

Dystopias

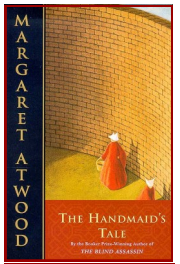
A Dystopia is an imaginary place, or future vision of Earth society, where the inhabitants' lives are controlled through terror or drugs. Presuming to act in the best interests of the majority, the powers-that-be squelch all freedoms.



Most of us are familiar with the classic Dystopian novels [A Clockwork Orange](#) by Anthony Burgess, [Brave New World](#) by Aldous Huxley, and [1984](#) by George Orwell, here we present some others for you to enjoy:

[The Handmaid's Tale](#) by Margaret Atwood (Adult Fiction)

In the Republic of Gilead, formerly the United States, far-right ideals have been carried to extremes in the mono-theocratic government. The resulting society is a feminist's nightmare: women are strictly controlled, unable to have jobs or money and assigned to various classes: the chaste, childless Wives; the housekeeping Marthas; and the reproductive Handmaids, who turn their offspring over to the Wives. The tale is told by Offred, a Handmaid who recalls the past and tells how the chilling society came to be. Also try [The Year of the Flood](#).



[The Running Man](#) by Richard Bachman / Stephen King (Science Fiction)

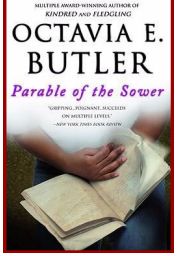
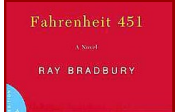
The year is 2025. The Running Man is America's favorite television game show. Ben Richards is the program's latest contestant - and the Hunters' latest target in a rigged game of death... Long before the now popular [Hunger Games](#) series, there was another televised game to the death.

[Genesis](#) by Bernard Beckett (Science Fiction)

Anax, lives far in the future where the distant past events of the 21st century are taught in school. The world was ravaged by plague and decay, the legacy of the Last War. Only the island Republic, situated near the bottom of the globe, remained stable and ordered, but at the cost of personal freedom. Anax, hoping her scholarly achievements will gain her entrance to the Academy, which rules her society, has extensively studied Adam Forde, a brilliant and rebellious citizen of the Republic who fought for human dignity in the midst of a regimented, sterile society.

[Fahrenheit 451](#) by Ray Bradbury (Science Fiction)

Set in a grim, alternate-future ruled by a tyrannical government in which firemen as we understand them no longer exist— here, firemen don't douse fires, they ignite them. And they do this specifically in homes that house the most evil of evils: books. Books are illegal in Bradbury's world, but books are not what his fictional — yet extremely plausible — government fears: They fear the knowledge one pulls from books. The inhabitants of this world have come to loathe books and fear those who keep and attempt to read them. They see such people as eccentric, dangerous and threatening to the tranquility of their state.

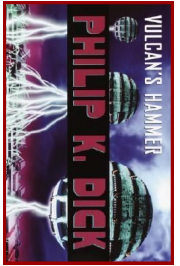


[The Postman](#) by David Brin (Science Fiction)

This is the story of a lie that became the most powerful kind of truth. He was a survivor—a wanderer who traded tales for food and shelter in the dark and savage aftermath of a devastating war. Fate touches him one chill winter's day when he borrows the jacket of a long-dead postal worker to protect himself from the cold. The old, worn uniform still has power as a symbol of hope, and with it he begins to weave his greatest tale, of a nation on the road to recovery.

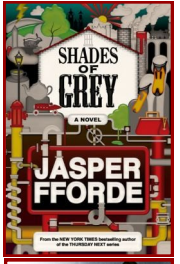
[The Parable of the Sower](#) by Octavia Butler (Science Fiction)

In 21st-century California, When unattended environmental and economic crises lead to social chaos, not even gated communities are safe. In a night of fire and death Lauren Olamina, a minister's young daughter, loses her family and home and ventures out into the unprotected American landscape. But what begins as a flight for survival soon leads to something much more: a startling vision of human destiny... and the birth of a new faith. Also try the Nebula Award winning sequel: [The Parable of the Talents](#) and [Lilith's Brood](#).



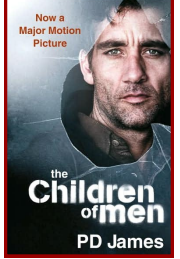
[Vulcan's Hammer](#) by Phillip K. Dick (Science Fiction)

Objective, unbiased and hyper-rational, the Vulcan 3 should have been the perfect ruler. The omnipotent computer dictates policy that is in the best interests of all citizens—or at least, that is the idea. But when the machine, whose rule evolved out of chaos and war, begins to lose control of the “Healer” movement of religious fanatics and the mysterious force behind their rebellion, all Hell breaks loose. Also try [Minority Report](#) and [Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?](#)



[Shades of Grey](#) by Jasper Fforde (Adult Fiction)

As long as anyone can remember, society has been ruled by a Colortocracy. In a social hierarchy based upon one's limited color perception, society is dominated by color. In this world, you are what you can see. Young Eddie Russett has no ambition to be anything other than a loyal drone of the Collective. With his better-than-average red perception, he could well marry Constance Oxblood and inherit the string works. For Eddie, life looks colorful. But everything changes when he moves with his father, a respected swatchman, to East Carmine. There, he falls in love with a Grey named Jane who opens his eyes to the painful truth behind his seemingly perfect, rigidly controlled society.



[The Children of Men](#) by P.D. James (Science Fiction)

It is 2025, and the human race faces imminent extinction. Since 1994, not a single child has been born on earth. Now, a pervasive lethargy blankets the world. Anarchy reigns in the prisons; immigrants are enslaved; renegades terrorize the land. Oxford historian Theodore Faron is drawn into the schemes of an unlikely group of revolutionaries out to save society, when a woman mysteriously becomes pregnant - the first such occurrence in many years.



[The Lathe of Heaven](#) by Ursula K. Le Guin (Science Fiction)

In a future world racked by violence and environmental catastrophes, George Orr wakes up one day to discover that his dreams have the ability to alter reality. He seeks help from Dr. William Haber, a psychiatrist who, while feeding George's neurosis that he is disturbed, immediately grasps the power George wields. Soon George must preserve reality itself as Dr. Haber becomes adept at manipulating George's dreams for his own purposes. Also try [The Dispossessed](#).

[V for Vendetta](#) by Alan Moore (Graphic Novel)

In a futuristic Britain where a totalitarian regime rules, a young woman is rescued from death by a masked vigilante calling himself "V," who launches a one-man crusade of terror against government tyranny and oppression. Also try Moore's [Watchmen](#).

[Anthem](#) by Ayn Rand (Adult Fiction)

Rand's protagonist, Equality 7-2521, describes a surreal world of faceless, nameless drones who "exist through, by and for our brothers who are the State. Amen." Alone, this daring young man defies the will of the ruling councils and discovers the forbidden freedoms that prevailed during the Unmentionable Times. In other words, he finds and celebrates the power of the self.

[Snow Crash](#) by Neal Stephenson (Science Fiction)

In California of the near future, when the U.S. is only a "Burbclave" (city-state), the Mafia is just another franchise chain (Cosa Nostra Pizza, Inc.) and there are no laws to speak of, Hiro Protagonist follows clues from the Bible, ancient Sumerian myth and high technology to help thwart an attempt to take control of civilization -- such as it is. Also try [Anthem](#).

[The Sunrise Lands](#) by S. M. Stirling (Science Fiction)

A generation has passed since The Change that rendered technology inoperable around the world, and western Oregon has finally achieved a degree of peace. But a new threat has risen in Paradise Valley, Wyoming. A man known as The Prophet presides over the Church Universal and Triumphant, teaching his followers to continue God's work by destroying the remnants of technological civilization they encounter and those who dare use them. Rudi Mackenzie, son and heir of the mystic Juniper, must journey with seven friends across a continent in chaos to the Sunrise Lands to solve the riddle of what destroyed a civilization. This series continues with [The Scourge of God](#).

[The Gate to Women's Country](#) by Sheri Tepper (Science Fiction)

Set in a post-holocaust feminist dystopia that offers only two political alternatives: a repressive polygamist sect that is slowly self-destructing through inbreeding and the matriarchal dictatorship called Women's Country. Here, in a desperate effort to prevent another world war, the women have segregated most men into closed military garrisons and have taken on themselves every other function of government, industry, agriculture, science and learning.

[Far North](#) by Marcel Theroux (Adult Fiction)

Out on the frontier of a failed state, a plane crashes at the edge of an abandoned city. Sheriff Makepeace, the city's last citizen, resolves to go in search of the plane's origins and what is left of a world ravaged by climate change and war. In this startling, post-apocalyptic landscape, Makepeace encounters stockaded villages, irradiated cities, and work camps laboring to harness the technologies of a vanished civilization.

[The Gladiator](#) by Harry Turtledove (Science Fiction)

Set in a future world where the Soviet Union won the Cold War, 17-year-old Annarita Crosetti and 16-year-old Gianfranco Mazzilli are students at Enver Hoxha Polytechnic in a Milan that's part of the quasi-Stalinist Italian People's Republic. Gianfranco is a fairly hopeless student, until he discovers a new game shop called the Gladiator, where he's delighted to play a game, Rails Across Europe, that improves his algebra scores. When the security police close down the shop for teaching capitalism, the head clerk, who's a friend of Gianfranco's and a marooned "out-timer," goes on the lam. Also try [The Disunited States of America](#).

[Player Piano](#) by Kurt Vonnegut (Adult Fiction)

Vonnegut's first novel, an unforgiving portrait of an automated and totalitarian future depicts a world where social and geographical lines separate the community between the educated, who run and build the machines, and the uneducated, who perform the manual tasks that the machines cannot. A human revolt against the machines, which control life, was arranged by the machines themselves to prove the futility of such resistance. Visionary and unrelenting, this is felt by some critics to be Vonnegut's best and most original novel.

[The Time Machine: an Invention](#) by H.G. Wells (Science Fiction)

The Time Traveller embarks on an astonishing journey into the future. His Time Machine transports him to a far-distant but dying world where humanity is divided into two classes: the graceful, idle Eloi who inhabit the idyllic surface of the world, and the Morlocks, ugly nocturnal creatures who live and work underground. Wells has created a social allegory that is both vivid and perturbing.

[Julian Comstock: a Story of 22nd-Century America](#) by Robert Charles Wilson (Science Fiction)

In the reign of President Deklan Comstock, a reborn United States is struggling back to prosperity. Over a century after the Efflorescence of Oil, after the Fall of the Cities, after the Plague of Infertility, after the False Tribulation, the sixty stars and thirteen stripes wave from the plains of Athabaska to the national capital in New York City. In Colorado Springs, the Dominion sees to the nation's spiritual needs. In Labrador, the Army wages war on the Dutch. America, unified, is rising once again. Then out of Labrador come tales of a new Ajax—Captain Commongold, the Youthful Hero of the Saguenay. The ordinary people follow his adventures in the press. The Army adores him. And the President is...troubled.

For even more Dystopian reads, check out our lists: [Dystopias for Teens](#) & [our library catalog!](#)

