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Facilitation of critical thinking and ethical awareness by reading dystopian literature

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Abstract

This thesis explores the potential of dystopian literature to facilitate critical thinking and ethical awareness, drawing on the theories of Martha Nussbaum and Wayne C. Booth to provide a theoretical framework for analysis. The study focuses on two classic dystopian novels, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. It analyzes how these novels invite reflections on societal issues and the self and depict critical thinking as important. Through close readings and analysis of specific passages, the analysis demonstrates how dystopian literature can be used to promote critical thinking and ethical awareness. By collecting empirical data, this argumentation can be bolstered further, and is a possible next step for this field.

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1 Introduction

“The principal goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done; men and women who are creative, inventive, and discoverers, who can be critical and verify, and not accept, everything they are offered.”

- Jean Piaget, 1973

The quote from Jean Piaget stems from his work *“To Understand is to Invent: The Future of Education.”* Although the quote was written in 1973, it is still highly relevant in current education. I root the quote’s relevance in one of the six core values listed in the new Norwegian curriculum that came into effect in 2020 (kunnskapsdepartementet). The core value in mention is “critical thinking and ethical awareness.” Piaget’s quote emphasizes how the new generation should not simply maintain the status quo but evolve society further. The subsection on critical thinking states that pupils should learn to assess sources critically while being inquisitive and posing questions to the world around them. The curriculum subsection also emphasizes how self-reflection is needed to understand that our experiences, points of view, and beliefs may be erroneous or incomplete (Kunnskapsdepartementet). When new insight inevitably emerges, critical thinking is vital in evaluating how we look at already-established ideas. Through this process, we decide whether the new ideas add to established ideas or if established ideas must be wholly scrutinized (Kunnskapsdepartementet). The curriculum uses the term established ideas, but it is to be understood as the current knowledge we have about different subjects, meaning that new research could expand or disprove this current knowledge.

Piaget’s quote was written in 1973, and it is safe to say that access to information through different media sources has increased since then. A study conducted in the USA in 2021 showed that 70 percent of Americans consumed news on social media compared to 5% percent in 2008, which is a significant increase (Levy 831). Levy also addresses the implications of consuming news on social media, which tend to be pro-attitudinal. By pro-attitudinal, Levy means that the news available on social media tends to reinforce the users, existing beliefs because users are more likely to consume news they agree with (Levy 868). Naturally, this leads to less exposure to challenging beliefs, which can become a problem if the ability to accept challenging beliefs and debate important issues in Norwegian society (as

a part of Western society) declines as a result (ibid). This roots the importance of critical thinking in current society and further underlines why its presence in the curriculum is important.

Levy's study ties closely to the values of the Norwegian curriculum. The curriculum states that we should be critical and verify, not just accept the first piece of information we discover (Kunnskapsdepartementet). Cross-checking with other sources is crucial in modern society. Much information is consumed through a media channel where much of the medium is a one-way stream of information. By "one-way stream," I mean it is not a medium we can interact with. For example, television only presents information as a news report, where the viewer cannot ask questions directly. This means that if you consume the same channel, day in and day out, without cross-checking the information, the channel you watch effectively controls a large portion of what you believe to be true. Social media like Facebook and Twitter allow for two-way communication, which means encountering opposing beliefs and ideas. However, if social media tends to show pro-attitudinal content, already-held beliefs are still reinforced to a certain degree. Confirming and cross-checking information is also emphasized in Facione's article "Critical Thinking: What is it and Why it counts." Facione formulates it as a "concern to remain well informed" and mentions this as a trait of the ideal critical thinker (27).

Cross-checking information and remaining well-informed is undoubtedly essential, but it only accounts for a portion of what is considered "critical thinking." Critical thinking is not a skill you either have or do not have, but rather it is a process. Facione defines the process of critical thinking as "interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation" (5). A definition of critical thinking that expands on the concept is Ennis' definition cited in Schpeizer "[Critical thinking is] reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (34). Going off Ennis' definition and the process presented by Facione, critical thinking is a process we engage in to decide what we believe, further determining what we do. This is also reflected in the curriculum in the subsection on critical thinking and ethical awareness, which states that critical thinking is a tool required to learn in different contexts and will help pupils develop good judgment (Kunnskapsdepartementet). As the considerations above suggest, this core value is more nuanced than at first reading. Critical thinking and ethical awareness as a core value did not "click" initially. This is because the correlation between critical thinking is not explained in the curriculum and is presented vaguely. However, through working with this core value, I

understood that the purpose of having these two values together is that the process of critical thinking is a tool for developing good judgment, which leads to ethical awareness.

The presence of critical thinking and ethical awareness as a core value in the curriculum means it is a skill that is kept in high regard in our society. In the English curriculum, under “core elements,” there is a subsection called “working with texts” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, English). The subsection states, “By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society” (ibid). The English curriculum’s focus on work with texts is weighted towards intercultural competence and understanding of others. In this thesis I expand the utility of working with literature to critical thinking and how reading literature facilitates more than intercultural competence and the understanding of others. My goal for this thesis is to show how literature invites the reader to reflect and think, thus facilitating critical thinking. Carlsen et al. supports this argument stating that the curriculum leaves room for many approaches to working with literature. Engaging with texts through interpretation and analysis of their social criticism leads to reflections on society and the self which are components in the process of critical thinking (Kunnskapsdepartementet).

Considering this core value in relation to literature, Martha Nussbaum argues for literature’s ability to facilitate empathy and compassion (Nussbaum 43). Wayne C. Booth’s works present a metaphor of literature as a “friend”. This “friend” in the form of a novel has ideas embedded in them which we are forced to critically assess and evaluate while comparing them to our current experiences and beliefs (Nussbaum, 44). Nussbaum and Booth’s ideas speak to literature’s ability to develop thought patterns and beliefs considered important in the core value “critical thinking and ethical awareness” (Kunnskapsdepartementet).

For my analysis I chose to analyze dystopian literature. I chose dystopian literature because I had knowledge of works within the genre that I deemed thought-provoking and suited for this thesis. Additionally, dystopian fiction has had success in past years with *The Maze Runner*, *Hunger Games*, and *Divergent* series becoming largely popular among the youth. The popularity of dystopias indicates that the genre contains elements that pupils find entertaining. This can serve as motivation for pupils to read and help them engage with the text. Additionally, if the pupils are familiar with other dystopian works, they can make

connections and reflections on what they already know through movies and other forms of entertainment.

Throughout my degree I took particular interest in the dystopian genre and its mechanism for delivering its ideas or social criticism. The dystopian genre is often associated with “cautionary tales” or “predictions on the future” but can in short be defined as a text that presents a pessimistic and detailed depiction of the very worst of social alternatives. Another way of describing dystopian literature is that it takes an aspect of society and exaggerates it. (Moylan 147). Dystopian literature can also be described as following a model of “if this goes on” (Fitting 141). There is a large body of literature on this genre that elaborates beyond the elements I mention in this paragraph, but these are the core elements relevant for this thesis.

The novels I have chosen to analyze is George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*. The main reason for choosing these novels is that they depict suppression of thinking, which leads to reflections on government control and thinking. The novels also emphasize values related to the core value critical thinking and ethical awareness in addition to provoking thoughts on government control, freedom, and media consumption.

The novels depict deeply intriguing societies, which leads to reflections on our own society. Following the characters that live in the depicted society leads to additional self-reflections in trying to understand the characters. Additionally, both novels also follow the model of “if this goes on” where “this” typically refers to patterns in society or politics that are concerning. These patterns are exaggerated in the dystopia, showing the reader what can become of the world if the issues in mind are not addressed. *Fahrenheit 451* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* executes the dystopian “if this goes on” model in a thought-provoking way that invites the reader to think critically of themselves and the environment around them (Fitting, 141).

In this thesis, I will therefore argue that dystopian novels invite critical thinking and are suited for the development of critical thinking in education. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Fahrenheit 451* both novels present societies where critical thinking is either suppressed or has lost its perceived value. Additionally, both novels present a counter-narrative where the protagonist begins to question his own society and eventually stands against the regime. Both novels have also stood the test of time as they were written around the 1950s and remain highly relevant today. An example of this is the 2018 release of a movie adaptation of *Fahrenheit 451*. The news article reads: “The dystopian tale of a government censoring ideas and thoughts by any means possible is as poignant in 2018 as it was in the Cold War” (Brouk). Additionally, *Nineteen Eighty Four’s* modern influence is evident by the fact that at “Trump’s inauguration...sales of the novel spiked by 9,500 percent” (Waddell, 5).

A large body of criticism exists on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Fahrenheit 451*. Keith M. Booker argues that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* refers to the oppressive regime under Stalin in Russia and echoes Hitler’s nazi regime in Germany in several ways. Booker further argues that the novel serves as a plea to remember the past and learn from it so that we do not make the same mistakes. Another important point taken from the novel is how the complacency of the masses gives opportunity for abuse of power by those in powerful positions (Booker 213-214). Bernard Crick emphasizes the importance of reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the context of its time. Crick writes on different readings of the novel, stating that the novel has been read as a: “deterministic prophecy as a kind of science fiction or a dystopia, as a conditional projection of the future, as a humanistic satire on contemporary events, as a total rejection of socialism of any kind”(Crick 143).

Crick continues to argue that the novel is a protest against totalitarian tendencies and abuse of power in other societies and his own. Crick reiterates how most bad or partial readings occur from reading the novel outside the context of its time, the post-war period (ibid). Waddell agrees with this but mentions in his book that the novel reflects ideals and attitudes on power that necessarily are not vanquished from the earth yet. Waddell draws forward Orwell’s own words describing the novel “as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralized economy is liable... and had already been partly realized in Communism and Fascism” (Waddell 4). Waddell further emphasizes the words of Orwell himself on why the novel is set in Britain. The novel was set in Britain to showcase that the dangers of totalitarianism, if left unchecked, could triumph everywhere (ibid). The novel is described as a novel that is trying to tell us something, and a novel that has a point to make, but Waddell

states that we should be wary of seeing the novel only as a message. A quotation from Hence Warburg is included in Waddell's book which is in line with other critics cited which emphasizes that the reader has the power to avoid the society depicted in the novel. Waddell also mentions the novels relevance to young readers, where he argues that the "novel confirms to many young readers that something is rotten in the state" (Ibid). The novel also shows how the world we know can consist of carefully constructed lies which we are encouraged to accept without questioning it. Waddell also emphasize how statistics, information and knowledge can be handpicked and presented to be in line for what is needed for the "status quo" (Waddell, 5). It is also important to mention that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* often is compared and thought to be inspired by Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

Fahrenheit 451 much like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a widely criticized work. David Mogen states that *Fahrenheit 451* have been criticized of "vagueness and sentimentality" (Mogen, 63) it is still considered one of the most prominent works of science fiction satire as a cautionary tale. Critics agree on Bradbury's satirical target, which is anti-intellectualism and reductionist philosophy (ibid). In comparison to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Fahrenheit 451* does not have an oppressive Big Brother. The target of Bradbury's criticism according to Mogen is the small-mindedness of the common person (63). The totalitarian power in *Fahrenheit 451* stems from the pleasure of consuming mindless media rather than the fear and government oppression (Ibid.). Mogen cites Kingsley Amis which defends Bradbury's vagueness arguing that Bradbury works through key symbols to achieve the wanted effect, rather than keen detail like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Ibid). Similarly, Rafeeq O. McGiveron argues the message Bradbury wants to put forward, which is the dangers of mass exploitation and how it can lead to decline of thought (1).

Nineteen Eighty-Four with its depiction of a totalitarian regime in which propaganda and surveillance force citizens to their will. *Fahrenheit 451* presents another angle where media consumption has spiraled out of control and complex ideas and thoughts are considered useless and frustrating. Both novels depict scenes that invite the reader to reflect on their own society and actions, which is my main argument as to why dystopian novels can be used to facilitate critical thinking. Another reason for choosing these novels is that they can be taught at different educational levels, from lower secondary school to elected subjects focusing on literature in upper secondary. The intended group for this thesis is levels 8-13. The novels can be taught by looking at a historical perspective and the contemporary issues the novels

criticized or allow for modern interpretation of the works bringing reflections on whether the issues are still relevant today.

The chosen method for analyzing the two novels is a close reading approach. This involves a re-reading of the novels where elements of the text are actively examined. For my close reading I chose to look at setting, characters, and themes. Through the establishment of a theoretical framework, I will discuss the novels I analyzed in my close reading. I have based my dystopian theory on *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, *The Palgrave Handbook of Utopian and Dystopian Literature* and *the Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. These works discuss the development and history of the dystopian genre which is important to discuss when arguing for facilitation of critical thinking through dystopian literature. Theory on critical thinking is based on Facione's work *Critical thinking: What It Is and Why it Counts*, which defines and discusses critical thinking's importance to society and why it is important in education.

To back up my argumentation of literature's ability to facilitate critical thinking I have drawn from the ideas of Martha Nussbaum's *Love's Knowledge* and Wayne C. Booth's *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* and *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. The works of these two literary critics speak to literature's ability to facilitate thought patterns involved in the process of critical thinking. Nussbaum's theory is centered around the development of empathy, which has relevance to my thesis in that I argue for literature's ability to facilitate the core value critical thinking and ethical awareness in the curriculum. Nussbaum's theory on development of empathy in literature is mostly related to the ethical awareness part of this core value.

Booth's ideas are therefore related towards the critical thinking part of the core value. Booth's theory argues that the reader constructs an implied author attributed to the work, which represents the beliefs, values, and intentions of the work. This relates to critical thinking because the exposure to the beliefs and values of the implied author brings reflections on our own beliefs and values.

2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework will give the reader a definition of dystopian literature and the genre's history and development. This section will also explain the term critical thinking and critical thinking's place as a core value in the curriculum. After defining the key terms involved with critical thinking, I will introduce the theorists central to my thesis. I have summarized the ideas from works of Martha Nussbaum and Wayne C. Booth. The theorists argue for literature's ability to facilitate empathy, compassion, reasoning and critical thinking.

2.1 Critical Thinking

In 2015 a report from the department of knowledge regarding the renewal of the curriculum was presented to the Storting. In this report a clear emphasis was put on development of critical thinking in the education and the importance of educating citizens which are critical thinkers (Meld St 2015). The report from the department of knowledge emphasizing critical thinking in renewal of the curriculum culminated in the core value listed as "critical thinking and ethical awareness" (Kunnskapsdepartementet). In the succeeding curriculum in the subsection "the purpose of education," we find the following statement "The pupils and apprentices shall learn to think critically and act ethically" (Utdanningsdirektoratet).

The emphasis on critical thinking is further specified in "the core values of the education and training" where we find a section named "critical thinking and ethical awareness" (Utdanningsdirektoratet). This subsection explains how schools should help and encourage pupils to be inquisitive and ask questions. This subsection also encompasses scientific thinking and methodology and how pupils should be able to apply reason in a systematic way to solve problems (Utdanningsdirektoratet) Another important skill that is included in this subsection is how to assess sources critically and how knowledge is continuously changing through new insights and research. The pupils must understand that there must be a balance between existing knowledge and new explorative pursuits in the field to develop new knowledge. As people, we make judgments and act on those judgments, therefore, it is important to be able to critically reflect and evaluate before a judgment is made (Utdanningsdirektoratet). In the subsection "learning to learn" in the core curriculum, it is stated that education should help pupils to understand their own learning processes. This ties into critical thinking because pupils are developing the ability to monitor their own learning. This means being conscious about how we learn and being able to question our own learning

strategies. This means evaluating your own learning processes and finding ways to improve them. In a classroom setting, this could be that a pupil notices they are learning more effectively when discussing with their peers. Knowing this the pupil can actively engage in more discussion with their peers and thus improve their learning. This conscious way of monitoring your own learning processes is meant to develop pupils that can learn throughout life, long after they finish education. The ability to monitor your own learning is necessary in the rapidly changing modern world. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, learning to learn).

Although critical thinking is emphasized in the curriculum and in the report from the department of knowledge no thorough definition of critical thinking is provided. Despite this most teachers and people in general have an idea of what critical thinking is or at least the outcome of critical thinking done correctly. “The result of critical thinking is a good decision or action” (Facione 1). A good decision or action can be many things but relating it to a classroom setting this would be to act with consideration for your classmates. Like any other subject, the English classroom is full of pupils with different skill levels. In my experience as a teacher speaking English can be a source of insecurity for many pupils. This means acting with consideration and making everyone feel comfortable in the classroom can be defined as a “good decision or action”.

Another way of describing critical thinking is careful and thorough thinking, but this is still not enough information to be able to develop a pupil’s critical thinking skills in a classroom. John Dewey’s definition of critical thinking (Dewey’s calls it reflective thinking) is “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 6). Another shorter and widely used definition of critical thinking is stems from the works of Ennis cited in Shpeizer “[Critical thinking is] reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do” (34). Shpeizer states that the motivation and purpose of critical thinking is “establishing ways to understand, evaluate, and construct arguments that appear and function in real-life language and situations” (100).

That critical thinking is a process of thought with the purpose of understanding, evaluating, and constructing arguments meant to fuel our beliefs, decisions and actions is clear. However, what abilities and traits goes into this process of thinking? And what skills does a “good” critical thinker possess? This is one of the questions posed by an expert panel tasked with defining critical thinking cited in Facione’s article “Critical thinking: What is it

and why it counts”. The expert panel consisted of 46 men and women from different scholarly disciplines throughout USA and Canada (Facione 1). The expert panel established a consensus of six skills that formed the core of critical thinking. These skills were interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation (Facione 5). Interpretation is described as “comprehending and expressing the meaning or significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgements, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures or criteria” (Facione 5). Analysis is to “identify the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, concepts, descriptions, or other forms of representation intended to express belief, judgement, experiences, reasons, information and opinions” (ibid). Evaluation is:

To assess the credibility of statements or other representations which are accounts of a person’s perception, experience, situation, judgement, belief or opinion; and to assess the the logical strength of the actual or intended relationships among statements descriptions, questions and other forms of representation (Facione 6).

Inference means to “to identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form conjectures and hypotheses; to consider relevant information and to deduce the consequences” (ibid). An example of inference is to see the implication of someone’s argumentative position or to predict the outcome of current forces at work. Explanation, which is the fifth skill considered to be at the core of critical thinking. Means to present a coherent argument consisting of evidence and justification for one’s reasoning which is in accordance with methodological and contextual criteria (ibid). The last skill that makes up the core skills of critical thinking is self-regulation. The self-regulation skill is about monitoring oneself and finding ways to improve our reasoning and thinking in other areas. In self-regulation we examine possible influences and personal biases and double-checking that our reasoning and arguments is valid (Facione, 7).

In relation to reading literature the skills of interpretation and analysis are the most central. However, in the work with dystopian literature, the pupils are presented with a society with exaggerated aspects in the form of an “if this goes on” model. This model invites the reader to reflect on and evaluate their own society. The “if this goes on” model invites the skill of inference, meaning that pupils must use the knowledge and information they have on their society and infer whether they think society is headed in the direction of the dystopia or not. If they conclude that society is indeed heading in a negative direction, and that they are

contributing to this development. This process of thinking, provoked by reading dystopian literature takes the pupil through interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference and explanation which are five of the six skills involved in the process of critical thinking presented by Facione (7). The insight developed through this process provides a foundation of judgement in which the pupils can use to self-regulate their behavior, beliefs and values.

Although important in education, the development of critical thinking is a skill that pupils are supposed to utilize outside of school and the educational setting. Characterizations of how the skill of critical thinking can be utilized is presented in Facione's article. Similarly to the curriculum, a general "Inquisitiveness" to a range of issues is described as something the ideal critical thinker exercises in daily life. Inquisitiveness and a "concern to remain well informed" which is the next characterization, are two characterizations that is relevant to each other. Drawing on the example from the covid-19 pandemic, an inquisitive person with a concern to remain well-informed would seek to validate the information presented to them and be open to adjusting their knowledge based on new insights that are presented. Being open to new insights is also a part of other characterizations, which include "open-mindedness" and "flexibility in considering alternatives and opinions". The last characterization made is acknowledging biases, prejudices, stereotypes, and self-interests and how these factors affect our decisions and actions (Facione 11). The attitudes and approaches to life listed in the characterization of the ideal critical thinker can be found throughout the core curriculum. The subsections I am referring to are "critical thinking and ethical awareness", "purpose of the education," and "Learning to learn" (Utdanningsdirektoratet).

After defining the term critical thinking Facione asks the question "Why critical thinking?" To answer this question, a study done to test the effectiveness of critical thinking instruction is presented. The research showed correlation between results on a test used to measure critical thinking ability and school performance. It is also pointed out that there is a correlation between critical thinking skills and reading comprehension (Facione 23). If a pupil is able to exercise critical thinking and read better, this would naturally result in better school performance, as the results also show. However, better reading and school performance can be viewed as a limited benefit and are not considered the end goal of the development of critical thinking in education.

The answer to "why critical thinking?" Can be found in the curriculum. The purpose of developing critical thinking is for the pupils to go beyond what teachers and professors say.

The purpose of the education is to develop independent pupils that are no longer reliant on a teacher, professor, or parent to provide information and knowledge. Critical thinking is certainly a tool for solving problems in the classroom, but also a tool in everyday life and how we develop as a person (Facione, 25). In a democratic society where everyone has a vote it is important that citizens are able to gather information, process, evaluate, discuss with others and come to their own decision as a result of critical thinking. This point ties critical thinking to yet another subsection of the curriculum, the interdisciplinary topic “democracy and citizenship” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, Democracy and Citizenship). The way critical thinking tie into this topic is how the pupil reflects on their role in a democracy and how they engage in the democracy. Facione points out the implications of a community of voters that do not exercise any of the core skills of critical thinking. Interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation would not be exercised by these citizens and stereotypes, biases and other factors of influence would govern their decisions. This would make people easily exploitable (Facione, 25). Facione also roots the importance of critical thinking in history. Using totalitarian regimes as examples Facione states that assaults on learning and thinking was used as a tool for maintaining control and crush opposition in these regimes. Facione speaks to the consequences the totalitarian regimes brought with them. These consequences were disintegration of cultures, collapse of communities and unspeakable numbers of deaths (Facione, 25-26). Facione speaks to the importance of critical thinking in this contexts as the process of critical thinking stands in opposition to such regimes and ideology because critical thinking means being open minded and caring of truth (Ibid).

To conclude Facione’s article, the expert panel issues an expert consensus statement on critical thinking and the ideal critical thinker. The statements begin with a definition of critical thinking.

We understand critical thinking to be purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based (Facione, 27).

Furthermore, the essence of what the expert panel defines as an ideal critical thinker is someone that is inquisitive, open-minded and fair-minded. A person that thinks rationally while taking their own biases into account when evaluating and making judgements. The

ideal critical thinker is able to reconsider when facts and arguments change the perspective on previous insights (Facione, 27).

2.2 Dystopia

Dystopian literature can be described as cautionary tales or predictions of the future but can also be described as a work that dramatically exaggerates an aspect of society. Dystopias presents a society or world that has developed in a negative direction and have become the very worst of social alternatives (Moynan, 147).

Within the realm of the dystopian genre (or utopian genre for those who consider dystopia a subgenre of utopia) it is important to have a clear picture of what utopia, anti-utopia and dystopia implies. In the *Cambridge companion to utopian literature* Fitting defines the three terms in a short and concise manner:

“I think that it is important to distinguish the utopia (a term which I use to mean the eutopia or positive utopia) from the dystopia which follows the model of ‘if this goes on’: a future in which some aspect of the present had continued and worsened. This last term should be distinguished from the anti-utopia, which is an equally dismal future, but one which is intended as a criticism of utopianism or of some eutopia” (Fitting, 135)

Embodying “the opposite of eutopia” Dystopian literature offers a view of an alternative world in vast detail where social and political developments is presented with a pessimistic view.

In Fitting’s definition he states that dystopian texts follow the model of “if this goes on” which is a key part in understanding how social critique presents itself in dystopian texts. The model of “if this goes on” implies that our society or aspects of society is heading in an unfavorable direction and a change is needed (Fitting, 141). The “if this goes on” model is something I consider to be relatively easy to grasp and is a suited starting point for introducing pupils to the genre.

Although dystopian texts present a pessimistic view, some novels retain an outlook of hope, while other dystopian novels close the door on that hopeful outlook (Moynan, 148). The typical narrative structure of dystopian texts is described as a counter-narrative. The texts typically start in medias res in the alternative hellish world where the reader is alienated to the

world they are presented with. Although in the hellish world everything is as normal. Then the counter-narrative ensues and a character or several characters that before was content in the dystopic world, begins to question or doubt the society around them which subsequently ends in a confrontation between the character and the dystopic world they live in (Moylan 148). The counter-narratives are something I will focus on in my analysis as the counter-narrative is a result of the characters awakening to critical thinking.

Dystopian literature allows for development of critical thinking because of the way it presents an exaggerated society, “if this goes on” model. Through introduction to the dystopian genre pupils will head into the work knowing what to expect, but not what the dystopic world they encounter is critical of. This allows pupils to interpret and analyze for themselves, drawing comparisons to the society they live in. This presents an opportunity for pupils to evaluate their own society and reflect on whether society is heading in the direction depicted in the dystopia. Regardless of where the pupil believe society is headed an explanation or justification describing their reasoning will be encouraged by the teacher. Further reflections on the self can also be encouraged by the teacher through questions on the pupil’s role in society’s development. This will increase the pupil’s consciousness on their role in society. Through this proposed process of reading dystopian literature and working with the texts, we can see how pupils engage in thoughts relating to the process of critical thinking (interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation).

The counter-narratives of dystopias presents a character that rebels against society, which presents opportunity for the pupils to reflect on themselves and the decisions they would make in a similar situation. Exploring the motivations behind characters other than the rebellious main character encourage understanding of others and are in line with Nussbaum’s ideas on development of empathy and understanding of others through literature.

2.3 Literary Theory

I apply the ideas of two theorists in this thesis. These theorists are Martha Nussbaum and Wayne C. Booth. Their theory is strongly related to the core value critical thinking and ethical awareness. Booth’s theory supports the argumentation of literatures ability to facilitate critical thinking, while Nussbaum’s theory supports the argument on literature’s ability to facilitate ethical awareness.

Martha Nussbaum's ideas on literature's ability to facilitate empathy is central in arguing for literature's ability to facilitate the core value of critical thinking and ethical awareness. Nussbaum is an acknowledged philosopher and in her work *Love's Knowledge* we can gather ideas that speaks to the benefits of reading literature. Her belief is that literature inspire us to empathize with others and consider things from their point of view. Literature, in Nussbaum's opinion, has the power to improve our understanding of the world and other people. According to Nussbaum, reading can aid in the development of the emotional intelligence needed to successfully negotiate challenging social situations and comprehend the motivations and viewpoints of others. We can better understand the human condition and cultivate our own empathy and compassion by immersing ourselves in the experiences of literary characters.

Nussbaum's viewpoints are also emphasized in newer didactic literature from Christian Carlsen et al. Carlsen states that when we read, we enter a "third space" where we try to make sense of the values and ideas the work communicates and reflect on our own standpoint in the process (Carlsen 211). After year seven the pupils are expected to "write about the content" and after VG1 pupils are expected to "read, analyze and interpret" (Carlsen 211).

Wayne C. Booth in *The Company We Keep: an Ethics of Fiction* and *The Rhetoric of Fiction* argues for the ways the reader engages with literature and the power literature holds to influence our beliefs and morals. Booth states that by encouraging us to picture ourselves in various scenarios and perspectives, Booth contends that fiction can aid in the development of a more complex and empathic understanding of the world and other people. He further argues that literature can teach us moral lessons and moral guidance by exposing us to difficult moral questions and forcing us to reflect critically on our own beliefs and values.

Booth also emphasizes how critical reader response and interpretation are tools for comprehending literary works. He contends that the way we read and interpret literary works is shaped by the unique experiences and viewpoints that each of us brings to the process and that this diversity of interpretation is a key component of the ethical value of fiction. Another key theory Booth presents is the idea of the "implied author". The implied author is constructed by the reader and contains the values, beliefs, and intention of the work. Overall, Booth believes that literature is a potent tool for fostering empathy, understanding, and

critical thinking as well as for helping us to develop our moral imaginations and ethical reasoning. (Booth 71)

3 Methodology

The chosen methodology for this thesis is a close reading approach. I chose this methodology because I am working with two relatively long texts and through a close reading approach was able to examine the parts of the text most relevant for the thesis. Close reading demands a close attention to detail with regards to the elements of focus. As I am arguing for dystopian literature's ability to facilitate critical thinking, I will analyze parts of the texts that invites critical thinking. My chosen elements of focus for this close reading were setting, characters and themes, as I felt these elements were impactful in the way they invite the reader to think critically. The elements I have chosen to focus on is setting, character and themes. I have chosen these three elements because of the potential pupils have for relating to these elements.

A significant factor in dystopian literature's ability to facilitate critical thinking is the setting. Dystopian literature can be described as following an "if this goes on" model. I consider this model to be a unique characteristic of dystopian fiction and is important in how Dystopian fiction delivers its criticism and how the genre invites the reader to think critically. If the characters are the "who" of the novel, the setting is the "where and when" (Mays 282). Going off the "if this goes on" model, the "when" in dystopian fiction is more often than not set in the future. This is true for both *Fahrenheit 451* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as they are set in the future relative to when they were written. The function and use of setting vary from different works, but the "if this goes on" model of dystopian fiction tells us that the setting takes certain social or political aspects of society and escalates them in a negative direction. Setting can establish mood, and situation and shapes the characters in the novels. In the same way the reader relates to the characters, the reader will also relate and compare the setting in the fictional world to the real world, which invites the reader to think critically (Mays 283).

The characters in the novels are reference points that the reader can easily relate or compare themselves to. The comparison between the reader and the character invites critical thinking because the reader is forced to self-reflect on the actions of the character and what separates the character from oneself, thus becoming self-aware on the themes and issues faced by the character. Characters are relevant in facilitating critical thinking because we try to understand them the same way we try to understand people in real life. Therefore, if a character who is dynamic goes from a non-critical thinker to a critical thinker we will question why (Mays 316).

“At some point, a responsive reader of any story or novel will inevitably ask, why does it all matter? What does it all mean? What’s the point?” (Mays 429). The theme of the work can be defined as the general idea being conveyed by the work. A novel can have several themes, although this is heavily debated. Some argue that a work can be boiled down to one main theme, which relegates the other ideas conveyed through a work to “subthemes”.

Grappling with the ideas presented in a literary work and why it matters is in line with what Facione categorizes as an ideal critical thinker. In addition to being in line with Facione’s description of an ideal critical thinker, reflecting and discussing themes is skills is in line with what the curriculum seeks to develop in pupils. In addition to developing critical thinking and ethical awareness, the core curriculum states that the education should provide an “all round” education. This means that pupils should be able to apply knowledge, interpret and participate in open-minded discussions.

4 Analysis

My focus will be on the setting, characters, and themes in the two selected novels, with particular attention paid to the intended reader. It's important to note that every reader will have their own interpretation of these novels, and there is no one "correct" way to understand them. Rather, the goal of reading these works is to develop critical thinking skills and ethical awareness. In this section, I will present my interpretation and analysis of setting, characters, and themes in the novels and how these elements invite reflection, and thoughts related to the process of critical thinking and ethical awareness. My hope is that my insights will serve as valuable examples for educators and pupils alike to explore and discuss in the classroom.

4.1 *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

4.1.1 Setting

The general setting of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is Airstrip One formerly known as Britain. Britain is now a part of a super-state containing the land masses of North and South America in addition to Australia, named Oceania, which is what I will be calling the fictional world moving forward. Oceania is governed by a regime called The Party under the leading figure of Big Brother. Two additional super-states have also emerged and are named Eurasia and Eastasia.

The first description of the setting comes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s second paragraph, where the protagonist Winston arrives home.

The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. At one end of it a colored poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall. It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a meter wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features... It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric current was cut off during daylight hours... the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran (Orwell 1)

This passage's importance cannot be understated as it immediately shapes the tone of the novel. The passage describes a poor living situation, but issues of electricity and unsatisfying smells is something everyone has encountered. However, when the bad living situation is combined with a huge poster captioned "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU" (Ibid), an uneasy and uncomfortable tone is set. Reading the poster's caption, comparisons and images of being surveilled enters the mind, it diminishes the feeling of freedom and intrudes on privacy.

Reading the passage, it is obvious that the setting is a means to control its citizens and inhibit critical thinking. "It was hopeless..." relays a feeling of hopelessness, meaning that there is no use in trying to circumvent the controlling setting. Additionally, the uneasy and uncomfortable tone sparks a critical interest in figuring out what is going on in the fictional world and why the setting depicted is so controlling and hopeless. This passage raises questions on why there is a poster, threatening in nature claiming to watch over everyone. Although the passage does provide definitive evidence of it. It hints at a society where everyone is monitored by the mystical poster-figure big brother.

The following description of gives further insight to the surrounding environment. The world outside of the building is described as "though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there seemed to be no colour in anything, except the posters that were plastered everywhere" (Orwell, 2). There are several ways to interpret this passage. One interpretation is that it represents Winston's view of Big Brother, where the presence of the posters seemingly takes the joy out of a clear blue sky full of sunlight. It is also possible that this is not strictly Winston's view, but that everything around him is, in a literal sense grey, and that the posters are the only thing allowed to take up space in the public sphere. The tone is further dampened as Winston describes from his window that he saw police patrols snooping outside the windows of neighboring buildings.

The regular police patrols are not what is most feared as "The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered" (Orwell, 2). The mention of the thought police describes yet another part of the setting in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* relating to surveillance, implying there is a police force to investigate and arrest people for their thoughts. Hence the term "Thoughtcrime" (Orwell 17). The threat of the thoughtpolice is another part of the setting that reiterates how the setting in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a controlling atmosphere whose purpose is to inhibit thought. Along with Big Brother, thought police and thoughtcrime

are concepts contrived by Orwell, which paints the society in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a nightmare world of constant surveillance.

Winston describes how documents, and such is disposed of, further underling how the setting is controlling. “When one knew that any document was due for destruction, or even when one saw a scrap of waste paper lying about, it was an automatic action to lift the flap of the nearest memory hole and drop it in” (Orwell 35). The memory hole is controlling by the fact that documents and waste paper is not allowed to be laying around. Paper lying about is something which is hard to control for The Party because it is not possible for them to control the information on the scraps of paper. Winston’s “automatic action” to throw the paper in the memory hole means that using the memory hole is something that The Party has drilled into the minds of the people in Oceania.

Another important aspect of the setting in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the telescreen, which confirms that Big Brother really is watching:

The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it; moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard (3).

The telescreen is yet another concept contrived by Orwell, which breaks with all known conventions of privacy. Not only is it a constant channel of propaganda directly from The Party and Big Brother, which cannot be turned off, but it is also transmitting video to The Party. The telescreen is also a mandatory device that everyone is required to have, which means that The Party has eyes and ears in every household, and everyone in Oceania is being constantly surveilled. As for relating and comparing the concept of the telescreen to modern life, it is eerily similar to modern television, and the reader can easily picture their own TV working in a similar way to the telescreen, constantly broadcasting video and audio to government officials. The telescreen invites critical thinking in several ways, firstly, what information we consume through our TV and its validity. Secondly, the telescreen invites reflections on privacy rights and the implication of a governing body that breaks these rights.

In the novel, the initial depiction of the setting revolves around Winston's meager living conditions and the omnipresent reminders of Big Brother's surveillance through posters. This portrayal evokes a sense of empathy towards the characters who are trapped in

this environment, in line with Nussbaum's theory. It highlights how discussing the setting can foster empathy and ethical awareness. Furthermore, the setting's constraints on thought are reflected upon, which intensifies the reader's compassion towards the characters. The citizens of Oceania live in perpetual dread of being monitored by the thought police and telescreens, which restricts their freedom to think and act (Nussbaum LK). The setting depicts a society that's under intense surveillance. This exaggerated portrayal of surveillance and absence of privacy confronts the reader and encourages them to contemplate and compare it to the level of surveillance and privacy in their own society.

By exploring dystopia's "if this goes on" model, students can reflect on their own society and invites inference on whether society is heading towards the dystopian setting depicted. The detailed descriptions of setting in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* provide opportunities to discuss whether there are elements in our own society that seek to control our thinking. The telescreen, thoughtpolice, and posters of Big Brother are recognizable elements that the pupils can relate to, which provides a base for reflecting on other elements of society that seek to control or influence us. These reflections are important as they relate to the core value we seek to develop, which emphasizes assessing information critically through being inquisitive. The influence the environment has on the characters that inhabit them inevitably comes with a toll, and this toll becomes evident in the analysis of two opposing characters in the next section (Fitting 147).

4.1.2 Characters

In Oceania, the populace can be classified into three distinct groups. The first group is the Inner Party, which holds the reins of power in Oceania. The second group is the Outer Party, consisting of educated workers who carry out the will of the Inner Party. The Outer Party members are strictly monitored to ensure that they follow the Inner Party's doctrines. The third and most populous group in Oceania is the Proles. The Proles constitute the working class of Oceania and account for 85% of the population. However, they are not required to have telescreens and are not subject to heavy surveillance since the Inner Party does not perceive them as a threat (Orwell, NEF).

Winston Smith is the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The first description of him reads “thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle” (1). When going up the stairs, Winston is described as going slowly, “resting several times on the way” (2). Our first

introduction to Winston indicates that he is a struggling man, and this is further expanded on in a later paragraph.

He moved over to the window: a smallish, frail figure, the meagreness of his body merely emphasized by the blue overalls which were the uniform of the Party. His hair was very fair, his face naturally sanguine, his skin roughened by coarse soap and blunt razor blades (2).

“frail”, “meagre” and “smallish” are the adjectives used to describe Winston, to exemplify his pitiful state furthermore. Winston is a member of The Outer Party and works in The Ministry of Truth. At the ministry, his job is to rewrite any past piece of writing to make it in line with current political ideas held by The Party (Orwell, NEF).

Although Winston works for The Party he is not conforming completely to its doctrines and is early on seen as “sitting in the alcove, and keeping well back, Winston was able to remain outside the range of the telescreen, so far as sight went” (5). The fact that Winston chooses to remain outside the view of the telescreen reveals a need for privacy and freedom in Winston. Sitting outside of the telescreen’s field of view is Winston’s way of achieving a tiny piece of freedom away from the clutches of The Party. Another revelation about Winston comes in the same page as it is revealed that Winston had acquired a book from a shop in the slum and Winston justified it because he “had been stricken immediately by an overwhelming desire to possess it” (5). Winston’s overwhelming desire to possess a book reveals that he is curious despite the consequences it might bring, which Winston is shown to be fully aware of:

The thing that he was about to do was to open a diary. This was not illegal (nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws), but if detected it was reasonably certain that it would be punished by death, or at least by twenty-five years in a forced labour camp (5).

Being fully aware of the consequences of opening a diary Winston does it, anyway, driven by the same curious impulse that prompted him to buy the book. After opening the book Winston asks himself the question “How could you communicate with the future?” (6). This question emphasizes Winston’s curiosity once again and breaks with the doctrines of The Party. It is also stated that Winston has had an inner monologue going on in his head for years. However, when about to put pen to paper, “It was curious that he seemed not merely to have lost the

power of expressing himself, but even to have forgotten what it was that he had originally intended to say” (6). Having an inner monologue and even planning what he wanted to write in his book, combined with Winston’s curious nature, reveals that Winston is not like the typical outer or inner party member. On the other hand, Winston has a curious and inquisitive inner monologue which leads him to question the world around him.

We are further introduced to Winston’s thoughts on the world around him during the “two minutes hate”.

where at one moment Winston’s hatred was not turned against Goldstein at all, but, on the contrary, against Big Brother, the Party and the Thought Police; and at such moments his heart went out to the lonely, derided heretic on the screen, sole guardian of truth and sanity in a world of lies (12).

Winston’s momentary declaration of hate towards The Party affirms that there is an internal struggle going on inside Winston. It is evident that Winston has a curious and inquisitive monologue going on inside him. This separates him from the masses, that blindly follow the doctrines of The Party. However, inside of Winston his inquisitive and curious nature is fighting The Party’s control and his fear of the Thoughtpolice. Given that Winston expressed that his inner monologue has been something he has wanted to express for a long time it is reasonable to assume that his inner monologue and thoughts now have led conclude that he is not content under The Party’s regime, resisting The Party’s control whatever way he can.

Another conclusion Winston has drawn is that the apparent enemy of The Party, Emmanuel Goldstein is the sole guardian in a world of lies. The wording “world of lies” means that Winston is not only questioning The Party but sees how The Party manipulates through propaganda, fear and enemy creation. Winston sees the world in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for what it really is and is not subject to The Party’s propaganda and influence.

Winston’s rebellion culminates when he turns up at the door of O’Brien to confess his desire to rebel against The Party. Throughout the novel Winston has continually gained more belief in O’Brien as a political conspirator. In the moments leading up to Winston’s confession he is very doubting of his actions. Not that his actions are right, but if there is a pretense for him confessing (Orwell, NEF). “For what evidence had he in reality that O’Brien was any kind of political conspirator?” (157). True to the passage, Winston does not have any

evidence of O'Brien's intentions, but it is the only semblance of hope he has in contacting the resistance.

In the novel Winston's character is dynamic. Through Winston a counter narrative is depicted where he goes from conformity to full-fledged rebellion towards society. Winston conforms to The Party's doctrines in the beginning of the novel but expresses further and further contempt in The Party. This leads Winston on a rebellious journey, beginning with the acquisition of a notebook. Along with his inquisitive and rebellious nature he engages in an illegal sexual affair with another member of the outer party named Julia. Growing more and more confident in his rebellion he contacts O'Brien which he thinks is a conspirator for the resistance and acquires a book written by Emmanuel Goldstein, the enemy of the state. As Winston himself stated early in the novel there was only a matter of time before his actions caught up with him. A hidden telescreen in the attic where he conducted his affair with Julia reveals that the Thoughtpolice knows what he has done, and the place supposedly free of The Party's grasp was never safe to begin with (Orwell, NEF).

As the protagonist of the novel, the reader experiences the novel through Winston. The reader is encouraged to empathize with him and reflect on his beliefs and choices throughout his rebellion towards Oceania's society. It is apparent that the setting has taken its toll on Winston, and he is described as frail and meagre with a varicose ulcer above his ankle (2). Using Booth's insight, we can interpret this as the implied author showing us the toll that comes with living in a society governed by The Party. This further encourages the reader to empathize with Winston and share his resentment for The Party and their way of governing Oceania (Booth). Winston's inner monologue models the process of critical thinking for the reader. This enables Winston to see the reality of The Party's and the abhorrent reality of how controlling society is in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Winston's inner monologue emphasizes the importance of critical thinking for the reader.

One can also argue that another belief is depicted in Winston's character. This belief is that people have a desire for freedom and that people are naturally curious and inquisitive. These impulses are heavily constrained by The Party, but despite The Party's efforts, Winston still acts on these impulses. Winston's character is an opportunity for pupils to reflect on what their beliefs are and whether they agree with Winston's beliefs and actions in the novel as he progresses from conformity to rebellion. Winston's rebellion allows for reflection on the pupil's own society and if there are aspects of society they disagree with and would be willing

to stand against. In a larger sense, we can see how literature involves interpretation and analysis which invites deeper reflections on our own beliefs and values in line with the process of critical thinking and ethical awareness.

O'Brien is a member of the Inner Party and subject to Winston's hopes that there is a resistance to The Party. However, to Winston's surprise O'Brien seems to be the complete opposite, a static character that does not grow to question The Party. O'Brien is first encountered during the two minutes hate early in the novel where Winston remarks that he is:

deeply drawn to him, and not solely because he was intrigued by the contrast between O'Brien's urbane manner and his prizefighter's physique. Much more it was because of a secretly-held belief – or perhaps not even a belief, merely a hope – that O'Brien's political orthodoxy was not perfect (10).

Several times throughout the novel O'Brien is described as displaying traits of unorthodoxy throughout the novel which fuels Winston's belief that there is a resistance. The display of unorthodoxy eventually leads to O'Brien handing Winston a note with his address on, which certainly is something that breaches with the doctrines of The Party. O'Brien acts as a catalyst to Winston's rebellious nature throughout the novel, giving an impression of unorthodoxy, and eventually something steadfast that breaches with The Party's beliefs.

Although O'Brien in Winston's eyes seemed to be a member of the resistance, O'Brien's true nature is revealed when he opens Winston's cell after his apprehension. O'Brien's and Winston's first interaction goes as follows: "They've got you too!" he cried. "They got me a long time ago," said O'Brien with a mild, almost regretful irony" (224). It is further revealed that O'Brien have been keeping tabs on Winston for a while according to the following statement "Don't worry, Winston; you are in my keeping. For seven years I have watched over you. Now the turning-point has come. I shall save you, I shall make you perfect." (230). This revelation completely changes the story of the novel as Winston's opposition to The Party was revealed by O'Brien before the novel even began. In a few sentences, O'Brien's significance changes drastically. Throughout the novel, O'Brien has signified hope, only to signify hopelessness at the end of the novel. O'Brien's true identity means that there never was any hope for Winston and that The Party was watching all along.

The hopelessness stretches even further when analyzing O'Brien's character further. That he is a member of the inner party and works with catching thoughtcriminals means that

he has to engage interpretation, evaluation and inference on people's actions to consider if they are thoughtcriminals or not. This means that O'Brien engages in the process of critical thinking for the purpose of his job. If we extrapolate O'Brien's example to the rest of the inner party, this means that the inner party has well-developed thinking skills, unlike the members of the outer party and the proletariat. This extrapolation would further enhance the hopelessness conveyed in the novel, shrinking the chance of the Party's defeat.

O'Brien, a member of the inner party, stands in stark opposition to Winston. As a character, O'Brien symbolizes The Party, and the relationship between O'Brien and Winston mirrors the relationship between the citizens of Oceania and The Party. Similar to how the citizens of Oceania had faith in The Party to govern truthfully, Winston trusted O'Brien, only to be deceived in the end. In the same way the novel serves as a cautionary tale, this cautionary tale is echoed in the relationship between Winston and O'Brien.

The relationship between O'Brien and Winston symbolizes the blind faith that the citizens of Oceania have in The Party. This symbolization directly relates to Piaget's quote and highlights the importance of the core value of critical thinking and ethical awareness. It serves as a reminder of the importance of being critical, verifying information, and analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating it to make informed and good judgments (Kunnskapsdepartementet).

4.1.3 Themes

The themes of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are many, but for this analysis, I have decided to focus on freedom and government control as the main ideas conveyed by the novel, in addition to concepts introduced by Orwell that are used to maintain control. What makes freedom a theme in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the relentless suppression of freedom in Oceania, which in turn, highlights the importance of freedom. Strict doctrines enforced by the Thoughtpolice combined with constant surveillance means that freedom is severely limited (Orwell, NEF). Although The Party does not issue thorough legislation to its citizens, any display of individuality or opposition to The Party is heavily punished. "Freedom of speech" is a well-known phrase that is completely obliterated in the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The novel attacks this phrase by displaying a society where its citizens are deprived of not only freedom of speech but the freedom to think. The freedom to think in the novel is primarily suppressed through the two concepts of doublethink and newspeak, in addition to the thoughtpolice (Orwell, NEF).

The suppression of freedom in the novel highlights how, without the freedom to act, speak, and think, individuals are deprived of any agency. This means that the citizens of Oceania have no influence on the society they live in and ultimately the lives they live, which stands in sharp contrast to Western beliefs of democracy (Orwell, NEF).

The portrayal of citizens without freedom or agency leads to the next theme in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* which is government control. By government control I mean a regime's ability to control or monitor its citizens. Because the citizens of Oceania's freedom are so heavily suppressed and have no political agency The Party as a governmental entity is left completely unchecked (Orwell, NEF). In the novel scarce evidence is put forward describing The Party's rise to power in Oceania, although it is stated that The Party ceased power after a large-scale nuclear war followed by several revolutions (Orwell, NEF). What we do know is that to cement their position in power, they started to erase the past, as seen described by Winston in the novel.

He tried to remember in what year he had first heard mention of Big Brother. He thought it must have been at some time in the 'sixties, but it was impossible to be certain. In the Party histories, of course, Big Brother figured as the leader and guardian of the Revolution since its very earliest days. His exploits had been gradually pushed backwards in time until already they extended into the fabulous world of the 'forties and the 'thirties (Orwell 33).

This passage perfectly captures the theme of governmental control in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* because it shows us the extent of The Party's control. Firstly, Winston expresses that he is not sure of his memories which is the result of The Party's rewriting of the past and prohibitions on personal memoirs. Additionally, we can assume that doublethink has had an effect on Winston, resulting in the loss of memories. Secondly, the introduction of Big Brother shows how The Party controls its population through propaganda and fear. The depiction of The Party invites reflections on the implications of governments with too much power and control.

The suppression of freedom through strict government control invites pupils to reflect and think about the ideals of Western democracy and the importance of engaging in societal debates. The Party's rise to power through blind faith allows the pupils to reflect on their own engagement in society and consider if Orwell's cautionary tale is a possibility if enough people opt out of discussions on important issues and elections. I would like to remark that

the reflections invited by The Party's rise to power are strongly related to the interdisciplinary topic democracy and citizenship. These issues are relevant because participation in societal debates should be based on critical thinking and ethical awareness (Utdanningsdirektoratet).

In Oceania, The Party has imposed a way in which its citizens are supposed to structure their thoughts, and the name of the concept is doublethink. Doublethink is described as:

To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully-constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which canceled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them; (Orwell 32)

Much like the telescreen and constant threat of the thoughtpolice, doublethink has been imposed by The Party to control the citizens of Oceania. The simplest way to describe Doublethink's function is that it is a way of thinking meant to prevent criticism or any opposing thoughts toward The Party. Through the process of doublethink, the citizens of Oceania convince themselves that The Party's doctrines, actions, and information is correct even though they contradict earlier events. (Orwell, 32). However, this is not enough for The Party; doublethink involves convincing yourself that there is no such thing as doublethink, essentially applying the principles of doublethink to doublethink itself.

In addition to doublethink as a way of controlling its citizens, The Party has introduced a new language called "Newspeak". At the time of the novel, Newspeak is on its eleventh edition, continuously "cutting the language down to the bone" (Orwell 49-50). Newspeak is a simplification of language meant to restrict the citizens of Oceania's ability to formulate complex thoughts. The Party's cynical way of governing Oceania has ultimately led them to restrict its citizens' ability to communicate with each other, limiting the citizens to a simple vocabulary. This means that citizens cannot express themselves fully and, therefore, not be a potential threat to The Party's regime. If the threat of the thoughtpolice were to fail in keeping citizens in line, it would not matter because none of the citizens would be able to explain their ideas or dissatisfaction with the party (Orwell 50).

Underlying Big Brother and The Party in the governing structure are the ministries which reflect how Airstrip One is being governed. The names of the ministries and The Party's slogan reflect the dynamic between The Party's regime and its citizens. The slogan of The Party is "'War is Peace', 'Freedom is Slavery' and 'Ignorance is Strength'" (3). The slogan consists of three contradictions. The slogan reflects how Oceania's citizens are subject

to doctrines and instructions from The Party. These doctrines and instructions are meant to influence the citizens to neglect their own thoughts and accept the words and actions of The Party, even though it contradicts itself or does not make sense. The same can be said for the four ministries:

The ministries consist of The Ministry of Truth, which concerned itself with news, entertainment, education and the fine arts. The Ministry of Peace, which concerned itself with war. The Ministry of Love, which maintained law and order. And the Ministry of Plenty, which was responsible for economic affairs (4).

The names of the ministries are purposely set to steer the population of Oceania's beliefs about them. The Party wants the population to believe that The Ministry of Truth which oversee news, education and other information related tasks is truthful. "The Ministry of Peace" which are in charge of warfare, works to keep peace. The Ministry of Love which maintain law and order, acts out of love for the society. The Ministry of Plenty, which oversee economic affairs, always makes sure that society is plentiful and prospering. The reality of the ministries is largely different from what they want the population to believe. The Ministry of Truth controls what truth is. Workers in the Ministry of Truth are tasked with rewriting history for The Party's benefit. This means that The Ministry of Truth is not truthful but actually in control of what is the truth. The Ministry of Peace, per definition, can be said to pursue peace. However, not in the conventional way because The Ministry of Peace actively pursues war as a means to create a common enemy for Oceania's citizens. The enemy-creation of The Party, however, does not stop there. In the novel, a sequence called "two minutes hate" is depicted, which encourages the citizens of Oceania to vent their hatred towards an enemy of the state called Emmanuel Goldstein, who according to The Party, was responsible for "All subsequent crimes against the Party, all treacheries, acts of sabotage, heresies, deviations, sprang directly out of his teaching" (10).

In the preceding paragraphs, I thoroughly examined how The Party employs various techniques to curb independent thinking among the people residing in Oceania. These techniques are designed to stifle critical thinking abilities, and it is evident that they serve this purpose effectively. For instance, Doublethink impedes the process of critical thinking, while Newspeak limits the capacity to construct intricate sentences necessary for expressing ideas generated through critical thinking. By suppressing critical thinking abilities, The Party has

successfully created a populace that does not question its actions, enabling The Party to manipulate even the past without any opposition.

In addition to inviting reflections and thoughts on the themes of freedom and government control, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* also depict and emphasize the importance of critical thinking through its detailed descriptions of the tools The Party use to suppress it. The Party's desperate attempt at suppressing thought means that the ability to think critically is a threat to their power. Using Booth's idea, we can state that the implied author is conveying that critical thinking is a countermeasure for tyranny and abuse of power by elected officials.

4.1.4 Summary

In this section I have analyzed *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with a focus on its ability to facilitate critical thinking and ethical awareness. The analysis of the setting revealed how every aspect of the setting in the novel suppressed thought through surveillance and fear and seeks to control its citizens. Through descriptions of poor living conditions and lifeless surroundings, we are encouraged to empathize with the citizens trapped in this dystopia and invited to reflect on surveillance and aspects of society that seek to control us. The setting allows pupils to reflect and compare the setting of the novel to their own society and infer if society is heading towards dystopia or not.

Through analysis of Winston and O'Brien we see how Winston symbolizes the citizens of Oceania, and O'Brien symbolizes The Party. This symbolization invites thoughts on the importance of assessing information critically and not accepting the first piece of information we are offered. This highlights the importance of being able to assess information presented to us critically, which is an important part of the core value critical thinking and ethical awareness in the curriculum. Additionally, Winston's beliefs and values invite reflection on our own beliefs and values. This presents the opportunity for pupils to discuss if they agree with Winston or not and if there are causes in their society, they are willing to rebel against.

Analysis of themes in the novel reveals how The Party desperately tries to suppress thought, as they consider it dangerous to their regime. Using Booth's approach of the implied author, this can be interpreted as the implied author telling the reader how critical thinking is a countermeasure to tyranny, corruption, and abuse of power.

Altogether, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* depicts a society with strongly exaggerated surveillance and government control which suppresses the citizens' freedom and ability to think through fear and propaganda. In terms of reading for facilitation of critical thinking and ethical awareness, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is strongly critical towards tyrannical regimes that suppress freedom which invites reflections on the individual freedom and society. Simultaneously, one can argue that the author emphasizes the importance of critical thinking as a countermeasure towards tyranny, being that critical thought is what The Party fears most.

4.2 Fahrenheit 451

Fahrenheit 451 depicts a similar dystopian world to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where thought is severely suppressed. *Fahrenheit 451* adds to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* because the decline and suppression of thought is the result of excessive consumption of media, and not tyrannical government. *Fahrenheit 451* is a shorter novel and vaguer than that of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but still depicts a dystopia which invites critical thoughts on society and the self.

4.2.1 Setting

The general setting of *Fahrenheit 451* is a city in the USA in the far future. Several aspects of the world have changed, and knowledge and complex ideas often depicted in books are not appreciated by the public. Books and the ideas they hold are seen as a nuisance, and society has progressed thereafter (Bradbury, FH). Society in *Fahrenheit 451* is also described by the development of technology. A mechanical hound for hunting perpetrators and a machine used to counteract overdoses (which are very common) are machines present in the world of *Fahrenheit 451*. The following passage between Guy Montag (referred to as Montag hereafter), the protagonist of the novel, and the neighboring girl Clarisse reflects how the role of firemen has changed in society:

"Do you ever read any of the books you bum?"

He laughed. "That's against the law!"

"Oh. Of course."

"It's fine work. Monday bum Millay, Wednesday Whitman, Friday Faulkner, burn 'em to ashes, then bum the ashes. That's our official slogan."

They walked still further and the girl said, "Is it true that long ago firemen put fires out instead of going to start them?"

"No. Houses. have always been fireproof, take my word for it."

"Strange. I heard once that a long time ago houses used to burn by accident and they needed firemen to stop the flames." (Bradbury 4).

The conversation between Montag and shows how the fire department in *Fahrenheit 451* now is responsible for starting fires instead of putting them out. Additionally, books are now forbidden to read due to the development of society and the depreciation of complex knowledge and ideas. The slogan of the fire department also reflects the depreciation of knowledge and ideas through a rhyme on famous authors and the days of the week. Everyone is not as depreciative of knowledge and books in the world of *Fahrenheit 451* as Clarisse clearly has knowledge of the past. Stating that firemen used to put out fires instead of starting them. Even though Clarisse states that she heard it somewhere, one can assume that she acquired this knowledge from books. We can assume this because no other information-bearing mediums are described in the novel (Bradbury FH).

IT was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed. With the brass nozzle in his fists, with this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world, the blood pounded in his head, and his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history (Bradbury 1)

This passage is a dense composition of meaning that reflects the world in *Fahrenheit 451*. To see things "eaten, blackened, and changed" refers to things being burned and turned to ash. This sentence also indicates that Montag takes pleasure in burning things, which stands in sharp contrast to the real world, where people that enjoy burning things are labeled as pyromaniacs. Furthermore, the metaphor of a python is used to describe the flamethrower, and venom to describe the fire. Interpreting the metaphor of the snake, it is easy to assume that the practice of burning things has a negative or venomous impact on the world, even though the majority of the population supports it. It is also impossible to ignore the allusions to the devil which the metaphor of the snake brings. Montag himself is described as the conductor of symphonies that brings down the last ruins of history.

Montag's captain, Beatty, describes how technology advanced from books "Then-- motion pictures in the early twentieth century. Radio. Television. Things began to have mass" (Bradbury 42). I interpret the meaning of the word "mass" similarly to what we now use as "mass media". Beatty further explains how "classics" first got cut down to shorter versions until they eventually ended up as two-minute radio shows (Bradbury 42-45). My interpretation of this is that with advancement of technology and media, there were more media to consume, and it was easier to consume. One can assume that this led to more consumption and less engagement with the material. The effect this had on people were that "because they had mass, they became simpler"(ibid).

The setting in which media is consumed in *Fahrenheit 451* is revealed by Montag's wife, which is Bradbury's representation of the average citizen in the novel "It's really fun. It'll be even more fun when we can afford to have the fourth wall installed. How long you figure before we save up and get the fourth wall torn out and a fourth wall-TV put in?" (Bradbury 14).

As seen in this passage, Bradbury's representation of media comes in the form of TV-walls, also referred to as parlor walls in the novel. As described in the passage, TVs now encompass entire walls, making it an immersive experience that cannot be ignored. The actors in the shows are referred to by the characters as "relatives" as if they were real people living with them. This immersive and comprehensive practice of filling an entire room with televisions is descriptive of how the population in *Fahrenheit 451* wishes to live.

Beatty also emphasizes how the media took steps to cater to everyone, the reason being that less controversy would befall them if they did. If the media targets and includes everyone, there are no toes to be stepped on (Bradbury 45). The population's decline into this culture of mass consumption is captured brilliantly by Beatty while questioned by Montag:

There you have it, Montag. It didn't come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick, thank God. Today, thanks to them, you can stay happy all the time; you are allowed to read comics, the good old confessions, or trade journals. (ibid).

The passages suggests that the book burnings are a will that has originated from the people and not something the government has imposed. The three reasons for the depreciation are

technology, mass exploitation and minority pressure. Technology allowed the opportunity for consuming mass media described by Beatty as “mass exploitation”. I have interpreted mass exploitation in two ways. The first interpretation is that it refers to the viewer’s exploitation of mass media as an easy form of entertainment. This easy form of entertainment for the population has been exploited to the degree of abuse, leading the population as far as despising complex knowledge and ideas as it is much less burdensome for the mind consuming mass media.

The second interpretation is that the people in control of the mass media exploit the population. The population’s addiction to easy entertainment, which has led them to despise complex ideas and knowledge, essentially makes them a slave to mass media. As we know, society in *Fahrenheit 451* has developed to a point where they burn books because of their ideas and knowledge; their perceived value has been diminished compared to newer media. This puts the population in *Fahrenheit 451* in a position where they refuse to engage in ideas outside of the mass media sphere because of their addiction to mass media. This means that the population only consumes the ideas and knowledge put forward by the mass media, giving the media substantial influence.

The two interpretations also allow for a third interpretation. The third interpretation proposes a residual relationship between the two previous interpretations. The population exploits mass media for easy satisfaction, and the mass media also exploits the population’s willingness or addiction to subject themselves to this satisfaction. This residual loop of consumption and mass media production is what has led the population to “become simpler” (Bradbury 42).

Whereas the setting in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* restricts thought through fear and constant surveillance, the setting in *Fahrenheit 451* restricts thought through the population’s own wish for the removal of media, which provokes thought because it is seen as a burden in comparison to the TV walls. Although the population has gradually developed in the direction of becoming simpler, the point where owning books became illegal created a setting where everyone is forced to conform to society. The depreciation and eventual war on knowledge created a setting constantly affected by burning houses of people who owned books, and further shown on the TV walls, further forcing conformity.

4.2.2 Characters

Montag is the protagonist of *Fahrenheit 451*, and similarly to Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he follows a trajectory that goes from conformity to full-fledged rebellion. In the beginning of the novel, we can read that Montag feels that “IT was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed” (Bradbury, 1). Montag leaves work and encounters a young girl from the neighborhood named Clarisse as he walks home. She asks him many questions the way a teen normally would, but one question, in particular, seems to stick with Montag as he enters his home. The question in mind is, “Are you happy?” (Bradbury 6).

Of course I'm happy. What does she think? I'm not? he asked the quiet rooms. He stood looking up at the ventilator grille in the hall and suddenly remembered that something lay hidden behind the grille, something that seemed to peer down at him now. He moved his eyes quickly away (ibid).

After being certain in his various claims towards the young girl a sense of uncertainty and doubt seems to affect Montag as he enters his home. From Montag's reaction where he sprouts displeasure with the question asked, I would claim that he is questioning himself. Coincidentally he remembers that something lay behind the ventilator grille but chooses to look quickly away. Given that the novel focus heavily on burning books it is not hard to picture a book behind the ventilator grille which Montag has previously taken, but choose to forget. My interpretation of this interaction is that for a moment, Clarisse's inquisitive and questioning nature sparked something in Montag. A spark that awoke something in Montag that made him aware and questioning whether he was happy or not. While aware and free from his monotonous stream of empty thoughts, Montag remembers something he has chosen to forget, what is most likely a book hidden in the ventilation grille. Montag lingers in his state of awareness for a while, asking himself "What?" asked Montag of that other self, the subconscious idiot that ran babbling at times, quite independent of will, habit, and conscience” (Bradbury, 6).

Further hints of Montag's breach of rules and changing ideals comes when “the Hound half rose in its kennel and looked at him with green-blue neon light flickering in its suddenly activated eye bulbs...No, no, boy," said Montag, his heart pounding” (18). Being approached by the Hound and being in evident fear it is clear that Montag has a guilty conscience and is further proof of his misconduct. Although Montag has tried to forget what

lies hidden in the ventilation grille, the Hound senses that Montag has changed after encountering Clarisse.

A little later in the novel evidence is provided as to why the Hound is on the right track, Montag is changed, he is inquisitive and questions the world around him.

Montag hesitated, "Was-was it always like this? The firehouse, our work? I mean, well,

once upon a time..."

"Once upon a time!" Beatty said. "What kind of talk is THAT?"

Fool, thought Montag to himself, you'll give it away. At the last fire, a book of fairy tales, he'd glanced at a single line (25).

Despite his efforts Montag is now awakened to the processes of critical thinking not being able to contain his inquisitive and curious nature. The encounter with Clarisse has permanently changed Montag and sparked influenced him in the direction of curiosity and pursuit of knowledge.

Montag's awakening to critical thought is finalized as his crew of firemen burn a house full of books where a woman refuses to leave. Rather than continuing to live she chooses to die with her books. This event has a profound impact on Montag as he becomes "sick" the next day.

"You weren't there, you didn't see," he said. "There must be something in books, things we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there. You don't stay for nothing." (40).

The woman's choice to die with her books has further aroused Montag's curiosity for books. Additionally, Montag is plagued with sickness after this event. Montag's supposed sickness is more likely a result of realization of what they the firemen are doing. Montag has engaged in critical thinking and faced the fact that a human being like himself, which has familiarized herself with books is willing to die rather than continue to live without them. To Montag this is confirmation that books must contain something valuable, so valuable that it is worth dying for. This leads Montag to finally read the books he has stored behind the ventilator grille

which is not accepted well by his wife Mildred. This completes Montag's counter narrative where he gradually moves from conforming to society, to a full rebellion towards society, breaking one of the most important rules in society.

Montag's rebellion naturally provokes the consequences society place on the individuals that reads or holds books. Beatty describes Montag as a problem that: "Gets too burdensome, then into the furnace with it. Now, Montag, you're a burden. And fire will lift you off my shoulders, clean, quick, sure; nothing to rot later. Antibiotic, aesthetic, practical." (86).

To society Montag has become a burden by opening his mind to new knowledge and ideas. Ideas and knowledge that burdens the society's members through the effort it takes to understand these ideas, in contrast to consuming media on the tv-walls.

Montag and Winston share many similarities, and like Winston we are encouraged to empathize with Montag as he awakens to the reality of his society. This reality is so frightening that he ends up sick, which is comparable to Winston's varicose ulcer. The difference being that Winston already had awakened to the same fact before the events of the novel took place. Montag, much like Winston, can be interpreted as the author's way of portraying the value of critical thinking through the depiction of their questioning of society and their choice to stop conforming to society in search of the truth and what is right. This reiterates the importance and value of critical thinking, which both novels convey.

Clarisse McKellan is the inquisitive and energetic neighbor of Montag. Montag is intrigued by her perspective of life and the way she questions Montag, his job, and life (Bradbury, FH). Clarisse has a profound effect on Montag, which is descriptive of her character. This dialogue between Montag and Clarisse shows how Clarisse deviates from what is considered normative behavior:

"Strange. I heard once that a long time ago houses used to burn by accident and they needed firemen to stop the flames."

He laughed.

She glanced quickly over. "Why are you laughing?"

"I don't know." He started to laugh again and stopped. "Why?"

"You laugh when I haven't been funny and you answer right off. You never stop to think what I've asked you."

He stopped walking, "You are an odd one," he said, looking at her. "Haven't you any respect?" (Bradbury, 4).

In this passage Clarisse notices that Montag does not think in the same way she does and explicitly states that he never stops to think before he speaks. Clarisse herself states that she "rarely watch the 'parlour walls' or go to races or Fun Parks. So, I've lots of time for crazy thoughts, I guess" (Bradbury, 5). Montag describes her house as all "its lights were blazing" (ibid). Additionally, when Clarisse is asked what is going on in her house, she answers that "my mother and father and uncle sitting around, talking" (Ibid). What is evident from Clarisse's actions and statements is that she is not the standard citizen described by Beatty. She states that she does not engage in activities such as the parlour wall and fun parks. This means that Clarisse likely is not affected to the same degree by mass media as Montag, his wife or Beatty.

Clarisse's family is also described as "peculiar" (Bradbury, 6) and their house stands in contrast to other houses as "lights blazing". It is safe to say that Clarisse's family is different and given her knowledge and questions about the previous history of firemen, it is highly possible that her family has, reads, and engages with books. Given Clarisse's inquisitive and curious nature, this would seem like a natural explanation. Additionally, the imagery of a house that is blazing, which is synonymous with "full of light," can allude to enlightenment in the figurative sense of understanding. I think the allusion to enlightenment is fitting for Clarisse and her family because of the profound impact she has on Montag (Bradbury, FH). Bradbury could also be conveying the idea that people are naturally inquisitive and curious. I believe this to be true because of the fact that he makes it so evident that Clarisse is untouched by the elements of society that have driven humanity to this thoughtless state.

The following passage is spoken by Granger, the leader of a small traveling group called The Collective. Montag encounters this group following his intense escape:

We're book-burners, too. We read the books and burnt them; afraid they'd be found. Micro-filming didn't pay off; we were always travelling, we didn't want to bury the film and come back later. Always the chance of discovery. Better to keep it in the old

heads, where no one can see it or suspect it. We are all bits and pieces of history and literature and international law, Byron, Tom Paine, Machiavelli, or Christ, it's here (Bradbury 113).

Granger and the collective are the outcasts of society dedicated to remembering renowned works. The collective memorizes these works for their safekeeping in the future, when they predict that they will be needed. Granger and the collective represent hope in *Fahrenheit 451* in the form of the solution to Bradbury's proposed problem. The collective appreciates the knowledge and ideas that accompany literature and enjoys engaging with these ideas and knowledge. Whereas the rest of society sees ideas and knowledge as a "burden" because of their abuse of media, Granger and the collective have avoided this decline in their ability to engage in thinking. Having avoided the decline in thought and addiction to media Granger and The Collective see the world for what it really is and understands the complications of eradicating ideas, knowledge, and thought-provoking material.

Much like Orwell depicts critical thought as the solution to The Party's tyranny, Bradbury presents us with Granger and The Collective that willingly accepts Montag. The Collective's engagement with the knowledge and ideas in literature and freedom from excessive media consumption has led them to the conclusion that the knowledge in books will be needed in the future. We can assume that The Collective has come to the conclusion that burning all knowledge and history means that society is doomed to commit the same mistakes as before. Given that *Fahrenheit 451* is a World War II novel, humanity's latest mistake is war, which is what the novel ends with, proving Granger and The Collective right.

4.2.3 Themes

The most prominent theme in *Fahrenheit 451* is the dangers of excessive consumption of media. Consumption of media stood out to me as it is still relevant today. Referring to the study cited in the introduction, it states that news consumption on social media has drastically increased in prior years. Although the study refers to news consumption on social media, it reflects an increase in overall social media consumption (Levy 868).

In *Fahrenheit 451* the excessive consumption has led to the population becoming simpler. The population becoming "simpler" draws comparisons to *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* Newspeak which sought to achieve exactly that, a simpler population which could not form critical thoughts and threaten their regime. In *Fahrenheit 451* this has been achieved through

the advancement of technology and the population's own engagement in consumption of mass media. Although the causes are different, populations in both novels have ended up with little to no agency over their own lives, not being able to question the authorities due to the decline of thought.

Although *Fahrenheit 451* was written approximately seventy years ago, the advancement of technology and consumption of media invites numerous reflections on the trends in today's world.. This provides an opportunity for pupils to reflect on the "if this goes on" model of dystopias. Through reflection on the "if this goes on" model, the pupils are encouraged to critically assess their own habits of consuming social media and infer whether society could be heading toward Bradbury's dystopia.

4.2.4 Summary

In this section, I have analyzed setting, characters, and themes in *Fahrenheit 451*. Like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* we are presented with a world absent of critical thinking and the consequences this entails. The reason for the decline in thought is the development of media which has narrowed the population's capability to think. Ultimately complex ideas and anyone who engages with them is seen as a burden. The portrayal of a society that has developed in this direction invites reflection on where our own society is headed, as the development in Bradbury's novel is strikingly similar to our own. Ideally, this leads pupils to reflect on their own habits in consuming media.

Fahrenheit 451 serves as a cautionary tale on the consequences of neglecting ideas and important issues in favor of easily consumed media. Bradbury conveys the importance of critical thinking through the characters Montag, Clarisse, and Granger (The collective). As characters engage in the process of critical thinking, they question the world around them and interpret, analyze, and evaluate society. Through this process, they understand that current trends are destructive and wrong. In the end, Bradbury conveys the destructive society's demise through the declaration of war and the eventual destruction of the city. The Collective is depicted heading towards the destroyed city to rebuild it with their knowledge and ability to utilize this knowledge through critical thinking, further emphasizing the importance of critical thinking. The decline of thought in *Fahrenheit 451* is important in relation to the core value critical thinking and ethical awareness by depicting what happens when no one questions society around them, an important aspect of the core value.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has explored the ability of dystopian literature to facilitate a core value in the curriculum, critical thinking and ethical awareness. Drawing upon the theories of Martha Nussbaum and Wayne C. Booth, it has been argued that dystopian literature can play a role in facilitating this core value, by encouraging readers to reflect on the values and beliefs portrayed in the works of literature.

Through the analysis of two dystopian novels, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Fahrenheit 451*, this thesis has demonstrated how dystopian literature can invite reflections on government control, media consumption, freedom, and the importance of critical thinking. By reflecting on these themes, readers are engaging in thought closely resembling what Facione describes as the process of critical thinking. By highlighting these themes, these novels challenge readers to think critically about the world around them and to question the status quo, which is in line with the goals described in the core value. In relation to Piaget's quote, the novels' properties as "cautionary tales" invites the reader to reflect on their role in society and how they can contribute to counteracting the societies depicted in the novels.

My hopes are that my exploration and discussion of dystopian literature in relation to critical thinking and ethical awareness can serve as inspiration for other teachers and students when choosing to work with literature in the classroom. Through my analysis, it is evident that dystopian literature invites reflection, which contributes to the development of critical thinking and ethical awareness. However, one possible next step is to collect empirical data from pupils to gauge the effectiveness of dystopian literature's ability to develop the intended core value.

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