Unit 1 — Dystopias — Teacher copy

Track E · Klasse 12 · Niveau E (Basisfach / Leistungsfach)

Niveau E

1. Reading

Read the text and use it for the activities below.

Reading — three extracts (paraphrased)

Orwell — 1984: The telescreen watched and broadcast simultaneously; Newspeak was designed to narrow the range of thought.

Huxley — Brave New World: Conditioning began in the bottle; soma dissolved discontent without argument; pleasure replaced suppression.

Atwood — The Handmaid's Tale: Ritual replaced law; reading was forbidden to women; the regime's language was scripture-coded ('Blessed be the fruit').

Vocabulary — literary dystopia

surveillance, complicity, conditioning, dehumanisation, ritualisation, language control, double-speak, totalitarianism, theocracy, biopolitics, complicity-of-the-comfortable, disciplinary apparatus, internal exile.

2. Practise

Niveau E — controlled

1. Match: 1984 → ?, Brave New World → ?, The Handmaid's Tale → ?
2. T or F: Orwell's regime forbids pleasure; Huxley's regime weaponises pleasure; Atwood's regime uses scripture-coded language.

Niveau E — productive

3. Build 4 close-reading sentences using literary-dystopia vocabulary on the three extracts.

3. Your turn

Comparative literary essay, 350 words. Trace one motif (language, ritual, surveillance) across the three texts. Use 3 integrated quotes + 5 academic discourse markers + 1 cleft.

Sample

The motif of language as instrument of control appears in all three canonical dystopias under discussion, but its function differs sharply. In Orwell's *1984*, Newspeak is engineered to *narrow the range of thought* — a deliberate, top-down linguistic project whose end-point is the impossibility of dissent. In Huxley's *Brave New World*, by contrast, the controlling language is advertising-bright: *a gramme is better than a damn*. The regime does not narrow vocabulary; it drowns dissent in cheerful, repetitive, consumer-coded phrases. Accordingly, Huxley's linguistic critique anticipates a register Orwell could not have predicted: the marketing register. In Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, language control takes a third form: scripture. Greetings — *Blessed be the fruit*; *May the Lord open* — replace ordinary speech, and the substitution is itself the regime's primary instrument. It is precisely this that makes Atwood's dystopia harder for the contemporary reader to pre-emptively reject: many readers grew up inside scripture-coded speech and recognise the rhythm without recognising the politics. More specifically, what each text is doing with language is different in kind, not merely in degree. Orwell shrinks; Huxley dilutes; Atwood ritualises. In this regard, the three texts function as a triangle: each names a control mechanism the others under-name. The reader's task is not to choose the most accurate dystopia but to notice that contemporary regimes typically deploy all three at once, calibrated to local conditions. The dystopian canon is, finally, less a prediction and more a vocabulary.

4. Further reading / listening

- George Orwell, *1984* (1949).
- Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932).
- Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985); also *The Testaments* (2019).

5. Teacher answer key

Controlled. 1. surveillance + linguistic / conditioning + pharmacological / ritual + scriptural.

2. F (Orwell suppresses dissent — pleasure is not the lever), T, T.

Productive. 3. Open.