



## **Dystopian Societies in Adolescent Literature: Can Compliance and Freedom Coexist Peacefully In A Dark, Dystopian World?**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 15.01.06, published September 2015  
by Teresa Rush

In 1516, Sir Thomas More wrote the first ‘Utopia’, which began a long and rich tradition of imagining both utopian (or ideal) societies and imperfect dystopian ones. Recently, there has been a spike in the popularity of dystopian literature and movies. This type of literature is characterized by a bleak, dysfunctional future in which anti-utopian events oppress the weaker class of a society. The ruling class uses various controlling agents to obtain absolute power and establish their own personal utopias. These forms of control include corporate control, bureaucratic control, technological control, and philosophical/religious control.

In this ninth grade English unit, students will explore the common and contrasting themes of the following dystopian novels: *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner, *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, and *Matched* by Ally Condie. In these novels, characters are faced with a lack of power and choice that force them and others who share their beliefs to rise up against their oppressive governments. While reading, students will engage in literature circle activities, close reading of dystopian and utopian articles, writing, and powerful discussions all centered on the Common Core State Standards. As they engage in reading and writing activities, they will develop a deeper understanding of whether or not compliance and freedom can coexist in a dark, dystopian world.

(Developed for English I, grade 9; recommended for English and English Language Arts, grades 7-10)

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)