**Dystopias: Definition and Characteristics**

*Utopia:* A place, state, or condition that is ideally perfect in respect of politics, laws, customs, and conditions.

*Dystopia:* A futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Dystopias, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system.

**Characteristics of a Dystopian Society**
- Propaganda is used to control the citizens of society.
- Information, independent thought, and freedom are restricted.
- A figurehead or concept is worshipped by the citizens of the society.
- Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance.
- Citizens have a fear of the outside world.
- Citizens live in a dehumanized state.
- The natural world is banished and distrusted.
- Citizens conform to uniform expectations. Individuality and dissent are bad.
- The society is an illusion of a perfect utopian world.

**Types of Dystopian Controls**
Most dystopian works present a world in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through one or more of the following types of controls:
- Corporate control: One or more large corporations control society through products, advertising, and/or the media. Examples include Minority Report and Running Man.
- Bureaucratic control: Society is controlled by a mindless bureaucracy through a tangle of red tape, relentless regulations, and incompetent government officials. Examples in film include Brazil.
- Technological control: Society is controlled by technology—through computers, robots, and/or scientific means. Examples include The Matrix, The Terminator, and I, Robot.
- Philosophical/religious control: Society is controlled by philosophical or religious ideology often enforced through a dictatorship or theocratic government.

**The Dystopian Protagonist**
- often feels trapped and is struggling to escape.
- questions the existing social and political systems.
- believes or feels that something is terribly wrong with the society in which he or she lives.
- helps the audience recognize the negative aspects of the dystopian world through his or her perspective.

-Information from Read, Write, Think
Below is a BRIEF list of some possible dystopian novels to choose from. You may select books not included on this list, but you MAY NOT select books from *The Hunger Games Series, The Maze Runner Series, The Divergent Series*, or *The City of Ember Series* (we want you to branch out to some different/non-movie options).

(In Alphabetical Order by Author)

*Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard
The Red Queen is about a common girl named Mare who is a “red blood” meant to serve the “Silvers” who ascends to become one of the more privileged people – or a “Silver.”

*Thunder* by Bonnie Calhoun
Thunder marks the first book in Bonnie’s dystopian trilogy about a girl named Seleh who discovers her family is not really biologically hers. Instead, she is really a Lander, the sworn enemy of her family – a people that her family hunts.

*The Selection* by Kiera Cass
For thirty-five girls, the Selection is the chance of a lifetime. The opportunity to escape the life laid out for them since birth. To be swept up in a world of glittering gowns and priceless jewels. To live in the palace and compete for the heart of the gorgeous Prince Maxon.

*The Chemical Garden* Trilogy by Lauren DeStefano
By age sixteen, Rhine Ellery has four years left to live. She can thank modern science for this genetic time bomb. A botched effort to create a perfect race has left all males with a lifespan of 25 years, and females with a lifespan of 20 years.

*The Jewel* by Amy Ewing
The Jewel is set in a “darkly riveting” world where young girls are raised to be surrogates for the wealthy who want a child. It’s a “debut filled with twists and turns, where all that glitters may not be gold” according to its synopsis.

*Landry Park* by Bethany Hagen
Landry Park is about a girl who wants to attend University, but her domineering father won’t hear of it, instead expecting his daughter make a good marriage.

*These Broken Stars* by Amie Kaufman and Meagan Spooner
Star-crossed lovers have to fight together in order to survive.

*The Legend* Trilogy by Marie Lu
By age sixteen, Rhine Ellery has four years left to live. She can thank modern science for this genetic time bomb. A botched effort to create a perfect race has left all males with a lifespan of 25 years, and females with a lifespan of 20 years.

*Anomoly* by Krista McGee

“Thalli has fifteen minutes and twenty-three seconds to live. The toxic gas that will complete her annihilation is invading her bloodstream. But she is not afraid.” A mix of sci-fi set in a dystopian world, McGee creates an intriguing and riveting world that poses a serious threat to its characters.

*The Delirium Trilogy* by Lauren Oliver

Delirium is a trilogy set in a world where love is an illness and a procedure called “the Cure” is administered to prevent its society from loving.

*The Winner's Curse* by Marie Rutkoski

Set in a new world, The Winner’s Curse is a story of rebellion, duels, ballroom dances, wicked rumors, dirty secrets, and games where everything is at stake, and the gamble is whether you will keep your head or lose your heart.