

Be College Ready

A LEVEL ENGLISH LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION TO DYSTOPIAN FICTION

WHAT DOES THE PERFECT WORLD LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Consider:

- Social systems
- Economic factors
- Education
- Relationships
- Recreational activities

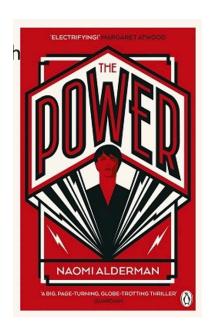


WHAT IS A DYSTOPIA?

An imagined state or society in which there is great suffering or injustice, typically one that is totalitarian or post-apocalyptic.

'THE POWER' BY NAOMI ALDERMAN (2016)

- · All over the world women are discovering they have the power
- With a flick of the fingers they can inflect terrible pain even death
- Suddenly, every man on the planet finds they've lost control
- The day of the Girls has arrived but where will it end?





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UrbanDox shrugs. 'Like I say. They want to kill us all.'

'But . . . the survival of the human race?'

'Women are just animals,' says UrbanDox. 'Just like us, they want to mate, reproduce, have healthy offspring. One woman, though, she's pregnant for nine months. She can care for maybe five or six kids well across her life.'

'So . . . ?'

UrbanDox frowns, like this is the most obvious thing in the world. 'They'll only keep the most genetically healthy of us alive. See, this is why God meant men to be the ones with the power. However bad we treat a woman – well, it's like a slave.'

Tunde feels his shoulders tighten. Say nothing, just listen, take the footage, use it and sell it. Make money out of this scumbag, sell him out, show him up for what it is.

'See, people got slavery wrong. If you have a slave, that slave's your property, you don't want damage to come to it. However bad any man treated a woman, he needs her in a fit condition to carry a child. But now . . . one genetically perfect man can sire a thousand – five thousand – children. And what do they need the rest of us for? They're going to kill us all. Listen to me. Not one in a hundred will live. Perhaps not one in a thousand.'

'And your evidence for that is . . .'

'Oh, I've seen documents. And more than that, I can use my brain. So can you, son. I've watched you; you're smart.' UrbanDox lays a moist, clammy hand on Tunde's arm. 'Join us. Become part of what we're doing. We'll be there for you, son, when all these others have gone away, because we're on the same side.'

Tunde nods.

'We need laws now to protect men. We need curfews on women. We need the government to release all the funding they need to "research" that cure. We need men to stand up and be counted. We are being ruled by fags who worship women. We need to cut them down.'

'And that's the purpose of your terror attacks?'

UrbanDox smiles again. 'You well know that I have never initiated or encouraged a terror attack.'

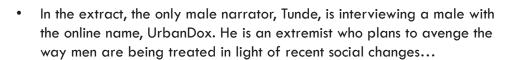
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Yes, he's been very careful.

'But,' says UrbanDox, 'if I were in touch with any of those men, I'd guess they'd barely gotten started. A bunch of weapons got lost in the fall of the Soviet Union, you know. Real nasty stuff. Could be they have some of that.'

'Wait,' says Tunde. 'Are you threatening to orchestrate domestic terrorism with *nuclear weapons*?'

'I'm not threatening anything,' says UrbanDox, his eyes pale and cold.



- Consider what you think is happening, narratively
- Can you identify some of the main themes with quotations to support?
- Which metaphors could offer implicit meaning about issues concerning gender equality?





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CRITICAL READING...

'Authors have shown that it is easy to conjure dystopias out of any dark or disturbing possibility, demonstrating that there is more opportunity for the world to sink into a dystopian nightmare than evolve into a utopian dream.'

'A dystopia presents the inhumanity of the soulless state machine against the hopes and aspirations of humanity. It's something we will all recognise.'

'The dystopian novel can be considerably more effective than the utopian. The utopian novel, in looking at mankind's ideals and how a perfect society might be achieved, will always encounter hurdles that must be overcome in seeking how to satisfy everyone, or at least the majority. The dystopian novel, on the other hand, readily provides a graphic warning of the consequences of going in a certain social, political or technological direction, and can do so with startling imagery that resonates with the reader.'

(Ashley, 2016)

- Choose a statement from the 3 comments, written by Mike Ashley in 2016, about Dystopian Fiction
- Try to identify what it is your comment suggests. What is the implicit meaning?
- Which one can you find evidence to support? Or challenge?
- Can you find evidence from the text that proves/disproves your point?
- Challenge: Write a paragraph exploring the Alderman's intentions in this extract, using the critical comments to guide you
- Extension: What Social/Political issue/group might the text be reacting too? Hint: it was published in 2016

YEAR 1 READING LIST

- Carol Ann Duffy's 'Meantime'
- Philip Larkin's 'The Whitsun Weddings'
- John Keats' 'Selected Poems'
- Jean Rhys' 'Wide Sargasso Sea'
- Michael Frayn's 'Spies'

