Definition: Brave New World from Brewer's Dictionary of Modern Phrase and Fable

A Dystopian novel (1932) by Aldous Huxley (1894-1963). Its portrayal of an imagined future world state in which men and women are processed into standardized batches by genetic engineering and lifelong conditioning was originally conceived as a challenge to the claims of H.G. Wells (1866-1946) for the desirability of eugenics. The title derives from Miranda's exclamation in Shakespeare's The Tempest:

O brave new world,
That has such people in't!

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See also First lines of novels.

Summary Article: Brave New World
from The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English

A novel by Aldous Huxley, first published in 1932. The title is taken from Miranda's words in The Tempest. 'O brave new world/ That has such people in't'

In the year 632 After Ford (i.e. the 26th century) the world has attained a kind of Utopia, in which the means of production are in state ownership and the principle 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need' is rigorously applied. Biological engineering fits different categories of workers - Alphas, Betas, Gammas, etc. - to their stations in life, and universal happiness is preserved by psychotropic drugs. As a stranger into this world comes the Savage, raised in a reservation of American Indian primitives. He takes up the arguments introduced by the disaffected intellectuals Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson, debating the merits of freedom and passion with World Controller Mustapha Mond. In the end, though, the Savage yields to the temptations of the carefree world, and kills himself in disgust.

Brave New World is frequently cited as a horrific work, though it is really a black comedy. It provides a scathing criticism of the values implicit in the myth of social salvation through technological expertise. Modern developments in biological engineering and psycho-chemistry have preserved, and perhaps increased, its relevance as an exercise in alarmism.

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