

Summer Reading Essay (DUE AFTER SCHOOL STARTS)

Your first essay this year is a personal response. A personal response requires a combination of your personal opinion and your analytical insight. You may argue whatever opinion you hold, but you must support your opinion with evidence from the text. Because you read these novels over the summer and we have hardly discussed them, you are not responsible for finding quotations to support all your claims. You only need to find two quotations for each novel, but of course, you are welcome to use as many as you wish.

I would like you to think comparatively about *Brave New World* (1932) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). Each author was looking at his society's recent past and current social trends and projecting the direction that his world would move in the future. What I want you to do is think about the social and political commentary that the authors are making as they examine their respective societies and warn about the future of those societies. For instance, in *Fahrenheit 451*, books are forbidden. What was it about 20th century Americans that led Bradbury to believe that we would not care if all books were taken away? In *Brave New World*, What does Huxley seem to be saying about the dependence of people in England on alcohol and other legal drugs in his slogan "A gramme is better than a damn"?

My two suggested essay topics are:

1) Which author do you feel has provided a more pessimistic vision of the essence of human nature? What characteristics of human beings does the author seem to be emphasizing? Do you think his view of us is a fair one?

2) Which novel do you feel offers a more realistic view of the direction the world is actually heading? Consider such factors as:

- technological advances
- societal developments
- political realities
- trends in human behavior

If you do not like either topic and you wish to design your own, you must clear it with me immediately. Thanks!

Essay requirements:

Minimum of four paragraphs:

introduction

2 body paragraphs

Conclusion

Both the introduction and the conclusion may be short for this first essay.

Remember that this is my "getting to know you" essay. Please attend carefully to details such as heading, citations, Works Cited, and all the other formatting habits that you acquired last year. I look forward to learning who you are as writers, thinkers, and philosophers.

Creative Assignment (DUE AFTER SCHOOL STARTS)

Your team has been selected to design a room for our museum of past civilizations. You are trying to create for posterity an exhibit that will bring alive the flavor of the world in your novel. Imagine what the necessary objects and people would look like that would convey the way the society in your novel would feel. You will also create a 1-2 page tour description that will explain the nature and values of your culture by presenting the items and people in your exhibit.

For example, in the room dedicated to the beginning of the 21st century, the artifacts might be an ipod, a cell phone, a laptop, a Wii, a facebook page, a credit card, a *Harry Potter* book, and a fast food counter.

One model is wearing crocs, jeans, and a tee shirt with spaghetti straps, and she has dyed hair, big, dangly earrings, and a pierced nose.

One model is wearing sneakers, torn jeans, his pants are slung low on his hips, partially revealing his boxers, and he is wearing a baseball cap that is on backwards.

The tour brochure would certainly mention how this society was obsessed with all things technical and these gadgets were breaking old habits of social interaction. For instance, instead of playing tennis, they had a Wii to simulate playing tennis. They use the cell phones not as much to talk to one another but more to text one another because they want instant gratification, so technology speeds up their worlds and isolates them from other human beings. You might want to mention how people have stopped purchasing books, with the exception of *Harry Potter*, and you could describe the cult behavior associated with that novel.

You can use any format you wish to create this world: computer, poster, model magic, or shoebox. Your group's imagination should guide you to your preferred format.

You will have two class work days.

You will briefly present your exhibit to your classmates on the day it is due.

Grading:

Group projects sometimes feel frustrating because it is difficult to work out the division of labor equitably, and you did not have a chance to choose your partners. This is a challenging assignment—too much for one person to do, so I thought teams would work better. I expect you to try to work cooperatively and to be sensitive to the needs and desires of your classmates. This is supposed to be fun, not stressful.

Obviously, I am most concerned with how thoughtful you are about the issues you see the author raising in the novel. A group that was working on *Fahrenheit 451* and did not have a fireman would certainly not receive the highest possible grade.

I will be assessing:

creativity

depth of analysis (in the written work)

visual appeal (not a big part because I am not giving you much time)