

DYSTOPIAN FICTION READER

Eight stories about control, freedom, technology and society

01	1984 SURVEILLANCE · TRUTH · CONTROL
02	V for Vendetta PROPAGANDA · FEAR · DICTATORSHIP
03	Nosedive RATINGS · SOCIAL PRESSURE · DIGITAL CONTROL
04	The Road COLLAPSE · SURVIVAL · MORALITY
05	The Giver SAMENESS · CHOICE · INDIVIDUALITY
06	WALL-E ENVIRONMENT · CONSUMPTION · TECHNOLOGY
07	The Hunger Games INEQUALITY · SPECTACLE · VIOLENCE
08	Fahrenheit 451 CENSORSHIP · MEDIA · KNOWLEDGE

How to use this reader

Read for the story first. Use the margin notes only when you need them. After each text, answer the six questions in complete sentences. The questions move from understanding to analysis and finally to discussion and evaluation.

The texts in this reader are original classroom summaries of the works named above. They are not extracts from the original works.



1984

George Orwell

SURVEILLANCE · TRUTH · CONTROL

Winston Smith lives in Oceania, a country controlled by a powerful political organisation called the Party. Its leader is known as Big Brother. His face appears on posters throughout the city, together with the message that Big Brother is watching.

The warning is not symbolic. In almost every room there is a telescreen. It broadcasts Party programmes, but it can also observe the people standing in front of it. At work, at home and in public places, citizens know that they may be watched. Even a nervous expression can become suspicious.

Winston works at the Ministry of Truth. The name sounds positive, but his real job is to change the past. When an old newspaper report no longer fits the Party's current story, Winston rewrites it. If the Party predicted that production would rise and it actually fell, the old prediction is changed. If a political person becomes an enemy, photographs and articles are altered until it seems that this person never mattered.

Winston understands the frightening logic behind his work. If every document can be changed, ordinary people have no reliable way to prove what happened. The Party does not only control information about the present; it tries to control people's memory of the past.

In secret, Winston begins to resist. He buys an old diary and writes down thoughts that would be dangerous if the Thought Police discovered them. He knows that even independent thinking can be treated as a crime. Still, writing makes him feel that part of his mind belongs to him.

READING LENS

SURVEILLANCE TRUTH CONTROL

As you read, notice who has power, how people are controlled, and what individuals can still choose.

KEY IDEA

Surveillance becomes most powerful when people begin to control their own behaviour because they might be watched.

VOCAB

telescreen = a screen that broadcasts and observes
to alter = to change
reliable = trustworthy
to resist = to fight against control



1984

George Orwell

SURVEILLANCE · TRUTH · CONTROL

Winston later meets Julia, another Party member who also breaks the rules in private. They begin a secret relationship. For a short time, they create a small world of their own. They find a room where they believe there is no telescreen and imagine that they have escaped the Party's eyes.

They are wrong. The room has been watched. Winston and Julia are arrested and separated.

Winston is taken to the Ministry of Love, where prisoners are tortured until they stop resisting. His interrogator does not simply want Winston to obey. He wants Winston to accept the Party's version of reality. If the Party says that two plus two equals five, Winston is expected not only to repeat the statement but to believe it.

The final stage of Winston's punishment attacks his deepest fear. Under extreme pressure, he begs the authorities to hurt Julia instead of him. The private loyalty that had helped him resist is destroyed.

After his release, Winston is no longer the same person. The Party has not merely controlled his movements or his words. It has broken his ability to maintain an independent inner life.

The novel therefore presents surveillance as only one part of a larger system. Cameras and telescreens create fear, but the ultimate goal is control over truth, memory and thought itself.

AFTER READING

A · UNDERSTANDING	1. What does Winston change in old newspaper articles? 2. Why do Winston and Julia think the rented room is safe?
B · ANALYSIS	1. How does changing old records help the Party control people? 2. How does the possibility of surveillance influence citizens' behaviour?
C · EVALUATION	1. Which form of control described in the summary seems most dangerous to you? Explain. 2. Is private space necessary for freedom? Use ideas from the summary to support your view.

Britain has become an authoritarian state after years of war, disease and political chaos. The new government promises order and security. Many citizens accept this promise because they remember how frightening the earlier crisis was.

The government, however, demands a high price. It controls the media, limits personal freedom and removes people it considers dangerous. Television and radio constantly repeat official messages. Political opponents and members of unwanted groups can disappear. The state presents itself as the only force protecting ordinary people from disorder.

A young woman called Evey Hammond meets a mysterious man known as V. He hides his face behind a Guy Fawkes mask and attacks important symbols of the regime. To the government, he is a terrorist. To V, the government itself has used terror to make the population obedient.

V believes that the regime's greatest weapon is not the police or the military. It is fear. Citizens have been taught to believe that without the government, chaos will return. The government also controls the stories people hear about the past and the dangers of the present.

Evey is initially frightened by V and unsure whether his methods can be justified. He is willing to use violence, and his idea of freedom is connected to revenge. The story therefore does not present resistance as simple or morally clean.

READING LENS

PROPAGANDA FEAR DICTATORSHIP

As you read, notice who has power, how people are controlled, and what individuals can still choose.

KEY IDEA

A dictatorship can gain support by convincing people that freedom is more dangerous than control.

VOCAB

authoritarian = demanding strict obedience
regime = a system of government
obedient = willing to follow orders
to justify = to give reasons for something

As V's attacks continue, he also uses the government's own communication systems. He takes control of a television broadcast and speaks directly to the public. Instead of simply telling people what to think, he asks why they accepted the loss of their freedoms.

The government responds with stronger control. Officials describe V as a threat to national security and try to prevent his message from spreading. Yet more people begin to question the official version of events.

The conflict becomes a struggle over political power, but also over language and symbols. The government uses flags, speeches and television to create obedience. V uses his mask, public actions

Eventually, the mask becomes more important than the individual wearing it. Ordinary citizens can use the same symbol. This suggests that an idea cannot easily be arrested in the same way as a person.

The story raises an uncomfortable question: people may willingly accept authoritarian control when they are afraid enough. Security can be a real human need, but governments can also use that need to justify extreme power.

The dystopian society in V for Vendetta is therefore maintained not only through force. It survives because fear, propaganda and political storytelling make control appear necessary.

AFTER READING

A · UNDERSTANDING	1. What does the government promise after war, disease and political chaos? 2. How does V speak directly to the population?
B · ANALYSIS	1. How does the government use fear to make its control seem necessary? 2. Why does V's mask become more important than the individual wearing it?
C · EVALUATION	1. When, if ever, can giving up freedom for security be justified? Refer to the summary. 2. How effective can symbols and public messages be against an authoritarian government? Explain.

Lacie lives in a society where almost every social interaction is rated. Using their phones, people can give one another between one and five stars. A pleasant conversation, a friendly smile or an attractive social-media post can improve a person's score.

At first, the system seems voluntary and harmless. There are no soldiers forcing people to smile. Yet the rating has become connected to important parts of life. People with high scores can receive better apartments, cheaper services and more respected jobs. A low score can close doors.

Lacie has a good rating, but it is not high enough for the life she wants. She carefully plans how she behaves in public. She practises her smile, posts attractive photographs and tries to have positive interactions with highly rated people.

An old friend with an excellent score invites Lacie to her wedding. Lacie sees an opportunity. If the wealthy guests like her speech and rate her positively, her own score could rise.

Her journey to the wedding, however, becomes a disaster. A small conflict leads to a bad rating. The lower score creates practical problems, which make Lacie more stressed. Her stress causes further conflicts, and those conflicts produce even more bad ratings.

READING LENS**RATINGS
SOCIAL
PRESSURE
DIGITAL
CONTROL**

As you read, notice who has power, how people are controlled, and what individuals can still choose.

KEY IDEA

The system works because people want approval and fear social punishment.

VOCAB

rating = a score or evaluation

downward spiral = a situation that keeps getting worse

genuine = real, honest

oppressive = limiting

freedom in a cruel or unfair way

The system creates a downward spiral. As Lacie's score falls, strangers become less patient with her. Services become harder to access. Her attempts to remain cheerful become increasingly desperate.

Eventually, Lacie stops performing the perfect version of herself. She becomes angry, emotional and honest. She arrives at the wedding in a terrible state and says things that polite society considers unacceptable.

The authorities finally arrest her. In a prison cell, she meets another prisoner. Neither of them has access to the rating system. They insult each other freely - and both seem strangely relieved.

The episode's dystopia is unusual because there is no obvious dictator. Much of the control comes from ordinary citizens. Everyone judges everyone else, and everyone knows that they are being judged in return.

This changes human relationships. Kindness can become a strategy for gaining points rather than a genuine emotion. Friendship becomes connected to social status. People avoid honesty because disagreement can damage their rating.

Nosedive therefore asks whether a society needs an authoritarian government to become oppressive. A digital system, social pressure and people's desire to be liked may be enough to limit freedom.

AFTER READING

A · UNDERSTANDING	1. Why does Lacie want a higher rating? 2. What causes her rating to fall during the journey to the wedding?
B · ANALYSIS	1. How does the rating system change the way people behave towards one another? 2. Why is it important that ordinary citizens, not only a government, enforce the system?
C · EVALUATION	1. Would this society still be dangerous if using the rating system were voluntary? Explain. 2. Should online ratings ever affect access to jobs, housing or services? Use the summary as a starting point.

A father and his young son travel through a destroyed America. An unnamed catastrophe has changed the world. The sky is grey, the landscape is covered in ash and most plants and animals have disappeared.

There is no functioning state to protect them. Roads, houses and shops still exist, but the systems that once made society work are gone. Money has little value. Food, clean water, shelter and safety have become the most important resources.

The father and son carry their possessions in a shopping cart. They move south because the father hopes the climate will be warmer there. Every day involves practical questions: Where can they find food? Is a building safe to enter? Can they light a fire without attracting attention?

Other human beings are often the greatest danger. Some survivors steal and kill. Organised groups use violence to control weaker people. The father therefore teaches his son to be extremely careful.

The boy, however, still wants to trust and help others. He repeatedly asks whether he and his father are still the “good guys.” The phrase becomes a moral test. Survival is important, but the boy does not want survival to destroy their humanity.

READING LENS

COLLAPSE SURVIVAL MORALITY

As you read, notice who has power, how people are controlled, and what individuals can still choose.

KEY IDEA

The collapse of institutions tests whether morality can survive without laws or social pressure.

VOCAB

ash = grey powder left after burning
supplies = food and useful materials
compassion = sympathy and a wish to help
institution = an organised social system

The father faces a difficult conflict. His love for his son makes him protective, but protection can require harsh decisions. When someone threatens them, he is prepared to use violence. When they meet desperate strangers, he often refuses to share their limited supplies.

The son reacts differently. He feels sympathy for people they meet and worries when his father becomes too hard. Their conversations show two responses to a collapsed society: fear can make people focus only on themselves, while compassion can preserve a sense of community.

Unlike many dystopian stories, *The Road* does not focus on an all-powerful government. The danger comes from the absence of government and social

This creates a different question about civilisation. Are people moral because laws force them to behave well, or can moral values survive when there are no consequences for breaking the rules?

The father and son continue their journey despite hunger, illness and fear. Their relationship gives them a reason to continue.

The story's dystopia is therefore both physical and moral. The world has been destroyed, but the deeper danger is that human ideas such as trust, kindness and responsibility may disappear with it.

AFTER READING

A · UNDERSTANDING	1. Why are the father and son travelling south? 2. Why is the father careful when they meet other survivors?
B · ANALYSIS	1. How do the father and son show different attitudes towards other people? 2. Why can the world in the summary be called dystopian even without a powerful government?
C · EVALUATION	1. In a survival situation, how much should people still help strangers? Refer to the summary. 2. Which value is more important for rebuilding society: security or compassion? Explain.



The Giver

Lois Lowry

**SAMENESS • CHOICE •
INDIVIDUALITY**

Jonas lives in a community that appears peaceful and successful. There is no war, almost no crime and little visible poverty. Everyone has food, a home and a clear place in society.

The community has achieved this stability through a principle called Sameness. Important choices are not left to individuals. Authorities decide people's jobs, organise family units and regulate everyday behaviour. Strong emotions are controlled, and citizens follow detailed rules.

At the age of twelve, each child receives a future role. Jonas is given a rare position: Receiver of Memory. He begins training with an older man known as the Giver.

The Giver transfers memories of the world before Sameness. Jonas experiences snow, sunshine, music and colour. He also experiences love in a way that his community does not understand.

But the memories are not only pleasant. Jonas also receives memories of hunger, pain and war. He begins to understand why earlier leaders wanted to remove suffering.

The solution, however, removed much more than suffering. Without real choices, people cannot make serious mistakes - but they also cannot choose meaningful lives for themselves.

READING LENS

SAMENESS CHOICE INDIVIDUALITY

As you read, notice who has power, how people are controlled, and what individuals can still choose.

KEY IDEA

A society can remove suffering by removing choice - but that changes what it means to be free.

VOCAB

Sameness = the community's system of eliminating differences
to regulate = to control by rules
burden = a difficult responsibility
genuine = real



The Giver

Lois Lowry

**SAMENESS • CHOICE •
INDIVIDUALITY**

Jonas gradually notices how limited his society is. Words such as “love” are treated as imprecise. Citizens do not fully understand death. Difficult realities are hidden behind calm, technical language.

He discovers that the community's peaceful appearance depends on practices he finds morally unacceptable. Decisions about who belongs in society are made without open public discussion. Because most citizens have no memories of a different world, they lack the knowledge needed to question the system.

Jonas now sees Sameness differently. Equality and stability can sound positive, but in his community they have become reasons to eliminate difference and freedom.

Jonas eventually decides that a life without genuine choice is not enough. His growing knowledge makes obedience impossible.

The Giver therefore challenges the idea of a perfect society. Removing pain may also remove courage. Removing conflict may remove freedom. Removing difference may remove individuality.

The central problem is not that order and equality are bad. It is that these goals become dangerous when people are no longer allowed to decide what kind of life they want.

AFTER READING

A • UNDERSTANDING	1. What role does Jonas receive at the age of twelve? 2. Name two kinds of memories the Giver transfers to Jonas.
B • ANALYSIS	1. How does Sameness create stability while also limiting freedom? 2. Why does receiving memories make it harder for Jonas to accept his society?
C • EVALUATION	1. Would you accept less personal choice for a society with less war, crime and suffering? Explain. 2. Can a society be truly equal if authorities make its citizens' most important choices? Refer to the summary.

C • DISCUSSION & EVALUATION

1. Would you accept less freedom if it guaranteed a life without war, hunger and serious crime? Explain.

2. Is a society truly equal if people cannot make important choices for themselves? Discuss.

Hundreds of years in the future, Earth is covered in rubbish. Cities are empty, the air is polluted and almost no plant life remains. Humanity has left the planet.

A small waste-collecting robot called WALL-E continues working among the ruins. Every day he compresses rubbish into cubes and builds enormous towers from humanity's waste. He also collects interesting objects that remind the viewer of the civilisation that disappeared.

One day, WALL-E finds something extraordinary: a tiny green plant.

Soon a modern robot called EVE arrives from space. Her mission is to search Earth for evidence that the planet can support life again. When she discovers the plant, her programming orders her to protect it and return it to the human spaceship Axiom.

The Axiom was originally meant to be a temporary home. Instead, humans have lived there for generations. Technology performs almost every physical task. People move in floating chairs, communicate through screens and receive food and entertainment automatically.

Life is comfortable, but the passengers have become extremely dependent on machines.

READING LENS**ENVIRONMENT
CONSUMPTION
TECHNOLOGY**

As you read, notice who has power, how people are controlled, and what individuals can still choose.

KEY IDEA

Technology is not the enemy; dependence and lack of responsibility are the real dangers.

VOCAB

waste = unwanted material / rubbish

to support life = to make life possible

dependent = needing something in order to function

passivity = not taking action

When the ship's captain learns about the planet, he becomes curious about Earth. For the first time, he starts asking questions about the planet his ancestors left behind. He decides that humanity should return home and repair the damage.

The automated system resists this plan. Its instructions were created long ago, when Earth's condition seemed hopeless. The machine follows its old command even though the situation has changed.

This creates an important conflict: technology that was designed to help humans has begun to make decisions for them.

The film also criticises extreme consumption. The ruined Earth is filled with products and waste connected to our

Yet WALL-E is not simply anti-technology. Robots also help save the planet and support the return to Earth. The problem is dependence without responsibility.

The story therefore connects environmental collapse with human passivity. Technology can make life easier, but comfort becomes dangerous when people stop making decisions, moving independently or caring for their environment.

The hopeful ending suggests that dystopia is not necessarily permanent. Humans can choose to take responsibility again - but only if they are willing to change their behaviour.

AFTER READING

A • UNDERSTANDING	1. What does WALL-E discover on Earth? 2. How do people on the Axiom live differently from people on present-day Earth?
B • ANALYSIS	1. How does the summary connect consumption with the destruction of Earth? 2. Why does the automated system become a problem although it was created to help humans?
C • EVALUATION	1. When environmental damage is serious, should governments be allowed to limit consumption? Explain. 2. Does the summary mainly criticise technology itself or people's dependence on it? Give your view.

ideas.

Panem is a country divided into a wealthy Capitol and twelve poorer districts. The districts provide resources for the Capitol, while many of their own citizens live with shortages and strict political control.

Every year, the government organises the Hunger Games. Each district must send two young people, called tributes, to a large arena. The rules are simple and brutal: the tributes must fight until only one remains alive.

The Games are broadcast across the country. Citizens in the districts are forced to watch. In the Capitol, however, the event is treated as popular entertainment. Viewers discuss costumes, personalities and chances of survival.

When Katniss Everdeen's younger sister is selected, Katniss volunteers to take her place. Before entering the arena, she discovers that survival depends on more than physical skill.

Tributes must also perform for an audience. They are interviewed, dressed by stylists and presented as characters in a television show. Popular competitors may receive gifts from sponsors during the Games.

Violence and entertainment become almost impossible to separate.

READING LENS

INEQUALITY SPECTACLE VIOLENCE

As you read, notice who has power, how people are controlled, and what individuals can still choose.

KEY IDEA

The Games are both entertainment and a public demonstration of political power.

VOCAB

tribute = a person selected for the Games

sponsor = someone who provides support

spectacle = an impressive public show

to normalise = to make something seem normal

For the Capitol, the Games serve several purposes. They entertain the population, but they also remind the districts that rebellion has consequences. The government can take children from every district and force them to participate.

Katniss gradually understands that controlling the story is almost as important as controlling the arena. Her actions are watched and interpreted by millions of people. A small act of compassion can become a political symbol.

Her relationship with Peeta is also turned into entertainment. They learn that appearing interesting or romantic can improve their chances of receiving support. Their private emotions become part of a public show.

Near the end, Katniss and Peeta challenge the rules rather than simply accepting the role the Capitol has written for them. Their resistance creates a problem for the government because viewers have already become emotionally invested in them.

The Hunger Games therefore shows how political power can use entertainment to normalise cruelty. When suffering is packaged as a spectacle, audiences may focus on excitement rather than injustice.

The story also connects inequality with control. The Capitol's luxury becomes more shocking because it exists beside hunger in the districts. The Games turn this unequal society into a performance that celebrates the power of the people at the top.

AFTER READING

A · UNDERSTANDING	1. Why does Katniss volunteer for the Hunger Games? 2. How can being popular with the audience help a tribute in the arena?
B · ANALYSIS	1. How do the Games function as both entertainment and political control? 2. How does the contrast between the Capitol and the districts show inequality?
C · EVALUATION	1. Can entertainment make audiences less sensitive to real suffering? Use the summary as a starting point. 2. Which seems more important for the Capitol's control: fear or entertainment? Explain your choice.



Fahrenheit 451

Ray Bradbury

CENSORSHIP · MEDIA ·
KNOWLEDGE

Guy Montag is a fireman, but his job is not to stop fires. In his society, books are illegal, and firemen burn them.

Montag initially accepts his role. He wears his uniform proudly and believes that destroying books helps protect social peace. Books contain conflicting ideas, difficult emotions and criticism. Without them, people are supposedly happier.

Most citizens spend their free time with fast entertainment. Large screens cover the walls of homes. Programmes create the feeling of constant activity and company, but serious conversation is rare.

Montag's attitude changes after he meets a young neighbour called Clarisse. She is curious about the world and asks questions that other people avoid. One question stays with him: Is he actually happy?

He begins to notice the emptiness of his routine. He also becomes fascinated by the objects he is ordered to destroy. During raids, he secretly takes books home.

Reading is difficult at first. Books require patience and contain ideas that disagree with one another. But that is exactly what makes them powerful.

READING LENS

CENSORSHIP MEDIA KNOWLEDGE

As you read, notice who has power, how people are controlled, and what individuals can still choose.

KEY IDEA

Censorship becomes easier when people prefer comfort and entertainment to difficult ideas.

VOCAB

censorship = control or suppression of information
raid = a sudden official search

to preserve = to keep safe
independent judgement = forming your own opinion



Fahrenheit 451

Ray Bradbury

CENSORSHIP · MEDIA ·
KNOWLEDGE

Montag's boss explains the logic of censorship. In his view, complicated ideas make people uncomfortable. Different opinions create conflict. A society focused on quick entertainment and simple messages avoids these problems.

Montag increasingly rejects this argument. A life without disagreement may be comfortable, but it also prevents people from examining their society critically.

His secret reading makes him a threat. Eventually, he must escape the city.

Outside it, he finds a group of people who preserve literature in an unusual way. Because physical books can be destroyed, each person memorises a text. The knowledge survives inside human memory.

Fahrenheit 451 therefore presents censorship as more than the removal of books. The deeper danger is a culture that loses interest in difficult ideas.

The government benefits from this situation, but citizens also participate in it. Many prefer entertainment that does not challenge them. This makes control easier.

The novel asks whether freedom of information matters if people no longer want to use it. Knowledge can be banned by force, but it can also disappear because a society chooses convenience over curiosity.

Montag's development suggests that reading is valuable not because every book is correct, but because encountering different ideas makes independent judgment possible.

AFTER READING

A · UNDERSTANDING	1. What is Montag's job, and what happens to books in his society? 2. Which encounter makes Montag begin to question whether he is happy?
B · ANALYSIS	1. According to the summary, why are books considered dangerous in Montag's society? 2. How does fast entertainment make censorship and social control easier?
C · EVALUATION	1. Is access to information enough for people to think independently? Use the summary to support your answer. 2. Can censorship ever be justified to protect society? Discuss with reference to the conflict described in the summary.