Dystopian Writing

Year 6 – Polaris – Home Learning

April/May 2020

YOUR UTOPIA
MY DYSTOPIA.
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Monday 20th April 2020

First News Crossword

**SAUDI ARABIA**

Maraya means mirrors
A Saudi Arabian company has built the largest mirrored building in the world. Located in the west of Saudi Arabia's Al-Ula region, the Maraya Concert Hall is 26 metres tall and can seat 500 people. The building is covered by a total of 9,740m² of mirrors.

**NEW ZEALAND**

Taxis for the birds!
A taxi driver has become the leader of a volunteer army who rescue Hutton's shearwater chicks that crash-land onto roads. The Hutton's shearwater is the only seabird in the world that nests and raises its young in the mountains. On foggy nights, the grey puffballs mistake glimmering roads for the sea and fly straight into them. They're then unable to move, and might get hit by a car or eaten by a cat. Fortunately, Toni Painting and her volunteers are there to help. Toni drives around every night, scooping up the birds she finds helpless at the side of the road, before dropping them off at a rehabilitation centre, which then gets them back to the sea.

**USA**

Basketball bounce record!
A teenager from Lousiana has set a world record for the most 'bounce juggles' in one minute with three basketballs. Zaila Avant-Garde has been practising dribbling basketballs since she was five. She also practised bounce juggling, where you bounce balls off the ground, for two years before trying for the record. She performed the feat on her 13th birthday and managed 231 bounces in one minute. That's about four bounces every single second and 18 more than the previous record. Zaila is a keen basketball player and hopes to join a team in the WNBA (Women's National Basketball Association) one day. “The more the achievements of women are promoted, the more little girls around the world will see that they can do anything and everything they put their minds to,” she said.

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**ACROSS**

3) An achievement that requires great skill (noun 4)
6) A type of centre where animals can be treated and looked after, then returned to the wild (adjective 14)
7) A unit of length in the metric system that is equal to 100 centimetres (plural noun 6)

**DOWN**

1) Continuous bouncing in basketball (present participle 9)
2) People who work for an organisation without being paid (plural noun 10)
3) Luckily; happily (adverb 11)
4) Performing an activity or exercising a skill repeatedly or regularly in order to acquire, improve or maintain proficiency in it (past continuous 10)
5) Having a surface like a mirror; reflective; fitted with mirrors (adjective 8)
SCIENCE NEWS

THE HUNT FOR A VACCINE

The first volunteers have received a trial vaccine in the USA, as a worldwide effort to find protection against the new coronavirus gets underway.

A vaccine is a substance that helps the body to recognise and kill off viruses or bacteria, keeping us safe from the diseases they cause. They are usually injected and already exist for several diseases, including measles, typhoid and some types of flu. But before a vaccine can be given to members of the public, it must first undergo a long series of trials to make sure it’s safe and effective.

As this new coronavirus quickly spreads around the world, scientists in various countries are working to urgently find a vaccine to protect the most vulnerable.

Jennifer Haller, a mum of two, was the first volunteer in America to receive a new vaccine called mRNA-1273. It has been developed by a biotechnology company called Moderna Inc in Massachusetts, USA. Haller said she really wanted to help in the hunt for a vaccine: “This was just something that I could do and that I wanted to do.”

As there is such an urgent need to slow the spread of the virus, researchers at Moderna were allowed to skip the usual rules of performing tests on animals first.

On 16 March, Haller was one of four volunteers to receive the jab. A total of 45 will take part in the trial, and they will be regularly monitored for 14 months, to see if the vaccine works. That means, of course, that even if mRNA-1273 is successful, it can’t be rolled out to the general public until some time next year at the earliest.

But several other trials are taking place in the USA and beyond. In the UK, researchers at Oxford University are expected to trial the country’s first vaccine next month.

A German biotechnology company called CureVac claims it could have a vaccine ready this autumn. The European Union is so confident in CureVac’s work that it has pledged £74 million of support.

Citizen scientists can also have a crack at helping researchers by playing a free online game. Foldit poses weekly science challenges that are directly related to vaccine research being done at the University of Washington.

F1 JOINS FIGHT

Formula 1 teams will produce ventilators to help British hospitals cope with COVID-19.

A group of UK-based F1 teams are working out how they can use their engineering skills to increase production of the life-saving kit.

Some people with COVID-19 (the disease caused by the new coronavirus) find their breathing is badly affected, and ventilators are the devices that doctors use to supply air to them.

The F1 teams, engine manufacturers and technology experts are well-placed to help because they have experience of designing and manufacturing products safely and, most importantly, quickly.

A spokesperson for F1 said: “All the teams have expert design, technology and production capabilities... which is hoped can be applied to the critical needs set out by Government.”

The NHS currently has access to 8,175 ventilators. The Government has already asked companies including Airbus, Rolls-Royce, Nissan and JCB to help produce up to 30,000 ventilators in just two weeks.
Questions on: ‘The hunt for a vaccine’

Part A: Find and explain the facts

A1. What is a vaccine?

A2. Where in the world have the first volunteers received a trial vaccine against the new coronavirus?

A3. Fill the gaps to complete the sentences about the trial.

On ______________ March, Haller was one of ______________ volunteers to receive the jab. A total of ______________ will take part in the trial, and they will be regularly monitored for ______________ months, to see if the vaccine works.

Part B: Deduce and infer information

B1. What is the problem with the mRNA-1273 vaccine, even if it is successful?

B2. Why has the European Union pledged £74 million of support to CureVac?
Questions on: ‘F1 joins fight’

Part A: Find and explain the facts

A1. What are a group of UK-based F1 teams going to produce to help British hospitals cope with COVID-19?

A2. Answer the following questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many ventilators does the NHS currently have access to?</th>
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<tr>
<td>How many ventilators does the Government want produced in two weeks?</td>
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Part B: Deduce and infer information

B1. What makes the F1 teams well-placed to help?

B2. Why is it significant that the Government has already asked companies including Airbus, Rolls-Royce, Nissan and JCB to help to produce up to 30,000 ventilators in two weeks?
Tuesday 21st April 2020

Utopia and Dystopia

‘Nearly all creators of Utopia have resembled the man who has toothache, and therefore thinks happiness consists in not having toothache...whoever tries to imagine perfection simply reveals his own emptiness.’

George Orwell – ‘Can Socialists be Happy?’ 1943.

The definition of ‘utopia’

The origin of ‘utopia’

The British Library: Utopia

For thousands of years human beings have dreamt of perfect worlds, worlds free of conflict, hunger and unhappiness. But can these worlds ever exist in reality?

In 1516 Sir Thomas More wrote the first 'Utopia'. He coined the word 'utopia' from the Greek ou-topos meaning 'no place' or 'nowhere'. But this was a pun - the almost identical Greek word eu-topos means a good place. So at the very heart of the word is a vital question: can a perfect world ever be realised?

Questions

1.) Explain the pun at the heart of the word ‘utopia’ – what makes the word a joke?
2.) List 10 things that would exist in your utopian world – think about how people would be treated, how society would work.
3.) Go back to the quote at the top of the page – what does George Orwell think is the flaw with utopias?
4.) Draw your own utopian world – use no more than half a page to do this.
Defining dystopia

The definition of the word ‘dystopia’

The word most commonly used to describe the opposite of utopia is ‘dystopia’, though when it was coined by John Stuart Mill in a speech in the House of Commons in 1868 it was not quite in the sense we use it now. Mill was reflecting on the impossibility of establishing a utopia because the basis of its economy and social development was subject to natural laws that cannot be influenced by human will, meaning that all utopias have a built-in inevitability of failure. He thus dismissed all utopian thinkers as dystopian, because their ideas were too flawed to be practical.

It is ironical, therefore, that the word dystopia has come to represent a society in which individuals are repressed, personal freedoms lost and creativity stifled. A dystopia presents the inhumanity of the soulless state machine against the hopes and aspirations of humanity.

Questions:

1.) In your books, define the words ‘totalitarian’ and ‘post-apocalyptic’
2.) Where did John Stuart Mill first use the word ‘dystopia’ and when?
3.) Why did Mill think that all utopian thinkers were actually dystopian?
4.) What does dystopia present according to the extract from the British Library? Please answer in a full sentence and quote from the source.
5.) List 10 things that would be present in your version of a dystopia – think about how people would be treated.
Wednesday 22\textsuperscript{nd} April 2020

Pick TWO of the statements from the table and explain why you agree or disagree with them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In an ideal society, everyone is equal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is better to be ignorant and happy than to be aware and upset.</td>
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<td>The government knows what is best for us.</td>
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<td>Rules exist to help us live our lives properly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The police should be allowed to do whatever they can to protect the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>You shouldn’t have to be around people that you don’t agree with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is alright to upset some people as long as you’re doing what is best for society</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you know you are right, you shouldn’t listen to anyone else.</td>
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**STATEMENT 1:**

**STATEMENT 2:**
Dystopias: Definition and Characteristics

**Utopia:** A place, state, or condition that is ideally perfect in respect of politics, laws, customs, and conditions.

**Dystopia:** A futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Dystopias, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system.

Dystopian Elements and Characteristics - Basic Building Blocks of Dystopia

The dystopian stories are often stories about survival; their primary theme is oppression and rebellion. The environment plays an important role in dystopian depiction. Dystopian stories take place in the large cities devastated by pollution. In every dystopian story, there is a backstory of war, revolutions, overpopulation and other disasters.

The dystopian depiction is imaginary. Dystopian fiction borrows features from reality and discusses them, but it doesn't depict contemporary society in general. Dystopian stories take place in the future, but they are about today and sometimes about yesterday.

All dystopias are keen on a strict division of the citizens by intellect, ability, and class. In *Brave New World*, people are divided in Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), there are capitalist and proles, Party and non-Party. In a typical dystopia, there is no social group except the State or such social groups are under government control. Independent religions do not exist among social groups, instead of that, there is a personality cult (usually of a head of state) created by the State, such as Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984) and The Benefactor of We.

The institution of family has been eradicated in some dystopian societies, as in *Brave New World*, where children are reproduced artificially. If the family exists in dystopian stories, it is usually in the service of the State as in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), where children are thought to spy on their parents.

Dystopian tales emphasise a sense of the powerlessness of the individuals in the face of the oppressive and brutal government run by a totalitarian dictatorship, or organized into massive bureaucratic institutions (as in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), the Ministry of Information). Paranoia is very evident among the citizens of dystopian societies who live in fear and who are being monitored, betrayed or manipulated. The Thought Police and the Thought crime in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984) are the most extreme examples of paranoia. Dystopian fiction features technology more advanced than we have today, and the group in power controls it.

The standard of living among the classes is lower than in contemporary societies. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), the upper class of society, The Inner Party has a standard of living poorer than the upper class in the real world. But in *Brave New World* and *Equilibrium*, people have a higher standard of living in exchange for a loss of independent thought and emotions.
The hero in dystopian literature always questions society although he is usually in high-standing within the social system. He often sees what's wrong and tries to change the system. He puts his hope in a group of people who aren't under the complete control of the state, in Nineteen Eighty-Four (1984), they are "proles", in Brave New World they are people on the reservation and in We, they are people outside the walls of the One State. His goal is either to escape or destruction of the society's principals, but usually, he fails in his intention to change anything, and sometimes they themselves end up changed to conform to the society's rules.

Dystopia is a subgenre of science fiction, because it depicts future fictive societies, and many of them use other elements of science fiction like time travel, space flight, amazing and advanced technologies, etc.

There is also a particular relationship between dystopian fiction and film noir, such as startling contrasts, symbolic shadow and the action that takes place during the night.


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**DYSTOPIAN FICTION**

- According to the source, what are the features of dystopian fiction? Create a bullet point list with as many details as possible.
- If you were to create your own dystopian novel, how would you reflect the features of a dystopian story? Using the features identified to guide you, create an outline for your story.
- Choose one novel and create a dystopian fact-file outlining how and why it is a good exemplar of this genre.
  Include:
  - Plot summary
  - Main characters
  - Connections to the expected features of dystopian fiction
  - Reviews from readers and commentaries from experts
  - Personal reflection

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**Research Zone**

The American Library Association (ALA) often gets requests for dystopian novels to be banned for being subversive or dangerous (especially for impressionable young adults). In the past, books such as ‘Brave New World’, ‘Fahrenheit 451’ and ‘The Giver’ have all been banned from American libraries.

Do some research into book banning and write a speech or letter in response to this stand. You might like to consider the answers to these questions:

- Do you agree with the ALA’s right to decide which books are deserving?
- Are there some books which should be banned from public and school libraries?
- Who should get to decide which books to include in libraries and studied in schools?
**Monday 27th April 2020**

**Why Do We Like Dystopian Novels?**

Dave Astor, Contributor  
Author, 'Comic (and Column) Confessional'

10/19/2012 01:44 pm ET Updated Dec 19, 2012

War. Death. Despair. Oppression. Environmental ruin. Yup, when it comes to demoralizing literature, dystopian novels have it all! Yet many of us love this genre, and there are good reasons we do.

For one thing, we’re reading about rather than actually living through the bad stuff happening in the near or far future (though that bad stuff is often an extrapolation of our troubled current world). We’re not “in the arena” like the beleaguered tributes of *The Hunger Games*, the dystopian trilogy I recently finished.

And, while dystopian novels are depressing, there’s a certain “rightness” in reading about a future that’s negative. Why? Because we know that politicians, military people and corporate moguls are capable of doing awful things — meaning dystopian novels feel kind of honest.

*The Hunger Games* certainly felt honest. That terrific trilogy gives its memorable characters some uplifting moments, but there are a greater number of downbeat outcomes — especially in the third instalment, *Mockingjay*. So, even though *The Hunger Games* (first book) and *Catching Fire* (second book) are more engaging (albeit often horrific), the final book truly rings true. Dictatorship, revolution and counterrevolution usually cause severe physical and psychological damage to the victims and other participants. To her credit, author Suzanne Collins doesn’t sanitize that for us.


Sometimes, authors of dystopian literature temporarily ease the tension a bit with humour, as the great Atwood does with some of the clever genetic-engineering terms she coined for *Oryx and Crake*. And dystopian books can have seemingly utopian elements — with things not appearing too bad even though they are bad; *Brave New World* is a perfect example. There are even novels, such as *The Shape of Things to Come*, that mix dystopian and actual utopian elements.

We admire the best dystopian novels because they’re written well and depict people we can relate to. We’re fascinated by the terrible things these characters face, and by how some react bravely and some react cowardly or with resignation. We, as readers, rubberneck to see...
the misery; we can’t avert our eyes even as we’re enraged by what despots and other vicious officials are doing to citizens. And we’re compelled to turn the pages as we wonder if rebels and other members of the populace can somehow remake a wretched society into something more positive. We also wonder who will survive and who won’t; I was surprised by some of the characters who end up dying in *The Hunger Games* (a trilogy I read on the enthusiastic recommendation of commenter “threnodymarch”).

Last but not least, we admire dystopian novels because, by giving us worst-case scenarios of the future, maybe our current society can be jolted enough to avoid those scenarios eventually happening in real life. Like some of the characters in dystopian novels, we might feel a little against-all-odds hope. Then again, maybe not...

What are your favourite dystopian novels, and why do you like them? Or are you not that fond of the genre, and why?

Answer these questions in your book

1. According to the source, what kinds of disasters often feature in dystopian fiction?
2. What are the reasons Astor gives for why we love dystopian novels?
3. Aston says that ‘dystopian novels feel kind of honest’, what do you think he means by that? Do you think he is right?
4. Often dystopian novels are written for younger audiences and marketed as YA (young adult) literature. Because of this, some argue that it should not be considered as worthy of literary study and consideration alongside the traditional classic texts. Do you think dystopian literature has an important place in accepted literary canon?

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1 The term “literary canon” refers to a body of books, narratives and other texts considered to be the most important and influential of a particular time period or place.
It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his chest in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.

The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. At one end of it a coloured poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall. It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a metre wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features. Winston made for the stairs. It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric current was cut off during daylight hours. This was part of the economy drive in preparation for Hate Week. The flat was seven flights up and Winston, who was thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went slowly, resting several times on the way. On each landing, opposite the lift shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.

Inside the flat a fruity voice was reading out a list of figures which had something to do with the production of pig-iron. The voice came from an oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror which formed part of the surface of the right-hand wall. Winston turned a switch and the voice sank somewhat, though the words were still distinguishable. The device (a telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of switching it off completely. He moved over to the window: a smallish, frail figure, the thinness of his body merely emphasised by the blue overalls which were the uniform of the Party. His hair was very fair, his face naturally ruddy, his skin roughened by coarse soap and blunt razor blades and the cold of the winter that had just ended.

Outside, even through the shut window-pane, the world looked cold. Down in the street little eddies of wind were whirling dust and torn paper into spirals, and though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there seemed to be no colour in anything, except the posters that were plastered everywhere. The black-moustachio’d face gazed down from every commanding corner. There was one on the house-front immediately opposite. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption said, while the dark eyes looked deep into Winston’s own. Down at street level another poster, torn at one corner, flapped fitfully in the wind, alternately covering and uncovering the single word INGSOC. In the far distance a helicopter skimmed down between the roofs, hovered for an instant like a bluebottle, and darted away with a curving flight. It was a police patrol, snooping into people’s windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered.

Winston looked out of his window towards a huge building several kilometres away.

The Ministry of Truth was startlingly different from any other object in sight. It was an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, three hundred metres into the air. From where Winston stood it was just possible to read, picked out on its white face in elegant lettering, the three slogans of the Party:
The Ministry of Truth contained, it was said, three thousand rooms above ground level and similar numbers below. Scattered about London there were just three other buildings of similar appearance and size. So completely did they dwarf the surrounding buildings that from the roof of Victory Mansions you could see all four of them simultaneously. They were the homes of the four Ministries between which the entire government was divided. The Ministry of Truth which concerned itself with news, entertainment, education and the fine arts. The Ministry of Peace which concerned itself with war. The Ministry of Love which maintained law and order. And the Ministry of Plenty which was responsible for economic affairs. Their names, in Newspeak: Minitrue, Minipax, Miniluv and Miniplenty.

The Ministry of Love was the really frightening one. There were no windows in it at all. Winston had never been inside the Ministry of Love, nor within half a kilometre of it. It was a place impossible to enter except on official business, and then only by penetrating through a maze of barbed-wire entanglements, steel doors and hidden machine-gun nests. Even the streets leading up to its outer barriers were roamed by gorilla-faced in black uniforms, armed with jointed truncheons.

1. What clues are there in the text that this story is taking place in a dystopian world? How does this make the reader feel? Why does it make the reader feel this way?
2. When do you think this story is set? Why?
3. What do you think day to day life is like for Winston? Why do you think this? Back your ideas up with a quotation from the text.
4. ‘Frail’. ‘Thin’. ‘Ruddy’. Three adjectives used to describe Winston. Why do you think George Orwell has used these adjectives? What do they make you think of and what impression do you get of Winston's character because of them? Why do you think Winston is ‘frail’ and ‘thin’?
5. Find out what the word ‘foreshadowing’ means. Is there an example of foreshadowing in the extract? If so, what is it? Why is this an example of foreshadowing?
7. What do the words ‘BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU’ suggest to the reader about the world these characters live in?
8. Compare the description of the man on the poster with the description of Winston. What do you notice? Why do you think this is?
9. Pick out five conventions of dystopian fiction. You may use examples you have already found.
Nouns: Specificity and granularity and tension.

**Nouns** refer to people, places, things, ideas and events; they are often naming words. The nouns we choose in our writing helps to set the mood of the text. How much is revealed and when can create tension, surprises, and helps the reader experience events alongside the characters in the story.

Have a look at this extract, pay particular attention to how Colfer introduces the danger Butler is facing:

Something moved in the dust haze. It was immediately obvious to Butler that the *something* wasn’t human. The manservant had been on too many safaris not to recognise an animal when he saw it. He studied the creature’s gait. Possibly simian\(^1\). Similar upper-body structure to an ape, but bigger than any primate Butler had ever seen. If it was an ape, then his handgun wasn’t going to be of much use. You could put five rounds in the skull of a bull ape and he’d still have time to eat you before his brain realised he was dead.

But it wasn’t an ape. Apes didn’t have night eyes. This creature did. Glowing crimson pupils, half-hidden behind shaggy forelocks. Tusks too, but not elephantine. These were curved, with serrated edges. Gutting weapons. Butler felt a tingle low in his stomach. He’s had the feeling once before. On his first day at the Swiss academy. It was fear.

**Specificity** can refer to how precisely something is named. The more ambiguous\(^2\) an object, the more unsettling or surprising it may be. Determining how precise your noun will be helps the readers decide how to feel about the events or characters.

Shadow → figure → someone → youth → boy → brother → James → Jimmy

**Granularity** To raise tension in moments like the one Butler faces in the extract, details are rarely given all at once, instead the narrator may give glimpses or an outline description, or even run through options of what it is not.

- Collect together all of the nouns Colfer uses to describe the danger
- Read line 7-10, how does Colfer make use of granularity to raise tension?
- Butler’s character is typically written to appear calm and professional.
  - How does Colfer reflect this through his noun choices?
  - Is this sense of calm undermined in any way?
  - How does Colfer use sentence length and type (especially when coupled with specificity) to reflect Butler’s state of mind?

**Writing Challenge**

Have a go describing a dinosaur using the techniques of specificity and granularity.

- Which elements will you focus on?
- Which nouns will you use to create tension and surprise?

\(^1\)simian – a formal/scientific term for apes and monkeys.
\(^2\)ambiguous – unclear, giving away little information or details
Tuesday 5th May 2020

Nouns: Tension

The door starts shaking. It’s a flimsy thing made of bamboo shoots held together with tattered lengths of twine. The shake is subtle and stops almost immediately. They lift their heads to listen, a fourteen-year-old boy and a fifty-year-old man, who everyone thinks is his father but who was born near a different jungle, on a different planet hundreds of light years away. They are lying shirtless on opposite sides of the hut, a mosquito net over each cot. They hear a distant crash, like the sound of an animal breaking the branch of a tree, but in this case, it sounds like the entire tree has been broken.

‘What was that?’ the boy asks.
‘Shh,’ the man replies.

They hear the chirp of insects, nothing more. The man brings his legs over the side of the cot when the shake starts again. A longer, firmer shake, and another crash, this time closer. The man gets to his feet and walks slowly to the door. Silence. The man takes a deep breath as he inches his hand to the latch. The boy sits up.

‘No,’ the man whispers, and in that instant the blade of a sword, long and gleaming, made of a shining white metal that is not found on Earth, comes through the door and sinks deeply into the man’s chest. It protrudes six inches out through his back, and is quickly pulled free. The man grunts. The boy gasps. The man takes a single breath, and utters one word: ‘Run.’ He falls lifeless to the floor.

Pittacus Lore (Michael Joseph)(2010); I am Number Four; Penguin books.

WHAT|WHERE|HOW|WHY

How does the writer use language and structure to create tension in this extract?

⋙ Writing Challenge

Have a go finishing this extract. Consider:

- How does the boy respond to the command to run?
- What is on the other side of the door?
- Why is the boy being chased into the jungle?
- How can you create a sense of speed?
- How can you reflect the thoughts and feelings of the boy?
I was jolted awake by the sound of gunfire in one of the neighbouring stacks. The shots were followed by a few minutes of muffled shouting and screaming, then silence.

Gunfire wasn’t uncommon in the stacks, but it still shook me up. I knew I probably wouldn’t be able to fall back asleep, so I decided to kill the remaining hours until dawn by brushing up on a few coin-op classics. Galaga, Defender, Asteroids. These games were outdated digital dinosaurs that had become museum pieces long before I was born. But I was a gunter, so I didn’t think of them as quaint low-res antiques. To me, they were hallowed artefacts. Pillars of the pantheon. When I played the classics, I did so with a determined sort of reverence.

Wade Watts is the protagonist.

What inferences can we make about his character based on the following lines from the extract?

1. Gunfire wasn’t uncommon in the stacks, but it still shook me up.

2. by brushing up on a few coin-op classics

3. [the coin-op classics] were hallowed artefacts. Pillars of the pantheon

4. I did so with a determined sort of reverence

How is Wade Watts established as the protagonist from the outset of the novel?
Setting: A Comparison

Setting: Ready Player One – Ernest Cline

Our trailer was near the northern edge of the stacks, which ran up to a crumbling highway overpass. From my vantage point at the laundry room window, I could see a thin stream of electric vehicles crawling along the cracked asphalt, carrying goods and workers into the city. As I stared out at the grim skyline, a bright sliver of the sun peeked over the horizon. Watching it rise, I performed a mental ritual: Whenever I saw the sun, I reminded myself that I was looking at a star. One of over a hundred billion stars in our galaxy. A galaxy that was just one of billions of other galaxies in the observable universe. This helped me keep things in perspective. I’d started doing it after watching a science program from the early ’80s called Cosmos.

I slipped out the window as quietly as possible and, clutching the bottom of the window frame, slid down the cold surface of the trailer’s metal siding. The steel platform on which the trailer rested was only slightly wider and longer than the trailer itself, leaving a ledge about a foot and a half wide all the way around. I carefully lowered myself until my feet rested on this ledge, then reached up to close the window behind me. I grabbed hold of a rope I’d strung there at waist level to serve as a hand hold and began to sidestep along the ledge to the corner of the platform. From there I was able to descend the ladder-like frame of the scaffolding. I almost always took this route when leaving or returning to my aunt’s trailer. A rickety metal staircase was bolted to the side of the stack, but it shook and knocked against the scaffolding, so I couldn’t use it without announcing my presence. Bad news. In the stacks, it was best to avoid being heard or seen, whenever possible. There were often dangerous and desperate people about...

...when I reached the bottom level, I jumped off the scaffold and dropped the few remaining feet to the ground. My rubber boots crunched into the slush and frozen mud. It was still pretty dark down here, so I took out my flashlight and headed east, weaving my way through the dark maze, doing my best to remain unseen while being careful to avoid tripping over a shopping cart, engine block, or one of the other pieces of junk littering the narrow alleys between the stacks. I rarely saw anyone out at this time of the morning. The commuter shuttles ran only a few times a day, so the residents lucky enough to have a job would already be waiting at the bus stop by the highway. Most of them worked as day labourers in the giant factory farms that surrounded the city.

After walking about half a mile, I reached a giant mound of old cars and trucks piled haphazardly along the stacks’ eastern perimeter. Decades ago, the cranes had cleared the park of as many abandoned vehicles as possible, to make room for even more stacks, and they’d dumped them in huge piles like this one all around the settlement’s perimeter. Many of them were nearly as tall as the stacks themselves.

I walked to the edge of the pile, and after a quick glance around to make sure I wasn’t being watched or followed, I turned sideways to squeeze through a gap between two crushed cars. From there, I ducked, clambered, and sidestepped my way farther and farther into the ramshackle mountain of twisted metal, until I reached a small open space at the rear of a buried cargo van. Only the rear third of the van was visible. The rest was concealed by the other vehicles stacked on and around it. Two overturned pickup trucks lay across the van’s roof at different angles, but most of their weight was supported by the cars stacked on either side, creating a kind of protective arch that prevented the van from being crushed by the mountain of vehicles piled above it.
I pulled out a chain I kept around my neck, on which there hung a single key. In a stroke of luck, this key had still been hanging from the van’s ignition when I’d first discovered it. Many of these vehicles had been in working condition when they were abandoned. Their owners had simply no longer been able to afford fuel for them, so they’d just parked them and walked away.

I pocketed my flashlight and unlocked the van’s rear right door. It opened about a foot and a half, giving me just enough room to squeeze inside. I pulled the door closed behind me and locked it again. The van’s rear doors had no windows, so I was hunched over in total darkness for a second, until my fingers found the old power strip I’d duct-taped to the ceiling. I flipped it on, and an old desk lamp flooded the tiny space with light.

The crumpled green roof of a compact car covered the crushed opening where the windshield had been, but the damage to the van’s front end didn’t extend beyond the cab. The rest of the interior remained intact. Someone had removed all of the van’s seats (probably to use as furniture), leaving a small “room” about four feet wide, four feet high, and nine feet long.

This was my hideout.

... This van was my refuge. My Batcave. My Fortress of Solitude. It was where I attended school, did my homework, read books, watched movies, and played videogames. It was also where I conducted my on-going quest to find Halliday’s Easter egg.
Our house is almost at the edge of the seam. I only have to pass a few gates to reach the scruffy field called the Meadow. Separating the meadow from the woods, in fact enclosing all of District 12, is a high chain-link fence topped with barbed wire loops. In theory, it’s supposed to be electrified twenty-four hours a day as a deterrent to the predators that live in the woods – packs of wild dogs, lone cougars, bears – that used to threaten our streets. But since we’re lucky to get two or three hours of electricity in the evenings, it’s usually safe to touch. Even so, I always take a moment to listen carefully for the hum that means the fence is live. Right now, it’s silent as a stone. Concealed by a clump of bushes, I flatten out on my belly and slide under a meter-long stretch that’s been loose for years. There are several other weak spots in the fence, but this one is so close to home I almost always enter the woods here.

As soon as I’m in the trees, I retrieve a bow and sheath of arrows from a hollow log. Electrified or not, the fence has been successful at keeping the flesh-eaters out of District 12. Inside the woods they roam freely, and there are added concerns like venomous snakes, rabid animals, and no real paths to follow. But there’s also food if you know how to find it. My father knew and he taught me some ways before he was blown to bits in a mine explosion. There was nothing left of him to bury. I was eleven then. Five years later, I still wake up screaming for him to run.

In the woods waits the only person with whom I can be myself. Gale. I can feel the muscles in my face relaxing, my pace quickening as I climb the hills to our place, a rock ledge overlooking a valley. A thicket of berry bushes protect it from unwanted eyes. The sight of him waiting there brings on a smile. Gale says I never smile except in the woods.
How do the authors present the setting in these extracts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ready Player One</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>The Hunger Games</th>
</tr>
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EXTENSION HINT: Try to think of examples that support big ideas. i.e. the setting is dangerous, the setting is special to the speaker, the setting is isolated from the rest of the population.
Setting

Design your own dystopian setting.

Begin by drawing it below:

Using your drawing to guide you, write a first-hand description of your dystopian setting. Remember to make the most of paragraphs (see p 28), punctuation and descriptive language techniques.
Show not tell: Defiance in The Hunger Games

The protagonist in dystopian fiction is often presented as defiant in the face of authority. However, writers must be careful to show this quality rather than repeat the description with the adjective defiant or adverb defiantly.

Have a look at these moments from The Hunger Games. Which ones reflect defiance?

Annotate and justify your selections in your book.

| “Well it serves them right. It’s their job to pay attention to you. And just because come from District Twelve is no excuse to ignore you.” Then [Effie’s] eyes dart around as if she’s said something totally outrageous. “I’m sorry, but that’s what I think,” she says to no one in particular.- p124 |
| “It’s lovely. If only you could frost someone to death,” I say. “Don’t be so superior. You can never tell what you’ll find in the arena. Say it’s actually a gigantic cake – “ begins Peeta. – P 111 |
| “Thank you for your consideration,” I say. Then I walk out without being dismissed. – p118 |

Surprisingly, little Rue comes up with a seven. I don’t know what she showed the judges, but she’s so tiny it must have been impressive. – p125

The exceptions are the kids from the wealthier districts, the volunteers, the ones who have been fed and trained throughout their lives for this moment...It’s technically against the rules to train tributes before they reach the Capitol, but it happens every year. – p109

I became a much better hunter when I didn’t have to look over my shoulder constantly, when someone was watching my back.- p129

Writing Challenge

Have a go writing a scene for your own protagonist where they reflect defiance towards the authority present. Remember to show and not tell – and be careful to consider the reaction of those who are being defied.
Monday 18th May 2020

First News yet to be published – see blog for learning/sheets

Tuesday 19th May 2020

THE MAZE RUNNER by JAMES DASHNER

He began his new life standing up, surrounded by cold darkness and stale, dusty air.

Metal ground against metal; a lurching shudder shook the floor beneath him. He fell down at the sudden movement and shuffled backward on his hands and feet, drops of sweat beading on his forehead despite the cool air. His back struck a hard metal wall; he slid along it until he hit the corner of the room. Sinking to the floor, he pulled his legs up tight against his body, hoping his eyes would soon adjust to the darkness.

With another jolt, the room jerked upward like an old lift in a mine shaft.

Harsh sounds of chains and pulleys, like the workings of an ancient steel factory, echoed through the room, bouncing off the walls with a hollow, tinny whine. The lightless elevator swayed back and forth as it ascended, turning the boy's stomach sour with nausea; a smell like burnt oil invaded his senses, making him feel worse. He wanted to cry, but no tears came; he could only sit there, alone, waiting.

My name is Thomas, he thought.

That... that was the only thing he could remember about his life.

He didn't understand how this could be possible. His mind functioned without flaw, trying to calculate his surroundings and predicament. Knowledge flooded his thoughts, facts and images, memories and details of the world and how it works. He pictured snow on trees, running down a leaf-strewn road, eating a hamburger, the moon casting a pale glow on a grassy meadow, swimming in a lake, a busy city square with hundreds of people bustling about their business.

And yet he didn't know where he came from, or how he'd gotten inside the dark lift, or who his parents were. He didn't even know his last name. Images of people flashed across his mind, but there was no recognition, their faces replaced with haunted smears of color. He couldn't think of one person he knew, or recall a single conversation.

The room continued its ascent, swaying; Thomas grew immune to the ceaseless rattling of the chains that pulled him upward. A long time passed. Minutes stretched into hours, although it was impossible to know for sure because every second seemed an eternity. No. He was smarter than that. Trusting his instincts, he knew he'd been moving for roughly half an hour.

Strangely enough, he felt his fear whisked away like a swarm of gnats caught in the wind, replaced by an intense curiosity. He wanted to know where he was and what was happening.

With a groan and then a clonk, the rising room halted; the sudden change jolted Thomas from his huddled position and threw him across the hard floor. As he scrambled to his feet, he felt the room sway less and less until it finally stillled. Everything fell silent.

A minute passed. Two. He looked in every direction but saw only darkness; he felt along the walls again, searching for a way out. But there was nothing, only the cool metal. He groaned in frustration; his echo amplified through the air, like the haunted moan of death. It faded, and silence returned. He screamed, called for help, pounded on the walls with his fists.

Nothing.

Science Fiction often relies on precise language and terminology to create a sense that events considered could really happen if the right conditions were met. Underline any precise language used in this extract.

How does Dashner use sentence types to reflect Thomas’s confusion?

Find all references to time – how is the idea of time passing created throughout the text?
Wednesday 20th May 2020

Your task is to create the opening for a dystopian story. Focus on establishing your setting and characterisation. Create a structure strip outlining what your section will look like. What descriptive and narrative features are you going to incorporate into your writing?

YOU ARE A BRAIN SURGEON. EVERY TIME YOU PERFORM A SURGERY, YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO SEE MEMORIES OF THE PATIENT YOU ARE OPERATING ON.

EVERY BABY IS TAKEN AWAY BY THE GOVERNMENT AND RETURNED WHEN THEY ARE TEN YEARS OLD. THEY NEVER REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED IN THOSE YEARS, BUT THEY ALWAYS RECOGNIZE THEIR PARENTS. YOU, HOWEVER, REMEMBER EVERYTHING. AND THOSE AREN'T YOUR PARENTS.

THE SOUND SUDDENLY STOPPED. A NOISE EVERY LIVING BEING HAS HEARD ALL THEIR LIVES, FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS. A TONE SO CONSTANT AND OMNIPRESENT, IT IS ONLY NOTICEABLE BY ITS ABSENCE. THE SOUND HAS STOPPED.

IT'S 3 AM. AN OFFICIAL PHONE ALERT WAKES YOU UP. IT SAYS "DO NOT LOOK AT THE MOON", YOU HAVE HUNDREDS OF NOTIFICATIONS. HUNDREDS OF RANDOM NUMBERS ARE SENDING "IT'S A BEAUTIFUL NIGHT TONIGHT. LOOK OUTSIDE."

YOU GET A DEEP CUT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR LIFE, INSTEAD OF BONE OR MUSCLE, YOU SEE WIRES.

WHILE CLEANING YOUR ATTIC, YOU FIND A BOX OF GLASS BALLS WITH NAMES ON THEM. YOU ACCIDENTALLY DROP ONE, AND AS SOON AS IT SHATTERS, A PERSON APPEARS.