Most Readers are very familiar with the idea of Utopia - the perfect society - as coined by Sir Thomas More in his book *Utopia* (1516). That concept also generated the notion of Dystopian societies.

The immense popularity of Suzanne Collins’ novels in *The Hunger Games* trilogy has led to a resurgence in interest in Dystopian fiction, particularly in the Young Adult genre.

**What is Dystopian fiction?**

Often classified as Science Fiction, which is itself a subgenre of Speculative Fiction, the novels are usually set in a future time, with technology more advanced than today. It can be characterized by authoritarian governments or social control of the population.¹

Author Robison Wells in his blog series called it ‘Utopia with a fatal flaw’.²

Elements of Dystopian fiction can include:

- A background story of war, revolution, uprising, overpopulation or some other natural disaster. Society itself has changed dramatically as a result, and plays a very important role in the story.

- Standards of living among the middle and lower classes can be significantly worse than contemporary society, although this is not always the case. Freedom and elements of humanity can be taken away as a controlling mechanism. Conformity is the desired outcome.

- A central character who questions society and the accepted norm. Often a group who are not under the complete control of the ruling government.

- Advanced technology is often controlled by a ruling class or group, while the rest of the population lives in poverty and with primitive technology.
Some famous early examples of Dystopian fiction include George Orwell’s *1984*, and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*.

There are no shortage of flowcharts and helpful blogs out there to inform and recommend the genre, and one of the best would have to be author Erin Bowman’s “fool-proof flow chart for de-coding the genre”. [http://www.embowman.com/2011/is-it-dystopia/](http://www.embowman.com/2011/is-it-dystopia/)

**What to read after *The Hunger Games***

The recent resurgence in this genre can, for the most part, be attributed to the huge success of Suzanne Collins’ youth trilogy *The Hunger Games*, and the subsequent movie.

Fans of the genre might like to try these other Dystopian novels, which have all been immensely popular with teen readers.

**Michael Grant**

*Gone, Hunger, Lies, Plague, Fear*

**PLOT SUMMARY:**

In the fictional town of Perdido Beach, everyone over the age of 15 vanishes, and the remaining children and teenagers are imprisoned in an impenetrable bubble. Hunger threatens. Bullies rule. A sinister creature lurks. Animals are mutating. And the teens themselves are changing, developing new talents—unimaginable, dangerous, deadly powers—that grow stronger by the day. It’s a terrifying new world - think *Lord of the Flies* meets Stephen King...

**James Dasher**

*The Maze Runner, The Scorch Trials, The Death Cure*

**PLOT SUMMARY:**

Boys come to the Glade via an empty freight elevator with no memory of how they got there or of their prior lives. To survive, they must lock themselves in every night to avoid the horrors of the Grievers, beings that are part machine, part animal—and altogether deadly.

The boys in the Glade send out Runners each day to find a way out through the Maze that surrounds their one patch of safety, with no success. Life goes on until one day the elevator delivers a girl. She brings a message: She is the last child to be sent, and there will be no more deliveries of food or supplies. Now the Glade is cut off, and as the Grievers gather for an all-out attack it’s clear that it’s now or never—the Maze must be solved, and the boys must escape.\(^4\)
Dystopian Fiction

Veronica Roth
Divergent, Insurgent

Chicago - society is divided into five factions, each dedicated to the cultivation of a particular virtue—Candor (the honest), Abnegation (the selfless), Dauntless (the brave), Amity (the peaceful), and Erudite (the intelligent). On an appointed day of every year, all sixteen-year-olds must select the faction to which they will devote the rest of their lives.

For Beatrice, the decision is between staying with her family and being who she really is—she can't have both. So she makes a choice that surprises everyone, including herself. During the highly competitive initiation that follows, Beatrice renames herself Tris and struggles to determine who her friends really are. But Tris also has a secret, one she's kept hidden from everyone because she's been warned it can mean death. And as she discovers a growing conflict that threatens to unravel her seemingly perfect society, she also learns that her secret might help her save those she loves… or it might destroy her.

Marie Lu
Legend

What was once the western United States is now home to the Republic, a nation perpetually at war with its neighbors. Born into an elite family in one of the Republic's wealthiest districts, fifteen-year-old June is a prodigy being groomed for success in the Republic's highest military circles.

Born into the slums, fifteen-year-old Day is the country's most wanted criminal. But his motives may not be as malicious as they seem. From very different worlds, June and Day have no reason to cross paths—until the day June's brother, Metias, is murdered and Day becomes the prime suspect.

Day is in a race for his family's survival, while June seeks to avenge Metias' death. But in a shocking turn of events, the two uncover the truth of what has really brought them together, and the secret behind the mysterious plague that reduces the population every year. Second in the Series Prodigy, will be published January 2013.

Scott Westerfeld
Pretties, Uglies, Specials, Extras

This author was writing in the genre years before The Hunger Games appeared. Set in a future post-scarcity dystopian world, everyone is turned "Pretty" by extreme cosmetic surgery upon reaching age 16. The theory being that if everyone looks the same, there will be no wars or conflict. Of course, the surgery also leaves brain lesions, which make the population extremely compliant and placid.

Teenagers rebelling against this enforced brain surgery escape to live in a primitive enclave - the Smoke - with the rest of the Uglies. The series follows a girl, Tally, who goes through the processes from an Ugly, to a Pretty, then a Special (a government weapon), as she and a group of citizens rebel against the enforced surgery.
**Dystopian Fiction**

**Kristen Simmons**

*Article 5*

In a post-war environment, the USA has outlawed all religions except the Church of America. People are governed by the Moral Statutes, particularly Article 5, which states that children are only ‘valid citizens if they are conceived within marriage.’ Ember Miller is 17, her Mother has broken Article 5, and the Government has found out. The Moral Militia are looking for Ember, and she is on the run.

First in a trilogy, the next book *Breaking Point*, is due in Feb 2013.

**Lissa Price**

*Starters*

Callie lost her parents when the Spore Wars wiped out everyone between the ages of twenty and sixty. She and her little brother, Tyler, go on the run, living as squatters with their friend Michael and fighting off renegades who would kill them for a cookie. Callie's only hope is Prime Destinations, a disturbing place in Beverly Hills run by a mysterious figure known as the Old Man.

He hires teens to rent their bodies to Enders—seniors who want to be young again. Callie, desperate for the money that will keep her, Tyler, and Michael alive, agrees to be a donor. Then she discovers her renter plans to do more than party - her body will commit murder, if her mind can't stop it.

Second in the series, *Enders*, is due Dec 2012.

**Margaret Peterson Haddix**

*The Shadow Children series - Among the Hidden, Among the Imposters, Among the Betrayed, Among the Barons, Among the Brave, Among the Enemy, Among the Free*

Written from 1998 - 2006, this series is set in a fictional future in which drastic measures have been taken to quell overpopulation. Luke Garner is a secret shadow child. Born third in a world where having more than two children is illegal, he spends his days and nights hidden away. He knows that if he is discovered, there is only one punishment: death.

But when he meets Jen, another shadow child, he begins to believe that maybe, the shadow children need to rise up together and take their rightful place in the world...but at what cost?

**Sue Gammon**

Bundaberg Regional Libraries

**References:**


*Dystopian fiction* [http://www.jochenenglish.de/misc/dystopian_fiction_ddat.html](http://www.jochenenglish.de/misc/dystopian_fiction_ddat.html)


*Kirkus Reviews* [http://www.kirkusreviews.com](http://www.kirkusreviews.com)