell silent, then began to crawl towards those clusters of sleek colours, those shapes so gay and brilliant on the white pages. As they approached, the sun came out of a momentary eclipse behind a cloud. The roses flamed up as though with a sudden passion from within; a new and profound significance seemed to suffuse the shining pages of the books. From the ranks of the crawling babies came little squeals of excitement, gurgles and twitterings of pleasure.

The Director rubbed his hands. "Excellent!" he said. "It might almost have been done on purpose."

The swiftest crawlers were already at their goal. Small hands reached out uncertainly, touched, grasped, unpetaling the transfigured roses, crumpling the illuminated pages of the books. The Director waited until all were happily busy. Then, "Watch carefully," he said. And, lifting his hand, he gave the signal.

The Head Nurse, who was standing by a switchboard at the other end of the room, pressed down a little lever. There was a violent explosion. Shriller and ever shriller, a siren shrieked. Alarm bells maddeningly sounded. The children started, screamed; their faces were distorted with terror.

"And now," the Director shouted (for the noise was deafening), "now we proceed to rub in the lesson with a mild electric shock."

He waved his hand again, and the Head Nurse pressed a second lever. The screaming of the babies suddenly changed its tone. There was something desperate, almost insane, about the sharp spasmodic yelps to which they now gave utterance. Their little bodies twitched and stiffened; their limbs moved jerkily as if to the tug of unseen wires.

"We can electrify that whole strip of floor," bawled the Director in explanation. "But that's enough," he signalled to the nurse.

The explosions ceased, the bells stopped ringing, the shriek of the siren died down from tone to tone into silence. The stiffly twitching bodies relaxed, and what had become the sob and yelp of infant maniacs broadened out once more into a normal howl of ordinary terror.

"Offer them the flowers and the books again."
The nurses obeyed; but at the approach of the roses, at the mere sight of those gaily-coloured images of pussy and cock-a-doodle-doo and baa-baa black sheep, the infants shrank away in horror, the volume of their howling suddenly increased. "Observe," said the Director triumphantly, "observe."

Books and loud noises, flowers and electric shocks—already in the infant mind these couples were compromisingly linked; and after two hundred repetitions of the same or a similar lesson would be wedded indissolubly. What man has joined, nature is powerless to put asunder.

"They'll grow up with what the psychologists used to call an 'instinctive' hatred of books and flowers. Reflexes unalterably conditioned. They'll be safe from books and botany all their lives." The Director turned to his nurses. "Take them away again." Still yelling, the khaki babies were loaded on to their dumb-waiters and wheeled out, leaving behind them the smell of sour milk and a most welcome silence.

One of the students held up his hand; and though he could see quite well why you couldn't have lower-cast people wasting the Community's time over books, and that there was always the risk of their reading something which might undesirably decondition one of their reflexes, yet ... well, he couldn't understand about the flowers. Why go to the trouble of making it psychologically impossible for Deltas to like flowers?

Patiently the D.H.C. explained. If the children were made to scream at the sight of a rose, that was on grounds of high economic policy. Not so very long ago (a century or thereabouts), Gammas, Deltas, even Epsilons, had been conditioned to like flowers—flowers in particular and wild nature in general. The idea was to make them want to be going out into the country at every available opportunity, and so compel them to consume transport.

"And didn't they consume transport?" asked the student.

"Quite a lot," the D.H.C. replied. "But nothing else."

Primroses and landscapes, he pointed out, have one grave defect: they are gratuitous. A love of nature keeps no factories busy. It was decided to abolish the love of nature, at any rate among the lower classes; to abolish the love of nature, but not the tendency to consume transport. For of course it was essential that they should keep on going to the country, even though they
hated it. The problem was to find an economically sounder reason for consuming transport than a mere affection for primroses and landscapes. It was duly found.

"We condition the masses to hate the country," concluded the Director. "But simultaneously we condition them to love all country sports. At the same time, we see to it that all country sports shall entail the use of elaborate apparatus. So that they consume manufactured articles as well as transport. Hence those electric shocks."

"I see," said the student, and was silent, lost in admiration.

COMPREHENSION

1. What is your initial response to this excerpt? Explain.
2. Who was Ivan Petrovich Pavlov?
3. Outline the different phases of the conditioning process presented in this extract.
4. Analyse the language that is used in this extract. What do you notice?
5. Which caste do the children belong to? What does this mean for their future?
6. What is the purpose of the conditioning process?
7. What is implied with the sentence “What man has joined, nature is powerless to put asunder”?
8. What is the secret of happiness in the society Huxley depicts here?

EXTRACT 2: GEORGE ORWELL - 1984

Eric Arthur Blair (1903-1950) pen-named George Orwell, was an English author and journalist. His dystopian novel 1984 was published in 1949 and depicts life in Oceania, a totalitarian state run by a dictator called Big Brother. The rulers of Oceania have commissioned the creation of a new language, “Newspeak”, which is meant to replace standard English by the year 2050. In the following lunchroom conversation, the novel’s protagonist Winston Smith discusses Newspeak with one of the language experts involved in the project.

‘How is the Dictionary getting on?’ said Winston, raising his voice to overcome the noise.

‘Slowly,’ said Syme. ‘I’m on the adjectives. It’s fascinating.’
He had brightened up immediately at the mention of Newspeak. He pushed his pannikin aside, took up his hunk of bread in one delicate hand and his cheese in the other, and leaned across the table so as to be able to speak without shouting.

‘The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition,’ he said. ‘We’re getting the language into its final shape — the shape it’s going to have when nobody speaks anything else. When we’ve finished with it, people like you will have to learn it all over again. You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We’re destroying words — scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We’re cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won’t contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050.’

He bit hungrily into his bread and swallowed a couple of mouthfuls, then continued speaking, with a sort of pedant’s passion. His thin dark face had become animated, his eyes had lost their mocking expression and grown almost dreamy.

‘It’s a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. Of course the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn’t only the synonyms; there are also the antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take “good”, for instance. If you have a word like “good”, what need is there for a word like “bad”? “Ungood” will do just as well — better, because it’s an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of “good”, what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like “excellent” and “splendid” and all the rest of them? “Plusgood” covers the meaning, or “doubleplusgood” if you want something stronger still. Of course we use those forms already, but in the final version of Newspeak there’ll be nothing else. In the end the whole notion of goodness and badness will be covered by only six words — in reality, only one word. Don’t you see the beauty of that, Winston? It was B.B.’s idea originally, of course,’ he added as an afterthought.
A sort of vapid eagerness flitted across Winston’s face at the mention of Big Brother. Nevertheless Syme immediately detected a certain lack of enthusiasm.

‘You haven’t a real appreciation of Newspeak, Winston,’ he said almost sadly. ‘Even when you write it you’re still thinking in Oldspeak. I’ve read some of those pieces that you write in “The Times” occasionally. They’re good enough, but they’re translations. In your heart you’d prefer to stick to Oldspeak, with all its vagueness and its useless shades of meaning. You don’t grasp the beauty of the destruction of words. Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?’

Winston did know that, of course. He smiled, sympathetically he hoped, not trusting himself to speak. Syme bit off another fragment of the dark-coloured bread, chewed it briefly, and went on:

‘Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed, will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten. Already, in the Eleventh Edition, we’re not far from that point. But the process will still be continuing long after you and I are dead. Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there’s no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It’s merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. But in the end there won’t be any need even for that. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak,’ he added with a sort of mystical satisfaction. ‘Has it ever occurred to you, Winston, that by the year 2050, at the very latest, not a single human being will be alive who could understand such a conversation as we are having now?’

‘Except ——’ began Winston doubtfully, and he stopped.

It had been on the tip of his tongue to say ‘Except the proles,’ but he checked himself, not feeling fully certain that this remark was not in some way unorthodox. Syme, however, had divined what he was about to say.
'The proles are not human beings,' he said carelessly. 'By 2050 — earlier, probably — all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron — they’ll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like “freedom is slavery” when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking — not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.'

COMPREHENSION

1. What is your initial response to this passage? Explain.
2. Summarise the main differences between Newspeak and Oldspeak.
3. What advantage does the state see in the creation of a new language?
4. "What sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like “excellent” and “splendid” and all the rest of them?" What would you reply to Syme’s question?
5. Explain the sentence “Orthodoxy is unconsciousness” and what are the implications of this?
6. Syme speaks of reality control through language. Can you think of any examples where language was/is used to manipulate the masses and/or distort the reality?
7. Listen to stand-up comedian George Carlin talk about “language that takes the life out of life”. Recall some of his best euphemisms and contrast them with the more offensive expression.

EXTRACT 3: MAX BARRY - JENNIFER GOVERNMENT

Max Barry (born in 1973) is a contemporary Australian author. His novel Jennifer Government (2003) introduces the reader to a dystopian society in which the world order has drastically changed.

Until she stood in front of them, Hayley didn't realize how many of her classmates were blond. It was like a beach out there. She'd missed the trend. Hayley would have to hotfoot it to a hairdresser after school. "When you're ready," the teacher said. She
looked at her note cards and took a breath. "Why I Love America, by Hayley McDonald's. America is the greatest group of countries in the world because we have freedom. In countries like France, where the Government isn't privatized, they still have to pay tax and do whatever the Government says, which would really suck. In USA countries, we respect individual rights and let people do whatever they want."

The teacher jotted something in his folder. McDonald's-sponsored schools were cheap like that: at Pepsi schools, everyone had notebook computers. Also their uniforms were much better. It was so hard to be cool with the Golden Arches on your back.

"Before USA countries abolished tax, if you didn't have a job, the Government took money from working people and gave it to you. So, like, the more useless you were, the more money you got." No response from her classmates. Even the teacher didn't smile. Hayley was surprised: she'd thought that one was a crack-up. "But now America has all the best companies and all the money because everyone works and the Government can't spend money on stupid things like advertising and elections and making new laws. They just stop people stealing or hurting each other and everything else is taken care of by the private sector, which everyone knows is more efficient."

She looked at her notes: yep, that was it. "Finally I would like to say that America is the greatest group of countries in the world and I am proud to live in the Australian Territories of the USA!"

A smattering of applause. It was the eighth talk this period: she guessed it was getting harder to work up enthusiasm for capitalism. Hayley headed for her seat.

"Hold it," the teacher said. "I have questions." "Oh," Hayley said. "Are there any positive aspects to tax?" She relaxed: a gimme question. "Some people say tax is good because it gives money to people who don't have any. But those people must be lazy or stupid, so why should they get other people's money? Obviously the answer is no."

The teacher blinked. He made a note. That must have been an impressive answer, Hayley thought. "What about social justice?"

"What?" "Is it fair that some people should be rich while others have
nothing?" She shifted from one foot to the other. She was just remembering: this teacher had a thing about poor people. He was always bringing them up. "Um, yeah, it's fair. Because if I study really hard for a test and get an A and Emily doesn't and fails" -- renewed interest from the class; Emily raised blond eyebrows -- "then it's not fair to take some of my marks and give them to her, is it?" The teacher frowned. Hayley felt a flash of panic. "Another thing, in non-USA countries they want everyone to be the same, so if your sister is born blind, then they blind you, too, to make it even. But how unfair is that? I would much rather be an American than a European Union... person." She gave the class a big smile. They clapped, much more enthusiastically than before. She added hopefully, "Is that all?"

"Yes. Thank you." Relief! She started walking. A cute boy in the third row winked at her. The teacher said, "Although, Hayley, they don't really blind people in non-USA countries." Hayley stopped. "Well, that's kind of hypocritical, isn't it?" The class cheered. The teacher opened his mouth, then shut it. Hayley took her seat. Kick ass, she thought. She had aced this test.

COMPREHENSION

1. What is your initial response to this passage? Explain.
2. How has the world order changed in Jennifer Government?
3. Describe Hayley's character based on this passage.
4. What makes Hayley love America so much?
5. Analyse the dynamics between Hayley, the teacher and the class. What do you notice?
6. Schools are sponsored by corporations like McDonald’s and Pepsi. Do you see any danger in that?

EXTRACT 4: MARGARET ATWOOD - ORYX AND CRAKE

Margaret Atwood, born in 1939, is a Canadian author and one of the most-honoured fiction writers in recent history. As a dystopian novel Oryx and Crake (2003) investigates and shows the consequences of developments in science and technology.

On the second to last evening, Crake said, “Let me walk you through a hypothetical scenario.”

“I’m game,” said Jimmy. Actually he was sleepy—
he’d had too much popcorn and beer—but he sat up and put on his paying-attention look, the one he’d perfected in high school. Hypothetical scenarios were a favourite thing of Crake’s.

“Axiom: that illness isn’t productive. In itself, it generates no commodities and therefore no money. Although it’s an excuse for a lot of activity, all it really does moneywise is cause wealth to flow from the sick to the well. From patients to doctors, from clients to cure-peddlers. Money osmosis, you might call it.”

“Granted,” said Jimmy.

“Now, suppose you’re an outfit called HelthWyzer. Suppose you make your money out of drugs and procedures that cure sick people, or else—better—that make it impossible for them to get sick in the first place.”

“Yeah?” said Jimmy. Nothing hypothetical here: that was what HelthWyzer actually did.

“So, what are you going to need, sooner or later?”

“More cures?”

“After that.”

“What do you mean, after that?”

“After you’ve cured everything going.”

Jimmy made a pretence of thinking. No point doing any actual thought: it was a foregone conclusion that Crake would have some lateral-jump solution to his own question.

“Remember the plight of the dentists, after that new mouthwash came in? The one that replaced plaque bacteria with friendly ones that filled the same ecological niche, namely your mouth? No one ever needed a filling again, and a lot of dentists went bust.”

“So?”

“So, you’d need more sick people. Or else—and it might be the same thing—more diseases. New and different ones. Right?”

“Stands to reason,” said Jimmy after a moment. It did, too. “But don’t they keep discovering new diseases?”

“Not discovering,” said Crake. “They’re creating them.”
“Who is?” said Jimmy. Saboteurs, terrorists, is that what Crake meant? It was well known they went in for that kind of thing, or tried to. So far they hadn’t had a lot of successes: their puny little diseases had been simple-minded, in Compound terms, and fairly easy to contain.

“HelthWyzer,” said Crake. “They’ve been doing it for years. There’s a whole secret unit working on nothing else. Then there’s the distribution end. Listen, this is brilliant. They put the hostile bioforms into their vitamin pills—their HelthWyzer over-the-counter premium brand, you know? They have a really elegant delivery system—they embed a virus inside a carrier bacterium, E. coli splice, doesn’t get digested, bursts in the pylorus, and bingo! Random insertion, of course, and they don’t have to keep on doing it—if they did they’d get caught, because even in the pleeblands they’ve got guys who could figure it out. But once you’ve got a hostile bioform started in the pleeb population, the way people slosh around out there it more or less runs itself. Naturally they develop the antidotes at the same time as they’re customizing the bugs, but they hold those in reserve, they practise the economics of scarcity, so they’re guaranteed high profits.”

“Are you making this up?” said Jimmy.

“The best diseases, from a business point of view,” said Crake, “would be those that cause lingering illnesses. Ideally—that is, for maximum profit—the patient should either get well or die just before all of his or her money runs out. It’s a fine calculation.”

**COMPREHENSION**

1. What is your initial response to this excerpt? Explain.
2. What happened to the dentists in the new world described by Crake?
3. What exactly has HelthWyzer been doing all these years and why? Explain in detail.
4. What diseases are the best ones according to the business principle?
5. What do you notice about the language that Crank and Jimmy use.
6. What is shocking about the ideas presented in this excerpt?
7. Can you see any parallels to our world today?
ESSAY TOPICS

1. Compare the dystopian fears that Huxley / Orwell brought forward to the ones that Barry / Atwood illustrate. What similarities can you find? What differences are there? Why?

2. Discuss the relationship between science, nature, economy, education and political power in reference to one of the passages above.

3. Utopianism suffers from an image problem. Our society associates change and progress with danger and risk. Discuss.

PROJECTS

1. Watch the first part of the documentary *The Corporation* (2003).
   Which picture of the corporation is painted by producers Achbar and Abbot?
   Are the directors exaggerating?
   Give more examples of corporate crime.

2. Imagine you were to lead a party of visitors through your school.
   Describe how the “system” works. Do not shy away from black humor, irony and satire.

3. How will the world end? Come up with possible scenarios.

4. Alternative lifestyles: Find out more about alternative communities worldwide. (Auroville / ZEGG community…) Focus on:
   - their goals
   - their philosophy and motivation
   - policies and ideals
   - sustainability
   - and everything else that strikes your interest

5. Analyse the lyrics and/or video of one of the following songs: *Genesis – Land Of Confusion* (1986) / *Tool – Aenima* (1996 / Attention: Explicit Lyrics) / *Linkin Park – Burning In The Skies* (2011)

(Sources: Utopia and Dystopia - Langenscheidt Viewfinder / Utopia and Dystopia – Cornelsen)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GLOSSARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>artificial intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>totalitarian state / totalitarian regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCTV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avarice, greed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desensitized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a high standard of living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>technological advance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birth control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loss of identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abuse of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyranny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dissidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idealism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autocracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>synthetic life form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dissent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controversial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to uphold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to enforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to evolve into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to subdue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be under surveillance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be disillusioned with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to oppress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to predict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to rebel against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to ban something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to abolish something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to brainwash citizens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>