

Science, technology and the environment: Utopia and dystopia

Possible answers and solutions

1. Outline what the Controller says about the concept of happiness in the new state. (*Comprehension*)

Aspects of the assignment:

– Concept of happiness:

Phrases from the text you could have highlighted	Your own words/paraphrases (Use your dictionary!)
“The world’s stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can’t get.” (ll.44–45)	In the new state happiness and stability depend upon each other.
“They’re so conditioned that they practically can’t help behaving as they ought to behave.” (ll.47–48)	Stability is achieved with the help of conditioning i.e. people are trained to behave in certain ways, they have no free will.
“They’re blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they’re plagued with no mothers or fathers; they’ve got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; [...]” (ll.46–47)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stability means the absence of emotional disturbances that might be caused by strong feelings like passion or fear. – There are no close relationships to members of the opposite sex or members of the family; marriage and families are institutions that no longer exist.
<p>“But why is it prohibited? [...] Because it’s old; that’s the chief reason.” (ll.19–21)</p> <p>“Beauty’s attractive, and we don’t want people to be attracted by old things. We want them to like the new ones.” (ll.24–25)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Laws forbid the use of old things like Shakespeare’s plays because they might be more attractive than the new ones. – People might reject (and not buy?) the new things.
“They’re well-off; they’re safe; they’re never ill; [...]” (ll.45–46)	To the inhabitants of the new state happiness means physical well-being.

2. Characterise the Controller and explain how the point of view used in this passage influences the reader’s perception of him. (*Analysis*)

Aspects of the assignment

– The Controllers’ character:

Phrases from the text you could have highlighted	Your own words/paraphrases (Use your dictionary!)
<p>“Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments will hum about my ears and sometimes voices.” (l.12)</p> <p>“But as I make the laws here, I can also break them.” (ll.15–16)</p> <p>“Because our world is not the same as Othello’s world.” (l.43)</p>	The Controller is an educated man who understands and controls the system. Unlike the other inhabitants of the new world he still has his free will. He is very eloquent and argues with John in a convincing way.

Task 1 aims at the content of the text (*Anforderungsbereich 1*).

Outline means that you have to give the main features, structure or general principle of a topic, without minor details. The topic is mentioned in the assignment: happiness in the new state. Make sure you use your own words. Your English-English dictionary will help you to do so. Avoid quotations but add some line references in brackets: (l.6) or (ll.13–14).

Task 2 aims at the formal elements of the text (*Anforderungsbereich 2*).

Characterise means that you have to describe and examine the way in which the character (here: Mustapha Mond) is presented. **Explain** means that you describe and define an aspect of the text (here: point of view) in detail. Short quotations from the text might be necessary. Never give your opinion in this *Anforderungsbereich*.

– Point of view:

Phrases from the text you could have highlighted	Your own words/paraphrases (Use your dictionary!)
(Complete excerpt)	The scene is presented from a third-person point of view; the narrator is not involved in the story. He does not comment on what he narrates.
“He had been prepared to lie, to bluster, to remain sullenly unresponsive; but reassured by the good-humoured intelligence of the Controller’s face, he decided to tell the truth, straightforwardly.” (II.3–5) “Bernard started and looked horrified. What would the Controller think?” (I.6)	The narrator has access to the thoughts and feelings of the characters, but he is selective. He presents mainly what John experiences. Occasionally the reader catches a glimpse of what Bernard Marx thinks, too.

– Influence on reader’s perception:

Phrases from the text you could have highlighted	Your own words/paraphrases (Use your dictionary!)
“the good-humoured intelligence” (I.4) “sudden pleasure” (I.13) “the excitement of meeting a man who had read Shakespeare” (II.19–20)	John’s first impression of the Controller is very positive: he is encouraged to be open and feels impressed by the Controller’s knowledge. The narrator’s focus on John means that the reader is likely to share John’s view.
(any of John’s questions)	Like the reader, John is a stranger in the new world and knows little about the way it works; he can ask the questions the reader might have, too.

3. a) Compare Huxley’s fantasy of the future with Ray Bradbury’s novel *Fahrenheit 451*. Comment on the question whether these visions are still relevant for us today. Pay special attention to the concepts of happiness and the role of books in the two societies. (*Evaluation: comment*)

- Judging from this excerpt from *Brave New World* there are only striking similarities between the two novels:
 - *Fahrenheit 451*: Books are banned, firemen make sure that any books that have remained are burned; only cheap magazines have survived. The reason for banning books is their potential for unsettling people’s minds.
 - *Fahrenheit 451*: Happiness has come to mean pleasure; there are no close bonds between people anymore although they live in the traditional institution of the family; in their free time people take part in inter-active TV shows or crash their cars.
 - Similarity between Mustapha Mond and Captain Beatty: both are dangerous, charismatic leaders who understand how the respective systems of society work.
- Ideas for possible comments: individual definitions of happiness, modern forms of entertainment, development of mass media.
- Also give a clear personal opinion on the relevance of the two novels today.

Task 3 a) aims at an evaluation of the text (*Anforderungsbereich 3*).

Compare means that you are expected to point out similarities and differences. In this assignment you are expected to refer to another dystopian novel. After that you have to state your opinion on their relevance today and support your view with evidence.

3. b) Conceive yourself to be in the position of Bernard Marx. Re-read the excerpt from the novel concentrating on what we learn about his reactions and feelings. Use these clues to write an interior monologue showing what he is thinking while listening to John and the World Controller. (*Evaluation: re-creation of text*)

Your text should

- interpret the clues given in the text in the right way. Make it clear that Bernard is frightened and miserable. He is not deceived by the Controller's good humour and worries about being punished.
- express thoughts/feelings that are in line with what we learn about Bernard's personality: He is, after all, an intelligent Alpha. Decide how critical of the system he is.
- present ideas that fit in with the course of John's and the Controller's conversation.
- arrange these ideas in a suitable order.
- observe the conventions of interior monologue, i.e. try to imitate how the character's mind works. This means that you use mainly informal language and that you don't have to use complete sentences.

You can start like this:

Why did I ever bring John back? I should have known he would cause trouble. He won't ever listen to me anymore. Doesn't he realise how powerful the Controller is? ...

Task 3 b) aims at an evaluation of the text by reflecting on its theme in a different type of text (*Anforderungsbereich 3*). That means that you must keep to the conventions of the required kind of text (here: interior monologue).