

Writing Task 4: Reading and Education

Core Question: What should an educated person read?

In *Brave New World*, the citizens of the World State can read, at least the Alphas and Betas, but they read very little. Most of their education is delivered through hypnopaedia, or sleep teaching. Deltas and below are conditioned to dislike books. Linda, who is a Beta Minus, brings one book to the Reservation, *The Chemical and Bacteriological Conditioning of the Embryo: Practical Instructions for Beta Embryo-Store Workers*, which is a job manual. She gives it to John and teaches him to read. Later Popé brings him *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, which he found in an old chest in the Antelope Kiva. John's education consists of those two books plus whatever Mitsima taught him about making pots, bows, and other crafts.

There are thus three types of education represented in *Brave New World*: sleep teaching, in which very little reading is done; book learning, in which a few books are read very thoroughly; and the hands-on teaching of crafts without any reading at all.

Sleep teaching clearly has advantages. It is less work for the student, and it doesn't waste time. It also doesn't require teachers. However, the crafts and skills that John got from Mitsima's ancient form of hands-on teaching were clearly useful to him, and the complex concepts and principles that he got from reading Shakespeare certainly helped him understand the society of the World State, even though Shakespeare was forbidden there. Judging from *Brave New World*, what role should reading have in education? Should it be replaced by some other technology? Should a few very rich and complex books like *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* be taught? Or could books be eliminated and replaced by hands-on learning? Finally, are the examples explored in the novel relevant to our own society and educational system? In answering these questions, discuss examples of the effects of these three forms of learning on the characters in the novel and the implications for our own society.