

## LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

Dear Mr. Huxley,

Half of the students in my school no longer understand how to use a reference book. I hear them ask over and over, “Why can’t we just use *Wikipedia*?” They’ve all become accustomed to simply typing a few key words into a search engine and having a neat, clean summary of the topic, complete with pictures and subtitles, hurled back. I’ve watched as the librarian patiently explains, yet again, why they need to learn the skill of using reference books instead of relying on possibly-fabricated evidence constructed by anonymous authors on the Internet. She presents the students with some incredibly valid points, yet the students still groan and mutter and shuffle off to the reference shelves to drag themselves through what they consider to be an archaic medium of learning—paper.

I’ve watched this epidemic of indifference spread slowly throughout my town. My friends don’t bother to use the telephone anymore; I simply get badly-structured messages via Facebook. Classmates in my English class rely on Sparknotes to understand Shakespeare instead of actually reading and thinking about his plays.

My generation is learning to take the easy way out. To me, it feels as if it is only a matter of time until society disintegrates into what your novel, *Brave New World*, presented—a mass of soulless bodies that have become lethargic and who are disinterested in individuality, spirituality, or progress.

I first read *Brave New World* in middle school. I tore through it, fascinated by how otherworldly this utopia seemed. I concentrated only on the ingenuity of manufactured humanity, on the ignorance of religion, and on the frank talk about sex and birth control. These were, at the time, interesting ideas to me. I had never thought of a world such as that, and that was how I first fell in love with your novel—superficially. I picked up *Brave New World* again, a few years after that first reading, thinking I would simply kill some time by rereading about that futuristic world. Once again, Mr. Huxley, your novel managed to astound me. This time, however, it wasn’t because of my fascination with what you imagined. This time I was chilled. I finally saw the root of the mindless world you had created in *Brave New World*. And I was startled to realize it was excessive sensuality and indulgence—in short, happiness.

It’s clear to me now: excess had ruined the minds and lives of every character you created. There was no love... only meaningless sex. Mothers were self-absorbed, caring only about drugging themselves to alleviate any kind of misery, even at the expense of their own sons. There was an overriding lack of spirituality. The utopia produced people according to class, with and their lives determined so they could avoid the pain of thought.

I was in a whirlwind of thought after rereading your novel. I took a second look at my life. I saw the struggling students, my unresponsive English classmates, and my rapidly-lengthening Facebook page in a new light. The students were no longer just victims of an undeveloped work ethic; they were victims of instant gratification, offered like candy by lecherous Internet search engines. The students in my English class were reinforcing their downward academic spiral and were no longer just victims of early senioritis. My Facebook, once a gauge of my popularity, was suddenly indicative of my friends' growing penchant for avoiding personal, meaningful contact.

Mr. Huxley, your book opened my eyes to a new way of looking at my world. I've learned to appreciate every aspect of my life—good and bad. I've come to recognize that tedium is a necessary part of my journey. Your book was devoid of true happiness in that it was devoid of struggle. I now appreciate that my generation can take the “easy way out” of nearly everything, but I'm not going to let that privilege consume me. With *Brave New World*, you have shown me that my circle of friends, my community, and my world require the personal sacrifice of time and energy to achieve meaningful happiness. Thank you for this gift.

Maggie Tighe  
Maryland Level 3