

SEM 1111: Utopia, Dystopia, and the End of the World
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Dystopias: Chaos and Control

A dystopia is a world where suffering is prevalent. The idea of suffering can encompass many different connotations, and therefore there are also many possible forms of dystopia. In short, there are three types of dystopia: complete control, complete chaos, or a combination of the two. There can be many causes of dystopia such as environmental degradation, overpopulation, nuclear war, totalitarian government, etc. However, all of these types can fall into any of the three categories above.

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The first dystopia that will be covered is the concept of complete chaos.

They woke up underneath a haphazard ceiling of rotted and broken roof. The perpetually grey skies peeked through the gaps within the dilapidated building. Light rain fell on their dirtied faces, the water creating brown streaks down their cheeks in a sad attempt to remove the built up grime. Since the government fell, their world was thrown into chaos. Once a family, only two siblings remained. They were constantly plagued by various calamities: natural disasters, looters, hunger, dehydration, and more. There was no time for any of the luxuries they had before. Their faces were caked with dirt, but not from playing in it, but from hiding in it. These masks of mud solidified into masks of maturity. Childhood was sacrificed for survival. Previously peaceful neighborhoods became areas to avoid. Crime was prevalent as gangs of looters began to rule. With no government, there was complete freedom. Yet this complete freedom led to anarchy.

The older brother gently shook his sister's shoulder. Dawn had yet to come, but they had a long day ahead of them. There was no time for sleep; they were lucky to find their current residence. The girl slowly sat up, bundled in a varied assortment of winter clothes. She clutched a tattered teddy bear, its fur matted with mud and red stains that seemed like blood. Its eyes were missing, leaving deep black gouges instead. The boy had discouraged her from grabbing it, but it was the only comfort she had. The only scrap of childhood she could find. Her lips were chapped and her face was greyer than even the skies. She was sick.

The cough started a few days ago, one that racked her small body. The fever came next, stealing away her clear eyes. And then the sleep. The sleep was the worst; she would sleep for hours on end without waking. Not only was it a reflection of her degrading health, but also a hindrance and vulnerability to the gangs that prowled the streets. They had to keep moving to survive. He tried to encourage her to move, "Come on, we have to go."

"I don't want to," she whined, "my legs hurt and I want to go home."

"You can't do this everyday. You know we don't have a home anymore, we have to go."

The poor girl looked up to him with wide-open eyes that started to pool with tears. Her lower lip quivered, and then she started to cry. Only a girl of six, she had been so brave. She was silent under the bushes when the looters killed their parents. Silent when they burnt their house. Silent whenever the gangs walked nearby. Silent when she was hungry, thirsty, and cold. But this was more than her little six-year-old heart could take.

Her mouth opened wide and a bloodcurdling scream emerged. It rang out and bounced around the room, piercing the walls and exiting the house. The whole street was pervaded with her cries. The brother was frantic, he looked around and quickly grabbed his sister in his arms, tempted to smother her scream with his hand. He whispered multiple 'shhs' at her, attempting to calm her sorrow. Yet it wasn't enough, they had already heard her.

The door banged open. The men's shadows were thrown menacingly upon the trodden pair. With a shout, the boy threw his sister behind him and took a few steps forward. Looters. His mind racing, he opened his mouth to try to negotiate the little things they had. But before any words had formed, a shot rang out. The boy fell to the ground with a thud, his ears ringing.

The last thing he saw was his sister's face frozen in terror. His baby sister.

A complete chaos dystopia is characterized by a lack of government and two or more basic human needs (food, water, and shelter). A lack of government allows crime to grow rampant. Anarchy results, disputes and deaths occur often, and proper justice is never served. With no rules and regulations, violence is a commonplace characteristic. As seen from the story above, the siblings are constantly on the run trying to avoid the gang of looters. Additionally, there is a lack of basic humans needs. The siblings are lacking proper food, shelter, and water. They are unable to find any medical attention for the sick sister and are constantly starving. Chaos reigns. Nothing is constant except for the prevalence of suffering and death.

A literary example of a complete chaos dystopia would be The Road. In this story, a man and his son are in search for the sea in a desolate and dead land. In the end, the father dies and leaves the son to fend for himself. The story spoke of continual suffering in a dystopic world. Although a common theme in the complete chaos dsytopia usually includes a barren world with little sustenance, this is not always the case. A complete chaos dystopia

merely means a world with no government where the majority of humans lack basic needs.

A complete chaos world can still be full of people and life. It is the lack of law and basic needs that drive humans to destroy and terrorize each other. Savage and primitive, the complete chaos world is near animalistic where most humans are reduced to creatures only concerned with carnal pleasures and survival.

The next dystopia to be covered is complete control.

Lucy hoped for sweets today. They were her favorite, yet she knew that if she did not receive them, it would be for her own good and the welfare of their great nation. Although the little girl had completed all of her allotted physical activity hours to perfection and slept for all the allotted sleeping hours, she was rarely allowed sweets. Her blood sugar was excessively high and during the allotted meal times, she rarely ever received sweets. But, Lucy was a good girl and knew that she had to be healthy in order to be an asset to her great nation. The purpose of one's life was to serve the great nation. That's what Lucy learned from the allotted Teachers. And the Teachers were always right. They were lucky to have a purpose, others floundered all their life searching for one. It was quite unfortunate they didn't have a nation to dedicate their lives to. Or so the Teachers said.

Selfishness was not tolerated in their nation. It was treason and the highest act of crime. The great nation was all powerful and the most prominent in the world. All other nations were withering weak wastelands that did not even deserve to cower in their shadow. Nothing compared to their nation. The Teachers also told her that when she was of age, Lucy would be assigned an allotted mate and occupation. And Lucy would have to gift the state with her children and labor until her death. She had to contribute to their great nation. She had to play her role in the upkeep of their glorious land. Or so the Teachers said.

Lucy knew she should not have thought of sweets. The last child that dared to open their mouth in complaint was taken away and publicly hung as an example. He was committing the utmost crime with his selfish thoughts. And so he didn't deserve a place in the great nation. Or so the Teachers said.

Clothed in grey, Lucy sat straight up in her seat, anticipating the coming meal. Along the grey length of the table sat other citizens also similarly garbed in grey. They were all simple cogs in the great machine; a monotonous and unmoving mass of meticulously groomed humans. Everyone had the same facial features, hair length, hair color, eye color, and body type. Differences weren't allowed. Lucy remembered how the Teachers talked of the time before when differences between people caused violence and discrimination. But, the great nation was able to rid itself of such savagery. They were advanced, almost preternatural. Perfect. Or so the teachers said.

At exactly the allotted time, the officials entered, each carrying a tray of specialized food that would be most beneficial to the person. Lucy sat patiently, waiting for her tray. When her tray was placed before her, she scanned it quickly. Then she looked at it again thoroughly. No sweets. Her heart dropped and tears escaped her eyes. Every other citizen in

I need to look up this word

her age unit had sweets. Unable to control herself, Lucy let out a disappointed sigh. Her official looked at her, shocked. And then disgust and cold malice filled her eyes slowly like a crawling smoke. Lucy looked up in terror and managed to whisper a, "I'm sorry." The official's face seemed to stiffen and she responded, "What a disappointment. Your selfishness knows no bounds. Your treachery shall be met swiftly with the great nation's fair justice." Shocked, Lucy stayed immobile. As the official's words sank in, Lucy began to whimper. The fear grew in her stomach like a black hole consuming all. It coursed through her veins and crawled up her spine, taking over when eventually it emerged from her mouth as a scream. Lucy did not stop screaming even when they dragged her down the length of the dining hall between all the tables. The citizens stared at her with blank faces without an ounce of sympathy. They knew what laid in store for Lucy. And she deserved it. Selfishness was the highest form of treason, and treason had to be punished. Or so the Teachers said.

A complete control dystopia can be characterized by a totalitarian government that portrays two or more of the following characteristics: force and terror, indoctrination, scapegoating, and controlled participation. Force and terror is used to exact control by the use of violence. It incites fear, and therefore obedience. Using the story above, Lucy's world uses public punishment as a form of force and terror. Indoctrination is when citizens are brainwashed to believe that their way of life is the best way of life. Within the story, the great nation is the best nation and all other ways of living were considered inferior. All citizens were instilled with an extraordinary sense of nationalism. Scapegoating is seen when any problems are blamed on others to remove criticism regarding the government. This is not depicted within the story, as the indoctrination is so great, the citizens are made to believe there are no faults within their nation. Lastly, controlled participation is when the government convinces citizens that they are an integral role in their nation, even if they have no say in any decisions. Lucy's role is to provide children and labor, a necessity in their nation.

A realistic example of a complete control dystopia is Nazi Germany. Within Hitler's totalitarian government, all characteristics were portrayed. Force and terror was often

employed as seen by the Schutzstaffel (SS). This was a military police that brutally punished citizens for the smallest grievances. Hitler also formulated various violent events such as Kristallnacht where vandalism and arson was executed among Jewish businesses. And most infamously, the Nazi regime used concentration camps. Hitler and his propaganda specialist, Joseph Goebbels excelled in indoctrination. Books were burnt and replaced with textbooks that 'scientifically' explained Jewish inferiority. There was a required Nazis' Teacher Association and various other organizations used to regulate education. In order to join the people against a common enemy, Hitler blamed the previous Weimar Republic (November Criminals) for Germany's failing economy and poor international standing. The Weimar Republic was too quick to surrender (during WWI) and hastily accepted the demands of their enemies in exchange for a folly peace (or so Hitler claimed). Controlled participation was also expertly carried out, as by the end of Hitler's regime one hundred percent of citizens were employed. The Strength through Joy program was used to reward hard-working Germans with vacations around the world. Hitler never downplayed the importance of citizens, even if their opinions mattered naught.

The last dystopia is a mix of both complete chaos and complete control. However, one must realize that this dystopia is the least concrete. This dystopia is characterized by a government attempting to exercise a totalitarian regime while the citizens suffer a lack of basic needs. Therefore, unrest and rebellion against the government is common. Although this period of instability can last several years, it can also be very short. As a result, these dystopias can also double as end of the world scenarios.

Akira provides an example of this last dystopia. The country is thrown into unrest after the third World War. Through various terror and force, and scapegoat techniques, the

government attempts to exact control over Japan. However, rebels and motorcycle gangs rule the streets and they constantly clash with the government. The government attempts to instill fear into the rebels by publically beating them and brutalizing innocents. Through scapegoating techniques, the government blames World War III for their current dilemma. On the chaos side, citizens are left jobless and starving, therefore rebels are a common sight. Violence amongst civilians is common and recklessly dealt out. Gangs rule the streets and religious fanatics preach of repentance. Throughout the movie, the government secretly develops a weapon of mass destruction that results in Japan's downfall. Akira elucidates the third dystopia wherein which there is a violent struggle between chaos and control. It also shows how this dystopia can also be regarded as an end of the world situation.

The study of dystopias proves to be a difficult topic due to the number of possibilities. However, each dystopia can be grouped within the three categories of complete chaos, complete control, or a combination of the two. Without a doubt, the central theme to all dystopias is human suffering. These situations are shown to the public in hopes that the audiences will learn from them and attempt to prevent these dire situations from fruition. Although, dystopias serve as a warning of the future, one must also note the fascination with dystopias exemplify how humans are irrevocably drawn to worst-case scenarios. Humans enjoy watching things they will never experience themselves as a source of entertainment. By vicariously living through dystopian characters, one can experience the suffering of dystopia without actually living in one. With the study of dystopias, one can better understand them and therefore prevent their actualization.

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are easy to read
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