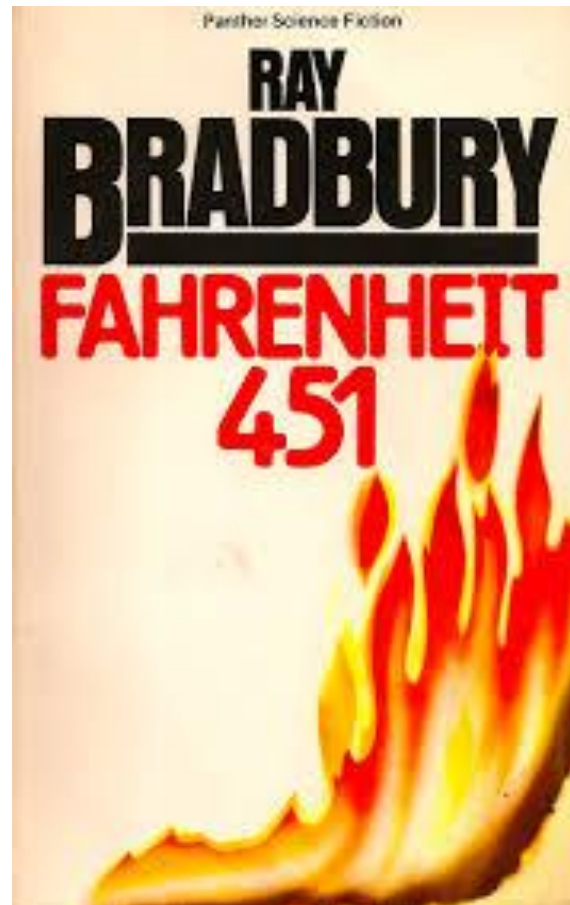
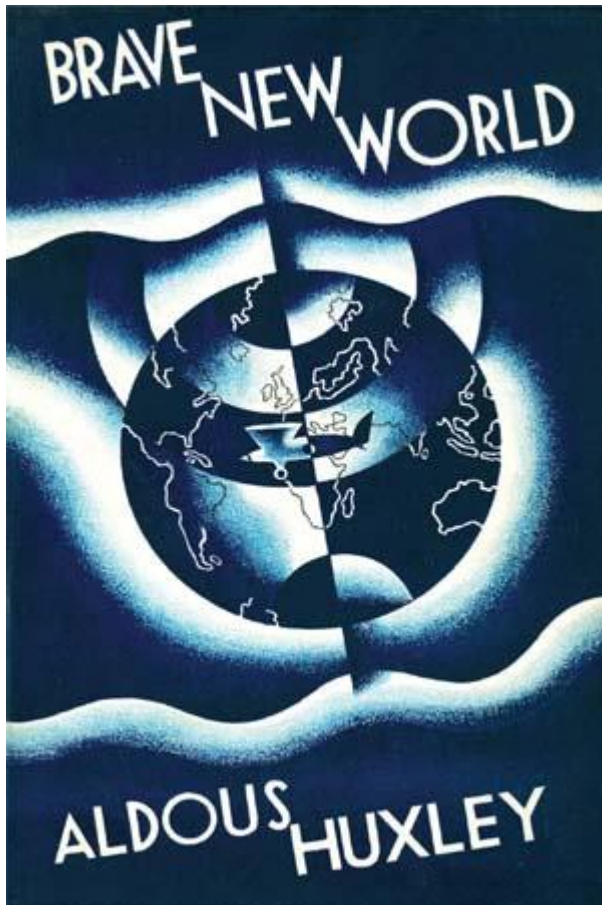


## Dystopian Fiction in the English Language Classroom

Discusses the reasons and ways to teach dystopian fiction in the upper grades of secondary schools in the Netherlands by focusing on *Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley) and *Fahrenheit 451* (Ray Bradbury).



By F.G. van Elzaker

3301893

MA Education & Communication, English

Utrecht University

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First Reader: Paul Franssen

Second Reader: Barnita Bagchi

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## Introduction

As an avid reader and future teacher of English, I have always seen it as a personal goal to show young people how amazing literature can be. To me, teaching literature is about teaching students about themselves, and I hope to become the kind of teacher who succeeds at making students realise how they are great human beings, while also letting them find out how reading can be pleasurable. I have come across many sources on teaching literature, but I have found that most of them are either too focused on meeting government standards, or are so idealistic or even utopic, that their methods seem impossible for anything other than teaching tiny groups of highly motivated students. However, teachers all over the Netherlands are working hard every day to meet students' needs. Both the authors of *Literatuur & Fictie*,<sup>1</sup> and Marc Verboord, in his article "Leesplezier als sleutel tot succesvol literatuuronderwijs?",<sup>2</sup> have analysed the way literature is taught in the Netherlands and have identified a shift towards a more student-focused approach. Even though this shift is already happening and has become visible, there is still a lack of practical sources on the topic. While learning to connect theory to practice is a part of most teaching degrees, it is not common to find sources where this link is explained and can be used as both a practical and an academic source. For new teachers, it is important to not only learn about theoretical approaches to teaching their subject, but also know how to incorporate this theory into their own lessons. With the pressure on teachers to constantly innovate and improve themselves and their lessons, while spending hours a day

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<sup>1</sup> Ilse Bolscher and Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling, *Literatuur En Fictie: Een Didactische Handreiking Voor Het Voortgezet Onderwijs* (Leidschendam: Biblion Uitgeverij, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Marc Verboord, "Leesplezier als sleutel tot succesvol literatuuronderwijs?," *Leescultuur onder vuur* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2006), 35-51.

teaching, grading papers, and holding meetings, it is a relief to find a way to develop which guides you in the right direction and is theoretically underpinned.

Even though the idea of connecting theoretical approaches to a practical lesson series is focused on helping teachers, the underlying goal of this thesis is to help students reach their potential while learning about literature. Their progress and development are in the foreground of this thesis. A few things I have noticed when working with young people is that literature is an intimidating concept to them, and that even though structure and clarity are important, they do not like to be told what to do. This is why I have thought about ways to introduce them to literature, and ways to ensure they understand the joys of reading without feeling that they are following their teacher's orders. To me personally, literature, like other forms of art, inspires me to take a critical look at myself, the world, and the people around me. I want students to feel the same way, but understand that it is not a realistic expectation that they will be as interested in literature as an English Language & Culture graduate. Because of this, I think it is a priority to introduce students to literature that appeals to them and motivates them to develop, as opposed to focusing on intimidating canonical works or dry literary history. Since I have experienced dystopian fiction as a genre which can be easily accessible, both language and content-wise, while usually containing clear messages to its readers, I thought it could be the key to reaching my goals. In "The Appeal of Cult Fiction",<sup>3</sup> Kelly Fann mentions how several works of the genre "speak to the reader in a way that no other book has done before, almost as if the author wrote the book in question specifically for the reader".<sup>4</sup> This powerful feeling, induced by literature, can motivate students to not only continue reading with pleasure, but

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<sup>3</sup> Kelly Fann, "Tapping into the Appeal of Cult Fiction," *Reader's Advisory* 51.1 (2011), 15-18.

<sup>4</sup> Fann, 16.

also help them in the adolescent stages of identity formation. In *Psychology in Education*, Anita Woolfolk discusses how teachers can offer guidance to young adults shaping their identity by offering them models of society from literature.<sup>5</sup>

In order to find out whether dystopian fiction is a suitable genre for the English language classroom and the goals I have set for the target group, I propose the following research question: *Is dystopian fiction suitable literature for young people, and if so, how can it be used in English literary education in Dutch schools?* With the intention of answering this question, I have also raised three sub-questions:

1. *How is literary education currently set up in the Netherlands, and how is English literature situated within it?*
2. *Which works of dystopian fiction are most suitable for young people within the setting of the English language classroom, and why?*
3. *How can these novels be taught with a focus on students' literary development?*

As mentioned previously, my aim was to create a link between current theory and practice in order to let teachers focus on actual teaching. I have done this by first establishing an outline of the current system of (English) literary education in the Netherlands (Chapter 1). This was necessary in order to create a basis for my findings and to justify choices made in the practical part of my thesis. In Chapter 2, I begin by introducing the dystopian genre, explain why it relates to the target group, and propose and analyse two specific novels: *Brave New World* by

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<sup>5</sup> Woolfolk, Anita, Malcolm Hughes, and Vivienne Walkup. *Psychology in Education*. (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2013), 18.

Aldous Huxley<sup>6</sup> and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury.<sup>7</sup> Even though the first two sections are based on academic sources, the actual choice of works is based on a combination of knowledge taken from previous readings, an analysis of their suitability as described and my personal preference. This chapter can be seen as a portrayal of the process a teacher like me goes through when linking theory to practice, and explains different reasons to opt for teaching dystopian fiction and the two suggested works specifically, while also taking into account possible arguments against these novels. After outlining current systems and steps to be taken in literary education, as well as arguing in favour of teaching dystopian fiction, chapter 3 is completely dedicated to the practical aspect of this thesis. Combining the experiences of my internships in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, as well as my teacher training at Utrecht University, I have developed a lesson series that can be adapted to suit students' needs by any teacher. Since both my training and internships were focused on the upper grades of secondary school and/or native speakers, these lesson series are created for this target group, although I am keen to see the lessons adjusted to a wider range of students.

Forming and answering these sub-questions would not be possible without consulting a selection of sources, which can roughly be divided into five categories: Literature on general literary education, past and current literary education in the Netherlands, adolescent psychology, the utopian genre, and teaching practice. A number of these sources are currently used in the teacher training programme of Utrecht University. In the first category, "A Debate on Literature as a teaching material in FLT" by Ferdows Aghagolzadeh, is a paper arguing that

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<sup>6</sup> Huxley, Aldous, Margaret Atwood, and David Bradshaw. *Brave New World*. (London: Vintage, 2007). First Published 1932.

<sup>7</sup> Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. (London: HarperVoyager, 2008) First published 1954.

the authenticity of literature helps students think critically, develop their language skills, and improves their cultural understanding.<sup>8</sup> Murat Hişmanoğlu wrote “Teaching English Through Literature” and gives some practical tips on the topic.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Mohammed Khatib proposes several teaching methods and approaches to teaching literature in his paper “Literature in ESL/EFL Classroom”.<sup>10</sup> Khatib also wrote “Why & Why Not Literature: A Task-Based Approach to Teaching Literature.” In this article, he explains why and how literature should be incorporated into foreign language teaching.<sup>11</sup> S. Stern also speaks in favour of incorporating literature in foreign language teaching, in her article “An Integrated Approach to Literature in ESL / EFL”.<sup>12</sup> Besides these articles with similar arguments, I have also read “The canon in the classroom: students’ experiences of texts from other times” by Mark Pike, on the arguments for and against a literature curriculum based around canonical works at secondary schools in the United Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> Reading about the importance of literature in the foreign language classroom helped me to understand that literature helps students develop their language skills as well as their cognitive skills. It showed me that integrating literature into language lessons (and the other way around) is beneficial for students since it offers them authentic and interesting material, while it also encourages them to develop their critical thinking. In order to

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<sup>8</sup> Ferdows Aghagolzadeh, & Farzaneh Tajabadi, "A Debate on Literature as a Teaching Material in FLT," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3.1 (2012): 205-210.

<sup>9</sup> Murat Hişmanoğlu. "Teaching English Through Literature," *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, April 1.1 (2005): 53-66.

<sup>10</sup> Mohammad Khatib, Ali Derakhshan, and Saeed Rezaei, "Literature in EFL/ESL Classroom," *English Language Teaching*, March 4.1 (2011): 201-08.

<sup>11</sup> Mohammad Khatib, Ali Derakhshan, and Saeed Rezaei, "Why & Why Not Literature: A Task-Based Approach to Teaching Literature," *International Journal of English Linguistics*, March 1.1 (2011): 213-18.

<sup>12</sup> Stern, S., "An Integrated Approach to Literature in ESL / EFL," *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, ed. M. Murcia (Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> Mark Pike, "The Canon in the Classroom: Students' Experiences of Texts from Other times," *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 35.3 (2003): 355-70.

approach this topic in my thesis, it was of course important to also focus on literature teaching in the Netherlands specifically.

The most helpful source of this second category, past and current literary education in the Netherlands, has been *Literatuur & Fictie* by Ilse Bolscher et. al.,<sup>14</sup> a book that is incredibly useful for new teachers as it describes the current curriculum of literary education in Dutch secondary schools, taking into account literature lessons within the foreign languages and Dutch. Besides outlining the current system, the authors also offer methods to teach –mostly Dutch- literature. Since many of the sources on literature teaching in the Netherlands only discuss Dutch literature, they have been useful as background reading but were difficult to incorporate otherwise. Among others, these included “Lezers, literatuur en literatuurlessen: reader response criticism in de literatuurlessen Nederlands” by J. A. G. Dirksen, in which his research shows how a focus on individual student development motivated students.<sup>15</sup> Cor Geljon describes the results of testing several literature teaching methods in Dutch classrooms in his article “Identificerende en Tekstbestuderende lesmethoden”.<sup>16</sup> Theo Witte wrote “Docentoordelen over leesdossieropdrachten”, which can only be described as a collection of opinions on different exercises and curriculum decisions within Dutch.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, a collection of articles by teaching experts, “Leescultuur onder Vuur”, edited by Koen Hilberdink, discusses how and why students should be confronted with literature, with a focus on Dutch literature

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<sup>14</sup> Ilse Bolscher and Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling, *Literatuur En Fictie : Een Didactische Handreiking Voor Het Voortgezet Onderwijs*. (Leidschendam: Biblion Uitgeverij, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> J. A. G. Dirksen, *Lezers, literatuur en literatuurlessen : Reader response criticism in de literatuurlessen Nederlands*. (Diss. Universiteit Nijmegen, 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Cor Geljon en D. H. Schram, “Identificerende en tekstbestuderende lesmethoden. Een vergelijkend empirisch onderzoek,” *Literatuur in functie. Empirische literatuurwetenschap in didactische perspectief* (Houten: Bohn Stafleu, Van Loghum, 1990), 203-229.

<sup>17</sup> Theo Witte, “Docentoordelen over leesdossieropdrachten,” *Het oog van de meester* (Delft: Eburon Uitgeverij B.V., 2008).



lessons. They also describe current situations and why there may be a need for a so-called literary intervention.<sup>18</sup> One of these, “Het leesrepertoire van leerlingen in het secundair onderwijs, 1962-2005” by Marc Verboord,<sup>19</sup> also identified the shift in literature teaching described in *Literatuur & Fictie*. Verboord also collaborated with Kees van Rees to write “Literary education curriculum and institutional contexts: Textbook content and teachers’ textbook usage in Dutch literary education, 1968–2000.” This article examines how curriculum content in secondary education has developed, and whether teachers focus on their own wishes or those of the students.<sup>20</sup> Two other books used in the Utrecht University teacher training programme are *Didactiek van het vreemdetalenonderwijs* by Erik Kwakernaak<sup>21</sup> and *Moderne vreemde talen in de onderbouw* by Francis Staatsen.<sup>22</sup> Both of these are focused on all aspects of foreign language teaching in Dutch secondary schools and unfortunately only have small sections dedicated to literature teaching. Two other useful sources on Dutch education were the 2007 and 2012 versions of “Handreiking schoolexamen moderne vreemde talen havo/vwo” by Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling, the independent national institute for Curriculum Development in the Netherlands.<sup>23</sup> In these, the government standards for secondary schools are discussed and explained by educational experts. Another source which discusses literature

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<sup>18</sup> Koen Hilberdink and Suzanne Wagenaar, *Leescultuur Onder Vuur*, Publicaties Van De Raad Voor Geesteswetenschappen. Vol. 10. (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie Van Wetenschappen, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Marc Verboord, “Het leesrepertoire van leerlingen in het secundair onderwijs, 1962-2005. De literatuurlijst Nederlands als culturele classificatie.” *Sociologie*, 2 (2006): 386-415.

<sup>20</sup> Marc Verboord and Kees van Rees, “Literary education curriculum and institutional contexts. Textbook content and teachers’ textbook usage in Dutch literary education, 1968–2000,” *Poetics. Journal of Empirical Research on Culture, the Media and the Arts*, 37.1 (2009), 74-97.

<sup>21</sup> Erik Kwakernaak, *Didactiek Van Het Vreemdetalenonderwijs* (Bussum: Coutinho, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Francis Staatsen, Sonja Heebing, and Edy van. Renselaar, *Moderne Vreemde Talen in De Onderbouw* (Bussum: Coutinho, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling, *Handreiking schoolexamen modern e vreemde talen havo/vwo* (Enschede: SLO, March 2007); Stichting Leerplanontwikkeling. *Handreiking schoolexamen modern e vreemde talen havo/vwo* (Enschede: SLO, January 2012).

teaching within the English language classroom is the book *English in the Netherlands* by F. A. Wilhelm.<sup>24</sup> This work described the development of English language teaching in the Netherlands between 1800 and 1920 and gives an interesting insight into the progress literature teaching has made within the subject. Moving away from actual education, and towards the results of literary education, Wim Knulst and Gerbert Kraaykamp wrote the article "Trends in Leisure Reading. Forty years of research on reading in the Netherlands"<sup>25</sup> about leisure reading in the Netherlands, in which they give numerous reasons for a decrease in time spent on reading for pleasure. Similarly, E. van Schooten et. al. wrote an article describing their longitudinal research in the Netherlands on the "Development of attitude toward reading adolescent literature and literary reading behavior".<sup>26</sup> They say the amount of literary education a student receives influences reading attitudes positively and also discuss parental guidance, friendships, and home situations as possible factors.

Of course a pleasure in reading and motivation for literary education is based on more than influences from a student's surroundings. This is why Anita Woolfolk's *Psychology in Education*<sup>27</sup> was incredibly useful. In her book, she provides practical information, discusses case studies, and presents a vast number of theories on all aspects of young adults and teaching besides the actual subject related matter. Her chapters on identity formation and student behaviour proved most helpful in understanding the key aspects of adolescent needs.

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<sup>24</sup> Frans Wilhelm, *English in the Netherlands: A History of Foreign Language Teaching 1800-1920: With a Bibliography of Textbooks*. (Utrecht: Gopher, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Wim Knulst and Gerbert Kraaykamp, "Trends in Leisure Reading: Forty Years of Research on Reading in the Netherlands," *Poetics* 26.1 (1998): 21-41.

<sup>26</sup> E. van Schooten, K. de Glopper, and R. D. Stoel, "Development of Attitude toward Reading Adolescent Literature and Literary Reading Behavior," *Poetics* 32.5 (2004): 343-86.

<sup>27</sup> Anita Woolfolk, Malcolm Hughes, and Vivienne Walkup, *Psychology in Education* (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2013).

Even though Kelly Fann's "Tapping into the Appeal of Cult Fiction"<sup>28</sup> is not focused on adolescent psychology, it does discuss a number of reasons why young adults are attracted to certain books. This focus on the age group and its psychological development clarifies how important it is for students to be offered a wide range of material, providing a vast amount of ideologies, role models, and narratives, therewith contributing to their progression into adult life. Specifically useful while researching this age group was the book *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*.<sup>29</sup> Even though this text is focused specifically on young adult literature as a genre, it still provides helpful insights into the needs of the age group and enabled me to visualise the connections between adolescent behaviour and literature.

However, Fann's analysis of cult fiction and works in the utopian genre in the same article also clarifies why these books appeal to so many people besides adolescents, describing the many key factors that make a book popular or "life-changing".<sup>30</sup> April Spisak writes about the definitions and appeals of dystopian fiction for young adults in her article "What makes a good dystopian novel?",<sup>31</sup> while also providing descriptions of numerous young adult dystopian works. "A Utopic Reflection" by Marcus Bussey<sup>32</sup> is a compilation of quotes and descriptions of different utopian works to explain the genre and its appeal to adolescents and adults alike. Dick Schram also collaborated with Jemeljan Hakemulder to write about the effect of different kinds

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<sup>28</sup> Kelly Fann, "Tapping into the Appeal of Cult Fiction," *Reader's Advisory*. 51.1 (2011): 15-18.

<sup>29</sup> Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan, *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Fann, 15.

<sup>31</sup> April Spisak, "What Makes a Good YA Dystopian Novel?," *Horn Book Magazine* May/June 88.3 (2012): 55-60.

<sup>32</sup> Marcus Bussey, "A Utopic Reflection," *Social Alternatives* 28.03 (2009): 57-59.

of literature on its readers in their article "The ethische werking van verhalende fictie",<sup>33</sup> describing how values can be transferred through the reading of literature. Marla Harris describes works with dystopian elements in her article "Contemporary Ghost Stories: Cyberspace in Fiction for Children and Young Adults"<sup>34</sup> and analyses the effect and messages of these stories. Most information on the history and definitions of the utopian genre came from *The Utopia Reader*, a collection of utopian writing edited by Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent.<sup>35</sup> These sources were valuable in establishing definitions of the utopian genre, as well as clearly outlining its merits and benefits. These were then simple to use as arguments in favour of teaching dystopian literature to adolescents, as well as provide inspiration for the practical aspect of this.

Even though most sources on literary education in the Netherlands and elsewhere already provided an array of practical ways to teach literature, it was important to also consult *CLIL Skills* by Liz Dale et. al..<sup>36</sup> This book is meant to explain Content and Language Integrated Learning for bilingual schools, but can be used as a valuable practical guide to teaching any subject, since it provides tools on differentiation, multiple intelligences, and co-operative learning. Directly related to literature is Rosa W. Konder's article "On problems concerning the teaching of literature",<sup>37</sup> which provides practical hands-on information for new teachers who have just started teaching literature. Even though neither of these sources could be used in the

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<sup>33</sup> Dick Schram and Jemeljan Hakemulder, "De ethische werking van verhalende fictie," *De lezer als Burger*. Kampen, Kok Agora (1994): 110-23.

<sup>34</sup> Marla Harris, "Contemporary Ghost Stories: Cyberspace In Fiction For Children And Young Adults," *Children's Literature In Education* 36.2 (2005): 111-128.

<sup>35</sup> Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader* (New York: New York UP, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> Liz Dale, Wibo Van Der. Es, and Rosie Tanner, *CLIL Skills* (Leiden: Expertisecentrum Mvt, ICLON, Universiteit Leiden, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Rosa W Konder, "On Problems concerning the Teaching of Literature," *Ilha Do Desterro* (2008): 7-14.

classroom directly, they did help in establishing assignments, thinking of ways to teach a topic, and problems that may occur.

Although the majority of my research is based on these sources, I have also taught parts of the lesson series at an International School in the Netherlands. While this thesis was still a work in progress, I tried out a few initial ideas about teaching dystopian fiction at this school. Being able to bring my theories to practice turned out to be a great way to try out the methods I have developed, receive students' feedback and gather inspiration to continue working on this thesis. I believe this was an incredibly important part of the initial stages of my thesis, as it immediately showed both weaknesses and strengths of my goals and ideas and showed me reactions of the age group towards this specific type of fiction as well as my teaching style.

With this project, I hope to have achieved a thorough analysis of the suitability of dystopian fiction for young adults, and clear instructions for fellow teachers who wish to teach the genre in the Netherlands. Even though it is clear that there are many sources on teaching literature in secondary schools, all from different perspectives, there is no information specifically about teaching dystopian fiction as a part of literary education. This will make my work a unique addition to current literature for teachers in the field of English, providing motives as well as methods.



*How is literary education currently set up in the Netherlands, and how is English literature situated within it?*

In order to answer the research question, it is necessary to build a solid theoretical basis by answering the first sub-question. This question focuses on the current status of literature, and more specifically dystopian literature, within the English language classroom in Dutch schools. This will be described elaborately in this chapter, but in short, literature is an important part of Dutch secondary education, a (part of a) subject every student will have to take. Schools have a choice to either make their literary education a part of lessons in Dutch and the modern foreign languages departments, or teach it as a separate subject.<sup>38</sup> It is usually taught as a combination of literary history, the reading of select literary works (some chosen by teachers, most by students), the writing of reports on these works and doing a number of assignments. An oral examination is usually held to determine students' final grades for the literature component of their degree. The Dutch secondary education standards<sup>39</sup> for literature are as follows:

Standard 7: The candidate is able to form an opinion and discuss a personal reading experience of at least three literary texts.<sup>40</sup> (havo/vwo)

Standard 8: The candidate is able to recognise and distinguish different kinds of texts,

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<sup>38</sup> Dick Meijer and Daniela Fasoglio, *Handreiking schoolexamen modern vreemde talen havo/vwo* (Enschede: SLO, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> Dutch: eindtermen

<sup>40</sup> Dutch: "De kandidaat kan beargumenteerd verslag uitbrengen van zijn leeservaringen met ten minste drie literaire werken."

and is able to use literary terms while interpreting literary texts.<sup>41</sup> (vwo)

Standard 9: The candidate is able to give an overview of the main points of literary history, and is able to place the read texts within their historical context.<sup>42</sup> (vwo)

This forms the basis of literary education in the Netherlands, and these standards need to have been met when a student graduates. They are leading when forming a literary curriculum.

Schools are able to choose whether they want to teach the literary component as a separate subject or as a part of the languages classes.<sup>43</sup> There are a number of arguments for and against either of these. Treating literature as a separate subject enables both students and teacher to see it as a separate part of the education provided at school, meaning it is easier to focus on literature and its standards when there are separate hours, teachers and schedules connected to it. However, this would require either specialised teachers capable of taking on every language's literary canon, or a complex schedule with teachers coming in from all departments. Besides that, it would also be a shame to miss out on a great chance to use literature as a tool of language acquisition in the modern foreign languages classes. In his article "Teaching English through Literature",<sup>44</sup> Murat Hişmanoğlu argues that there are four main reasons to use literature in the language classroom. The first reason for this is that literature can serve as authentic material, offering "actual language samples of real life / real life like settings".<sup>45</sup>

Letting students read material meant for native speakers, gives them a chance to "become

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<sup>41</sup> Dutch: "De kandidaat kan literaire tekstsoorten herkennen en onderscheiden, en literaire begrippen hanteren in de interpretatie van literaire teksten."

<sup>42</sup> Dutch: "De kandidaat kan een overzicht geven van de hoofdlijnen van de literatuurgeschiedenis en de gelezen literaire werken plaatsen in dit historischperspectief."

<sup>43</sup> Handreiking, 2007

<sup>44</sup> Murat Hişmanoğlu, "Teaching English Through Literature," *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* Vol.1, No.1, April (2005).

<sup>45</sup> Hişmanoğlu, 54.



familiar with many different linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings”.<sup>46</sup> It is also argued that literature can act as a window to another culture, as a “colorful created world can quickly help the foreign learner to feel for the codes and preoccupations that shape a real society through visual literacy of semiotics”.<sup>47</sup> The author also speaks of language enrichment, describing how “Students become familiar with many features of the written language, reading a substantial and contextualized body of text. They learn about the syntax and discourse functions of sentences, the variety of possible structures, the different ways of connecting ideas, which develop and enrich their own writing skills”.<sup>48</sup> The fourth reason is about motivating students in the language classroom, as reading an engaging literary text is often more appealing to a student than studying a grammatical concept. Through literature, language learning will be more interesting to them.<sup>49</sup> Overall, it is clear that literature is beneficial to language acquisition. However, teaching literature in the language classroom also means it is important to distinguish when literature is used as an aid in language acquisition and when it is taught with an actual focus on literary education, as the latter remains an individual component in the Dutch secondary education standards that needs to be met. The lesson series of chapter 3 aims to do both, with components of language acquisition and production, as well as a clear focus on literature and its history.

According to Bolscher et al., writers of *Literatuur & Fictie*, a shift has been taking place in the last decades: Literary education in the Netherlands is moving away from the traditional way of literature teaching to a more individualistic approach, based on each student’s wishes and

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<sup>46</sup> Hişmanoğlu, 54.

<sup>47</sup> Hişmanoğlu, 54.

<sup>48</sup> Hişmanoğlu, 55.

<sup>49</sup> Hişmanoğlu, 55.

development. This also generates the need for teachers who focus on giving guidance instead of knowledge. Previously, the literature lesson was often based on providing students with information, with the teacher as the holder of all knowledge. Students were told what they needed to know about the facts of the different important literary works and received insights into the true interpretation of what the authors wanted to convey. With a new focus on the individual experience of literature reading, however, it is becoming increasingly important how a student feels and thinks after reading a book. Because of this, the role of the literature teacher has changed from a literature encyclopaedia into a kind of discussion leader, still providing the students with interesting insights and guiding them through but never dominating the conversation about literature.<sup>50</sup> This creates an atmosphere where a students' personal reading developments and enjoyment are more important than their factual knowledge of books and genres, as chosen by their teachers.

Following from this, Bolscher et al. also argue that a common goal of all literature teachers should not be to have students read the required number of books, but to let students leave school after graduation feeling that reading is something to do for fun and their own personal enrichment. Because of this, they argue that every contemporary literature teacher should help their students focus on their personal development as readers and, hopefully, literature lovers.<sup>51</sup> With the guidance of these teachers, students are encouraged to develop their own taste in literature, by getting to know multiple genres and kinds of texts through their literature lessons. These lessons are the main platform to show students what literature can mean to them, and to help them find enjoyment in reading. In his article "Leesplezier als

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<sup>50</sup> Bolscher, 204.

<sup>51</sup> Bolscher, 169-170.

sleutel tot succesvol literatuuronderwijs?”, Marc Verboord mentions that literature and language teachers in the Netherlands agree that literary education needs a focus on a student’s personal development as opposed to the reading of canonical works.<sup>52</sup> He also talks about empirical research on the differences in literary enjoyment after being taught with a traditional and/or student-focused approach. This was done at 35 different schools, covering 85 teachers and 562 students. The post-school reading hours were measured in 2000, while the literature lessons were taught between 1975 and 1998. The research shows a significant difference between readers who were taught by student-focused teachers and readers who were taught by more traditional literature teachers. The latter group read 26% less than the first group.<sup>53</sup> In order to establish a focus on the individual student, Verboord proposes four strategies: 1. Coming up with learning objectives focused on personal development, 2. Making sure texts and work formats correspond with student needs and wishes, 3. Offering group discussions, and 4. Moving away from teaching canonical literature.<sup>54</sup> While both Verboord and Bolscher et. al. have identified a shift towards a more individualistic approach to literature teaching, and argue in favour of creating literary enjoyment in students, their ideas remain rather abstract. In chapter 3, I will outline what I believe is a way to teach literature that is focused on students, their development, and their pleasure. This practical guide will represent a way to teach literature following the theories and goals described by Bolscher et. al..

Even though it is clear that literary enjoyment has a basis in literary education, and that more teachers than ever see this as a goal of their teaching, it is still important for both

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<sup>52</sup> Marc Verboord, *Leescultuur onder Vuur: Zes voordrachten over geletterdheid*. ed. Koen Hilberdink and Suzanne Wagenaar (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2006), 35-6.

<sup>53</sup> Verboord, 36-41.

<sup>54</sup> Verboord, 38.

teachers and students to keep in mind the standards set by the Dutch government. These still dictate the way literature is taught, and are therefore a vital part of each literature lesson taught on the road to graduation. As these standards help create the curriculum, their influence can also be seen in the way students are supposed to read and produce their own work for their literature lessons. Bolscher et al. explain the way literature reading works during the upper grades of Dutch secondary schools as follows: Students are usually expected to keep a reading file<sup>55</sup> in which they store their reading reports,<sup>56</sup> close-reading assignments,<sup>57</sup> and anything else their teachers may want them to add to the file. For each selected work, a student is supposed to spend about 10 hours reading a text (usually a novel), writing the report and doing the close-reading assignment,<sup>58</sup> a rather limited timeframe for an entire work of literature. A reading report can be defined as a combination of the following: a summary of the text, a description of the reading experience, and an evaluation of the text.<sup>59</sup> A close-reading assignment is meant to deepen students' understanding of the literature, and let them discover aspects of the text they had not noticed previously.<sup>60</sup> These assignments can be focused on text styles, the reader experience, characters, creativity, or historical/literary backgrounds, among others. They are meant to show both teachers and students how a student is developing.<sup>61</sup> Bolscher et al. argue that these close-reading assignments are more challenging and useful than reading reports for a student's literary development, and are in favour of focusing on these

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<sup>55</sup> Dutch: leesdossier

<sup>56</sup> Dutch: leesverslag

<sup>57</sup> Dutch: verdiepingsopdracht

<sup>58</sup> Bolscher, 168.

<sup>59</sup> Bolscher, 176.

<sup>60</sup> Bolscher, 200.

<sup>61</sup> Bolscher, 202.

assignments.<sup>62</sup> The final project of the lesson series described in chapter 3 can be seen as an elaborate close-reading assignment.

Every school has the ability to either let students read set works of literature, let them choose from a list, let them be completely free in choosing what they want to read, or any combination thereof.<sup>63</sup> Teachers need to think about what they want students to take away from the literature lessons. This means that teachers with a student-focused approach usually would not tell students which books to read. However, it is still important to make sure students do not read texts that are too simple or too challenging, as this would either halt their development or demotivate them. Bolscher et al. explain that on a practical level, this means that the teacher should help students read works that are slightly above their level, in order for them to develop the ability to read increasingly challenging texts.<sup>64</sup> This is specified further by Francis Staatsen, who mentions that these texts need to be slightly more challenging in vocabulary used, layout, difficult topics, or information that is increasingly implicit.<sup>65</sup> As one way to ensure that a text is at the right input level, it is useful to refer to the Common European Framework of References, “a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages”.<sup>66</sup> It offers descriptors of different language levels to achieve in the fields of reading, listening, writing and speaking. Within the literature classroom, it can be used to assess student levels as well as text levels, although most language teachers seem to have a natural knack for understanding which texts are suitable for their students.

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<sup>62</sup> Bolscher, 203.

<sup>63</sup> Bolscher, 192.

<sup>64</sup> Bolscher, 169.

<sup>65</sup> Staatsen, 57.

<sup>66</sup> Liz Dale, Wibo van der Es, and Rosie Tanner, *CLIL Skills* (Leiden: Expertisecentrum Mvt, ICLON, Universiteit Leiden, 2010), 56.

In conclusion, literature teaching is important for both language acquisition and personal development, and seems to have found its place within the language classroom for English. While developing a curriculum, teachers need to keep the standards set by the Dutch government in mind, and it is vital for them to offer students texts at the right level. One way to combine both a set curriculum meant to meet the standards, and an attempt to let students discover literature on their own terms is to familiarise them with works that form a gentle yet intriguing introduction to literature. In the following chapter, it will be argued that works of dystopian fiction are a great gateway to literature for young adults.

*Are works of dystopian fiction suitable for young people within the setting of the English language classroom, and if so, which texts are most suitable, and why?*

In order to answer this question, it is important to first clarify what dystopian fiction is exactly, and how it has evolved. Dystopias and utopias are usually ranged under the same literary genre under the name of utopian fiction. A utopia, meaning *no place* in Greek, is “a nonexistent society described in detail and normally located in time and space”.<sup>67</sup> The works typically emerge from either the “dream of a better life”,<sup>68</sup> or a critique on contemporary society, and the places must always be “recognizably good or bad to the intended reader”.<sup>69</sup> Utopias tend to bring about as well as signify “paradigm shifts in the way a culture views itself”,<sup>70</sup> which becomes clear in the evolution of utopian fiction since the sixteenth century. Even though precursors of the genre have always been around, with Plato’s *Republic* (380 BC) as “the most cited early Western example”,<sup>71</sup> some argue that Sir Thomas More invented the genre when his *Utopia*<sup>72</sup> was published in 1516.<sup>73</sup> Four stages of utopian development since *Utopia* are suggested in *The Utopia Reader*;<sup>74</sup> Firstly, religious radicalism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced various egalitarian schemes with a focus on “communal property-holding” based on Spartan and Christian ideals. Secondly, the fear of moral degeneration caused by increasing wealth and voyages of discovery from the sixteenth century

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<sup>67</sup> Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader* (New York: New York UP, 1999): 1.

<sup>68</sup> Claeys, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Claeys, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Claeys, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Claeys, 3.

<sup>72</sup> Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*, (1516), ed. Robert M. Adams (New York: Norton and Company, 1992).

<sup>73</sup> Claeys, 3. .

<sup>74</sup> Claeys, 3.

onwards “encouraged a heated debate over the virtues and vices of primitive peoples”. Next, “scientific discovery and technological innovation” since the seventeenth century have created a longing for the seemingly infinite “progress of the human species toward better health, a longer life, and the domination of nature in the interests of humankind”. This has created a basis for hope and/or fear in science fiction in the twentieth century as well as the anxieties expressed in modern dystopias. Finally, a “utopian promise of a society of greater virtue, equality, and social justice” emerged from the revolutionary movements of the late eighteenth century in North America and France, while the “transformation of socialism after 1848” has created small-scale communities and an “imaginative aspiration for social and human improvement”.<sup>75</sup> Clearly, utopian texts that emerged from the daydreams of better places and fear of the future are based on significant social and political changes. This thesis will be focused on those utopias that “the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the reader lived”,<sup>76</sup> otherwise known as dystopias or negative utopias. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*,<sup>77</sup> a dystopia is defined as follows:

The term dystopia (‘bad place’) has recently come to be applied to the works of fiction, including science fiction, that represent a very unpleasant imaginary world in which ominous tendencies of our present social, political, and technological order are projected into a disastrous future culmination.

From this definition, it is obvious that dystopian texts are written as a reaction to what the authors deem wrong with society as they know it. In this reaction, everything that is off beam in

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<sup>75</sup> Claey's, 3.

<sup>76</sup> Claey's, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Meyer Howard Abrams and Geoffrey Gal Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Australia: Thomson, 2005): 387.



their culture is enlarged to create a horrible future world. This way, dystopias often act as warning signs for contemporaries of the author, and are therefore portrayed as inherently bad places. This also lines up with the definition given by April Spisak in her article “What Makes a Good YA Dystopian Novel?” as she mentions that “[d]ystopias are characterized as a society that is a counter-utopia, a repressed, controlled, restricted system with multiple social controls put into place via government, military, or a powerful authority figure”.<sup>78</sup> Clearly, a novel set in a dystopian society is meant to make readers feel uncomfortable about the world the protagonists live in, and therewith warn them about the threats of their own world.

Even though there are many science fiction novels that fall under the header of dystopian fiction, it is important to clarify that not all science fiction novels or texts about bad places are dystopias. Spisak does this by stating that

while shambling, brain-eating zombies; nuclear holocausts; electromagnetic space pulses that knock out most of the population; or alien invasions all make for compelling reading, they do not necessarily fall into the category of dystopia. Now, if the survivors of those various tragedies form a messed-up society where freedoms are curtailed in order to protect its citizens from imagined future terrible events, then we’re talking dystopia.<sup>79</sup>

Obviously, the focus of dystopian fiction is not necessarily on the horrible surroundings or monsters, but on the powers in place and the freedom and rights taken away from the protagonists. Besides this, authors of dystopian fiction tend to include “[i]ssues of surveillance and invasive technologies”, as well as “a consistent emphasis that this is not a place where

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<sup>78</sup> Spisak, 55.

<sup>79</sup> Spisak, 55.

you'd want to live".<sup>80</sup> This links back to the previous argument of dystopias acting as warning signs for their readers.

About dystopian texts and their suitability for young adults specifically, Spisak writes that four major elements consistently appear in these novels:

Certainly a book need not have all of them, but the best do: a setting so vividly and clearly described that it becomes almost a character in itself; individuals or forces in charge who have a legitimate reason for being as they are; protagonists who are shaped by their environment and situations; and a conclusion that reflects the almost always dire circumstances.<sup>81</sup>

Most of these elements can be found in works considered a part of the dystopian genre. *The Utopia Reader* also describes the vivid setting and descriptions of what the society is like, while the situations and characters are shaped by this realistic setting, displaying a genuine threat. The caution conveyed in dystopian fiction is convincing and based on real potential risks for society. This could explain the popularity of the genre.

Some dystopian works end up as cult favorites, which is one of the reasons that Kelly Fann, the author of "Tapping into the Appeal of Cult Fiction" writes about several dystopian texts in her article, which she says "inspire, amuse, and amaze their readers, they stir the emotions and mesmerize, they evoke passion, and they etch themselves into their reader's memory".<sup>82</sup> About *Brave New World* specifically, she mentions that it "was [her] first foray into cult fiction and it will forever be emblazoned as [her] 'life changing' text of choice".<sup>83</sup> Fann also

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<sup>80</sup> Spisak, 55.

<sup>81</sup> Spisak, 56.

<sup>82</sup> Fann, 15.

<sup>83</sup> Fann, 15.

mentions *Fahrenheit 451* as a notable text in the cult fiction genre. Obviously dystopian works are not necessarily part of cult fiction, and vice versa, but Fann clearly distinguishes these two works in her article. Dystopian fiction is often seen as life changing for all kinds of people, and is therefore appealing to many, as “they speak to the reader in a way that no other book has done before, almost as if the author wrote the book in question specifically for the reader”.<sup>84</sup> This means that “[a]s more and more readers react to a book in this same manner, feeling as though they are the only people who understand what the author really means, the cult status of the title begins to develop”.<sup>85</sup> Fann describes how “alienation, ego-reinforcement, behavior modification, and vulnerability interact with one another” in these novels, which is what makes them so “strikingly appealing to adults in their 20s and 30s as well as to teen readers”.<sup>86</sup> While alienation is described as the relationship of the protagonist to society, ego-reinforcement is directly aimed at the reader, conceptualising how readers feel connected to protagonists and this makes them feel good about themselves. Behaviour modification appears once readers begin to identify with the protagonist and start to see their own worlds differently, as the text is able to “offer an opportunity for readers to experience a pivotal moment of clarity to see the world beyond the stereotypical or mainstream consciousness”.<sup>87</sup> In one sense, this will stroke readers egos as they will each feel like the only one who sees the world as it truly is. At the same time, it also makes a reader vulnerable. While claiming a book is life changing can feel strengthening, it also means an almost unconditional trust in the text and its message. This combination of vulnerability and strength, strongly identifying with a protagonist and many

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<sup>84</sup> Fann, 16.

<sup>85</sup> Fann, 16.

<sup>86</sup> Fann, 16.

<sup>87</sup> Fann, 16.

readers feeling like a “book speaks *to* them and *for* them”<sup>88</sup> means it is likely that these texts appeal to students.

Craig Hill also recognises the influence of dystopian fiction on young people and highlights the importance for teachers to “understand why students are fascinated with these stories”, and to help “them find ways to think through the issues they raise”.<sup>89</sup> He also says that teachers have a responsibility to help students “find answers to the questions they keep asking: What can I do to prevent such a world? How can we survive? How can we remain human?”.<sup>90</sup> This relates to arguments coined by Fann, who sees these titles as perfect forays into adult fiction and even claims they “serve as a rite of passage into adulthood”.<sup>91</sup> Not only do they form an introduction to adult fiction for young adults, they also attract the target group for reasons to do with their personal development at that age. Fann states that “explicit and controversial [works] attract teen readers”,<sup>92</sup> talking about how current popular YA works discuss “difficult subjects faced by teenagers today”.<sup>93</sup> Jeffrey Kaplan suggests that the appeal of dystopian fiction may have to do with young people becoming “aware of how regimented their daily lives are”,<sup>94</sup> and describes the following effect:

Whether at school or at home, young people live with restrictions – some real, some fanciful – that define what they can and cannot do. So naturally, when confronted with

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<sup>88</sup> Fann, 16.

<sup>89</sup> Craig Hill, "Dystopian Novels." Ed. Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan. *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012. 99-116: 101.

<sup>90</sup> Hill, 101.

<sup>91</sup> Fann, 17.

<sup>92</sup> Fann, 17.

<sup>93</sup> Fann, 17.

<sup>94</sup> Kaplan, Jeffrey S, "The Changing Face of Young Adult Literature." Ed. Judith A. Hayn and Jeffrey S. Kaplan, *Teaching Young Adult Literature Today: Insights, Considerations, and Perspectives for the Classroom Teacher*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012. 19-40: 20.

alternative realities – worlds that they can easily define and perhaps subvert or change – they are attracted to these fanciful notions.<sup>95</sup>

In this way, dystopian fiction serves as a source of inspiration for young people who want to change the world around them. Similarly, Hill addresses this effect by stating that “[b]leak though the future may be, young readers [of dystopian fiction], who may feel unempowered in the present, can rehearse the role of liberator, saving the world from the maelstrom of destruction adults have set in motion”.<sup>96</sup> Hill also poses that “adolescents are well aware of the problems in our world: the threat of annihilation by war, environmental degradation, the pervasiveness of poverty, inequitable access to education and healthcare resources, and many others”.<sup>97</sup> This implies that combining knowledge of the current state of the world and reading dystopian fiction generates a drive to alter current society. On a more practical level, Hill describes this effect as young people who are studying dystopian fiction “participating in conversations about their present and how it may lead to desirable or undesirable future”.<sup>98</sup> When discussing these novels in a classroom setting, students “are challenged to live not only in the present but in the light – or dark – of their future”.<sup>99</sup> To Hill, this means taking the opportunity to “engage adolescents in the core of their beings at a time when they are just beginning to envisage ways to live a meaningful life”.<sup>100</sup> As a result of teaching these novels,

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<sup>95</sup> Kaplan, 20.

<sup>96</sup> Hill, 101.

<sup>97</sup> Hill, 113.

<sup>98</sup> Hill, 114.

<sup>99</sup> Hill, 114.

<sup>100</sup> Hill, 114.

young readers will be able to “imagine the world they would want to live in [and] begin to find ways to create that world”.<sup>101</sup>

Not only are young people expected to want to change the world around them, they also have individual reasons to want to read specific texts. Fann indicates that many popular books for young adults can be found on the “American Library Association’s Banned Book List, [apparently] heightening their esteem for teen readers”.<sup>102</sup> Books which were once banned or censored seem to have an almost natural appeal to young people. This might be because their brains are in a state of development where their behaviour is sometimes adult-like, while they are still very likely to “have trouble controlling emotions and avoiding risky situations”.<sup>103</sup> In *Psychology in Education*, it is described how “adolescents appear to need more intense emotional stimulation than either children or adults”, which means they might be on the search for “taking risks or seeking thrills”. Woolfolk suggests that teachers actually take advantage of this intensity by guiding them towards “areas such as politics, the environment or social causes, or by guiding them to explore emotional connections with characters in history or literature”.<sup>104</sup> An individual moving into adolescence needs to deal with a developing mind and body, and is confronted with “the central issue of constructing an identity that will provide a firm basis for adulthood”.<sup>105</sup> This identity “refers to the organisation of the individual’s drives, abilities, beliefs and history into a consistent image of self. It involves deliberate choices and decisions, particularly about work, values, ideology and commitments to people and ideas”.<sup>106</sup> This search

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<sup>101</sup> Hill, 114.

<sup>102</sup> Fann, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Woolfolk, 79.

<sup>104</sup> Woolfolk, 79.

<sup>105</sup> Woolfolk, 87.

<sup>106</sup> Woolfolk, 87.

for an identity combined with the quest for thrills, makes it clear why explicit or (previously) banned books, as well as texts describing (im)perfect societies are appealing to young adults.

About the specific literary needs of young adults, Kaplan writes that:

[d]espite all the recent social, environmental, and technological changes, young people are still interested, above all, in their own lives. From contemporary realistic fiction to fantasy, adolescents are always looking for stories (in books, videos, movies) to answer the timeless question, 'Who am I and who am I supposed to be?'.<sup>107</sup>

This focus on their own lives and questions about their present and future is based around the forming of their identities, and it is obvious that teachers should contribute to this process by offering suitable literature. Shaping an image of themselves and the world they live in is made easier when they are able to identify with a rebellious protagonist, or experience the individual appeal of a text written specifically for them, as described by Fann.

The animated reactions of people reading dystopian novels have to be taken into account when teaching these texts in the English literature classroom. Reading is an individual experience, and there is a big chance dystopian fiction will cause the desired reactions and feelings in the reader. As argued previously, the genre taps right into the needs of students in secondary school. Besides being appealing as explicit or otherwise interesting content, and helping them shape their identities, these texts will offer them an introduction to adult literature. They will show them how literature can be a part of their own lives, without being the dry or boring kind of texts they might expect when reading literature. It is important for students to develop their own reading skills and tastes, but in order to make sure students

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<sup>107</sup> Kaplan, 20.

leave secondary school as people who enjoy reading, it is a good idea to offer them literature that touches them and stays with them, like dystopian fiction. They could experience the connection to the author described by Fann, and find similar experiences in other books. Dystopian fiction will also be able to show students how literature can be used to convey messages to its readers; authors do not only offer philosophical themes of death or love, but may also use their works to critique the world around them. This awareness might inspire students to search for themes with a message in other texts as well.

There are a number of reasons why *Fahrenheit 451* and *Brave New World* are specifically suitable for young adults. Their cult status can cause adolescents to feel as if the texts had been written just for them, as described by Fann. As adolescents tend to experience a certain disobedience to the system, even a feeling as if they can take on the entire world individually, they will hopefully enjoy the criticism on society of *F451* and *BNW*, and relate to the rebellious nature of their protagonists. The appeal of dystopian fiction is currently showing in popular YA fiction and films; the *Gone* series,<sup>108</sup> the *Hunger Games* trilogy,<sup>109</sup> the *Divergent* trilogy,<sup>110</sup> and their respective film versions are all top-grossing within the YA genre. The popularity of these texts may well brush off on *F451* and *BNW* when discussing these in the classroom.

Another reason dystopian texts can be viable sources for teachers, is because even though their messages can be layered and complicated, it is easy to find dystopian texts written in a register that is suitable for non-native speakers. Both *Brave New World* and *Fahrenheit 451*

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<sup>108</sup> Michael Grant, *Gone* (New York: HarperTeen, 2008).

<sup>109</sup> Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (New York: Scholastic, 2008).

<sup>110</sup> Veronica Roth, *Divergent* (N.p.: HarperCollins, 2011).



are readable to students whose first language is not English. One way to establish the level of a text is using Cummins' Quadrants, which describe four levels of input:<sup>111</sup>

<p><b>Quadrant 1</b></p> <p>Input supported with many visual cues and day-to-day language</p>	<p><b>Quadrant 2</b></p> <p>Input with little context, cognitively undemanding, day-to-day language</p>
<p><b>Quadrant 3</b></p> <p>Input supported with much context but cognitively demanding, more abstract language</p>	<p><b>Quadrant 4</b></p> <p>Input with very little context, cognitively demanding, more abstract language</p>

As I have pointed out, the language in *BNW* and *F451* is not the biggest challenge for the target group, while the students do need context to be able to understand the texts and their messages. Slight differences in language and context provided in both texts mean they should be categorised differently, with *F451* as a Quadrant 2 text and *BNW* in Quadrant 3. This is because even though a basic understanding of *F451* can be achieved by all, a deeper understanding of what the author is trying to convey needs deeper thinking because of the lack of context provided. This is why it is important to combine a reading of this text with lessons on its social and historical context. To exemplify, the following passage of *F451* features easy to understand, everyday language, while it remains difficult to understand what it means without reading the rest of the text and knowing the context:

In the late afternoon it rained and the entire world was dark grey. He stood in the hall of his house, putting on his badge with the orange salamander burning across it. He stood

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<sup>111</sup> CLIL, 46-47.

looking up at the air-conditioning vent in the hall for a long time. His wife in the TV parlour paused long enough from reading her script to glance up. 'Hey,' she said. 'The man's *thinking!*'.<sup>112</sup>

Contrasting is the level of input of *BNW*, which features a level of English which is not incredibly difficult, but definitely more abstract than the language of *F451*. However, the text itself consistently provides the context needed to understand the text and get a grasp of its subtext. This is why the novel can be considered a Quadrant 3 text. The following passage shows how the language in the novel is sometimes challenging, but everything is explained in a detailed way and with references to the past and current decisions that have made society the way it is now:

The Director and his students stood for a short time watching a game of Centrifugal Bumble-puppy. Twenty children were grouped in a circle round a chrome steel tower. A ball thrown up so as to land on the platform at the top of the tower rolled down into the interior, fell on a rapidly revolving disk, was hurled through one or other of the numerous apertures pierced in the cylindrical casing, and had to be caught.

"Strange," mused the Director, as they turned away, "strange to think that even in Our Ford's day most games were played without more apparatus than a ball or two and a few sticks and perhaps a bit of netting. Imagine the folly of allowing people to play elaborate games which do nothing whatever to increase consumption. It's madness.

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<sup>112</sup> F451, 29.

Nowadays the Controllers won't approve of any new game unless it can be shown that it requires at least as much apparatus as the most complicated of existing games".<sup>113</sup>

Even if some words are unfamiliar, students will still be able to understand what this passage means because it is so detailed; while the explanation of the development of games shows the reasons society is shaped like this. It is vital to offer young people texts that they can understand, whether it is through language and/or context, as it is incredibly difficult to motivate students to work on texts they cannot read independently. However, it is important to keep in mind that it is possible to discuss these texts with students who would struggle with them, it is just even more important to provide them with enough help and to shift the focus of an assignment from text understanding to working with a text in a different way.

As mentioned before, April Spisak distinguishes four major elements of dystopian fiction,<sup>114</sup> which are all present in *BNW* and *F451*. This makes them apt models of the genre, fit to discuss dystopian fiction through the analysis of these works.

	Brave New World	Fahrenheit 451
A clear and vivid setting	Aspects of society are thoroughly described by the omniscient narrator throughout the novel.	Even though the focus of F451 is on the thought process of Montag, Bradbury is able to create a setting through his eyes.
Individuals in charge with "legitimate reasons for being as they are"	One of 10 World Controllers, Mustapha Mond, was an intelligent scientist given the choice to be exiled or to be in charge when his work was discovered.	Captain Beatty has read many books, yet has chosen to destroy them and hates them profoundly.

<sup>113</sup> BNW, 25-26.

<sup>114</sup> Spisak, 56.

	He chose the latter.	
“protagonists who are shaped by their environment and situations”	Bernard has only started to think about the way society is because others thought of him as different, while John was forced into this society and had to suffer until his death.	Throughout the book it is clear how Guy changes, and although he had always felt good in his world, this happiness is slowly crumbling.
Conclusion reflecting the dire circumstances	B is forced to either assimilate to regular life or move to Iceland, while John feels no other way out than to commit suicide.	Guy Montag is forced to live on the outskirts of his city, hidden with others like him, even after he is offered a way back by Captain Beatty.

Establishing the presence of these four elements, as well as the previous arguments on the suitability of dystopian fiction for the target group make the choice for *BNW* and *F451* a legitimate one.

*Brave New World* was written as a satire on American culture as experienced by Huxley while travelling between 1925 and 1926, and “it was this visit to America which made him so pessimistic about the cultural future of Europe”.<sup>115</sup> The novel was published in 1932, and is set in the year 2540 AD, or 632 After Ford, the number of years since the first Model T car was produced. Most of the novel is set in England, but some parts are set in a savage reservation in New Mexico. The world described in *BNW* is one of prevailing technology, where sentimentalities like feelings, families and free thinking have lost importance to make room for a society in which “everybody’s happy nowadays”, through hallucinatory drugs (soma), unrestricted sex and strict hierarchies. These hierarchies have been artificially decided from the moment an egg is fertilised in one of the many World Hatcheries, creating Alphas, Betas,

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<sup>115</sup> *BNW*, xxxiii.

Gammas, Deltas or Epsilons, and as such deciding a person's path of life before birth. Its protagonist, Bernard Marx, is rumored to have received a wrong ingredient during this process, causing him to be an Alpha Plus as well as an outcast. Bernard's struggles with the society he lives in become even clearer when he takes John, 'the savage,' away from his home, and he challenges the society by merely existing there. The society that might be a utopia for some is a complete dystopia for John, and readers will probably relate to his understanding of the world. The pressures of society cause John to commit suicide, while Bernard is to be unwillingly exiled to Iceland due to his critiques on society. Throughout the novel, we experience interactions between Lenina, a "wonderfully pneumatic" girl, and Bernard and John, who both have a different relationship with her.

*Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury was published in 1953 and followed George Orwell's *1984* trend of futuristic dystopian fiction. It is set somewhere in the future, in an American city, and follows its protagonist Guy Montag. Montag is a fireman, a role which entails burning books instead of stopping fires in a society where houses are fireproof and books are banned. He seems to experience a permanent kind of happiness until his wife once again attempts to commit suicide, he meets a peculiar young girl in his neighbourhood, and quickly after experiences the desire to possess one of the books he is supposed to be burning. His resistance against the burning of books, society's obsession with parlour walls (a type of TV screen that fills up an entire room), the help of a retired teacher, Faber, and the disappearance of Clarisse, his neighbour, cause him to withdraw from society and live on the outskirts of the city with others like him. They live to memorise and one day reproduce books.

The books are similar in many ways; they both show a society in which everyone is supposed to be happy, through the means of feelies, soma, caste systems (BNW), or parlour walls and seashell radios (F451), showing how science and technology are seen as means to create an artificial and superficial kind of happiness. However, outcasts of society in both of them are extremely vulnerable, seen as dangerous, and are not allowed to be a part of society. Protagonists in both novels experience this firsthand and in both they do not see a way back into society after the truth is known to them, even if they are offered a choice. In both novels, the advancement of science and technology can be read as a negative development, as in both of them art and literature have disappeared to make room for the superficial happiness of new kinds of entertainment. This also extends to the relationships between people, which appear incredibly shallow. The exceptions are Montag and Clarisse (F451) and Lenina and John (BNW), relationships that seemingly triggered revolutionary acts as well as complicated situations. Captain Beatty (F451) and Mustapha Mond (BNW) both offer the protagonists glimpses of their rebellious pasts, and their roads to their current high statuses, which makes it clear that they expect the protagonists to choose a similar righteous future. This makes each of the novels appealing to students who are struggling with forming their own identities, as they often have people in their lives who are attempting to steer them in a certain direction. It is important to keep in mind that the role of the teacher is not to do this, but to acknowledge that students need to process input individually in order to grow. Each novel provides topics which have a connection to society right now, and will assist young people in this development. These are likely to be most interesting to students when connecting with the messages of a text.

A major part of society in Huxley's novel seems to be based in the fight against any type of norm defying behaviour, which starts before a child is even born and is nurtured by the use of advanced medical science. For all adolescents working on life's big questions and their place in society, a society where everything is decided before birth must evoke some emotions. Interestingly, many of Huxley's predictions seemed unimaginable when his novel was published, while medical science has progressed so much since then, that it seems as if creating human beings in the hatcheries and conditioning centres of *BNW* is not so far-fetched after all. Current debates on medical science in society often include the ethics of genetic engineering,<sup>116</sup> and as such can easily be connected to Huxley's novel. Also up for debate is the usage of drugs to battle the effects of mental conditions that can result in deviant behaviour, like ADHD<sup>117</sup> and depression.<sup>118</sup> It is easy to imagine the opponents of Ritalin or Prozac arguing against the widely encouraged drug use of Huxley's society, where soma is distributed by the government in order to keep everyone happy and away from any type of rebellious or undesired behaviour. Another prediction in *BNW* is the disappearance of art and literature, which, according to character Mustapha Mond, is because:

"Our world is not the same as Othello's world. You can't make flivvers without steel-and you can't make tragedies without social instability. The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get...And if anything should go wrong, there's soma.[...][T]hat's the price we have to pay for

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<sup>116</sup> Rebecca Smith, "Number of Women Travelling to America to Choose Sex of Child Rises 20%," *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, 21 July 2014. Web. 21 July 2014.

<sup>117</sup> Nick Collins, "ADHD 'not a Real Disease', Neuroscientist Claims," *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, 30 Mar. 2014. Web. 20 July 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Stephen Adams, "Antidepressants Prescribed 'too Easily' Says GP," *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, 23 Jan. 2013. Web. 21 July 2014.

stability. You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art".<sup>119</sup>

According to this, art is solely created when people are unhappy, and since mind-control and drugs make sure that this does not happen, the main source of entertainment has become the feelie, a type of 3D film or virtual reality with most scenes depicting either violence or sex. This form of visual entertainment is created as a superficial replacement for literature and other arts, which have become superfluous now that everyone is kept happy through soma.

This movement away from literature and other art forms, towards a culture of visual stimulation, can be seen as the main conflict of *Fahrenheit 451*. In that sense, John (BNW) and Montag (F451) are similar in that they both seem to have an inherent love of literature. However, Montag is actively struggling with these seemingly obvious forms of entertainment in his own home. As the focus of literary education needs to be on the individual student, this concept of opposites can encourage students to think critically about their own choices of entertainment. Since students develop their own definitions of literature in the beginning of the lesson series, a suggestion is to let them think about what distinguishes literature from other forms of entertainment. Students should be able to form their opinions on the censorship conflict in *F451*, and analyse why the importance of literature is emphasised in the novel. Whereas it is expected that teachers of literature believe in the values of reading, it is imperative that students are given the opportunity to either identify the merits of literature or argue in favour of visual media based on their own experiences. This is one of the reasons why a focus on students' individual development is so important; only when they have experienced

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<sup>119</sup> BNW, 193-194.



various types of arts consciously are they able to form an opinion based on their personal involvement with each one.

As well as these main themes in the two novels, it is also interesting to see that even though both works are revolutionary when it comes to some aspects of the future society they portray; their protagonists can still be described as representative for the majority of western literature. The texts are centered around white, heterosexual men, and especially *BNW* sees women as mere supporting characters, while people of colour are hardly even mentioned (*F451*) or portrayed as a subhuman species (*BNW*). Neither book contains anything other than heterosexuality, even if *BNW* does challenge expectations of monogamy. These are relevant critiques to share with young people as they will be influenced by the under- and overrepresentation of certain groups of people. In *BNW*, the roles of Lenina and Linda (John's mother) are defined in relation to the main characters, men, while the dialogues Lenina shares with other women are centered on these same, or other, men. Linda is only described to have some sort of interaction with women who are angry at her for sleeping with their men. Neither of them undergo any character development and they are both portrayed as one-dimensional characters, with Linda shown as constantly under the influence of either soma or alcohol, and Lenina only interested in pleasing men sexually, holding true to her characterization as a pneumatic girl. It could be argued that Ray Bradbury is slightly better at portraying women in *F451*, as both Clarisse and Mildred are important characters. Montag has breakthroughs he would not have had without Clarisse, while Mildred's character develops throughout the book and she even has female friends she interacts with, although they mostly watch the parlour walls together. Their main presence in the novel is when Mildred's friends are subjected to

Montag's reading of some poetry, and end up reporting him to Captain Beatty with all of its consequences.

Even though neither work states that all characters are white people, this is highly probable as people of colour are only briefly mentioned in *F451*, describing black people as a minority disapproving a racist book and therewith causing the banishment of books. In *BNW*, the only people of colour live in New Mexico, on what is described as a *Savage Reservation*, a place where high-ranked Alpha men take women on dates to look at the inhabitants. To treat the only people of colour in a society as a sort of tourist attraction is highly problematic and should be addressed as such when discussing this with young people.

Besides these critiques, it has also become clear that the only desirable romantic or sexual relationships in both books are between one man and one woman, which is interesting when considering the sexual freedom described in *BNW*. Huxley seems to have predicted the sexual freedom that is seen in our society today, now that contraception has enabled people to make a distinction between sex and reproduction. However, in the society that he describes, it seems highly unlikely that everyone is heterosexual unless they are conditioned that way, which would be even more horrible than leaving out deviant sexualities. Within Bradbury's work, all relationships described are heterosexual ones based in monogamy and matrimony. This last critique can potentially be used in the thematic lesson on love & relationships (see Chapter 3), discussing representation and (in)tolerance of non-heterosexuality in society today. There are a number of possibilities to discuss the other two critiques in parts of the lesson series, as a way to let students think critically about the texts they read and how they reflect society today. It is important to realise that even though *BNW* and *F451* have appealing factors

that will draw in the students, the criticism on these books can serve an important role in students' literary and individual development as well.

Following the definition of dystopian fiction as texts which describe societies as bad places in which no one wants to live, is the idea that these works are written by authors who are apprehensive about the direction their society is going in. In that sense, they can be seen as warning signs to contemporaries. Since many of the concerns emphasised in dystopian literature remain concerns for generations of readers, the texts remain relevant, and even tend to have qualities that make readers feel as if they are the only ones who are aware of the impending downfall of society. Since dystopian fiction covers these major issues, they appeal to young people who are in the midst of their identity formation. Important in this process is the development of opinions on topics of importance like political climates, interpersonal relationships, and ethics. Dystopian fiction offers models and morals to analyse and discuss, like genetic engineering in *BNW* and censorship in *F451*. It is important to realise that even though these works offer great material, critiques of both novels also need to be taken into account. Specifically, both novels are centered around white heterosexual men, which means that women are seen as supporting characters with little to no character development, while people of colour are hardly mentioned and homosexuality seems completely absent from these societies. Letting students identify these shortcomings will mean that the novels do not appear as perfect examples, which encourages students to think critically when reading literature. Another argument in favour of teaching these novels is the suitability of the level of input for the target group.

*How can these novels be taught with a focus on students' literary development?*

Now that it is clear how the Dutch educational system works with regards to English literature teaching and an analysis of *Brave New World* and *Fahrenheit 451* has been carried out, it is time to offer a hands-on approach to teaching these texts within the English literature classroom. Even though students are only required to read three books in English in three years, teachers should encourage their students to read outside of school hours, for pleasure, and to continue reading after they graduate. In order to achieve this goal, literature needs to be taught in a way that appeals to as many students as possible. This is why it is important to look at different students' needs, ways to differentiate between students and to develop a clear and structured lesson series with a number of engaging and challenging assignments to keep students interested throughout the duration of the lessons and afterwards.

This original lesson series consists of ten lessons aimed at students in the upper grades of secondary school in either HAVO (higher general continued education) or VWO (pre-university education). It would work especially well within bilingual (English and Dutch) education or at international schools. With some adjustments, it might also work for other types and levels of education. This chapter will include ways of teaching dystopian fiction, authentic assignments on the topic, as well as practical solutions to some problems that might occur. This chapter can be replicated as a lesson series, used as a guideline, or simply seen as a point of inspiration when teaching English literature. Teachers who wish to use this chapter as a way to start teaching dystopian fiction are expected to make adjustments based on their students' needs. Assignments, work forms, and several didactic theories are suggested, but

each teacher must establish the starting levels of and expected development of a group of students before putting any of these to use. It is also important to decide on a learning goal in advance: should the focus be on teaching students about the genre? Alternatively, if students have a hard time working together, should the goal of the series be to improve co-operative learning? If desired, it may even be possible to collaborate with other teachers to create a series on e.g. censorship in history, totalitarian societies today, advancements in medical science, or creating utopias/dystopias in arts. The realization of the project depends on the teacher, students, and school.

The place these lessons started to develop on a practical level was at a Dutch international school, where native speakers in year 4 of the Middle Years Programme (ages 14-15) encountered their first work of dystopian fiction, joined in on discussions and did an assignment on *Fahrenheit 451*. They were also able to provide some useful feedback. When referring to these students, their work, feedback and opinions, they will be referred to as the MYP students.

This series aims to incorporate all levels of students within the upper grades, with possibilities for differentiation, in order to challenge bright students and provide scaffolding for weaker students where needed. Providing scaffolding entails giving those students who need it extra help within an assignment or lesson. It is important to distinguish two types of scaffolding: built-in and contingent. Both should be used, but built-in scaffolding specifically needs to be prepared in advance, as it is a kind of “support for developing language or content which is planned in advance by the teacher”.<sup>120</sup> This could mean deciding before a lesson which

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<sup>120</sup> CLIL, 250.

students will receive a clarifying vocabulary list or an easier assignment. Contingent scaffolding, while equally important, is “immediate, on-the-spot scaffolding, which helps struggling learners to understand”.<sup>121</sup> Usually, this also means knowing which students might need extra help, while this help is only provided during a lesson by, e.g. translating a word or offering some extra guidance. Providing scaffolding in advance (built-in), to a selection of students, is a part of differentiation, where each student is given the opportunity to excel with an individually tailored amount.

In order to differentiate properly, it is important to keep in mind that some students will excel in writing assignments, while needing scaffolding in discussions and vice versa. This is partly connected to the theory that there are multiple intelligences that need to be addressed via a variety of learning styles in order to reach as many students as possible. In order to put this into practice, the writers of *CLIL Skills* suggest:

Teachers can also think about activating learners through different learning styles or multiple intelligences, so as to reach a larger number of learners and interest them in the topic. [...] You could invite learners to choose the activity or activities they personally prefer to carry out. We are not suggesting that a teacher always carries out eight different types of activities; this will depend on the learners and teacher in each class.<sup>122</sup>

In order to keep this lesson series as appealing to everyone as possible, it is framed around this notion of multiple intelligences. This means that it incorporates different kinds of talents and intelligences, and even offers a choice between different areas for the final project (i.e. writing,

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<sup>121</sup> CLIL, 251.

<sup>122</sup> CLIL, 26.

presenting, creating). This ensures each student has the possibility to excel in a way that suits them best.

This lesson series contains a number of different parts. First of all, it will serve as an introduction to the genres of utopian and dystopian fiction, as well as the two texts. Students will focus on three different themes throughout the series, which can be categorized as follows: entertainment, relationships & love, and then vs. now. Of course it will also include a number of authentic assignments based on the different intelligences and concluding with a big project the students will be working on throughout the series.

Lesson	Topic
1	Introduction to utopian and dystopian fiction
2	Introduction to Brave New World and Fahrenheit 451
3	Thematic analysis BNW and F451: entertainment
4	Creative writing
5	Thematic analysis BNW and F451: Relationships & Love
6	Discussion
7	Thematic analysis BNW and F451: Then vs. Now
8	Final project: Make your own utopia or dystopia
9	Final project: Make your own utopia or dystopia
10	Concluding lesson

Short overview of lesson series.

## Lesson 1

The first lesson in this series is probably one of the most important ones, as it is needed to introduce students to the topic in a clear and structured way, while making sure they are all engaged from the start. This first lesson needs to be well planned and cater to the students' needs, so that they will be interested in studying the topic during the time period of the lesson series. Part of this lesson should be a concise introduction to the genre, with a focus on getting the students interested in studying the genre. One way to do this is to look at some popular dystopian films or novels together, like *Divergent* (Veronica Roth), *The Hunger Games* (Suzanne Collins), or *Gone* (Michael Grant). This lesson can also be used to discuss what literature, and dystopian literature specifically, actually means. It is important to guide the students in this discussion, instead of the teacher solely telling them one definition of literature. One of the MYP students defined literature as fiction "that is written in a different way than a normal story, in the sense that it makes you think more" (7), while another said it is "creative writing which makes you think about the text" (6). As dystopian fiction tends to make people think, these students would already be great candidates for a lesson series like this one, while other students may need an extra push in the right direction. This is why it is useful to establish how students define literature and use that in the preparation for the first lesson. Students will then be able to reflect back on their definition while discussing dystopian fiction and thereby help themselves and their teachers find reasons to study the genre. Besides opening up this discussion, it is always important to inform students about the schedule of the entire series from the beginning, so that they are prepared and can already start thinking about their final project.



Learning Goal	Suggested activities/work forms	Notes
To introduce utopian and dystopian fiction & the lesson series.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Class discussion on literature</li> <li>○ Getting to know different dystopian works</li> <li>○ Introducing the series &amp; final project</li> </ul>	This first lesson is extremely important to get students engaged and interested in the topic.

## Lesson 2

While introducing students to the two chosen novels during the second lesson, in this case *Brave New World* and *Fahrenheit 451*, it is important to keep in mind that there will probably be a number of students who have already read the books, and need to be challenged to think about the works just as much as every other student in the class. The teacher could pick a number of interesting passages while introducing the novels, and then ask the students who have already read them whether the specific passage is typical for the novel and why, or why not. Included in the introduction to the novels should be some background as to when, why and how the novels were written and how they relate to the dystopian genre, although activating students is more important than giving them information. It is important to show students how to think critically about the material they are offered. During this lesson, the different qualities and critiques of *BNW* and *F451* should surface. These can simply be mentioned by the teacher, but students should be encouraged to find out about positive and

negative aspects of a work independently. One method to achieve this is to let them work in a *jigsaw format*, where the class is divided into equally numbered *home groups*. Each member of a home group is assigned a topic, i.e. racism, language, message, and then researches this topic within an *expert group* made up of members of the other home teams. After a set amount of time, students return to their home teams, where they are then able to teach the other members of their home teams what they have learned. This ensures that all students participate in the research stage, as they are expected to report back to their home teams as experts. It also has the advantage of changing the role of the teacher, as it is the students who are in charge of input and discussion during this lesson.

Learning Goal	Suggested activities/work forms	Notes
To introduce <i>Brave New World</i> and <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduce novels via (historical) context, author backgrounds</li> <li>○ Showcase interesting and typical passages</li> <li>○ Jigsaw format: students delve deeper into the positive and negative aspects of the works</li> </ul>	<p>Students need to either find out or be told why they are working on these specific works.</p> <p>Students who are already familiar with one or both of the books need to be challenged as well.</p>

### **Thematic lessons (lessons 3, 5, 7)**

There are three lessons in this series with a focus on certain topics within *Brave New World* and *Fahrenheit 451* that appeal to students. These are as follows: Entertainment (lesson 3), Love & Relationships (lesson 5), and Then & Now (lesson 7). The choice for these specific themes is based on their relationship and appeal to the target group. They are all themes students can relate to, while at the same time they form the basis of the messages conveyed by the authors of BNW and F451. Alternatively, it is possible to use one of the topics of lesson 2 as the topic of one of the thematic lessons. It should become clear from the BNW and F451 introductory lesson (lesson 2) when these novels were written and how they were received in that time. During the thematic lessons this background information will help students understand why certain elements in the novels (e.g. parlour walls, feelies, sexual freedom) were controversial at the time. Without a doubt, some of the topics within these lessons will overlap or come back multiple times.

The first thematic lesson can serve as an introduction to the way these themes will be discussed, as all students will have an opinion about this, as well as enough knowledge about contemporary entertainment to compare and contrast it with the different forms of leisure and entertainment within the chosen novels. This lesson would be the right moment to use music or audiovisual material for those students with musical or audiovisual intelligences, as a basis for an assignment about entertainment. Instead of telling students about the historical context of a novel, showing them how the first films which incorporated spoken dialogues, so-called talkies, were a marvel of the 1930s, and letting them travel back in time through videos of Charleston ballrooms will make them connect their own experiences to those times and the

books. Another focus might be on reading, books, and their roles in the two different worlds, as this can also link back to students' experiences and will give them an opportunity to adjust or strengthen their opinions of literature. During this lesson, students might be asked to design their own parlour wall story (F451) or write a song for Bernard Marx's choir group.

Learning Goal	Suggested activities/work forms	Notes
<p>To analyse the topic of entertainment in <i>BNW</i> and <i>F451</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Getting the students to connect their own use of entertainment to the (historical context of the) novel</li> <li>○ Let students design their own version of otherworldly or future entertainment, using their knowledge of the novels' context and depiction of entertainment</li> <li>○ Create a time machine through music, video and pictures of entertainment through the years</li> </ul>	<p>The assignment in this lesson can be used to kickstart a final project for weaker students. Simultaneously, fast learners can be encouraged to perform their creation during this lesson.</p>

In the second thematic lesson another familiar topic is Love & Relationships, as students will all have experience in this, whether it is a crush, friendship, or family. Looking at the novels with this theme in mind will also show students how Huxley's and Bradbury's warnings were rooted in a fear of the disappearance of meaningful interpersonal connections. However, it might prove difficult for students to discuss this theme freely, as this age group can quickly feel too shy or unwilling to open up. This is why this lesson is probably best suited for individual or small group work, perhaps by asking students to write a diary entry or a letter from the point of view of one of the characters, based on several (or more) passages from the novels they have read so far. Besides making it easier for students to discuss feelings this way, it is also a great tool to create a deeper understanding of a text. The concept is also called "writing out of literature", and is demonstrated by Stern in her text "An Integrated Approach to Literature in ESL / EFL" when stating that "[w]riting 'out of' literature means making use of a literary work as a springboard for composition - creative assignments developed around plot, characters, setting, theme, and figurative language".<sup>123</sup> An example of this can also be an assignment in which a "student can write a letter to one of the characters, in which he / she gives the character personal advice about how to overcome a particular problem or situation".<sup>124</sup> Students may be given a choice of assignments, which could include a letter to Linda about feeling at home in the reservation, or to Guy Montag about reconnecting with his wife. In order to write these, it is important for students to relate to the way love and relationships work in our society. A way to accomplish this is discussing stages of relationships as we know them, the meaning of family, or the rigid representation of love and relationships in the novels. Even

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<sup>123</sup> Stern, 59.

<sup>124</sup> Stern, 59.

though there is a clear sexual revolution going on in *BNW*, Huxley, like Bradbury, only speaks of heterosexual relationships and escapades. Discussing this as a critique will create an atmosphere of acceptance in the classroom while it could even be connected to current LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) struggles.

Learning Goal	Suggested activities/work forms	Notes
To analyse the topic of love & relationships in <i>BNW</i> and <i>F451</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Let students think about what they expect of love and relationships in the novels</li> <li>○ Students do a writing assignment where they get a deeper understanding of interpersonal relationships in the novel, by writing a letter to one of the characters or writing a diary entry.</li> </ul>	As this is a sensitive topic, it is suggested to only discuss personal experiences when students feel safe in the classroom. Ways to ensure this can be by letting them work in self-chosen smaller groups, letting them choose what to share, and teachers sharing their personal stories.

The third thematic lesson, Then & Now, will appeal to students who might find it difficult to read between the lines, but are still able to create an understanding of the novels and their messages when comparing the historical context of the texts with our current society.

This lesson will see students compiling lists of things that were described in the books but not possible at the time, while they are possible now. This can be done in the form of a lesson starter where the teacher brings images of inventions into the classroom and students deduce whether they were present in the author’s life, are present in the books, and/or are present today. They can then focus on one specific aspect (e.g. the banishment of books or roles of firefighters in *F451*, the use of soma or sexual freedom in *BNW*) to research in more detail and argue for or against this concept in a short presentation. Included in this assignment should be a hypothesis on what the author is trying to convey with his choices or inventions. Because this requires quite some knowledge about the books and their historical backgrounds, this lesson is perfect for involving IT into this series. Students can look up answers in a computer room, or depending on school rules, on their phones while in the classroom. An engaging plenary idea is to ask students at the end of the lesson which of the seemingly impossible concepts discussed in the starter or researched by their classmates appeal to them most, and do a vote to keep everyone engaged until the very end.

Learning Goal	Suggested activities/work forms	Notes
To analyse the topic of then vs. now in <i>BNW</i> and <i>F451</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Researching a topic in a group, using IT</li> <li>○ Presenting findings in a short presentation, including an analysis of the message connected to</li> </ul>	Even though this lesson might be a relief for the students who struggle with understanding the deeper meanings of literature, this should still be a challenging lesson for students who do thrive when analyzing subtexts. A

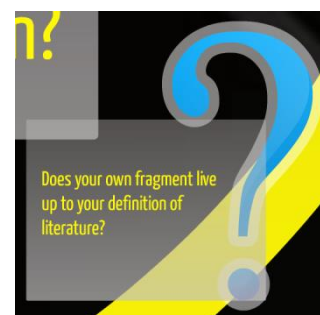
	a certain concept	suggestion is to let them present on how an author's different choice of concept could have changed the message of the book.
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#### Lesson 4 (Creative Writing)

During the fourth lesson, students will be asked to rewrite a passage in such a way that their own opinions are conveyed and they are able to communicate a message other than that of the author. The MYP 4 students did a simplified version of this assignment, and this proved to be a creative outlet for them and enabled them to show their own feelings about the subject of the passage. The exact instructions they received can be seen on the right. The text used was taken *Fahrenheit 451*<sup>125</sup> and I chose this specific passage

Rewrite the first paragraph from your own point of view. Firemen are burning your books. How does that make you feel? Which book will you try and save? How do you react towards the firemen?

because it had a clear connection to the discussion on the definition of literature, and how students thought about reading. At the same time, it is filled with metaphors and similes, and has a clear writing style that shows students what a writing style could look like. The following introduction to the passage and the passage itself were given to the students:



These are a few paragraphs from the beginning of *Fahrenheit 451*. The novel presents a future American society where books are outlawed and firemen burn any house that

<sup>125</sup> F451, 9-10.



contains them. The protagonist in this story, Guy Montag, is one of those firemen, and this passage is written from his point of view.

FAHRENHEIT 451:

The temperature at which book-paper catches fire and burns.

PART I

IT WAS A PLEASURE TO BURN

IT was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed. With the brass nozzle in his fists, with this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world, the blood pounded in his head, and his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history. With his symbolic helmet numbered 451 on his stolid head, and his eyes all orange flame with the thought of what came next, he flicked the igniter and the house jumped up in a gorging fire that burned the evening sky red and yellow and black. He strode in a swarm of fireflies. He wanted above all, like the old joke, to shove a marshmallow on a stick in the furnace, while the flapping pigeon-winged books died on the porch and lawn of the house. While the books went up in sparkling whirls and blew away on a wind turned dark with burning.

Montag grinned the fierce grin of all men singed and driven back by flame. He knew that when he returned to the firehouse, he might wink at himself, a minstrel man, burnt-corked, in the mirror. Later, going to sleep, he would feel the fiery smile still gripped by his face muscles, in the dark. It never went away, that smile, it never ever went away, as long as he remembered.

All students rewrote this passage as if it was them whose books had been discovered and were now burning in front of their eyes. The reason I chose to let them write from their own point of view, was because the lesson was set up around their definition of literature, and I wanted them to show their opinions of reading and literature through this assignment. This is an indirect way for them to show how they feel, without asking them directly. At the same time, it shows how the messages in dystopian fiction can relate to their lives, and hopefully makes them think about how they would feel as a protagonist in F451. Besides that, they did not need to have a vast amount of knowledge about this (for them) unfamiliar text, which means they could all be successful in this assignment. Below are the unedited texts of three MYP students:

The animals came in and started spitting kerosene, covering every book of which was ever placed in my house. Years of paranoia and secrecy, all burning away in seconds. I didn't protest however, because the most important books were hidden in places these fire-spitting monsters would never be able to reach. I slowly made my way out of the house, watching the firemen burn away any inspiration to this flat town. (StH)

And:

I sat in my chair and enjoyed reading my novel when all of a sudden, I was ambushed. Doors flew open, windows broke down and I saw nothing but firemen rush in to burn all my books. I begged, screamed, cried out to them to stop, but they did not stop. The first thing I thought of was to save one of my most precious books. I ran quickly to my bookshelf in my room, and grabbed the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It had belonged to my great grandmother and had been passed down to me. I ran downstairs where all my belongings were being burned and made eye contact with a fireman with the number

451 on his helmet. He had a devilish smile on his face. I ran out and after 100m I turned back to see my whole life burnt to ash. (RG)

These two passages are both quite positive about books and reading. They show that these students have thought about what the situation described would mean to them. It is also clear that these students have had experience with (creative) writing. They would be great candidates for a challenging creative writing assignment. However, a teacher is likely to encounter students who do not feel the same way about reading, or have not had any experience writing creatively. One MYP student clearly had a more negative approach to literature:

It was a comfortable, warm and nice moment. All the books were burning, all the schoolbooks were just on fire. I had never read/bought a book that was not for school. There it was in front of me, 10 years of torture disappearing, now covered in wet ash. The firemen were trying to save them but instead of me there was something saying "Stop the firemen, let those books completely turn into ash." (AP)

Clearly, this student is much more positive about burning books that will be gone within minutes, and clarified this by changing the role of the firemen into people trying to save the books. It is important to know, as a teacher and as a student, that the opinions conveyed in this text are just as valid as the previous two texts. This needs to be clearly communicated to them, and it should always be expected that there are students who feel this way. Besides a way to let students use their creativity, it is also a great way for teachers to find out more about their students and how they react to these kinds of assignments. If future students already have some experience in creative writing, this is a great assignment to give them to showcase their

creativity, whereas inexperienced students would benefit from some pointers on creative writing and what is expected of them.

Learning Goal	Suggested activities/work forms	Notes
To rewrite a passage of <i>BNW</i> or <i>F451</i> from your own perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher explains the writing process, expectations, and shows an example</li> <li>○ Students individually rewrite a passage</li> <li>○ A rubric is used for peer feedback</li> </ul>	Differences of ability between students come to light during writing assignments, when some need to be challenged by an extra assignment because of their speed, while others never seem to finish in time. Remember to have extra assignments ready, and to encourage fast students to challenge themselves using emotive language and ambitious vocabulary.

## Lesson 6

The sixth lesson should be a moment to focus back on the genre of dystopian fiction, and what the students have learned so far. It is key to explain the final project and all its details during this lesson, so that students have a solid basis before they start working on it. The project goals need to be clear, and students need to be given enough knowledge, inspiration and ideas during the previous lessons and this lesson specifically. Depending on the group and

what they need, this could mean a number of things; from working on project ideas in groups, creating individual mind maps, to having a class discussion on utopian and dystopian fiction. In this lesson, the teacher could talk about different kinds of dystopian and utopian fiction for inspiration, show examples of possible projects, and make sure students know everything they need to know to start. Therefore, it is also a great moment to look back on what they have learned so far, and whether anything is still unclear. Part of this lesson should be reserved for each student to talk to the teacher about ideas for the upcoming project.

Learning Goal	Suggested activities/work forms	Notes
<p>To discuss different works of dystopian fiction in more detail and write about your own dystopia/utopia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Refresh students' memories about the goals of the series as well as what has been learned so far</li> <li>○ Let students start working on their final projects by showing them varieties of existing examples</li> <li>○ Individual moments for each student to discuss plans</li> </ul>	<p>If there are students who have no idea what they want to do, have a list of suggestions ready. Make sure students know to create a project connected to literature and the messages of the genre, instead of focusing on ghouls or zombies.</p>

## Lessons 8 and 9

Lessons 8 and 9 are reserved for creating the final project. In order to let all students excel, it is up to each teacher to offer a number of choices based around multiple intelligences, while thinking of what would be the best challenge for each student. It should be encouraged that students choose the creative form they feel fits them and the topic of dystopian/utopian fiction. This could be anything from a sculpture to a short story, and a guidebook to a play, depending on what the teacher feels will give students the best opportunities. Even though it is likely students will pick something they find easy, this does mean they will have to work hard to show their understanding of the topic through their project. The choice in formats is used to make students feel encouraged and comfortable, but they still need to be able to show that they have been challenged by the final outcome. This is one of the reasons most of the work for the project is situated within the classroom. During this time, the teacher is available for guidance, while able to register each student's input and progress.

Learning Goal	Suggested activities/work forms	Notes
To create your own dystopia or utopia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Start each by activating students' knowledge and motivating them to begin</li><li>○ Set tasks for blocks of time, so each student knows what to do when</li><li>○ End the lessons by letting students write themselves</li></ul>	It is important to create an atmosphere where students do not feel overwhelmed by the task, which is why structure and guidance are extremely important while they are working independently. Make sure to have helpful planning/starting guides

	<p>a note on what to do</p> <p>during the next lesson, so</p> <p>they have a clear starting</p> <p>point</p>	<p>ready for students who need it.</p>
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## Lesson 10

During the tenth and last lesson of this series, students will present their projects to their teacher and fellow students. Besides the actual project, students should also write an individual paper, offering the personal reasons to choose a specific format as well as explaining the ways it portrays a dystopia or utopia. This is especially important for those projects involving the visual arts, as opposed to texts, and will make sure teachers get to know their students even better. It also encourages students to look at their projects from a distance, hopefully creating a moment of personal feedback for them. This lesson should also be reserved for feedback on the lesson series, both through a guided discussion and some form of written feedback. This will help tremendously in the evolution of this lesson series and will also provide each individual teacher with helpful feedback.

Learning Goal	Suggested activities/work forms	Notes
To present your final projects and discuss the lesson series.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Even though the projects themselves are mostly created in the classroom, the actual justification of</li> </ul>	<p>Depending on the teacher, students, and school, this could be a lively lesson with plays and poetry readings, while it could</p>

	<p>the work should be done as homework, as each individual student reflects on what has been learned and created.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students are asked to give feedback on each other's work as well as the lesson series as a whole.</li> </ul>	<p>also be a lesson where everyone hands in an essay. The lesson should be designed accordingly, in order to remain stimulating.</p>
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After this lesson series, students are encouraged to read a work of literature in the dystopian genre to work towards their reading goal as set by the government standards and each school individually. Their knowledge of the genre will help them tremendously while doing the assignments in their reading file. Weaker students can opt to read either *Brave New World* or *Fahrenheit 451*, while teachers may want to encourage strong readers to broaden their horizons by selecting another work of dystopian literature. Eventually, it is up to each teacher to adapt this lesson series to their students' needs and abilities, but this chapter already provides a solid basis in the form of a guideline towards teaching dystopian fiction in the English language classroom. Its aim is to provide input and output possibilities for different kinds of students, each with different talents, wishes and possibilities.



## Conclusions

It has been established that the current shape of literary education is the result of a shift that has been taking place in the last decennia. This ongoing change in the curriculum has started to move away from the idea of a teacher telling students what they need to know about literature, towards a focus on a student's individual reading experience and development. This means a change of teaching styles, material, and goals is in order. It is now more important than ever to look at what each student needs to develop as a reader of literature and a young adult. Since dystopian fiction tends to appeal to people of all ages, and lets students relate to characters who are also shaping their perception of the world, it seems to be suitable for classroom teaching. Even though the dystopian works focused on in this thesis, *Brave New World* (1932) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1954), have been written in the last century, they are still relevant today. Their suitability for young adults has to do with the major themes of censorship, genetic engineering, interpersonal relationships, advanced medical science, the use of drugs, and dominant media, which encourage students to form opinions on their surroundings, themselves and society in general. Similarly, there are several critiques of the novels' lack of satisfying representation of women, people of colour, and homosexuality, which will stimulate adolescents to think critically about the input they are offered through the media. All of this will support the process of identity formation in the age group. A practical reason for offering these novels is the level of input featured in both. As it is impossible to teach about texts that are not readable to students, this is required for the lesson series. The series itself has been formed on the basis of practical experience, didactic sources, and theories about young adults and their educational needs. Of importance is the implementation of differentiation; the idea of

supporting each student with the right amount of guidance, in order to create an atmosphere in which all students are challenged and none of them are bored. Scaffolding, a way to offer different kinds of help to different students, can either be done in advance, or on the spot, and needs a thorough understanding of each student's abilities. Because it is impossible to know exactly what each student needs, it is encouraged to base each lesson of the series on multiple intelligences, in order to let all students reach their potential.

While the lesson series is the practical answer to the research question; *Is dystopian fiction suitable literature for young people, and if so, how can it be used in English literary education in Dutch schools?*, the first two chapters form the theoretical support behind teaching dystopian fiction in the English literary classroom. Not only is the genre a suitable way to introduce students to literature, it will also help them develop their own identities, which is a vital part of life for adolescent students. This thesis connects several recent theories on and shifts in literature teaching to a practical lesson series to be used by teachers of English. I believe this project will prove a useful source for new and experienced teachers alike, since the lesson series can be adapted to fit each teacher and the groups they teach. While this thesis does not limit teachers to solely following a pre-fabricated lesson series, I do provide structure and a vast amount of suggestions based on the arguments provided in the first two chapters, making sure it is simple to bring the series into the classroom with just a few additions and adjustments. I am hoping to inspire teachers to use this model in their classroom, and teach a new generation about the qualities of dystopian fiction.

While I believe I have proven the suitability of dystopian fiction for young adults, and have offered methods to teach books of the genre in the classroom, I am aware that the genre

has its limitations. When teaching literature in the classroom, this is always within a restricted amount of time, and there are only so many lessons a year to meet all the goals set by the teacher, school and government. It is possible that the dystopian genre is too much of an underdog compared to canonical works and other genres, and will not fit in the curriculum. At the same time, it is very much a genre which needs to appeal to the person in charge of literary education, as even though I have argued for its position as a must-read part of the curriculum, not everyone agrees with this. Sadly, I have not been able to test out this complete lesson series as it is written here, which is a serious limitation. This is why the lesson series is a suggestion based on secondary literature, and is not solely rooted in the experience of teaching part of this lesson series to the MYP students.

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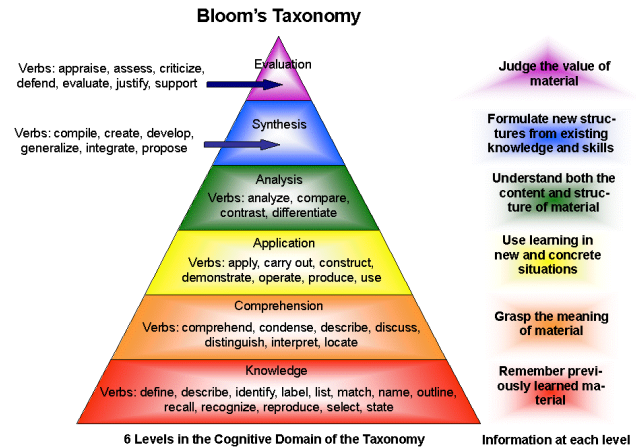
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**Authentic assignment:** “Tasks that have some connection to real-life problems the learners will face outside the classroom”.<sup>126</sup>

**Bloom’s Taxonomy:** “a useful tool to plan questioning or tasks for learners[, ] divided into six categories: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating”.<sup>127</sup> This tool can be used to challenge learners, the higher up the pyramid the concept, the deeper thinking it requires.<sup>128</sup>



**CEFR:** Common European Framework of Reference, “a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe”.<sup>129</sup>

**CLIL:** “Content and Language Integrated Learning: Learning a subject and another language at the same time”.<sup>130</sup> A teaching concept usually applied in bilingual programmes in the Netherlands and Europe.

**Differentiation:** Approaching students in the same group differently, when teaching, giving out assignments, scaffolding, based on their abilities and needs. This means that each student will

<sup>126</sup> Woolfolk, 694.

<sup>127</sup> CLIL, 93.

<sup>128</sup> <http://ar.cetl.hku.hk/images/blooms.gif>

<sup>129</sup> CLIL, 250.

<sup>130</sup> CLIL Skills, 250.

be challenged in the way most suitable for them, while still able to successfully achieve their goals.

**Dystopian Fiction:** Subgenre of utopian fiction, focused on works that describe a bad place and act as a warning for the future.

**HAVO:** Higher General Secondary Education. Prepares students for hbo or polytechnic tertiary education.

**Kerndoelen:** A set of measures set by the government for secondary schools, which act as requirements for each secondary school graduate. Subject curricula are usually shaped to meet these requirements.

**Learning Objective:** A “[c]lear statement of what pupils are intended to learn”,<sup>131</sup> usually a goal for each lesson, although teachers can apply them to a semester, year, or just one task.

**Multiple Intelligences:** The theory that there are 8 kinds of intelligences (logical-mathematical, bodily-kinaesthetic, linguistic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, visual-spatial), which all connect to different learning styles. Each person has a different combination of these intelligences, meaning that in order to reach as many students as possible, teachers should attempt to appeal to multiple intelligences when creating a lesson.

**MYP:** Middle Years Programme, “a programme offered by the International Baccalaureate Organisation which helps learners to develop skills which are useful for them in the world”.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Woolfolk, 699.

<sup>132</sup> CLIL, 253.

Students between ages 11-16 as an alternative to regular secondary education. Usually at International Schools.

**Rubric:** “A scoring tool often in the form of a matric that teachers use to assess learner outcomes (products, performances). A rubric includes a set of criteria and levels of performance”.<sup>133</sup>

**Scaffolding:** “A special kind of help that teachers can use to help learners move forward in their learning and understanding”.<sup>134</sup> Built-in scaffolding: “support for developing language or content which is planned in advance by the teacher”.<sup>135</sup> Contingent scaffolding: “Immediate, on-the-spot scaffolding, which helps struggling learners to understand”.<sup>136</sup>

**TTO:** Bilingual education at secondary schools in The Netherlands, usually Dutch and English.

**VWO:** Preparatory Academic Education. Prepares students for university.

**Input Hypothesis:** A hypothesis based on the idea that “learners learn a language by exposure to language (input) that is just beyond what they already know”.<sup>137</sup> This is also sometimes known as the +1 theory.

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<sup>133</sup> CLIL, 254.

<sup>134</sup> CLIL, 254.

<sup>135</sup> CLIL, 250.

<sup>136</sup> CLIL, 251.

<sup>137</sup> CLIL, 252.