Brave New World – Compared To Fahrenheit 451 Essay, Research Paper

Brave New World and Fahrenheit 451 are two books, both of which are supposed to be set in the future, which have numerous theme similarities throughout them. Of all their common factors, the ones that stand out most would have to be first, the outlawed reading of books; second, the preservation of health and youth at almost any cost and the keeping of people happy and stress-free; and third, the theme of the protagonist as being a loner or an outcast from society because of his differences in beliefs as opposed to the norm.

We’ll look first at the concept of outlawed reading. To us this sounds very strange. In the societies of both of these books, however, it is a common and almost completely unquestioned law. In Brave New World reading is something that all classes are conditioned against from birth. In the very beginning of the novel we see a group of infants who are given bright, attractive books but are exposed to an explosion and a shrieking siren when they reach out for them. This thus prevents them from wanting the books and causes them to scream and shrink away in horror at the mere sight of the books. In reference to the accomplishment of this conditioning, the director said, “Books and loud noises…already in the infant mind these couples are compromisingly linked; and after two hundred repetitions of the same or a similar lesson would be wedded indissolubly. What man has jointed, nature is powerless to put asunder,” (Huxley 21-22). We come to learn that the basic reasoning behind this conditioning against reading in Brave New World was because “you couldn’t have lower-caste people wasting the Community’s time over books, and there was always the risk of their reading something which might undesirably decondition one of their reflexes” (Huxley 22).

In Fahrenheit 451 the outlawing of book reading is taken to an even greater extent. In this novel the whole purpose of a “firefighter” isn’t to put out fires, rather it is to start fires. The reading of books in their society is completely forbidden and if someone is suspected of even owning a book, the firefighters are dispatched to go to that person’s residence and start a fire. They start fires for the sole purpose of destroying books, as illustrated here, “They pumped the cold fluid from the numeraled 451 tanks strapped to their shoulders. They coated each book, they pumped rooms full of it…’the whole house is going up’ ” (Bradbury 38).

Another common factor of the two novels is the extent to which each society works to preserve its people as both young and healthy and content. In Brave New World the people have soma, the feelies, they are never alone, they’re conditioned to like their job, and life for them is just made easy. Soma is what the people in Brave New World use to go on “holiday.” It is like the perfect drug with no side effects. It simply puts its users in a state of euphoria. According to Mustapha Mond himself, soma is to “calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering…anybody can be virtuous now” (Huxley 238). The feelies are yet another concept of the Brave New World designed simply for the comfort and enjoyment of the people. The people experience the movies in not only the visual sense, but they also feel and smell what is going on, almost as if it really is. The structure of their whole lifestyle is made in such a way so that the people are never alone. Mond even says,”But people never are alone…we make them hate solitude; and we arrange their lives so it’s almost impossible for them to ever have it” (Huxley 235). The different castes are also conditioned to like their jobs. This maintains stability because everyone does their job without complaint and remains happy. According to Mond, “they like their work…It’s light, it’s childishly simple. No strain on the mind or the muscles. Seven and a half hours of mild, unexhausting labour, and the the soma ration and games and unrestricted copulation and the feelies. What more can they ask for?” (Huxley224).

As far as life being made easy for them goes, Mond says, “There isn’t any need for a civilzed man to bear anything that’s seriously unpleasant” (Huxley 236). Similarly, in Fahrenheit 451, the people have television walls. We learn about their purpose, importance,and value from the character Mildred. In regards to the walls, Mildred tells Guy, “It’s really fun. It’ll be even more fun when we can afford to have the fourth wall installed…it’d be just like this room wasn’t ours at all, but all kinds of exotic people’s rooms” (Bradbury 20-21). As far as youth or health preservation goes, in the very beginning of Fahrenheit 451 we see an example of this. Guy comes home to find Mildred in bed, overdosed on pills. He called the emergency hospital and they came. “They had this machine. They had two machines, really. One of them slid down into your stomach like a black cobra down an echoing well looking for all the old water and the old time gathered there. It drank up the green matter that flowed to the top in a slow boil…the bloodstream in this woman was new and it seemed to have done a new thing to her. Her cheeks were very pink and her lips were very fresh and full of color and they looked soft and relaxed” (Bradbury 14, 16).

The final and one of the most evident of the similarities in these two books would have to be the fact that the main character in both books was basically an outcast or a loner from society. In Brave New World this is , at different times, a different character. First we meet Bernard Marx as our outcast. He thinks just a little more than the average man in his society. He and his friend Helmholtz Watson are two men who stand apart because they actually think rather than drone around like the rest of the people. Bernard is also much smaller than most other alphas and has a hard time both getting women and getting lower castes to do what he says. When speaking of Bernard, one of the women says, ” They say somebody made a mistake when he was still in the bottle- thought he was a Gamma and put alcohol in his blood-surrogate. That’s why he’s so stunted” (Huxley 46). It isn’t until Bernard gains guardianship over John that he is anything but an outcast. For the first time in his life he can get any woman he wants and he even believes he has power. However, after things fall apart and the savage is no longer under his control, Bernard goes back to being an outcast and is even eventually sent off to an island by himself. The second person viewed as an outcast in Brave New World would be John the savage. He never fits in while he lives on the reservation because of who his mother is and what she’d done to the reservation. He is constantly secluded from activities and looked down upon, as we see here, “He went with the others…suddenly one of the men stepped forward, caught him by the arm, and pulled him out of the ranks…’Not for you, white-hair!” (Huxley 136). Though he too has his period of acceptance when he comes to the Brave New World, he ultimately returns to his solitary ways. In the end, despite Mond’s wishes to continue with the research, John ran away and moved into an abandoned light tower to live as a recluse. Similarly, in Fahrenheit 451, Guy Montag is pretty much a loner himself. Though he is a firefighter, he secretly steals more and more books and the more he reads, the less he believes in burning them. He cannot tell anyone of this, even his wife, because they will surely turn him in. Eventually, though, Guy’s secret is discovered and the rest of the story consists of the chase after him by the police as well as the electronic hound. He makes his get away alone and though he meets others along the way, he travels alone. The other loner in this book is Clarisse. Clarisse new she was an outcast and even said, “I’m afraid of children my own age. They kill each other…I’m responsible. I was spanked when I needed it, years ago. And I do the shopping and house cleaning by hand” (Huxley 30).

Outlawed reading, contentment, youthfulness and health of the people, and society outcast- these three themes are, to me, the most evident in the two books. I find it incredibly fascinating that two different authors can both write books on the future and have them similar in so many ways. If you look past their similarities though, both of these books were very well written and really leave you wondering just what the future will hold.

Brave New World. Huxley, Aldous. Perennial Classics. New York, 1989.

Fahrenheit 451…The Temperature At Which Books Burn. Bradbury, Ray. Ballantine Books. New York, 1979.