

BE ON THE LOOKOUT

*Ideas you should be thinking about and questions you should be asking yourself
as you read through your Dystopian Novel*

As we have learned from our reading of *The Giver*, a Dystopian Novel features a fictional, futuristic and controlled society. Usually science or technology play a role. While these are some of the unifying features of Dystopian Literature, virtually all other aspects of this genre can vary tremendously. While reading your Dystopian Novel, think about how it is similar to *The Giver*. Also consider what elements distinguish it from Lois Lowry's compelling tale. The following questions will help guide your reading so that you will be able to generate the ideas necessary to write your final Humanities paper for this school year—a 5-7 paragraph essay comparing and contrasting the two works of fiction.

SETTING

Where does your novel take place? Is the location crucial to the plot of the book or could the events happen anywhere? Is there more than one physical location represented in the novel? Is there specific information about the time period in which the action takes place? Does the novel span a short or long period of time (such as several generations)?

CHARACTERS

What are the ages and genders of the main characters in your novel? Are these features important? How do the main characters end up in this society? What are their attitudes about their situation? Are there characters that feel trapped in the current system? Do they work toward exposing the inhumanity or addressing the injustices? Are there characters that are unaware of the negative aspects of the current structure or openly support it? Is there a central figure that is revered by the members of the society? Is there a person or a group of people that appear to be separate from the excessive controls of society? Is there more of a focus on the characters than on the action in this book?

PLOT

How does the novel begin? How does it end? What kinds of conflicts exist? Is there a single significant event such as war, rebellion, climate change or overpopulation that results in the dramatic changes in the society? How are the conflicts presented and how are they resolved? Is there much external conflict such as people fighting or characters enduring natural catastrophes? What kind of role do the characters' internal conflicts play in the action of the book? What suspenseful elements are included? Does the action guide the writing, or does the "back story" or character development dominate?

POINT OF VIEW

Who tells the story? How do you feel about the narrator, i.e. is s/he believable or likeable? Does the point of view limit the reader's access to information? Does the reader generally know more about what is happening than the characters do? Would elements of the novel be significantly different if the point of view changed? Does the point of view shift at any point during the novel?

WRITING STYLE

Are there mostly short, easy-to-understand sentences in your novel or does the author use many lengthy sentences that demand extra concentration? Does the author make use of much dialogue? Is the vocabulary basic or sophisticated? Do you find many examples of descriptive writing or figurative language such as the similes and metaphors you would find in good poetry? Do you feel like the writing flows naturally? Is it fast-paced?

TONE

Are the situations in the novel unsettling or disturbing? Does the tone of the novel get progressively darker or does the reader sense instances of hopefulness? Are the images presented in a graphic way? Is there an emphasis on violence? Are there suspenseful moments or does the plot progress in a more predictable fashion?

SYMBOLISM

Is there an object, character, or idea that at first glance seems unimportant but that reappears often or that the writer spends a great deal of time describing? Are there names of characters or locations that seem to take on special significance or represent something more than just a name?

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

What forms of technology are present in the novel? What is the purpose of this technology? How are computers, robots and other scientific advances used or abused? How are the creators of this technology treated? Are there cases when technology takes the place of humans or interferes with what we would consider normal human interactions?

FORMS OF CONTROL

How is information distributed to the people? How is independent thought controlled? What freedoms are people denied? What rules are in place? What punishments exist for breaking the rules? How is the natural world such as the climate or the landscape controlled? Is there a formal system for educating young people? What role does fear play? Are characters purposely isolated from each other or relationships between people limited?

SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Does the author of your novel seem to be criticizing some current trend or political situation? Is there a lesson to be learned from reading this book? Upon finishing the novel, do you feel differently about some aspect of our society?