

Knowledge Organiser: Dystopian Fiction

The Genre		Key Idea	Explanation	How it's seen in the text	
<p>A dystopia is an imagined community or society that is dehumanizing and frightening.</p> <p>The word 'dystopia' is well-known as the opposite, or antonym of 'utopia'.</p> <p>Dystopia comes from the Greek dys ('bad') and topia ('bad place'). If 'utopia' represents an ideal or dream society, 'dystopia' is the word used to refer to an imagined nightmare world which is usually the world of the future.</p> <p>The noun 'dystopia' is defined as 'an imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible'.</p> <p>Dystopias are often thought to be 'cautionary tales' but are also used to explore the ideas of what is to be human.</p>		Cause and Effect	A person's choice having an absolute effect to their outcome in the narrative.	In <i>A Sound of Thunder</i> Bradbury explores how one small action can have devastating consequences.	
		Authoritarianism	The worlds depicted are often controlled by a totalitarian or authoritarian government. This means the government have total control and the people have very little.	In dystopian fictions there is always an element of a small group (or technology) having absolute control over most of the population. This leads to people having no control over their own destinies.	
		Oppression	The characters in dystopian narratives are often forcibly repressed, persecuted and tormented.	The oppression in <i>The Examination</i> occurs through the state's absolute control over its population's intellect.	
		Technology	Technological advancement is often seen to be to the detriment of the human population in dystopian societies.	<i>The Pedestrian</i> explores how advances in technology has deadened the population and allows the police to enforce absolute uniformity.	
Texts		Mortality	A character's obsession with death and their own eventual or inevitable demise, as well as a potential feeling of power over death itself.	In <i>A Sound of Thunder</i> , Eckles feels deep concern over his own death and his hobby of trophy hunting suggests a power over death.	
'The Examination' by Henry Slesar	'The Examination' is set in a fictional world where intelligence is closely monitored. Excessive excellence is not tolerated by the government.				Environmentalism
'The Pedestrian' by Ray Bradbury	"The Pedestrian" is a dystopian short story that describes one night in the life of Leonard Mead, resident of an unnamed city in the year 2053. Mead enjoys walking the city streets alone every night. As he walks, Mead enjoys taking in the sights, sounds, and smells of the natural world. He also talks to himself, addressing the people in the homes, asking under his breath what they are watching on television. Mead's actions do not conform to government will though. It will not be tolerated.	Writer's Methods			
		Method	Definition	Example	Purpose
'A Sound of Thunder' by Ray Bradbury	Eckles is going on a trip – one in which there is no guarantee that he will come back alive. This gives him pause, but not enough to give up the opportunity for ultimate control over nature.	Symbolism	The use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities.	The crushed butterfly in <i>A Sound of Thunder</i>	This represents the way humankind can have devastating effects over the natural world.
		Pathetic Fallacy	Using the weather to set the tone or atmosphere of a scene.	<i>A Sound of Thunder</i> ends with a thunderclap.	The thunderclap indicates the chaos caused by Eckles choices and the momentousness of the final moment.
'The Lottery' by Shirley Jackson	Each year the residents of a small town hold a lottery. It is a requirement that everyone participates. However, this is not a lottery as we know it. No-one wants to win this game. A story about the power of the many over the will of individual rights and civil liberties.	Antagonist	A character in direct opposition to the main character.	In <i>The Pedestrian</i> , Leonard Mead is pitched in opposition to the state, who act as his antagonist.	Its purpose is to illustrate the powerlessness of an individual against the authoritarian control of the state.
		Didactic	Intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive.	<i>The Lottery</i> has a clear moral message around mob mentality.	It shows the consequences if people forgo their individual morals.
		Cyclical Structure	There being clear parallels between the opening of a text and its conclusion. Often used to highlight the key themes in a plot.	In <i>The Lottery</i> , the story begins and ends with the titular event.	The cyclical structure indicates how nothing, in the end, has changed. The ending becomes inevitable



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Key Word Glossary			
Word	Definition	Example	Word in Action
Dystopia	An imagined place or state in which everything is unpleasant or bad, typically a totalitarian or environmentally damaged one.	Since the accident the world was a dystopia , as we had to abide by such strict rules and regulations.	
Utopia	An imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect.	The world was a wonderful utopia .	
Totalitarian	A system of government that is centralised and dictatorial and requires its people to obey the government or state without questions.	The totalitarian regime meant no-one, apart from the leader, had a say in decisions concerning the people.	
Fatalistic	Relating to or characteristic of the belief that all events are predetermined and therefore inevitable.	His fatalist belief led to him making rash decisions.	
Nihilistic	Rejecting all religious and moral principles in the belief that life is meaningless.	His life was so grim he became nihilistic .	
Repressed	Oppressed or restrained.	The people were so repressed it didn't occur to them to fight back.	
Tyranny	Cruel, unreasonable and oppressive rule or government.	The king's tyranny meant everyone else lived in fear.	
Dehumanise	To deprive someone of positive human qualities.	The government's treatment of prisoners was so appalling it dehumanised them.	
Rebellion	The action or process of resisting authority, control, or convention.	The people were so fed up about the government's control they decided a rebellion was the only way to change the system.	
Paranoia	Unjustified suspicion or mistrust of people.	His paranoia was so great he thought that even his own mother was out to get him.	
Propaganda	Using biased or misleading information to promote a political cause or point of view.	The government's propaganda convinced the citizens they were god-like people.	
Ebbing	To gradually decrease.	The character's grip on reality was slowly ebbing away.	
Interminably	Endless or continuing too long.	The pandemic was interminably long.	

