

**The Dehumanizing Impact of Consumerism and Technology in
The Novel Brave New World**

*In what ways does Aldous Huxley use satire
and symbolism to explore the dehumanizing
impact of consumerism and technology in
Brave New World?*

English B Higher Level Extended Essay

CATEGORY 3

Word Count: 3669

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. LITERARY TECHNIQUES USED BY HUXLEY	5
2.1. SATIRE	5
2.2. SYMBOLISM	9
3. CONCLUSION	12
4. BIBLIOGRAPHY	15

1. INTRODUCTION

Brave New World is a dystopian novel written by Aldous Huxley. The story takes place in the future, in the year 632 AF, which stands for “After Ford.” Ford refers to Henry Ford, who is treated as a spiritual and revolutionary leader in this society. Citizens of this society is divided by a caste system. They live in a very orderly organized society as they point out every chance, they get that they do.

Aldous Huxley was born in a period of rapid change which is the near end of the Victorian period. Due to this time Huxley grew up in a world that differed from earlier generations. In earlier civilizations life was not as fast as it was in the past. New scientific discoveries, medicine and technology were out of reach. However, by the time Huxley was born new inventions and ideas were appearing much more quickly. He saw how factories have enabled mass production. Huxley takes the idea of mass production and applies it to human beings to show the dehumanizing effects of technology in Brave New World. People are made in bottles in large buildings called Hatchery Centres instead of being born naturally. Technology has become a device to control how people are created and how they think. This industrial way of living also leads to loss of individuality. World State forces its citizens to love shopping and hating old things. So, to keep the system running world state uses consumerism.

Society in Brave New World is like a big factory; loss of family and human connections is visible. In the novel, the government possesses the idea of family to seem disgusting and shameful. by destroying the concept of family government ensures that people only care about working and consuming. Huxley’s own experience with rapid progress made him fear that if we only cared about technology and purchasing thing, we would eventually lose the basic specialties of human.

Huxley imagines a world where his concerns are represented in daily behaviours. He presents a society which is both entertaining and cautionary. While the late 19th and early 20th centuries were periods of rapid progression, Huxley suggests that such progress could be negative depending on its consequences.

“Progress is lovely” is a slogan taught to citizens from infancy hypnopædia or sleep conditioning. This process enables the World State to shape individual identities during sleep hours. The World State discourages individuality, so they produce and condition citizens in factories known as Hatchery Centres. This process creates people who fit perfect into the system.

The technology created by humans removes real human connections in Brave New World. Aldous Huxley focuses on the limits of the progress and examines how an advanced society might lose its human essence.

Huxley’s experience and observation about the industrial world are not just background information. These experiences are directly the reason he chose specific literary tools to use. The novel, Brave New World presents Aldous Huxley’s fears about future and acts as a warning. The research question of this essay explores how Aldous Huxley uses satire and symbolism to explore the dehumanizing impact of consumerism and technology in Brave New World. These literary tools act as a bridge between Huxley’s experiences and the dark themes of the novel. Understanding how he uses these tools is essential in realizing that a world driven only by efficiency will eventually destroy the basic human qualities.

This essay focuses on the dehumanizing effects of technological progress and consumerism in Brave New World and how Aldous Huxley uses literary techniques such as satire and symbolism to present these ideas.

2. LITERARY TECHNIQUES USED BY HUXLEY

Aldous Huxley creates an imaginary future and presents it to the reader by using specific literary tools. Huxley uses satire and symbolism to improve his message's effect. These techniques used by Aldous Huxley are the ways he represents how a society which prioritizes technology and consumerism can lose its soul. The availability of these techniques enables Huxley to create a bridge between the real-world of his time and the imaginary World State in the novel.

Satire is arguably one of the most important tools in the novel. Huxley takes the mass production and the demand for constant comfort ideas and modifies them until they are seen ridiculous. Huxley turns a successful businessman like Henry Ford and turns him into a godlike figure. This exaggeration helps the reader to see the dehumanizing side of the progress.

On the other hand, Huxley gives deep meanings to simple objects using symbolism. In the novel, things like "soma" or the "feelies" are some inventions of World State. These inventions symbolize how the government controls people's minds. In the novel satire mocks the system and symbolism shows the emotional cost of that system. Huxley, by using these techniques together warn the reader that progress without humanity could pose threat to the individual's inquisitive nature. This section will analyse how these two literary devices work together and individually to show that a society built only on technology and consumerism eventually turn humans into a part of a machine that keeps the factory running stable.

2.1. SATIRE

Satire is a literary technique writers use to criticize society, ideas, or human behaviour through humour, irony, and exaggeration. In *Brave New World*, Huxley uses satire to do exactly this. Although the novel is set in the future, it is a critique of the society he was living in. Like many dystopian writers before him, Huxley chose to set his story in a distant future.

Throughout the novel, Huxley uses satire to criticize how the values and norms of his society were changing, and to expose the society of the World State and show that it is not a perfect place as shown. The concepts motherhood and family are presented to the reader as dirty and shameful. This satirical shift of values is key part of control using technology. Technology allows the World State to replace natural human birth with a mechanical process. This process is an example of dehumanization impact of a society that cares more about industrial efficiency than humanity. When people are conditioned to laugh at deep emotions or family bonds, they stop thinking about themselves. This situation leads to dehumanization on individuals. Through this way satire helps the reader to understand that the mockery of traditional values limits the private connections. Personal connections are seen as a threat because they are hard for the government to manage or overcome. So, Huxley uses satire to warn that when a society loses its ability to form thoughts and relationships to technology it eventually loses its soul.

One example for this would be motherhood. Both in Huxley's time and for many centuries before motherhood was seen as something natural, respectful and sacred. Women were often pressured to believe that having and raising children were their duty. It does not matter whether there is an agreement with view. It has been widely accepted by society for a long time. In Brave New World Huxley presents a world where this deeply held belief is reversed. This shows to what extent social values could change.

Motherhood is completely removed in the novel. Parents are not seen in the as well. People in the novel does not know what "mothers" or "fathers" are because no one is born naturally. Aldous Huxley takes the idea of motherhood and challenges its limits. This shows what he fears could be the newest reality through unchecked progress. Also, in the novel even the word "mother" is considered rude and shameful, and giving birth is seen disgusting among citizens.

At the beginning of the novel, Mustapha Mond, the Resident Controller of Western Europe, visits the Director and a group of students touring the facilities. Through the questions he asks the students, the reader clearly sees how ignorant this society has become about motherhood and family life. These scenes highlight just how far removed the World State is from traditional human values.

“Just try to realize it,”

“Try to realize what it was like to have a viviparous mother. That smutty word again.”

“And do you know what a ‘home’ was?” They shook their heads.” (Huxley, page 30)

“Mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters. But there were also husbands, wives, lovers. There were also monogamy and romance.” (Huxley, page 34).

Like motherhood, these norms are completely removed from Huxley’s imagined society. There are no families or natural births, no marriages or engagements, and no monogamous relationships or romance. There is also no idea of chastity. Although progress may seem efficient removing such values makes life lack human emotion and humanity. People do not fall in love, marry or dream having children. These people never experience the deep love, responsibility or emotional bonds within a family.

In World State the main rule is “Everyone belongs to everyone else.”, according to this slogan people are encouraged to have many partners. From the moment people are created they are taught these ideas through sleep conditioning. Through sleep conditioning nothing distracts these people from completing their duty to society. Strong personal goals, deep relations, and heartbreaks are impossible to see in this dystopia.

These rules help World State maintain order and control over citizens. However, World State manages to reduce the human aspects of life. People being treated like parts of a machine instead of individuals, represents the dehumanization in the novel. These people's only purpose in the society is to be useful and keep the system running smoothly. By pushing human values to the extreme, Huxley shows a world where technology and control have taken away true human emotion in the name of stability.

“What with mothers and lovers, what with the temptations and the lonely remorse, what with all the prohibitions they were not conditioned to obey, what with all the diseases and the isolating pain, what with the uncertainties and the poverty – they were forced to feel strongly. And feeling strongly, how could they be stable?” (Huxley, page 35)

Living through the rapid changes of the twentieth century, Huxley may have felt worried about how society's values were changing. Just as shared values shape the World State, they also shape real societies. He feared that losing these values would make life confusing and meaningless. This fear may have inspired him to imagine and write about the future world in *Brave New World*.

He created this future based on the direction society was already moving in during his lifetime. Although he exaggerated some ideas, the changes he warned about were already beginning. Through the novel, Huxley criticizes this kind of progress and warns readers about what society could become if it continues the same path.

Having to live in rapidly changing and advancing glorious twentieth century; Huxley might have felt that the norms of his society could change drastically. As the norms give identity to the society of the World State, it does so also in the real world. He might have feared losing his norms and virtues which are the tools to make sense of the world, interpret life and live it righteously. This uncertainty of the future and the fear of losing identity perhaps are the exact

pushing powers that made Huxley imagine such a future in the first place and write about it. He imagined that future according to the ways his own society was progressing. He exaggerated perhaps, but the changes toward such future were happening in his time and it was that same future he feared. He criticised how he saw society was progressing for the worse and showed his concerns and what he thought was to become of them if they were to continue the progress.

2.2. SYMBOLISM

Symbolism is a literary technique in which an object, action, or idea represents a deeper meaning beyond its literal sense. Writers use symbolism to help readers understand complex ideas by connecting them to familiar things.

Even in the century before Huxley, consumerism, advertising, and propaganda were becoming powerful forces in everyday life. By the twentieth century, the time Huxley lived in, consumerism had grown into something much stronger and more complex. Mass production became common, making products cheaper and faster to produce. However, if a product was well made and long-lasting, people would not need to replace it often. To keep people buying, products had to be made faster and cheaper, but also with lower quality so they would not last as long. Usage of cheap materials lowered prices and made products affordable even for low-income families. Additionally, new versions of products were constantly released and created a desire to purchase the latest one. People do not know where products come from or even who made them. When something is cheap compared to its rivals it encourages constant purchase of the product.

Huxley imagined the extreme form of consumerism. He imagined something made only to create happiness with no other purpose. This is the creation of *soma*. Soma is a drug given to every citizen for free in World State including both higher and lower castes. Soma is seen as the easiest route to reach perfect happiness. Some feelings like sadness, anger or stress being

experiences can be overcome by taking soma easily. People are designed to be addicted to soma. When there is even a small controversy in a crowd, machines are set to spray soma into the air to ease the situation. By keeping people relaxed and emotionally numb, soma help maintain peace and order. Each dose brings pleasure as momentary excitement when a purchase has been made.

The pleasure we get from buying something is usually hidden behind packaging and the advertisement in real world. Products are presented as need and tools. However, usually their one purpose is to make people feel satisfied and happy momentarily. This situation keeps buyers coming back. This whole situation has turned into a loop where consumers keep consuming and producers producing. Huxley removes this disguise in *Brave New World*. Instead of hiding happiness behind products, he presents it openly through soma. Soma is advertised for what it truly is: a small dose of bliss, given for free. In this way, *soma* symbolizes every small purchase and the brief happiness that comes with it. Through soma, Huxley cleverly criticizes the highly consumer driven society of his time.

People in the World State are always able to reach perfect happiness without making any effort. They do not have to work for it, sacrifice anything, or even think about it. Happiness comes in the form of a free drug provided by the State, and it appears to cost nothing. However, even though soma is given freely and encouraged by the government, everything else connected to consumerism in this society is designed to be extremely costly.

“We condition the masses to hate the country,’ concluded the Director. ‘But simultaneously we conditioned them to love all country sports.’ At the same time, we see to it that all country sports shall entail the use of elaborate apparatus. So that they consume manufactured articles as well as transport.” (Huxley, pages 18-19)

The people of the World State are also conditioned to consume everyday luxuries in excess and without care. Many of these luxuries are unfamiliar to us. With advanced technology, they have perfume flowing from taps, movies called “*feelies*” that allow people to sense touch and smell, and flying vehicles called “*taxicopters*,” among many others. However, the system works in the same way: people are constantly encouraged to want more and to keep consuming.

They are also taught never to repair what they own, even if it is only slightly damaged. Their motto is, “The more stitches, the less riches.” Instead of fixing things, they throw them away and buy new ones immediately. This is part of their conditioning.

In every aspect of life, they are trained to consume as much as possible. An example is Bernard’s behaviour of taking soma tablets. He consumes excessively because that is what he has been taught to do

“Bernard swallowed four tablets of soma at a gulp, turned on the radio and television and began to undress” (Huxley, 80).

People in the World State are also encouraged to consume sexuality excessively. Polyamory is the only accepted type of relationship. The slogan “*Everyone belongs to everyone else*” applies in sexual relations also. There is “*orgy-porgy*” in the novel. It is a ritual where people gather, take soma together, and then have group sex. Sex in this society is not private or emotional; it is a shared, communal activity. This example shows personal life does not exist in the World State. Every experience is meant to be shared with others. From a young age, people are taught that doing everything together is the happiest and most proper way to live. When nothing is private, society becomes easier to manage and control. Living communally reduces uncertainty and helps the State maintain perfect order.

The examples mentioned shows the blind and endless consumerism of citizens. Huxley also highlights the importance of consumerism on economy of the World State. Thus, in the novel we see that both production and control are entirely in the hands of the State. As a result, people are no longer seen as individuals but as parts of a perfectly working system, valued only for how well they function. Feelings, individuality, and emotional depth are deliberately removed because they threaten the stability of the State.

3. CONCLUSION

The society Huxley imagined is very different from the reality of his time. Even in the twenty first century, we are still not as advanced as the society shown in *Brave New World*. However, despite how strange this world seems, there are still clear similarities to our own. Many ideas are familiar but taken to much greater extremes. Although Huxley's novel is dystopian, we sometimes experience technology and consumerism in exaggerated ways today, even if not to such extreme levels.

Basic human characteristics are removed to maintain peace and order in the society. Some people believe that giving up humanity is a fair price to pay for constant peace and happiness while some disagree. However, this loss seems troubling from a humanitarian perspective. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but a world without struggle, emotion, and choice risks losing its meaning.

"You can't make tragedies without social instability. The world is stable now. People are happy... they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there's soma." (Huxley, page 194)

John the Savage, who has read Othello and grown-up enjoying Shakespeare's works, is not impressed by the civilized world he encounters. He prefers the painful yet emotional world of

Shakespeare. Shakespeare's plays are not like "feelies"; they do not include smells or physical sensations. Yet John values them more because, even though they are made only of words, they are full of soul. They express real human emotions that speak directly to the reader and feel relatable and powerful.

Mustapha Mond explains that every change and strong emotion is seen as a threat to society. Human emotions are unstable and constantly changing. A perfectly calm and controlled society cannot exist if people are allowed to feel deeply. For this reason, emotions are removed to achieve stability and peace.

However, this advanced and controlled society is ultimately not desirable. Nearly a century has passed since the publication of *Brave New World* and today's world is still very different from the World State. This shows that such a society is not something people truly want. A character, Mustapha Mond understands both the old world and the new and explains this idea clearly.

"Actual happiness always looks pretty squalid in comparison with the overcompensations for misery... [it has] none of the picturesqueness of a struggle with temptation, or a fatal overthrow by passion or doubt." (Huxley, page 195)

We, human beings value our individuality, emotions, and personal space too much to accept such a future. In World State peace and happiness are achieved through sacrificing the innate humanity and creating a society that is calm, but calmness is caused by dehumanization.

Huxley uses satire and symbolism to show that this perfect world created in this dystopia is a nightmare. By mocking family values and using soma as a symbol of easy happiness he represents his fears about the possible future. These literary techniques help the reader understand that a society based only consumerism and technology has lost its soul and ability to sustain itself.

In the World State the real problem is that people cannot decide how to feel or control their feelings individually. The inability of humans to control their feelings is a sign of dehumanization in *Brave New World*, as feelings are the most basic parts of a human being. The government uses technology to maintain order and to ensure everyone's happiness.

However, happiness and pleasure in the novel are not real feelings such that they are forced by government to maintain peace and order in the society. John the Savage shows that being a real human includes both happiness and sadness. People in the novel are limited in experiencing any negative feeling or any struggle. By removing the negative sides of emotions, the World State turns its citizens into a part of a machine. These people are stable and calm but they are no longer truly alive, because they have no control over their feelings and decisions.

In conclusion, Huxley's worries about the rapid progress of his time led him to imagine an extremely advanced society. He pushed these developments to their limits and created a world that contains very little humanity. This imagined society may have helped him explore his fears, showing that "perfect" progress leaves little room for flawed human nature. Humanity and progress may only exist together in balance, not in extreme forms. Huxley's *Brave New World* reminds us that progress without humanity is not worth pursuing and that not all progress is as lovely as it appears.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "Brave New World.", *Open Library*, Vintage Classics, 1 Jan. 1932, openlibrary.org/isbn/9780099518471. Accessed 16 May. 2025.
- Miller, D. D. (2011). " Brave New World" and the Threat of Technological Growth. *Inquiries Journal*, 3(04). Accessed 4 July. 2025.
- Mohammadi, A. The Culture Industry And Loss Of Individuality In Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. *ADVANCES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES*, 7. Accessed 16 July 2025.
- Zhamurashvili, L. (2014). Dehumanized Society in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. *Humanities and Social Sciences Review*, 3(2), 139-154. Accessed 17 May. 2025.