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| **Utopia** |
| The noun "utopia" refers to human efforts to create a perfect society that does not exist (yet). Ideas which could radically change our world for the better but are very difficult or impossible to realize are often labelled as "utopian". |
| Orgin of the word "Utopia" |
| The term "utopia" was first coined by **Sir Thomas More** as part of the title of his book *De* ***Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia*** (circa 1516), commonly known as ***Utopia***. The term is combined from two Greek words: "not" and  "place". Utopia therefore means "nowhere" or "nonexistent place". But there is more to it: More created the neologism (new word or expression, invented by the author) "utopia" from two existing Greek words: outopia (no place) and its homophone eutopia (good place). in the 19th century, the concept of a utopian society became closely connected with *socialist ideas* such as an egalitarian distribution of goods (i.e. everybody gets the same), often with a total abolition of money, and citizens only doingwork which they enjoyed and which was for the common good, leaving them with plenty of time to enjoy the arts and study the sciences. Especially after the two world wars, a ***global utopia of world peace*** was optimistically seen as one of the possible endings of history. In addition to this, there have always been ***religious utopias***, most often described as a garden of delights, a life free of worry in the middle of streets paved with gold. A scientific and technology utopia is the strong belief that one day science and technology will allow utopian living standards, like the absence of death, illness and suffering, and changes in human nature and the human condition. |
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| **Dystopia** |
| A dystopia, also called *anti-utopia* or *cacotopia* (alternative spelling: *kakotopia*), is the antithesis of the utopian society. It is usually characterized by a totalitarian or authoritarian from of government or some other kind of oppressive control. Writers of dystopian literature mostly engage their readers with something that is familiar to them since the dystopian society must have echoes of the readers' own experiences. Only if the readers can identify the patterns that might lead to the dystopia they are confronted with, can their reading become an involving and effective experience. |
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| Some typical traits of dystopian literature: |
| » War, revolution, rebellion, overpopulation, natural disaster or other climatic events have resulted in dramatic changes to society. |
| » The standard of living among the bulk of the population is generally poorer than in contemporary society. Only the ruling class is living in luxury. (An exception to this is, for example, ***Brave New World***, where all people enjoy a higher standard of living in exchange for a loss in intelligence, emotion and freedom). |
| » The reader is confronted with a protagonist who questions this society because he/she feels that something is terribly wrong. |
| » Since most dystopian literature is set in the future, it often feature technology more advanced than that of contemporary society. Usually, this advanced technology is controlled exclusively by the ruling class and used to help them to stay in power. |