

## What is a Dystopia?

- There are many examples of dystopia in literature and media – from classics like 1984 and Brave New World, to modern texts like The Hunger Games.
- Writers craft these worlds using archetypal dystopian techniques such as a controlling and totalitarian government, violence, punishment and rules.

## Crafting a Dystopian Setting

- A setting can be integral (important) to the plot of dystopian stories. Dystopian settings are often bleak and dismal; they often have decaying buildings. Stormy weather and technology also feature heavily.
- Writers craft these in order to create different effects – especially feelings of oppression, misery and entrapment.

## Dystopian Protagonists

- Characters in dystopian fiction are often oppressed, so writers give them tough and resilient personalities. The protagonist rises up from a traumatic and difficult situation to fight back and rebel against those in control. This leads the reader to root for them and believe in their resistance.
- Katniss Everdeen in The Hunger Games is a great example of a tough dystopian protagonist who takes on those in control.

## Surveillance Culture

- Dystopian novels can often open with dramatic, attention-grabbing lines.
- 1984 by George Orwell starts with a famous opening line – and describes a world watched constantly by Big Brother.
- Surveillance culture is common in dystopian texts; it is designed to make those within the dystopian world more submissive and pliable.

## Dystopian Societies

- A short story contains all of the sections of a full narrative arc, but moves at a much quicker pace, building the tension and climax much faster.
- Shirley Jackson wrote The Lottery in two hours in 1948. It is a prime example of the disadvantages or conformity in a dystopian text.



|               |                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dystopia      | An imagined world or society in which there is great suffering or injustice.                                                                    |
| Utopia        | An imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect.                                                                            |
| Archetypal    | Very typical of a certain kind of person or thing.                                                                                              |
| Setting       | The place where an event in a story takes place.                                                                                                |
| Narrator      | The perspective a text is written from. Can be first or third person, omniscient (all-knowing) or not.                                          |
| Oppression    | Cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority. An oppressive setting is one that creates a feeling of the characters being mistreated.     |
| Protagonist   | The lead character in a text.                                                                                                                   |
| Antagonist    | The character who opposes the protagonist in a story.                                                                                           |
| Dictatorship  | A society with a ruler who has total power over everything and everyone – typically by force.                                                   |
| Surveillance  | Close observation, especially of a suspected spy or criminal.                                                                                   |
| Motif         | A dominant or repeating idea in a story.                                                                                                        |
| Paranoia      | An irrational suspicion or mistrust of others.                                                                                                  |
| Narrative arc | A term that describes a story's full progression, from beginning to end.                                                                        |
| Conformity    | Behaving or acting in an accepted way to fit in with others.                                                                                    |
| Monolithic    | In terms of people: implies they are all alike and act as one. In terms of society: closed off from others, indivisible and unlikely to change. |
| Ritual        | A series of actions or type of behaviour regularly followed.                                                                                    |