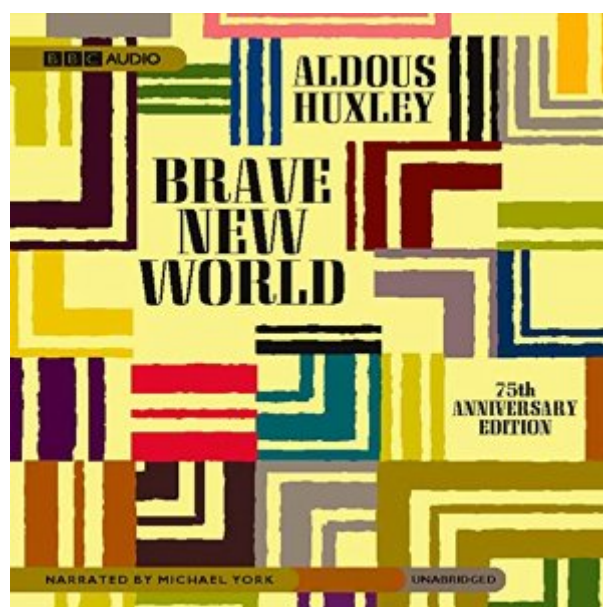


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Brave New World



Synopsis

Brave New World is a novel written in 1931 by Aldous Huxley and published in 1932. Set in London of AD 2540 (632 A.F. "After Ford" in the book), the novel anticipates developments in reproductive technology, sleep-learning, psychological manipulation, and classical conditioning that combine profoundly to change society. Huxley answered this book with a reassessment in an essay, Brave New World Revisited (1958), and with Island (1962), his final novel. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 8 hours and 5 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Blackstone Audio, Inc.

Audible.com Release Date: January 16, 2008

Language: English

ASIN: B0012QED5Y

Best Sellers Rank: #23 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Classics #43 in Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish #90 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Classics

Customer Reviews

Brave New World is an excellent book and, what's more, one that seems to be becoming more relevant all the time in our fast paced world. And unlike many other books with a similar philosophical orientation, Brave New World is quite refreshing, as Huxley's prose is somehow manages to be clear, elegant and insightful without being overly obvious. As regards the actual plot, Brave New World is in essence a portrayal of a utopia (or dystopia, depending how you look at it) in which there is constant prosperity, people are always content, as they are well provided for and have been programmed to like their society in all respects. This programming is undertaken by workers in charge of breeding the future citizens of this idyllic world, which is united under one government, under Ford. As everybody has been programmed to like their class and job, everybody is constantly content and has no wish to do anything other than what is required of them. If they happen to become depressed, of course, there is always the mood altering drug Soma. Through presenting a few individuals who do not exactly fit into this molded world, however, Huxley presents us with a challenging and endlessly interesting question: What can possibly be wrong with a world in

which everybody is happy, even if there is no real free will involved in actuality? If we can make ourselves superficially content and never have to suffer a moment of desperation or uncertainty, why not just do that? With the help of William Shakespeare and a young man from a "savage reservation," Huxley explores the alternatives to his invented society's promotion of mindless satisfaction. Should true art and the deep thought and emotion that inspires it be sacrificed to perpetual happiness without thought or deeper feeling?

As critic and best-selling author Neil Postman points out so well in the introduction to his book "Amusing Ourselves To Death", we have congratulated ourselves prematurely by figuring we made it past the totalitarian nightmare state depicted in George Orwell's gripping cautionary tale "1984". Perhaps, Postman suggests, we should remember another visionary totalitarian nightmare scenario and use it to critically examine the contemporary state of social and psychological well-being. Of course he was referring to Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World, written before Orwell's by 15 or so years, and even more frightening in its own way in the world it describes. More and more, that frightening vision looks like our contemporary world. Picture his ironic portrait of a populace doped into Nirvana on "soma" (read Prozac and Zoloft), isolated and diverted by petty preoccupations in mindless trivial pursuits (read video games and internet surfing to all the porno sites), oblivious to anything not directly pertaining to themselves and totally unaware of the degree to which they are being socially, economically, and politically co-opted. Beginning to sound more familiar? Remember, says Huxley, brute force is not the only method an oligarchy can use to influence, manage, and finally control our hard-won freedoms and liberties; it can be done with over-indulgence and the deliberate fertilization and promulgation of apathy through self-absorption, as well.

I've put off reviewing Brave New World, as I thought I wouldn't be able to give an unbiased review. But, after re-reading the book for the tenth time (or so), I decided to give it a shot. Brave New World is the most important science fiction novel ever written. Not necessarily the best, not necessarily the best-written, but the most important. It is very good and very well written, but those are subjective points open to debate. Brave New World, published some ten years before Orwell's more popular, anti-Communist 1984, imagines a world where people are conditioned from the moment of their birth to be part of an economic and intelligence-based caste, where the media exists for the sole purpose of distracting people from the humdrum of their lives and news is created as sensationalist entertainment, where different thinking is treated with social ostracization or drugs or both, and where the rule of the entire society is maximizing consumption of material goods. In short, not unlike

the world today, and America in particular. BNW (the society outlined in the book) is a Capitalist and Freudian Hell, where people are manipulated to buy things they don't need and conditioned to be perfect molds for that manipulation. The book follows three main characters: Helmholtz, a reporter who realizes the truth about BNW, Bernard Marx, a man who ultimately succumbs to the ostracizing criticism of his so-called "friends," and John Savage, an outsider who grew up with books and without the benefit of BNW's conditioning. All three eventually come to the same conclusions about BNW: that it is a society based on dictatorship-like control for the sole purpose of increasing consumer-base for a large, unnamed corporation-government.

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