

Dystopia

Perfection at a price

A utopia is a perfect world; a dystopia is a deeply imperfect world. A dystopian society keeps people down. Often, the leader(s) claim the society is a utopia, a perfect place. That “perfection” comes at a price—freedom.

A dystopia is an oppressive society

To oppress means to exercise authority in a heavy and burdensome manner—unjustly and cruelly. Individual freedom slips away, or is a distant memory.

A dystopia presents a “solution” to a problem or issue

In a dystopia, the society has devised a solution that takes the problem to the opposite extreme. The solution doesn’t just solve the problem, it controls lives.

Write about an issue you understand. Make it personal and relatable.

- Fairness and unfairness
- One group treated differently than another (gender, skin color, etc.)
- Bullying, targeting one citizen or one certain group
- Censorship (controlling media messages)
- Media overtaking us—TV, computer, social media, constant connectivity
- School issues: too much homework, unfair rules, too much testing

Describe your society

How is your dystopia governed? Here are some ideas to consider:

- Who has the power? A king or dictator, a group, or the masses?
- How are the powerless treated in your dystopia?
- Is there a concept of personal property or is everything shared? Is the sharing of resources fair? Do people like the system?
- Is this societal organization new or has it been around a while? Does your main character remember when things were different? Does anyone who is alive in this society? Can anyone imagine a different way to live?

Will the hero overcome oppression?

In your dystopia, the main character does not have to overcome oppression. He or she might become a victim of the oppression or even become an oppressor.

Your story will be more inspiring if the character fights back in some way.

- ◆ Small scale: freeing your mind, finding freedom in a friendship or romance, subverting (destroying the system from within while seeming to fit in)
- ◆ Large scale: rebellion, revolution, uprising

Your dystopia will be more compelling if it follows the Hero's Journey.

Planning a Dystopia

Characters	Problem
<p>Main character</p> <p>Other characters</p>	<p>Dystopian solution</p> <p>Power structure</p> <p>Overcoming oppression</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Events in the Hero's Journey</p> <p>Beginning (exposition): Show the hero's problem and the event that starts the adventure.</p> <p>Middle: The hero encounters oppression and prepares to take a stand (or not.) The scenes set the stage for the climax, where the hero will either overcome oppression or fall prey to it.</p> <p>CLIMAX: Everything is on the line...it's do or die. This is the most exciting part of story.</p> <p>Wrap-up: Tie up the loose ends. Reward the good characters and punish the bad ones. Does the dystopian society continue, or will there be change? Will the change be good, or do you set up a new dystopian society for the sequel?</p>	