

Dystopian Summaries and Features

Use the following to practice identifying dystopian features and see summaries.

George Orwell: 1984

The story takes place in an imagined future, the year 1984, when much of the world has fallen victim to perpetual war, omnipresent government surveillance, historical negationism, and propaganda.

Great Britain, known as *Airstrip One*, has become a province of a totalitarian superstate named *Oceania* that is ruled by the *Party* who employ the *Thought Police* to persecute individuality and independent thinking.

Big Brother, the leader of the Party, enjoys an intense cult of personality. The protagonist, Winston Smith, is a diligent and skillful worker who secretly hates the Party and dreams of rebellion. He enters into a forbidden relationship with a colleague, Julia, and starts to remember what life was like before the Party came to power.

Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Scott Westerfeld: Uglies

Three hundred years in the future, the government provides for everything, including plastic surgery operations. Everyone on their sixteenth birthday receives the "pretty" operation which transforms them into the society's standard of beautiful. After the operation, new Pretties cross the river that divides the city and lead a new life with no responsibilities or obligations.

Former cities have decayed after bacteria infected the world's petroleum, making it unstable. The old society, so dependent on oil, fell apart when cars and oil fields exploded and food could no longer be transported. People who lived before this catastrophe are called "Rusties."

Tally Youngblood is almost sixteen. Like every other Ugly, she awaits the operation but she discovers the operation also causes lesions in the brain to make the people "pretty-minded." Horrified, Tally decides to rebel against the system.

Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Andrew Niccol: Gattaca

In the "not-too-distant" future, a genetic registry database classifies created people as "valids" while those conceived by traditional means and more susceptible to genetic disorders are known as "in-valids".

Vincent Freeman is conceived without the aid of genetic selection. He dreams of a career in space travel but is always reminded of his genetic inferiority.

Vincent works as an in-valid, cleaning office spaces including that of Gattaca Aerospace Corporation, a spaceflight conglomerate. He gets a chance to pose as a valid by using hair, skin, blood and urine samples from a donor, Jerome Eugene Morrow, a former swimming star who was paralyzed after being hit by a car. With

Jerome's genetic makeup, Vincent gains employment at Gattaca, and is assigned to be navigator for an upcoming trip to Saturn's moon Titan. To keep his identity hidden, Vincent must pass daily DNA scanning and urine tests using Jerome's samples, and hide his heart defect.

Gattaca becomes embroiled in controversy when one of its administrators is murdered a week before the flight. The police find a fallen eyelash of Vincent's at the scene. An investigation is launched to find the owner of the eyelash, considering them the top suspect, making his plans to become a navigator very difficult to achieve.

Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Veronica Roth: Divergent

In the future, Beatrice Prior lives in a post-apocalyptic Chicago in which society has been divided into five factions: *Abnegation*, *Amity*, *Candor*, *Dauntless*, and *Erudite*.

Beatrice, a member of Abnegation, explores her identity within a society that defines its citizens by their social and personality-related affiliation and removes the threat of anyone exercising independent will. Beatrice falls in love and starts questioning the world around her, making her a dangerous divergent person.

Source: [Wikipedia](#)