Utopias and Dystopias
Stories about the future and other worlds

- **Utopia**: depicts an ideal existence
- **Dystopia**: depicts a nightmarish or inhuman existence
Part 1: Utopias
Conceptions of the good life

- Paradise
- Plato’s ideal state
- Cockaigne
Utopia – the first literary utopia

Thomas More (1478-1535): utopian originator
Utopia – the nowhere land

“oú” (no) + “topia” (place) = utopia
Characteristics of the utopia genre

The main character:
- gets lost
- ends up in an imaginary country
- gets shown around and is astounded

The reader:
- understands the difference between their own world and the utopia.
Herland – a feminist utopia

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935)
Discuss: What different conceptions about women are expressed?
Modern utopias

What would a utopia that was written today look like?

BOOK COVER OF ERNEST CALLENBACH'S ECOTOPIA, BANTAM BOOKS, 1975

TORBJÖRN ENGSTRÖM'S SYSKONPLANETEN, ALFABETA BOKFÖRLAG, 1985
Part 2: Dystopias
How utopia turned to dystopia

Visions of good are replaced by visions of evil.
1984 – a dystopian vision of a total surveillance society

George Orwell
(1903-1950)
The Handmaid’s Tale – a feminist dystopia

Margaret Atwood
(b. 1939)
**Klara and the Sun** – about a future of artificial intelligence

Kazuo Ishiguro  
(b. 1954)
Related genres – science fiction

The War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells (1866-1946)
Related genres – climate fiction

- The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins
- Memory of Water by Emmi Itäranta
- The Threat, The Struggle and The Escape by Mats Söderlund
Utopias and dystopias: summary

Stories about the future and other worlds.