



Non-Fiction Knowledge Book

Key Vocabulary

Allegory	a metaphorical story with a moral message
Anarchy	a state of lawlessness and disorder (usually resulting from a failure of government)
Antagonist	the main character who opposes the protagonist in a narrative or play
Apocalypse	the total destruction of the world, as prophesied in the biblical book of Revelation.
Capitalism	an economic system based on private ownership of capital
Communism	a political theory favouring collectivism in a classless society
Eco-dystopia	stories that depict post-apocalyptic societies in which some sort of ecological catastrophe has occurred
Espionage	the systematic use of spies to get military or political secrets
Degenerative	marked by gradual deterioration
Democracy	the political orientation of those who favour government by the people or by their elected representatives
Desensitisation	the process of reducing sensitivity
Dictator	a ruler who is unconstrained by law
Ideology	an orientation that characterizes the thinking of a group or nation
Institution	a custom that for a long time has been an important feature of some group or society

Intertextuality	the relationship between texts, especially literary ones
Metafiction	A form of fiction that comments on its own construction
Modernism	Writing that self-consciously breaks from tradition
Oligarchy	a political system governed by a few people
Pastoral	a literary work idealizing the rural life
Post-apocalyptic	relating to the time following a nuclear war or other catastrophic event.
Postmodernism	a departure from modernism and is characterized by the self-conscious use of earlier styles and conventions, a mixing of different artistic styles and media
Propaganda	information that is spread for the purpose of promoting some cause
Protagonist	the principal character in a work of fiction
Repression	restraining, inhibiting, or subdue something
Romanticism	a movement in literature and art during the late 18th and early 19th centuries that celebrated nature rather than civilization
Satire	witty language used to convey insults or scorn
Socialism	an economic system based on state ownership of capital
Totalitarianism	a form of government in which the ruler is an absolute dictator
Verisimilitude	the appearance of truth; the quality of seeming to be true

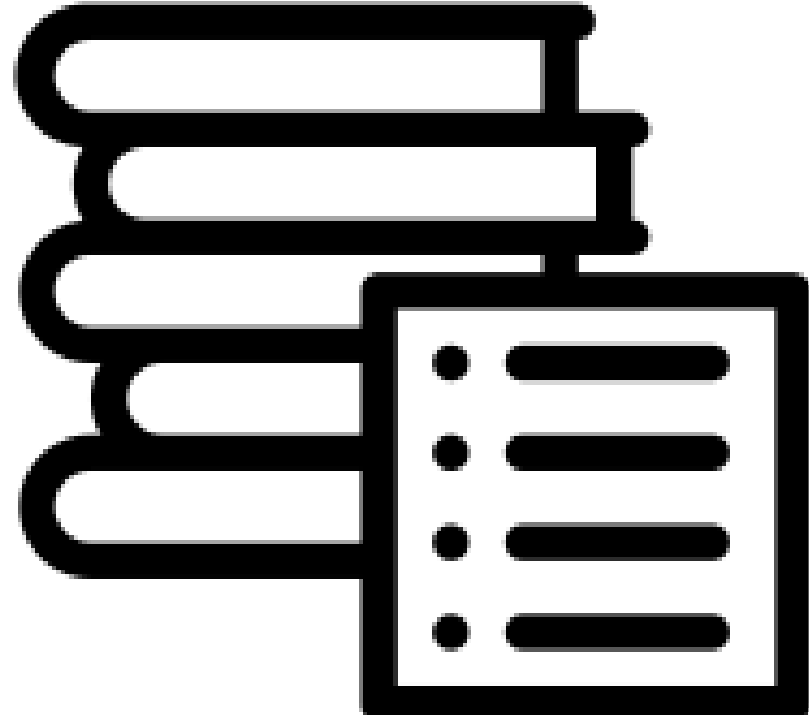
Set Texts for the Exam

You must study at least one of the following:

- *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), Margaret Atwood
- *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), George Orwell

Extra reading list:

- *The Time Machine* (1885), HG Wells
- *Brave New World* (1931), Aldous Huxley
- *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), Ray Bradbury
- *The Drowned World* (1962), JG Ballard
- *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), Anthony Burgess
- *Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), Doris Lessing
- *The Children of Men* (1992), PD James
- *The Road* (2006), Cormac McCarthy



Key Term – Dystopia

(AO3)

Etymology

A **utopia** is a perfect world. In utopias, there are not problems like war, disease, poverty, oppression, discrimination, inequality, and so forth. The word *utopia* was made up from Greek roots by Sir Thomas More. In 1516, More wrote a book called *Utopia*. Depending on the Greek roots used, utopia can either mean *no place* (Ancient Greek: οὐ "not") or *good place* (Ancient Greek: εὖ- "good").

A **dystopia**, on the other hand, is a world in which nothing is perfect. The problems that plague our world are often even more extreme in dystopias. Dystopia is a play on the made-up word *utopia* using the prefix *dys*, which means *bad* or *difficult*.

“The dystopian writer presents the nightmare future as a possible destination of present society, as if dystopia were no more than a logical conclusion derived from the premises of the existing order”.

Chris Ferns, *Narrating Utopias*

Further context:

Though several earlier usages are known, *dystopia* was used as an antonym for *utopia* by **John Stuart Mill** in one of his **1868** Parliamentary Speeches (*Hansard Commons*) by adding the prefix "dys" to "topia". It was used to denounce the government's Irish land policy: "It is, perhaps, too complimentary to call them Utopians, they ought rather to be called dys-topians, or caco-topians. What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they appear to favour is too bad to be practicable".

Decades before the first documented use of the word "dystopia" was "**cacotopia**"/"kakotopia" (using Ancient Greek: κακός, "bad, wicked") originally proposed in **1818** by **Jeremy Bentham**, "As a match for utopia (or the imagined seat of the best government) suppose a cacotopia (or the imagined seat of the worst government) discovered and described".

Though dystopia became the most popular term, cacotopia finds occasional use; Anthony Burgess, author of *A Clockwork Orange*, said it was a better fit for Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* because "it sounds worse than dystopia".

Utopia by Thomas More

Many of the ideas presented in *Utopia* were not new. Equality among classes and genders had been suggested by earlier writers, including Greek philosopher Plato (c. 428/427 BCE–c. 348/347 BCE).

- *Utopia* was written nearly 500 years ago, before the works of English playwright William Shakespeare and before the founding of the United States.
- *Utopia* is set in the "New World," meaning the Americas. It's helpful to remember that the *Mayflower*, on which the Pilgrims travelled to America, landed in Plymouth nearly 90 years *after* More wrote *Utopia*.
- *Utopia* describes a world in which communal ownership of homes and property result in an ideal society. When More wrote *Utopia*, however, Europe was still led by monarchs who ruled by "divine right."
- It **may seem** that *Utopia* was written as a description of an ideal society. However, it's important to remember that More was a dedicated servant of an absolute monarch and was devoted to the Catholic pope. *Utopia*, therefore, should not be read as a "prescription" for a perfect world but instead as **social satire** and commentary.

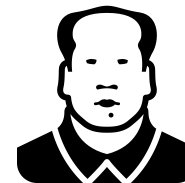
The Political Impact of *Utopia*



A thinker whose work relates to that of More was German philosopher Karl Marx (1818–83). Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) in which he describes an ideal egalitarian society.



Marx's ideas became the basis for the Russian Revolution (1917), where Russian Communist revolutionary Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks revolted and ended czarist rule in Russia. The Russian Revolution made possible the development and rise of the Soviet Union.



In China, Communist leader Mao Zedong used utopian ideas to fuel a Communist takeover of the government that took place in 1949, ending a lengthy civil war.



On a much smaller level, many groups have followed the dream of a Utopia by founding their own "perfect" societies. Examples of such utopian societies include communes founded by hippies during the 1960s.

Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift

Dystopian literature is widely considered to have originated in the 1726, with the publication of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. It is one of the most famous satirical texts in English literature and it ridicules contemporary British history of the late seventeenth century and eighteenth century.

- Jonathan Swift, satirises both human nature and the "travellers' tales" literary subgenre as Gulliver travels to a range of lands and unknown societies.
- In the fourth journey, Gulliver is abandoned in a landing boat and comes upon a race of deformed savage humanoid creatures, the **Yahoos**. Shortly afterwards, he meets the **Houyhnhnms**, a race of talking horses with superior intellect who rule over the Yahoos.
- Gulliver becomes a member of a horse's household and comes to both admire and emulate the Houyhnhnms and their way of life, rejecting his fellow humans as merely Yahoos.
- Gulliver is however rejected by the Houyhnhnms and is forced to leave the island on a canoe. He is rescued by Captain Pedro de la Mendez who is wise and courteous, but Gulliver now considers all humans Yahoos.
- Gulliver returns to his home in England, but is unable to reconcile himself to living among "Yahoos" and becomes a recluse, remaining in his house, avoiding his family and his wife, and spending several hours a day speaking with the horses in his stables.
- It is now generally accepted that the fourth voyage of *Gulliver's Travels* does embody a wholly pessimistic view of the place of man and the meaning of his existence in the universe.

Ideas explored in *Gulliver's Travels*:



A satirical view of the state of European government, and of petty differences between religions.



An inquiry into whether men are inherently corrupt or whether they become corrupted.

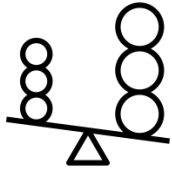


No form of government is ideal—the simplistic Brobdingnagians enjoy public executions and have streets infested with beggars, the honest and upright Houyhnhnms who have no word for lying are happy to suppress the true nature of Gulliver as a Yahoo and are equally unconcerned about his reaction to being expelled.



Specific individuals may be good even where the race is bad—Gulliver finds a friend in each of his travels and, despite Gulliver's rejection and horror toward all Yahoos, is treated very well by the Portuguese captain, Don Pedro, who returns him to England at the novel's end.

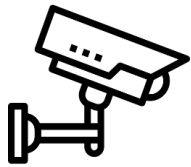
Key Themes of Dystopian Fiction



Inequality: dystopian fiction is most recognisable in the way it depicts **inequality**. Typically, a **powerful minority** exercises **dominance** and **control** over a vastly **weaker majority**.



Oppression: oppression is key in dystopian fiction, as it explores what could happen if a power-hungry **government**, **secret society** or **alien race** robbed people of **agency** and **free-will**



Surveillance: surveillance is a very common theme as it symbolises the loss of **privacy**. It highlights the expectation to **conform** rather than express **individuality**.



Corruption: dystopian novels tend to expose the dishonest and fraudulent conduct of those in power. In particular, how this power is abused to exploit those in lower positions.



Destruction: ideas of **post-apocalypse** and dystopia go hand in hand. **Futuristic technology** often plays a large role in dystopian fiction, showing how loss of humanity is wrong and ultimately leads to **self-destruction**.



Control: those in power aim to control those below them. This may be done through controlling every aspect of their daily routine or even attempting to control their thoughts.



Violence: dystopian fiction exposes how violence is used as a way of **instilling fear**. However, it is also explored as a criticism of our society becoming more **desensitised** to violence due to the development of visual media.



Fear: dystopian novels create fear through a sense of the **uncanny**. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) described the uncanny as 'that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar'. In other words, uncanny elements are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, which is what makes them terrifying.

Key Features of Dystopian Fiction



Uniforms: these are used to divide individuals in society. Uniforms are also significant in creating a sense of collectivism and removing individualism.



Isolated: characters feel isolated from the rest of society. This may be a choice or this could be forced upon them by the environment or the state.



Protagonist: the protagonist of dystopias tend to be outsiders to the system. They are rebellious and question the laws and ideologies of the state. They have an instinct to survive and overcome.



Overpopulation or desolation: dystopias deal with either overpopulation leading to limited resources and a caste system. On the other hand, some dystopias also deal with a decline in population and the fear of human extinction.



Futuristic technology: advancement in technology are used to give the appearance that life for individuals is improved or are used to control individuals e.g. surveillance.



Archaic technology: some dystopias are set in societies that appear to have regressed and rely on old technologies.



Capitalisation: dystopian texts can often be identified through the capitalisation of words that denote new traditions, places or customs. This could be to suggest how these have been institutionalised.



Language: those in power aim to control the language used. Whether written or spoken, dystopian texts show how language is manipulated and changed to help those in control. This can be seen equally through the use of propaganda.

Political dystopias

(AO1+AO3)

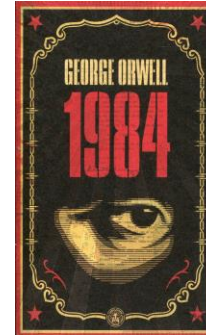
Political dystopias typically focus on totalitarian regimes, where individuals are given no choice but to follow exactly what the state asks of them. Novels explore the range of methods totalitarian regimes might use to control their citizens and maintain power.

- **Ideologies:** one way totalitarian states traditionally maintain their power is through the use of ideologies. **Louis Pierre Althusser** (philosopher, 1918-1990) defines an ideology as 'the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' ; in other words, it is a system of beliefs that determines how individuals see the world around them.

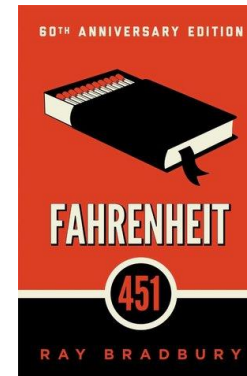
Althusser (AO5) argues that ideologies are constructed and manipulated by the rich and the powerful ultimately to prevent those deemed as socially inferior from understanding the injustices that are being done to them.

- **Regulation:** totalitarian states aim to regulate every aspect of individuals' lives. This can include anything from censorship to what individual citizens wear, and even control sexual habits. States may regulate the information citizens are able to access by forbidding and restricting communication through books and writing and having full control of mass media and propaganda.

Examples:



'1984' (1949) presents a regime where the political party maintains power by denying individuals the ability to act independently. In '1984', we see how the Big Brother not only aims to control the lives of individuals physically through the use of uniforms and surveillance, but also psychologically through the manipulation of language, concepts such as 'double think' and the invasion of the domestic sphere through the use of the telescreens.



In 'Fahrenheit 451' (1953), Bradbury creates a world where books are burnt to limit the knowledge of ordinary men. Through the burning of books the state is able to have complete control over what information citizens have and prevents them from developing contrary opinions to the state. Beatty, a supporter of the state's ideologies states: 'if you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides to worry him'. By maintaining individuals ignorant and with a false belief of their own freedoms, it prevents future rebellions or resistance to the state.

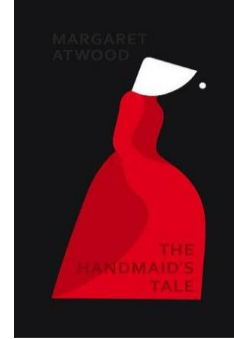
The rise of feminist dystopias

(A01+A03)

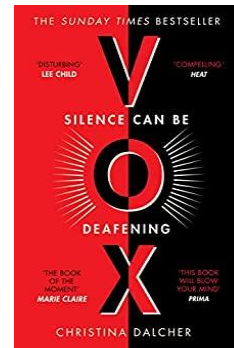
Whilst 'The Handmaid's Tale' was written in 1985 as a reaction to the regressive ideologies displayed by Donald Regan's presidency, modern readers' anxieties and fears have become once again awakened by Donald Trump's presidency. Over the last couple of years there has been an increase in the number of dystopian novels about women that have been written by women.

- **Fears of infertility:** anxieties had emerged in the later twentieth century. No longer was there the Free Love of the 1960s and there was an increase and freedom in the use of contraception. Furthermore ideas of sexual intimacy had become entwined with images of disease and death with the high-profile threat of AIDS.
- **Controlling the female voice:** in dystopian fiction women are often seen as second-class citizens. Governments try to control women's access to education and means of communication.
- **Reinstating gender stereotypes:** feminist dystopian have been a reaction to the fears that there are still instances in society where the progressive status of women in society still comes under attack in a patriarchal society – men continue to make decisions on women's bodies.

Examples:



In 'The Handmaid's Tale' (1985) Atwood presents a theocratic state through Gilead that seeks to establish 'traditional roles' for both males and females in society. Set in the Republic of Gilead, a fictional state within the borders of the future United States, where there is declining fertility and the need for 'handmaids', women who are still able to conceive and have been bound in sexual slavery by the ruling classes.



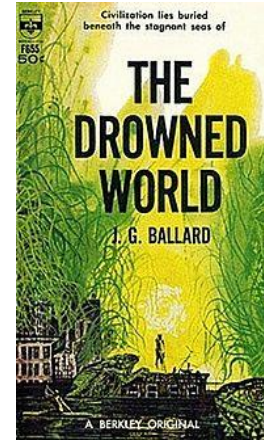
'Vox', a 2018 novel by Christina Dalcher, explores how men are taught to believe that women are second-class citizens within school after new conservative Christian government in the United States has banned women from speaking more than 100 words a day, in order to enforce male supremacy within every subsection of society. Women are fitted with high-tech bracelets that deliver electric shocks if they breach their limits (the shocks grow increasingly severe the more the women transgress).

1. Eco-dystopias (post-apocalyptic)

One key concern of dystopian fiction is pollution, and the notion that we are at risk of destroying our natural environment in the pursuit of technological and scientific progress. Eco-dystopia has emerged as a branch of dystopian through an exploration of environmental critical theory.

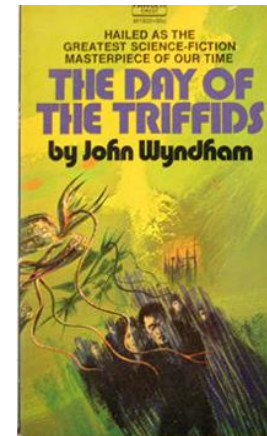
- **The Romantic Movement:** writers of the Romantic movement responded to the effects of the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840). The Revolution brought about continued urbanisation – by focusing on pastoral settings the Romantics sought to remind society of the importance of the environment. The natural environment was thus presented as a refuge from industrialisation.
- **Environmental Movement:** the modern environmental movement originated in the early 1960s. It looked at:
 - Chemical industries abusing their positions of power and authority. Spreading inaccurate information about their practices to ensure they continue to make profit regardless of the damage and harm they were causing to the natural world.
 - The alarming rate at which the **human population** was growing and was putting an increasing strain on the natural environment.
 - An exploration of **anxieties regarding pollution** – worlds where environmental contamination has escalated to environmental destruction, and where we no longer possess any form of security or safety.

Examples:



‘**The Drowned World**’ is set in the year 2145 in a post-apocalyptic and unrecognisable London: a setting of tropical temperatures, flooding and accelerated evolution.

Ballard's story follows the biologist Dr Robert Kerans and his struggles against the devolutionary impulses of the environment.



‘**The Day of the Triffids**’ is a 1951 post-apocalyptic novel by the English science fiction author John Wyndham. After most people in the world are blinded by an apparent meteor shower, an aggressive species of plant (triffids) starts killing people. The protagonist is Bill Masen, a biologist who has made his living working with triffids. The narrative begins with Masen waking up with his eyes bandaged up. After unbandaging his eyes he leaves the hospital and is walking through a chaotic London full of blind inhabitants.

2. Eco-dystopias (post-apocalyptic)

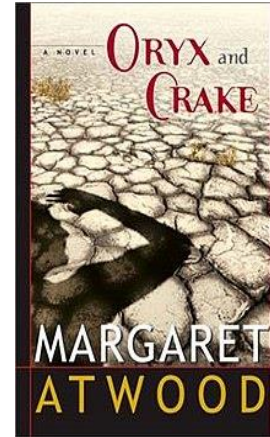
- **Margaret Atwood** – is a leading author in eco-dystopias. She is an outspoken environmental campaigner outside of her writing pursuit as patron of Friends of the Earth and in 2004, she invented the LondPen, an eco friendly device that allows writers to sign books remotely.
- In an article discussing her novel, 'Oryx and Crake', Atwood introduces the concept of **ustopia**:

'Ustopia is a world I made up by combining utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other. In addition, almost always, a mapped location, Ustopia is also a state of mind, as is every place in literature of whatever kind. (Atwood, 'The Road to Ustopia')

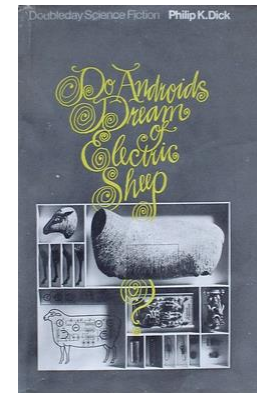
Atwood highlights how easy it is to slip from a perceived utopia to a terrifying dystopia. Her use of 'us' in her formation of the word 'ustopia' implies that is something that reflects our own mistakes as human beings.

- **Destruction:** Dystopian fiction often explores the destruction of the world around us by technology. In 'Oryx and Crake', Atwood explores how our obsession with technology could result in the destruction of the civilisations we have constructed over the centuries. Similarly, in 'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep', life on earth has been damaged by nuclear war.

Examples:



'Oryx and Crake' (2003) focuses on a post-apocalyptic character called "Snowman", living near a group of primitive human-like creatures whom he calls *Crakers*. Flashbacks reveal that Snowman was once a boy named Jimmy who grew up in a world dominated by multinational corporations and privileged compounds for the families of their employees. The world has changed because Crake, a scientist in pursuit of perfection, releases a pandemic in order to wipe out the human race.



'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep' (1968) is a science fiction novel by American writer Philip K. Dick, first published in 1968. The novel is set in a post-apocalyptic San Francisco, where Earth's life has been greatly damaged by a nuclear global war, leaving most animal species endangered or extinct. The main plot follows Rick Deckard, a bounty hunter who is tasked with "retiring" (i.e. killing) six escaped Nexus-6 model androids, while a secondary plot follows John Isidore, a man of sub-par IQ who aids the fugitive androids.

3. Eco-dystopias (post-apocalyptic)

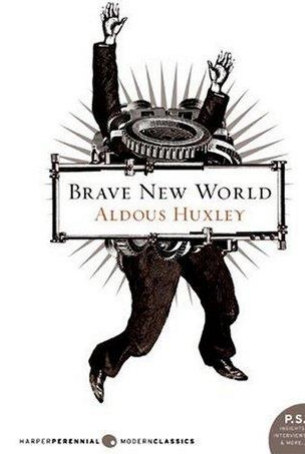
- **Nature vs Technology:** In dystopian fiction, writers stress the significance of the natural landscape by setting it against in stark contrast to social and technological developments. In 'A Brave New World', Huxley contrasts the mechanised and regulated society that dominates the novel with imagery of the outside world to suggest the freedom of the natural world.

'The roses were in bloom, two nightingales soliloquized in the boskage, a cuckoo was just going out of tune among the lime trees. The air was drowsy with the murmur of bees and helicopters.'

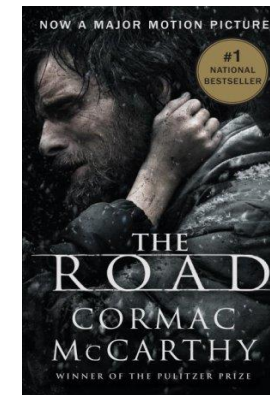
(Huxley, 'Brave New World')

- **Longing for the past (nostalgia):** Images of nature in dystopian fiction could also be associated with character's longing for the world destroyed by an apocalypse. Nostalgia is often used as a coping mechanism to combat loneliness, a familiar feeling to many of us during a time when social interaction is discouraged. In 'The Road', McCarthy 'the Man' often reflects on his past experience; in 'Brave New World', John the Savage is a product of the past.

Examples:



'**Brave New World**' (1932) is set in 2540 CE, which the novel identifies as the year AF 632. AF stands for "after Ford," as Henry Ford's assembly line is revered as god-like. This futuristic **technocratic** society, called the World State, revolves around science and efficiency; emotions and individuality are conditioned out of children at a young age, and there are no lasting relationships. The novel begins by explaining the scientific and compartmentalized nature of this society, beginning at the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre, where children are created outside the womb and cloned in order to increase the population.



'**The Road**' (2006) is set in a post-apocalyptic world, date and place unnamed, though the reader can assume it's somewhere in what was the United States because the man tells the boy that they're walking the "state roads". As the novel develops it becomes clear that the man is the boy's father. Resources are scarce and, the man and the boy need to escape from some groups that have turned to cannibalism.

Technical Features- Characterisation

Term	Definition	Example
Protagonists	A dystopian protagonist is typically someone who aims to make some kind of change to their environment. Whether this be the overthrowing of a totalitarian regime, the rescue of other characters, or simple the assertion of their independence, protagonists always somehow set themselves apart from the majority of society.	'1984' – Winston 'THT' – Offred
Victim	A victim will be targeted of some kind of cruelty or misfortune. We often see the protagonists display elements of victimhood, having to suffer extreme peril and punishment for their actions. However, in the dystopian texts there are also victims which are peripheral characters.	'1984' – Julia 'THT' - Moira
Antagonist	The antagonist stands in opposition to the protagonist, either by trying to control them or by carrying out violence upon them. These characters are particularly terrifying – not because they are excessively violent or supernaturally strong, but because somehow they are immovable.	'1984' – O'Brien 'THT' – The Commander

Technical Features

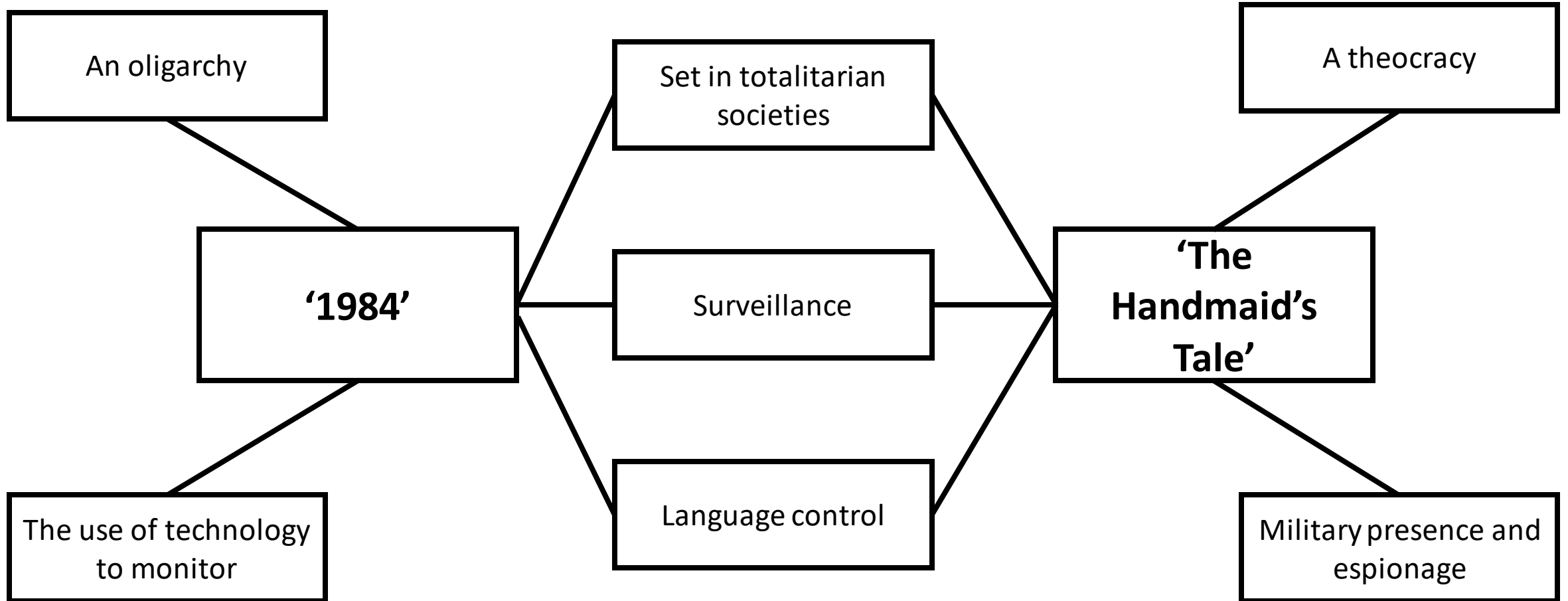
Term	Definition	Example	Analysis
Oxymoron	A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction.	'war is peace freedom is slavery ignorance is strength'	Orwell satirises the dishonesty of the totalitarian regime through these oxymoronic statements. Because it is introduced so early in the novel, this creed serves as the reader's first introduction to the idea of doublethink. By weakening the independence and strength of individuals' minds and forcing them to live in a constant state of propaganda-induced fear, the Party is able to force its subjects to accept anything it decrees, even if it is entirely illogical.
Irony	Irony is an incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs, although this is not a completely satisfactory definition because true irony involves some form of deceit, duplicity, or hypocrisy, be it intentional or accidental.	"(The wings) are to keep us from seeing, but also from being seen"	The use of 'wings' to cover and protect the faces of Handmaids is ironic because wings are often perceived as symbols of freedom.

Technical Features

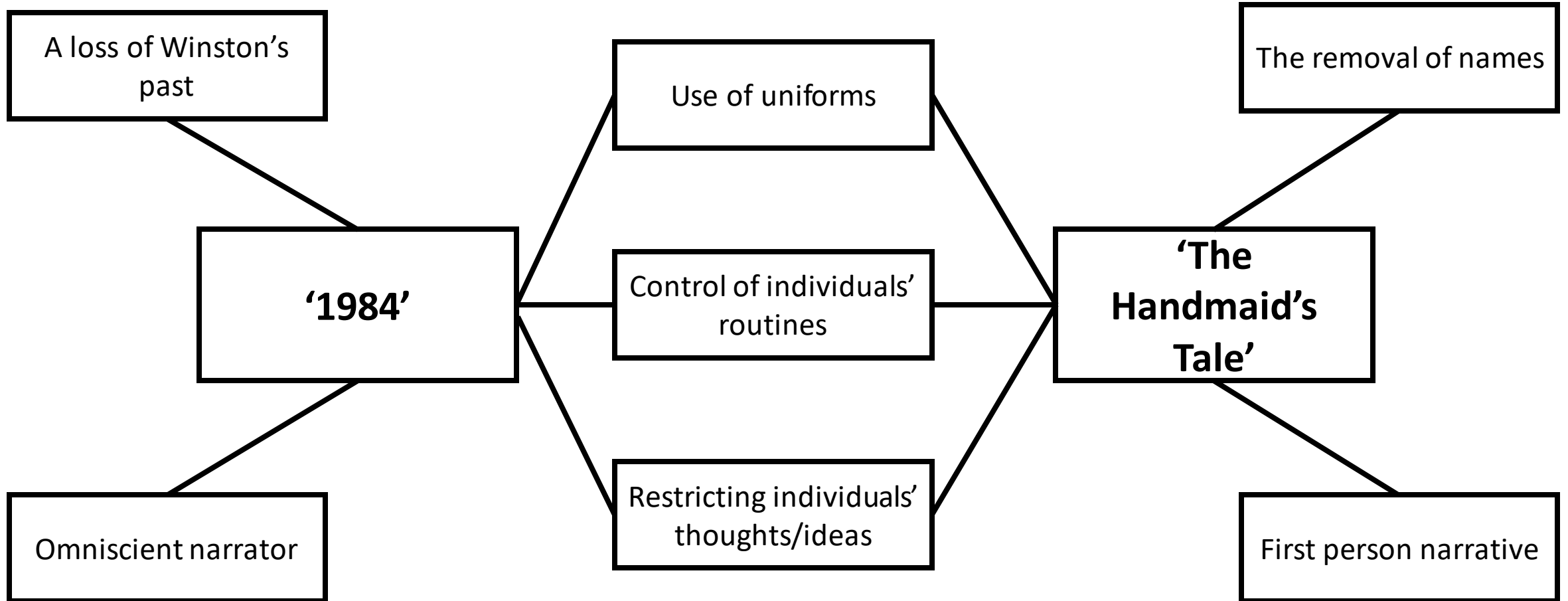
Term	Definition	Example	Analysis
Juxtaposition	The act of placing two words or ideas side by side for effect, especially for contrast or comparison. It is a literary device which is employed to bring out similarities and differences between two situations, thoughts, characters or emotions. In placing them together, the writer highlights a detail for the reader.	'helped onto the high stool as if she's being helped up the steps of a bus... the noose adjusted delicately around the neck, like a vestment.'	Atwood deliberately uses images which seem inappropriate, to shock us into a realisation of the way in which the horrific has come to be completely accepted in Gilead. For example, at the Salvaging described in chapter 42, Atwood juxtaposes of tenderness and holiness with brutal repression wakes up the reader to the ease with which Gilead is achieving its oppressive ends.
Satire	Satire is a literary form through which a writer pokes fun at those aspects of society, especially those people and those social institutions, that the author thinks need to change.	"two plus two equals five" (2 + 2 = 5)	In propaganda work for the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) during the Second World War (1939–1945), George Orwell applied the illogic of $2 + 2 = 5$ to counter the reality-denying psychology of Nazi propaganda, which he addressed in the essay "Looking Back on the Spanish War" (1943), indicated that: "Nazi theory, indeed, specifically denies that such a thing as "the truth" exists. There is, for instance, no such thing as "Science". There is only "German Science", "Jewish Science", etc. The implied objective of this line of thought is a nightmare world in which the Leader, or some ruling clique, controls not only the future, but the past [...] This prospect frightens me much more than bombs.'

Essay Plans and Idea

Government Control



Loss of Individualism



Survival

