



# DELVING INTO DYSTOPIA

A Template for a Collaborative Cross  
Annotation  
Literature Study

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# HOW THE COLLABORATION BEGAN:

- In 2014 Brampton Public Library started a Teen Reading Pilot inviting libraries across Ontario and their teen advisory committees.

- Haliburton County Public Library doesn't have a teen advisory committee, but does have a good relationship with Haliburton Highlands Secondary School!

- As we explored the logistics of participating in the Teen Reading Pilot, we kept coming up with more and more ideas to expand on it at a local level.

- That's how **BOOK PROJECT 1.0: DELVING INTO DYSTOPIA** started!

# HOW DOES AN ANNOTATION BOOK STUDY WORK?

- ✱ After a theme and book titles have been chosen:
  - ✱ Each person receives **BOOK 1** and annotates inside the book in a designated *colour* on the **BIG QUESTION** or focus that is being examined.
  - ✱ Book club participants then switch books and annotate notes on the same **BIG QUESTION** in a second *colour* as well as responding to comments of the *first Annotator*.
  - ✱ A third switch and the next reader continues annotations in a third *colour*, answering the **BIG QUESTION** and responding to annotations from *Annotator 1* or *Annotator 2*.
  - ✱ The books are returned to the original reader (i.e. everyone gets their **BOOK 1**), who then re-read through the annotations and summarizes the ideas made by all 3. They become the *expert* of that title.

# BOOK PROJECT OVERVIEW: A HIGH SCHOOL TEMPLATE

- **THEME:** Dystopian Fiction (based on current YA trend).
- **BIG QUESTION:** What will we analyse? What makes a Dystopian society? What are the features? What is the message?
- **WHAT TITLES COULD WE USE?** Classics and new YA, eg. *Brave New World*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, *Feed*, *A Handmaid's Tale* etc.
- **SPECIFIC AUDIENCE:** Grade 11 or 12 students in 3 different high schools.
- **TIMELINE:** June to December (i.e. end of one school year and first semester of following).
- **SCHEDULE OF ANNOTATION AND BOOK SWITCH:** First book distributed before the summer, one month for book 2 and 3, presentations in December.
- **PRESENTATION MODE:** A gathering of students from all schools in a Book Forum to present annotation findings, i.e. answers to big question.

# BOOK PROJECT 1.0 - BIG QUESTION AND INSTRUCTIONS



## The Book Project:

# A Critical Analysis of Dystopian Fiction

## The “Big” Question:

What makes a story interesting? In dystopian fiction what writing techniques have engaged you as a reader?

(Examples:

humor, language choices, invented terminology, imagery, quotations, , descriptive language, plot twists, setting ,characters, etc. )

1st reader: red second reader: blue third reader :green

Questions? E-mail: [m.shapiera@tldsbc.on.ca](mailto:m.shapiera@tldsbc.on.ca)



to the time of the Nine Years' War. *That* made them change their tune all right. What's the point of truth or beauty or knowledge when the anthrax bombs are popping all around you? That was when science first began to be controlled—after the Nine Years' War. People were ready to have even their appetites controlled then. Anything for a quiet life. We've gone on controlling ever since. It hasn't been very good for truth, of course. But it's been very good for happiness. One can't have something for nothing. Happiness has got to be paid for. You're paying for it, Mr. Watson—paying because you happen to be too much interested in beauty. I was too much interested in truth; I paid too.

'But you didn't go to an island,' said the Savage, breaking a long silence.

The Controller smiled. 'That's how I paid. By choosing to serve happiness. Other people's—not mine. It's lucky,' he added, after a pause, 'that there are such a lot of islands in the world. I don't know what we should do without them.

Put you all in the lethal chamber, I suppose. By the way, Mr. Watson, would you like a tropical climate? The Marquesas, for example; or Samoa? Or something rather more bracing?'

Helmholtz rose from his pneumatic chair. 'I should like a thoroughly bad climate,' he answered. 'I believe one would write better if the climate were bad. If there were a lot of wind and storms, for example . . .'

The Controller nodded his approbation. 'I like your spirit, Mr. Watson. I like it very much indeed. As much as

I officially disapprove of it. He smiled. 'What about the Falkland Islands?'

'Yes, I think that will do,' Helmholtz answered. 'And now, if you don't mind, I'll go and see how poor Bernard's getting on.'

*Well - it looks like Helmholtz and John may get the happy ending they want - by being true to their own desires and not what society wants them to be. Careful though, this society seems to lack "truth" and hide happiness, thoroughly reinforced throughout.*

## WHAT MAKES A STORY INTERESTING?

### Annotation Sample:

- One reader in this example noticed similarities between Aldous Huxley's dystopia *A Brave New World* and modern events.
- Another reader is optimistic about a character's fate, while cautioned by another reader that things may not be as they seem.

# WHAT MAKES A STORY INTERESTING?

The discussion continues:

- In this example the readers get quite animated about the end of the book....
- "... what was the point of it all?" asks one, who is then answered by another reader who takes a more (albeit cautiously) optimistic approach.
- The third reader acknowledges their reading partners while providing their own view of Huxley as a prophet.

208 ALDOUS HUXLEY

and round, beating one another in six-eight time. Orgy-  
page 1...

It was after midnight when the last of the helicopters  
look its flight. Stupefied by *soma*, and exhausted by a long-  
drawn frenzy of sensuality, the Savage lay sleeping in the  
heather. The sun was already high when he awoke. He lay  
for a moment, blinking in owlish incomprehension at the  
light; then suddenly remembered—everything.  
"Oh, my God, my God!" He covered his eyes with his hand.

That evening the swarm of helicopters that came buzzing  
across the Hog's Back was a dark cloud ten kilometres long.  
The description of last night's orgy of atonement had been  
in all the papers.

"Savage!" called the first arrivals, as they alighted from  
their machine. "Mr. Savage!" There was no answer.

The door of the lighthouse was ajar. They pushed it open  
and walked into a shuttered twilight. Through an archway  
on the further side of the room they could see the bottom of  
the staircase that led up to the higher floors. Just under the  
crown of the arch dangled a pair of feet.

"Mr. Savage!"

Slowly, very slowly, like two unhurried compass needles,  
the feet turned towards the right; north, north-east, east,  
south-east, south, south-south-west; then paused, and, after  
a few seconds, turned as unhurriedly back towards the left.  
South-south-west, south, south-east, east . . . . .

That's the end?  
Oh John, you couldn't live with  
what society made you into.

That ending. I can understand that Huxley  
is saying that the society would just  
kill a person who doesn't conform to  
it, but nothing constructive happens in  
entire book. All the characters don't  
do all that much and the world is  
not the same as it started so what  
was the point of it all?

That's like asking what the point of  
1984 was - the world was left unchanged  
in that book too. I would argue that  
BWS had a happier ending than it  
may seem. John was allowed a lot  
of free will in his death - he chose why  
the time, the place and how - he was  
even able to die as himself and not  
as something society changed him into  
(Hunger Games + 1984 reference). And look  
at Helmholtz - he gets to live with other  
intellectuals, and write about what he  
wants. There are ways out of this society  
you just have to want to find them.  
(just look at the quote in the text - it basically  
predicted the ending for Helmholtz)

Responding to two different  
points, I have refrained  
commentation and my own opinion.  
I believe Huxley wrote this  
as a mocking protest and a  
cautionary tale more so than to  
acknowledge this society  
reflects & needs that which our  
media glorifies or hides.  
Huxley was a true prophet.

# BOOK PROJECT 2.0 - BIG QUESTION AND INSTRUCTIONS



## The Book Project 2.0

### Girls Speak: Empowerment through Empathetic Fiction

#### The "Big" Question:

What *actions* have empowered the main character to achieve success? What *characteristic* does this demonstrate? ( eg. Initiative, courage, determination, self awareness etc)

What is their *definition of success*? ( autonomy? Safety? Healthy relationship? Education?)

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1st reader: red second reader: blue third reader :green

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When I opened my eyes again, Sarah was watching me.

"You know, Bee, I was thinking about what you said, about you staying. About us helping each other. I think you're right. Maybe it is time to be serious. Maybe these are serious times."

↑ reoccurring theme

Women helping each other from PTSD

I love the relationship that they have. They help each other, take care of one another and understand each other. Sarah seems to realize that they're stronger together and that they can possibly heal together. It's quite beautiful

## HOW IS SUCCESS DEFINED?

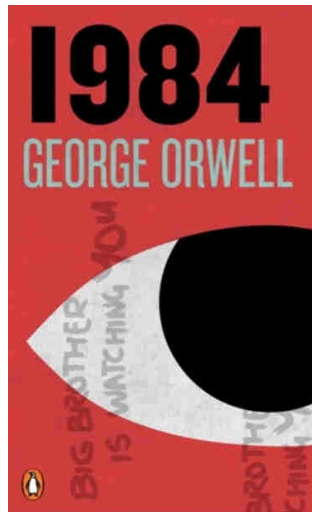
### Annotation Sample:

(*Little Bee* by Chris Cleave)

- Looking at her other (and more sentimental) *idea of success*, Little Bee begins to build a strong relationship with Sarah and Charlie (much to Sarah's lover's dismay).
- They agree to look after and that they need each other in their current situation (149).
- Sarah and Bee's relationship is a recurring theme throughout the novel with the women constantly trying to help one another; the two have a wonderful relationship despite the trauma on both ends.
- This relationship is pivotal to the feelings of success in their lives.

# WORKSHOP ACTIVITY

Participants were given templates to create a readers' advisory bookmark to be distributed at the school and public libraries.



**dys-to·pi·a**  
**dis'tōpēə/**  
*noun*  
an imagined place or state in which everything is unpleasant or bad, typically a totalitarian or environmentally degraded one. The opposite of utopia.

**u-to·pi·a**  
**yoo'tōpēə/**  
*noun*  
an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect.

**"He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother."**

Rating as dystopian fiction: 9/10

- Totalitarian government, privacy is non-existent, free thought is not allowed.
- Not a good place to live.

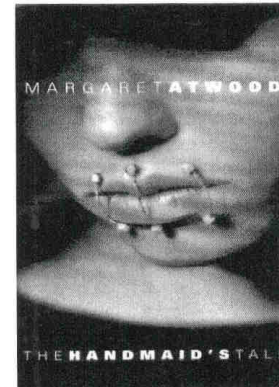
Message to the modern reader:

- Government power needs to be watched so that they don't become invincible.

This example of dystopian fiction was reviewed and rated by ENG4U Independent Study Students from Haliburton, Huntsville and Fenelon Falls High Schools.

\* Source: Oxford University Press, [Oxforddictionaries.com](http://Oxforddictionaries.com), retrieved 12/2014.

DELVING  
INTO  
DYSTOPIA



EMPOWERING QUOTE:

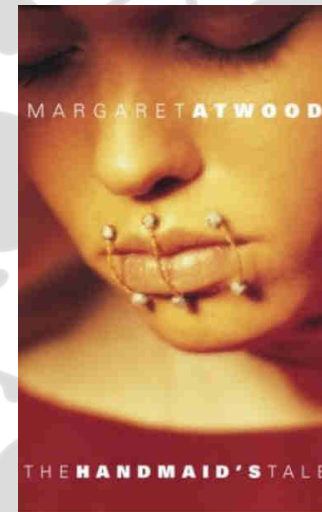
"Nolite te bastar-des  
(carborundorum): (Do not  
let the bastards grind  
you down)"

Main Character's Goal for Success:

To be in control of  
her mind, body, and  
spirit as well as have  
companionship.

Message for Modern Readers:

Even though things might  
get tough, you shouldn't  
let it control you.



**suc·cess**  
**sək'ses/**  
*noun*  
the accomplishment of an aim or purpose.

**em·pow·er**  
**əm'pou(ə)r/**  
*verb*  
make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights.

**GIRL SPEAK:**  
**EMPOWERMENT THROUGH  
EMPATHETIC FICTION**

"NOLITE TE BASTARDES  
CARBORUNDORUM.  
(DON'T LET THE BASTARDS GRIND  
YOU DOWN.)"

Main character's goal for success:

- To be in control of her mind, body and spirit, as well as have companionship.

Message to the modern reader:

- Even though things might get tough you shouldn't let it control you.

This example of empathetic fiction was reviewed by senior students from Haliburton, LCVI, I.E. Weldon and Fenelon Falls High Schools.

\* Source: Oxford Pocket Dictionary via Google Definitions, retrieved 2016/01/11.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

For Book Project 1.0, students participated in an interview on local community radio to discuss the project.



The project was later cited by one of the students as being something that helped improve their public speaking - ability and confidence.



# EXTENSION ACTIVITY

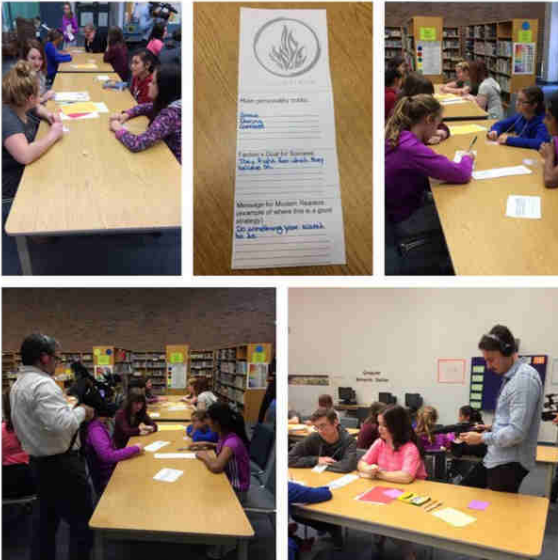
For Book Project 2.0, student leaders facilitated a workshop with grade 8 students. Factions from *Divergent* by Veronica Roth were examined and used to determine the definition of success in a variety of real life high school scenarios.



Archie Stouffer ES  
@ArchieStouffer



Shared learning about Divergent with  
@HHSS\_RedHawks captured by  
@MediaFace #studentsuccess #tldsblearns  
#asesroars

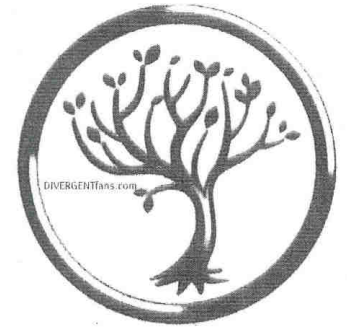


MediaFace  
@MediaFace



Follow

Capturing conversations about themes in  
Divergent today @ArchieStouffer  
#Bookproject



AMITY

Main personality traits:

kindness  
peaceful  
caring

Faction's Goal for Success:

To have peace

Message for Modern Readers:  
(example of where this is a good strategy)

Be kind no matter  
what and to spread  
kindness towards others.



# THEORETICAL EXAMPLE: BOOK CLUB TEMPLATE

• **THEME:** Historical Fiction

• **BIG QUESTION:** what makes a great historical novel? what attracts you as a reader?

• **WHAT TITLES COULD WE USE?** The Outlander Series by Diana Gabaldon, Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett, All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr....

• **SPECIFIC AUDIENCE:** Adult Readers

• **TIMELINE:** 12 months

• **SCHEDULE OF ANNOTATION AND BOOK SWITCH:**  
Books exchanged once every quarter

• **PRESENTATION MODE:** End of year book club potluck

# THEORETICAL EXAMPLE: HIGH INTEREST LOW VOCAB

- **THEME:** Hooked on Classics
- **BIG QUESTION:** Are classic literature selections relatable? If you were telling the story how would you make it better/more relevant?
- **WHAT TITLES COULD WE USE?** Simplified versions of Call of the Wild, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, etc.
- **SPECIFIC AUDIENCE:** New literates, teens reading below level, English Language Learners
- **TIMELINE: 3 MONTHS:** 3 months
- **SCHEDULE OF ANNOTATION AND BOOK SWITCH:** Switch each month
- **PRESENTATION MODE:** Informal round-table discussion with pizza lunch



# THANK-YOU!!

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