Aristotle suggests that happiness is an end in itself, that all virtue and action aim to happiness: “honor, pleasure, reason, and all other virtues, though chosen partly for themselves are chosen for the sake of the happiness that they will bring us. Happiness, on the other hand, is never chosen for the sake of these, nor indeed as a means to anything else at all” (699). Enter *Brave New World*, where happiness is the government’s means to social control.

Huxley’s *Brave New World* turns Aristotle’s aim of man into a *fait accompli*, a utopia generated by state-sponsored technology. Without relying on Aristotle’s “virtue and act,” the citizens live a happiness predetermined by genetics and behavioral conditioning, sustained by government slogans masked as aphorisms, as well as sports, shopping, movies, drugs, and sex. The result? The World controllers eliminate war, suffering, and old age; the citizens behave and serve the state. But what else do those Controllers eliminate?

Influenced by the writings of Charles Darwin and Ivan Pavlov, Huxley creates a government that manipulates concepts of evolutionary biology and behavioral psychology to create citizens who view as anathema individuality, freedom, independent thought, and love. In short, *Brave New World* is dystopian novel about the dangers of state-sponsored utopianism. And those dangers emerge in satire until Bernard resents the lack of respect he receives in life and brings home John the Savage.

John the Savage, for as long as he can remember, lived with his mother on an Indian reservation in North America. When Bernard brings John and John’s mother back to what once had been England and is now a Utopian society where technological and social “advances” exceed anything he could have imagined, John finds that he despises what he first “dreamt” a “brave new world” (Huxley 139).

Something of a Shakespeare scholar, John is appalled that this putatively more advanced society has banned all of Shakespeare; indeed, not only Shakespeare but all serious literature, all of high art, all of serious music. No one misses any of this because everyone has been “taught” to enjoy only the tawdry, cheap, profane, and easy offerings of the popular culture. According to Huxley, all the “leaders” need to do to control everyone is not to resort to a brutal police state engendering raw fear as in Orwell’s 1984 but to insure a steady coarsening of taste, abundant and cheap recreational drugs, and promiscuous sex for all: “Within the next generation I believe that the world’s rulers will discover that infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are more efficient, as instruments of government, than clubs and prisons, and that the lust for power can be just as completely satisfied by suggesting people into loving their servitude as by kicking and flogging them into obedience” (“P.S.” 14). Huxley does not hold forth much hope for a better world engineered by human utopianism. No spoiler to follow—enjoy the novel.

**Summer study tasks**: Huxley states that “the theme of *Brave New World* is the advancement of science as it affects the individual” (“Foreward”). As you read, pay attention to evidence that might make that theme more specific, more argumentative, related but not limited to subjects such as happiness, human nature, family, love, knowledge, freedom, and individuality.

**Questions**:

1. According to one of the repeated hypnotic phrases, “Everybody’s happy nowadays.” How does Huxley make it clear that this is not really the case? In what specific ways has the dystopia failed to create a society in which everyone is happy?

2. Explain the satire in each of 10 passages.
Works Cited