

THE NOBEL PRIZE

In-depth: Utopias and Dystopias

Analyse a Utopia or Dystopia

A dystopia is a story or film that is set in a future in which something dramatic and horrible has happened to change the conditions for human life and for nature. Many utopias express grief over how much we are in the process of losing, but also a powerful desire to fight back and make everything right. The opposite of dystopia is utopia. A utopian story describes the perfect life in an ideal place or in the future. But it's hard to find utopias today. Can you think of one?



Discuss a utopia or a dystopia – a book or a film. Analyse why it played out the way it did and what we can do to create new futures for ourselves. Here are some questions that can move the discussion along:

How is the story structured?

- What happens in this story?
- When and where does the story take place?
- Which character is most important to the plot and why?

The driving force of the story – the conflict

- What is the problem or conflict?
- What has happened?
- Compare to our lives here and now – what are the differences?

The characters

- *Who* is the story about?
- What feelings does the transformed world awaken in the people in the story?
- What thoughts and feelings does it awaken in you?
- What consequences have the changes in the world had – for the characters or perhaps for everyone on earth?
- *Look for errors*: if you think the characters have made mistakes, what could they have done instead?

Hope and the future

- Does the story contain any kind of solution to the problem?
- Does anyone or anything in the story represent hope for the future?
- Does this story include any ideas about what the good life might look like?
- Does this story inspire you to see the future from a new perspective?

These questions were developed by Camilla Brudin Borg, PhD in literary criticism at the University of Gothenburg.