

Utopia and dystopia

Possible answers and solutions

1. Outline what the Controller says about the concept of happiness in the new state.

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.

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).

2. a) Characterise the Controller.

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 2 a) and b) both aim 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*.

2. b) Explain how the point of view in this passage influences the reader's perception of him.

– 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 this excerpt from Huxley's fantasy of the future with visions other writers or film producers have expressed in their work.

– Ideas for the comparison:

- What is the individual definition of happiness like?
- Which forms of entertainment are possible/allowed?
- Which role do the mass media play?

– Some examples for other visions to compare the excerpt with:

- *The Matrix*: You could point out that the degree of control over mankind is even higher than in *Brave New World*, but instead of a likeable and understanding World Controller like Mustapha Mond machines have all the power. People are kept in a virtual reality, which satisfies their demands. According to Agent Smith, an early version of this virtual reality, which represented a perfect world of happiness, was not accepted because humans define themselves through suffering.
- *Fahrenheit 451*: You could point out that the World Controller and Captain Beatty are similar to each other, that in both dystopias literature is seen as potentially dangerous, that happiness means superficial pleasure, ...
- *1984*: Telescreens are used to watch people all the time to detect nonconformist behaviour. Entertainment and pleasure are not important.

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 other fictional works (books or films).

Winston reads to Julia from a forbidden book containing revolutionary thoughts, ...

- *The Handmaid's Tale*: Handmaids are not allowed to read and write.
- ...

- 3. b)** Re-read the excerpt from the novel, concentrating on what we learn about Bernard Marx's reactions and feelings. Use these clues to write an interior monologue, showing what he is thinking while listening to John and the World Controller.

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? ...

- 3. c)** Present your ideas on a perfect civilisation in the future.

To get started, you should

- collect spontaneous ideas (brainstorming).
- make a list of things/situations which are worth being kept in the future as well as a list of things which need to change.
- give reasons for your choice of arguments/improvements.
- think of examples to explain your ideas.
- also think of possible negative consequences of your ideas, i.e. of what would happen if perfection was really achieved (perfection could lead to boredom or laziness, maybe even degeneration). Can perfection really be achieved?

Your text could begin like this, for example:

To my mind, a lot needs to be done to build up a perfect civilisation. In a time of global catastrophes of all kind, we must be aware that we must learn from the mistakes of the preceding generations before it is too late. ...

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).

Task 3 c) aims at *Anforderungsbereich 3* (Text production).

As a starting point, it may also help to think of what you like or dislike in other people's visions of the future e.g. utopian/dystopian novels or science fiction films. However, always remember that this kind of task (text production) is about your personal ideas!