

## **Possible Worlds (II)**

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### **Overview**

This unit on possible worlds in literature is designed to be taught at the School of the Future in a 200 Level Humanities class. The Humanities curriculum at the School of the Future aligns with National Standards for History, PA Standards for Reading, Writing & Thinking, as well as the Core Curriculum of the School District of Philadelphia.

At the School of the Future, our project-based curriculum is organized around thematic inquiry. The 200 Level (2<sup>nd</sup> year) of our Humanities curriculum focuses on the study of systems, change, and expansion. (See Appendix A.) The curriculum asks the essential questions, “How are we affected by the systems in which we live?” and conversely, “How do we change or affect the systems in which we live?” The content of the 200 Level course focuses on World and American History before the 1900s. This course in particular will coincide with our social studies coverage of World History and early American History from 1000-1500 CE.

This unit will be woven across a learning cycle (approximately 12-14 weeks – See Appendix B). During this time, the learners will explore utopias, dystopias, and other possible worlds as part of a broader study of social systems and medieval history. This unit provides a framework for our historical study of people, places and world events. Our literary studies will depart from the historical content, but will reinforce the essential questions and topics. The texts and films have been chosen to give learners a unique vantage point to probe their own assumptions about societal structures and their philosophical underpinnings.

A critical aspect of this unit is that it is part of an interdisciplinary project. While designed to also stand on its own, this unit is inherently part of a larger whole. I teach Humanities which is both Social Studies and English, so while much of this unit is focused on literature it will be woven in with my Social Studies instruction. At the School of the Future we work in teams; therefore I plan and teach with a Science Educator and a Math/Technology Educator. My co-educators and I will teach content that is braided across the subjects: three distinct strands overlapping in some places and coming together in “nodes” and projects. The final performance of understanding, which is the project that drives the learning, will ask learners to create their own possible world and develop it based on their understanding of topics covered in all of our classes.

## **Rationale**

This curricular unit uses Science Fiction short stories and a novel to explore both social systems and the creative possibilities therein. The literature gives learners a framework within which to work. I can use the societies presented in the texts as examples of worlds in which societal structures, governments, belief systems, institutions exist. I will complement our textual analysis and writing on these subjects with our curricular study of historical systems, places, people and events. At the School of the Future ensuring that learning is relevant is a critical part of our mission and vision. This unit is designed with this question of relevance and connection in mind. The specific texts were selected to accommodate struggling readers and allow ample opportunity for interconnection among disciplines.

In an essay for *Essence* magazine in 1989 (the essay is included in the short story collection my learners will use in class), Octavia Butler wrote about being asked early in her career “what good is science fiction to Black people?” Butler explains that when she was asked this question (usually by a Black person), she “gave bits and pieces of answers that didn’t satisfy me and that probably didn’t satisfy my questioners” (134). Butler acknowledges resenting the question and its implicit call for her to justify her chosen career. Butler’s ambivalence is important and familiar to me. In planning this unit, I felt the urgency of her interlocutor. Thinking of my own students – predominantly African-American adolescents – I wondered myself, “What good?” I found myself hesitating. Where is the relevance in this unit? How will my students connect to the lessons and learnings of science fiction?

I found my own answers echoed in the conclusion of Butler’s 1989 essay. She closes the essay with pointed questions:

“What good is science fiction’s thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternate ways of thinking and doing? What good is its examination of the possible effects of science and technology, or social organization and political direction?” (Butler 135)

I reflected on these prodding questions as I framed this unit. Science Fiction imagines possible worlds. Through reading and writing my students are given new tools to consider and examine the world in which they live. Butler appreciates this quality of Science Fiction, claiming, “At its best science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity.” It is to these ends that this unit will use texts (Butler’s, Asimov’s and Huxley’s) to stimulate imaginative understanding and creative problem solving.

With my co-educators, I have chosen texts that offer up a range of visions of perfected and altogether imperfect worlds. In all of these texts, the worlds presented showcase systems and structures designed by the author to support the narrative. I will use writing

and reading activities to draw attention to the underlying rules of these texts to further emphasize our study of systems. This focus on laws and structures will also help prepare learners for the task of building their own possible worlds.

### *Body Ritual Among the Nacirema*

I have chosen to include this text as an introductory piece for the unit because it teaches a strong lesson about perception. This text is often used in history and anthropology classes as a way of calling an eager student's attention to the dangers of making assumptions about a people or a society based on limited information.

This essay by Horace Miner presents itself as study of an unusual people with unusual hygiene-related practices. As the essay progresses the reader may begin to recognize the familiar in the strange "rituals" described. There are in fact clues throughout the essay that if caught identify the Nacirema as none other than the average American, whose dentistry and bathroom habits turn out not to be quite so foreign after all.

### *Brave New World*

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is an ideal text for our study of possible worlds and social structures. The highly organized, scientifically and technologically advanced society put forth in the text offers ample opportunity for analysis. I will work with my learners to apply the same critical lens we use when we study civilizations to help them better understand the World State and how it operates. This means I will focus in detail on the economics, family structures, recreation activities, health care, communication, and government of Huxley's imagined world.

The novel's complexity requires us to focus a great deal on reading comprehension and plot-and-character analysis. Still, it is my intention to depart from traditional treatment of the text and focus primarily on the ways in which Huxley describes and develops the distinct world of the novel. In fact, *Brave New World* lends itself to an analysis of these structures. From the opening chapter's omniscient view of the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre to the debate between John/the Savage and Mustapha Mond, the novel engages in the business of explaining how and why the World State is structured the way it is.

Our study of *Brave New World* will also connect directly to our study of social systems throughout history. My learners can learn about Henry Ford and Fordism in the context of the novel and compare this period of industrial history with advancements made during the period of world history we are studying – like the advancements of trade and trade technologies from 1000-1500 CE. Although drastically different, it is possible to trace parallels in the lasting effects of varying technological advancements and the way new "technology" can alter societal values and practices.

Additionally, the World State's caste system can be compared to other highly regimented societies like India's Hindu caste system, or even feudalism in Japan and Europe. I may have my learners read sections of significant Hindu texts like the Bhagavad-Gita or the Manu Smriti, study specific aspects of Japanese warrior class, or Medieval Europe's feudal system to highlight this point of comparison. Again, the point is not to say that the structures in the novel and the structures in world history are the same, but rather that the deep implications of such systems for the individuals within the system provide an interesting opportunity for comparative analysis.

By the end of our work with the novel, learners should be able to explain and critique the distinct features of the World State. This will prepare them for the kind of critical thinking they need to employ when they create their own Possible Worlds in their Final Performance of Understanding.

### *Bloodchild*

This collection of short stories offers a number of strong examples of "possible worlds" and while I only intend to have learners read three of the stories in class ("Bloodchild," "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" and "Book of Martha") the collected stories will be available to learners as a reference while they plan their own possible worlds in the Final Performance of Understanding. The three stories I have decided to focus on present starkly different imagined worlds. They also interrogate societal structures and assumptions.

"Bloodchild" is Butler's famous exploration of male pregnancy. This story is especially instructive as a model for the short story writing that will be part of the Final Performance of Understanding. Butler does not explicitly describe the features of this society, instead the alarming reality of the arrangement between Terran and Tlic is intentionally withheld for much of the story. This provides many instructive passages which I can use to teach strategies for understanding and writing narrative exposition. The story also raises questions about social structures around pregnancy, gender roles, and even immigration – since the Terrans are immigrants to the Tlic territory, held captive on a Preserve with an illusion of autonomy. These issues relate back to our curricular study of medieval societies, their structures, their values, and their cross-cultural interactions.

The story, "The Evening and the Morning and the Night," presents an afflicted woman and explores the ways in which her society does and does not cope with her disease. There are immediate curricular connections to historical events like the Bubonic Plague. Moreover the story raises questions about how societies accommodate and fail to accommodate differences of all kinds. This is a connection I would explore through comparison activities which would ask learners to investigate how societies in Asia, Europe, Eurasia, Africa and the Americas handled illness or any social and cultural differences.

“Book of Martha” is Butler’s “utopia story” (*Bloodchild and Other Stories*, Afterword, p. 214) about a woman conversing with a Judeo-Christian God. This God charges Martha with the task of altering the world in some way, with the aim of improving it. This story is especially interesting in the context of this project because it directly asks the reader to consider ways in which the world could be different. Martha’s thinking directly parallels the kind of planning necessary for my learners when developing their possible world. In the story the God character probes Martha to consider all of the possible outcomes of her proposed changes. This thought experiment would lend itself well to the planning stages of our Final Performance of Understanding.

### *I, Robot*

The robots that are featured in many of Isaac Asimov’s novels and short stories are not the monstrous visions of Mary Shelley, nor are they given to the eerie omniscience and power of Clarke and Kubrick’s HAL. Instead, Asimov’s robots contribute positively to society even when they are misunderstood. The consistency and positivity with which Asimov’s robots are presented can be directly attributed to the Three Laws that govern their behavior and performance. These three laws are one of the main reasons we chose to include the *I, Robot* stories in this unit. The way in which these laws are presented (explicitly in the second story “Runaround,” and subtly throughout all nine stories) is an important example for our learners of rules regulating a system or society.

Although Asimov wrote his first three robot stories without ever explicitly detailing the laws they were always part of his conception of robots. In an essay about his robot stories, Asimov acknowledges this, explaining that in his stories “robots were machines and not metaphors” (Asimov 8). This is an important move away from the moralistic robot and monster Science Fiction stories that preceded Asimov’s work, in which “the creation of robots was looked up on as the prime example of the overweening arrogance of humanity” (Asimov 5). Asimov is an interesting writer for my children to read in this unit because he is so intentional with robots and their meaning, or lack thereof. In fact, the underlying belief that technology can be a positive force in society is another significant reason to include Asimov in this unit.

### Films: *Gattaca*, *The Matrix* and *Aeon Flux*

To supplement their work with the texts, learners will also view *Gattaca*, *The Matrix*, and *Aeon Flux*. All of these films showcase possible worlds with rich scientific and philosophical characteristics. Learners are likely to view these films in their Science and Math/Technology classes, but I would use them in the Humanities class in discussions and writing activities. Learners will dissect the ways in which societies in these films are governed. Together, we will analyze the ways in which people, institutions and systems in these societies function. We will explore the underlying ideas and values communicated in the film about the imagined society and our actual society. Through

our study of these films learners will demonstrate their mastery of our learning objects while also preparing themselves for their Final Performance of Understanding.

### **Objectives**

- Learners will analyze the rules and systems that govern societies.
- Learners will discuss and debate ideal societal structures.
- Learners will relate their society to historical and literary societies.
- Learners will compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, behaviors, and institutions.
- Learners will consider multiple perspectives.
- Learners will read for understanding.
- Learners will write with focus.
- Learners will write and revise for an audience.
- Learners will analyze the importance of ideas.
- Learners will analyze cause-and-effect relationships.
- Learners will understand the development and expansion of states and civilizations from 1000-1500 CE.

### **Strategies**

All of the learning surrounding these texts is project-based. Work in this unit will culminate with a Final Performance of Understanding in which learners create, write about, justify and present their own Possible Worlds. Many other classroom structures and instructional strategies will follow the learners through their work with these texts and the related content.

#### *Reading Journals*

Learners will maintain reading journals to keep track of key ideas, themes and vocabulary from the novels. The reading journals will be maintained digitally using the note-taking software Microsoft OneNote. In a traditional classroom setting a simple spiral-bound notebook would suffice. The digital or paper notebook would need to be divided into three sections: 1) Reading Notes, 2) Reflection Prompts and 3) Vocabulary and Key Terms.

In the Reading Notes section learners would record their observations about the texts. My learners tend to need structures to support their note-taking. At the beginning of the unit I would require all learners to take notes on the setting, characters, plot and tone in the stories. I would also encourage learners to write down any questions that occur to them as they read. I would check this section of the journal for accuracy and encourage learners to study from it in preparation for reading quizzes.

The Reflection Prompts will be used in opening and closing activities. I will provide prompts to help learners focus on the ideas and systems that the authors present in the

texts. The prompts will ask learners to explicitly consider the rules, structures, and thinking that shape the fictional world. The prompts would also facilitate the connections learners would make between and among the texts by different authors. Furthermore, the prompts would preview and initiate some of the planning that would support the learners' work with their own possible worlds. Finally, this emphasis on systems thinking supports our curricular study of how people shape and are shaped by social systems.

The last part of the reading journal is the Vocabulary and Key Terms section. In keeping with Core Curriculum expectations and to support the learners reading comprehension, the reading journals will also facilitate our study of vocabulary. As learners read they will be expected to keep a running list of new vocabulary they encounter. Any important terms I will present as part of our historical or literary studies would also add to the vocabulary section. At the end of each text (or mini-unit) the learners will be quizzed on their word lists. Learners could consolidate their lists into one class vocabulary list which all learners would be quizzed on. Further instructional differentiation may be possible and would be supported by a web-based program called QUIA. Using QUIA, each learner could create, study and be quizzed on their own personal list of words.

Additional use of the reading journals may lead into longer writing activities (in-class and at home). These writing activities may be generated in response to key events in the works or in relation to historical or cross-curricular parallels that I may be emphasizing in our work with a particular text.

### *Class Discussion*

These texts all raise potentially controversial issues like male pregnancy, social isolation, drug use and abuse, industrialization, and the dangers of artificial intelligence. These issues offer numerous opportunities for me to connect our literary studies back to my learners' daily lives. In order to draw out the learners' opinions and stimulate debate, I would use a variety of discussion formats.

In some cases, learners will use structured dialogues like debate to explore ideas presented in the texts. Through debate and discussion learners will stake their own positions on the issues. The goal of the debates is to get learners to see the values behind the systems and to recognize the kinds of beliefs that support the social systems real and imagined.

For some more issue-based conversations, I would use "Four Corners" activities that position learners around the room based on their opinions on a variety of statements. For example, learners may agree, disagree, agree strongly or disagree strongly with a statement. I would also use written anticipation guides to allow learners to gauge their opinions before engaging in less structured class discussions.

### *Independent Research*

At various points throughout the unit learners will be called upon to make connections between the novel and stories we are reading and the historical events we are studying. While the essential questions and learning objectives are useful tools for framing this unit, student-centered, constructivist teaching insists that learners forge the curricular connections themselves. Research is the necessary means for making these connections. Learners will be asked to conduct their own research (within a framework of websites and resources that I will provide) and prepare presentations (written and oral) for the class. The topics for research will be determined by issues raised in the literature, in other courses, and in our coverage of the National History Standards.

### **Classroom Activities**

**Lesson:** The Nacirema & Perspective

**Description:** Learners will read and respond to the essay *Body Ritual Among the Nacirema*. This lesson would work particularly well at the beginning of the unit.

**Learning Goals:** Learners will consider the importance of perspective in historical analysis. Learners will recognize the danger of making assumptions when they learn about other people or cultures.

### **Objectives:**

Learners will be able to:

- Read for understanding.
- Work with a partner.
- Draw inferences from textual evidence.
- Revise and improve inferences based on new information.
- Write with focus.

### **Standards:**

PA State Standard: 8.1.12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development

PA State Standard: 1.2.11: Reading Critically in All Content Areas

### **Materials:**

- Copies of the text of the Nacirema essay – divided into 4 parts.
- Reading journals or alternate materials for Do Now & Debriefing Question
- Reading Questions (available online or on paper)



## **Learning Plan:**

*Opening Activity:* Learners will complete the “Do Now” in their reading journals: Which societies do you think have the “weirdest” cultures? What is weird about them?”

*Reading:* There will be 4 parts of the Nacirema essay distributed to the learners. Learners will read each section with a partner. As learners complete the reading they will answer guiding questions (provided on a worksheet on their computers or on paper). 1) Where do the Nacirema live? 2) What stands out to be about the Nacirema? 3) What surprised you about their rituals? 4) What words would you use to describe the Nacirema? After learners complete the Nacirema reading and questions, the educator will go over them as a class. The educator and the learners will create a shared list of the things they noticed about the Nacirema and the words they would use to describe them. The educator will address the class and ask if anyone can tell the class more about the Nacirema? If learners have not “caught on” yet, the educator will select one learner to come write the Nacirema’s name backwards on the board.

*Closing Activity:* Learners will answer the Debriefing Question in their reading journals: How does perspective change perception?

*Homework or Extension Activity:* In a short essay, consider what do our body rituals and cultural practices communicate about the systems and structures of American society.

## **Lesson:** *Brave New World* Debate

**Description:** Learners will engage in a three-day debate activity which will give learners an opportunity to research and defend a position on one of the scientific or societal “advancements” proposed in *Brave New World*.

**Learning Goals:** Learners will relate real world issues to the science and systems in *Brave New World*. Learners will determine, develop, and debate a position on an issue from the novel of relevance to our world today. Learners will practice debate protocol and techniques.

## **Objectives:**

Learners will be able to:

- Work in cooperative groups.
- Research an issue in contemporary science and politics.
- Locate information using appropriate sources and strategies.
- Use data to support an argument.
- Use media for learning purposes.

- Defend and debate a position on a controversial topic.
- Organize their ideas for rebuttal and concluding statements.

**Standards:**

PA State Standard: 6.1.12: Economic Systems

PA State Standard: 8.1.12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development

PA State Standard: 1.6.11: Speaking and Listening

PA State Standard: 1.8.11: Research

**Materials:**

- Printed images to represent the possible debate topics (Eugenics, Mood-Altering Drugs, other possible topics include: Caste System, Mass Production) cut into puzzles.
- List of web resources for each topic.
- Computers with internet access.
- PowerPoint or another presentation software for opening statements.
- Forms for Peer-Evaluation (and note-taking during the Debate Presentations)

**Learning Plan:**

*Making groups:* Learners will be given a puzzle piece and instructed to find the rest of their group by completing their puzzle. The puzzles are pictures of the possible debate topics (Eugenics, Mood-Altering Drugs, other possible topics include: Caste System, Mass Production). There are 2 copies of each picture but they must be cut into DIFFERENT puzzles for each group. In the end there will be 2 or 3 pairs of groups – 2 groups for each topic. Each group should have 4-6 learners, and there must be an even number of groups in each class. Ideally there are 4 groups of 6, but adjustments may be required.

*Day 1:* Learners will meet in their groups. Each group will prepare the pro or con of their assigned topic. Learners will use web resources provided to research their topic. Learners will be instructed to research both sides of their topic so that they are prepared for the debate.

*Day 2:* Learners will wrap-up their research and been preparing PowerPoint presentations of their “Opening Statements” for their position. Groups must submit the written Opening Statements to the educator for assessment. Learners will also prepare a list of Rebuttal statements and questions in anticipation of the competing team’s position.

*Day 3:* The Debate- there will be a different debate for each topic. While the other topic debates, the learners in the “audience” will complete a review of the topics and positions covered and a peer- evaluation of the learners’ debate performance. Each group will be given 3-4 minutes for their Opening Statements. Then both groups will be given time to

prepare their Rebuttal statements and questions. Each group will then present their Rebuttals. Then each group will be given time to prepare their Closing Statements. Each group will share their Closing Statements. The peer-evaluations and educator evaluations will be used to determine the debate winner. This procedure will be repeated for subsequent topics.

**Project:** “*The Evening and the Morning and the Night*” PSA Project

**Description:** Learners will research a group of people historically or currently marginalized in society because of a perceived difference or deficiency. Learners will prepare print or video Public Service Announcements to teach people about this marginalized group and resources available to support them.

**Learning Goals:** Learners will develop empathy for a marginalized group and marginalized groups in society in general. Learners will develop tools to better advocate for the needs of others.

**Objectives:**

Learners will be able to:

- Research a topic of interest to them.
- Locate information using appropriate sources and strategies.
- Organize, summarize and present the main ideas from research.
- Analyze societal reaction to perceived differences.
- Appreciate the effects of marginalize on groups of people.
- Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
- Write an informative and persuasive piece of print or video media.
- Encourage others to take a specified action on an issue.
- Use media for learning purposes.

**Standards:**

PA State Standard: 7.4.12: The Interactions Between People and Places

PA State Standard: 8.1.12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development

PA State Standard: 8.3.12: United States History

PA State Standard: 8.4.12: World History

PA State Standard: 1.2.11: Reading Critically in All Content Areas

PA State Standard: 1.4.11: Types of Writing

PA State Standard: 1.6.11: Speaking and Listening

PA State Standard: 1.8.11: Research

**Materials:**

- List of possible topics (Witches in Europe or in Colonial America, Japanese Internment during WWII, lepers, TB patients, the homeless, etc. *NOTE: The list*

*of topics is intentionally very broad. This is intended to give learners a comprehensive picture of marginalization and a deeper understanding of how and why societies marginalize groups of people.)*

- Preliminary list of web resources for each topic.
- Computers with internet access.
- Publisher or another program for creating PSAs as brochures or posters.
- Video cameras, chargers, and media storage device (tape or memory card) for filmed PSAs.
- Forms for Peer-Evaluation (and note-taking during the PSA Presentations)

### **Learning Plan:**

*Introduction to Project:* Learners will receive a project description sheet, including a rubric for assessment, and will discuss project specifications with the educator before beginning to research.

*Research:* Research will be done in class and at home. Learners will be provided with preliminary websites to assist in their research. Learners will be expected to extend their research beyond the websites provided. Learners will be given guidelines about accuracy and bias in research to help them verify the reliability of their sources.

*Bibliography:* Learners will prepare a bibliography of the websites they use as they go. Educator will need to instruct learners in creating and formatting bibliographies.

*Public Service Announcements:* Learners will prepare either a print or video informational advertisement that 1) Introduces the public to the group. 2) Explains the reason they are currently or were historically marginalized. 3) Reviews resources historically or currently available to the group and the public. 4) Advises the public to take a certain action: Learn more about the group. Volunteer to support the group. Advocate for the group's rights. Etc.

*Presentation:* Learners will present their video or print PSA to the class. While the other topic debates, the learners in the "audience" will complete a peer- evaluation of the learners' PSA.

### **Lesson: *I, Robot* Thought Experiment**

**Description:** This is a short activity to complement our work with the short stories in *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov and to support learners in their preparation of their Possible Worlds. It relates directly to the importance of the Three Laws of Robotics in Asimov's writings. The activity also works with learners' reading of "The Book of Martha" by Octavia Butler, since that story poses similar questions.

**Learning Goals:** Learners will consider what laws could be needed to improve the world in which they live. Learners will develop a procedure for determining the efficacy and necessity of the laws they develop.

**Objectives:**

Learners will be able to:

- Make decisions in groups.
- Analyze cause and effect.
- Critique their ideas and the ideas of others.
- Present in an informal setting.
- Analyze effective decision-making strategies.
- Write a creative vignette.
- Revise writing.

**Standards:**

PA State Standard: 8.1.12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development

PA State Standard: 1.4.11: Types of Writing

PA State Standard: 1.5.11: Quality of Writing

PA State Standard: 1.6.11: Speaking and Listening

**Materials:**

- Reading journals or alternate materials for Do Now & Debriefing Question
- Copies of the “Some things to consider” Questions

**Learning Plan:**

*Opening Activity:* Learners will complete the “Do Now” in their reading journals: Complete the sentence “There should be a law that…” Come up with as many new laws as possible. (5 minimum!)

*Group Activity:* Learners will be put into groups of 3. Each individual learner will share their lists of possible laws with their groups. Each group must then develop a process for determining which 5 laws to present to the class. Groups will be instructed to consult the “Some things to consider” Questions: Does the law already exist? Why doesn’t it exist? Who would the law affect? Young people? Families? Businesses? Communities? What are the consequences of the law going into effect? What would change? Does it have any negative consequences? How might people misinterpret this law? What would be the consequences of this misinterpretation? Groups will need to come to a consensus about 2 of their laws that they will share with the class. Each group will present its 2 laws and the decision-making procedure the group used to arrive at their conclusion. Then the class will choose a decision-making procedure to eliminate some of the suggestions and settle on 3 final laws.

*Closing Activity:* Learners will answer the Debriefing Questions in their reading journals: Which decision-making strategies were effective? Which were not as effective? Why or why not?

*Homework or Extension Activity:* Creative Writing: What would it be like to live in a world with these 3 laws? Write a creative vignette about one day in this world.

**Project:** Final Performance of Understanding – Possible Worlds

**Description:** As a culmination of their work in the Humanities, Math/Technology and Science over the learning cycle, learners will complete a cross-curricular final project. They will be asked to create, outline, write about and program a Possible World. The Humanities component of this project will include writing a short story that takes place in this possible world.

**Learning Goals:** Learners will develop systems, institutions, philosophies and other characteristics of their Possible Worlds. Learners will understand the implications of the decisions they make about the systems and structures of their Possible Worlds. Learners will write descriptively about their Possible Worlds. Learners will present their Possible Worlds to an audience.

**Objectives:**

Learners will be able to:

- Draw on readings to create their Possible Worlds.
- Synthesize essential ideas from texts.
- Understand and develop consistent and workable social systems.
- Predict outcomes.
- Identify causes and effects.
- Write with focus and creativity.
- Include literary elements and literary devices in their writing.
- Revise writing.
- Use media for learning purposes.

**Standards:**

PA State Standard: 7.4.12: The Interactions Between People and Places

PA State Standard: 8.1.12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development

PA State Standard: 1.4.11: Types of Writing

PA State Standard: 1.6.11: Speaking and Listening

PA State Standard: 1.8.11: Research

**Materials:**

- Computers with internet access.
- Guiding Questions sheet
- Writing tools – paper/pen or computer for drafting, revising, editing, etc.
- Resources & Educator-provided checklist for revision.

**Learning Plan:**

*Introduction to Project:* Learners will receive a project description sheet, including a rubric for assessment, and will discuss project specifications with the educator before beginning the writing process.

*Research & Planning:* Research will be done in class and at home. Learners will be provided with some models of possible worlds. We will study Utopian communities in American history such as the Shakers, the Fruitlands, the Oneida Community, etc.. I will also provide learners with other examples of utopian and dystopian short stories, films to mine for ideas. As they conduct their research, learners will also work to develop their own version of a Possible World.

*Guiding Questions:* Learners will use the Guiding Questions sheet to help them think through the structures and systems that support the world they envision. This will also help the learners focus on what details need to be included in the exposition of their short stories in order for the reader to understand the Possible World. Learners will need to explain the governance of their world in the Humanities class. They will need to explain natural phenomena of the world in their Science class.

*The Rules:* Learners must define at least 5 rules that govern their Possible World. These rules should be consistent throughout the short story. These rules must be explained in some way by the events or description in the story.

*Short Stories:* Learners will first brainstorm ideas for the short story that will take place in their Possible World. We will use a variety of classroom strategies to help the learners identify the plot, setting and characters of their story. As their story takes shape, learners will map out the sequence of events using storyboarding (a scene-by-scene approach to narrative writing). They will then work to draft writing around the ideas presented in their storyboards. The storyboards and first drafts of the short stories will be workshopped in small groups so that learners can get feedback from their peers. When learners are satisfied with their second draft they will submit it for educator review. The educator feedback and more peer feedback will help learners prepare the final draft of their stories. Most of the writing process will take place in class, so that learners can have support from their educator and peers as they work on their stories.

*Publishing & Presenting:* Learners will publish their short stories to a class website. Learners will present the virtual version of their Possible World (developed with the Math/Technology Educator) to the class.

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Aeon Flux. Dir. Karyn Kusama. DVD, Paramount Pictures, 2003.  
Apre los ojos Dir. Alejandro Amenábar. DVD, Lions Gate Film, 2003.  
Children of men. Dir. Alfonso Cuarón. DVD, Universal, 2006.

### **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Asimov, Isaac. I, Robot. New York: Bantam Books, 1991.  
This is the collection of nine of Asimov's robot stories. It includes "Robbie," Asimov's very first robot story and "Runaround" the story which introduces the Three Laws of Robotics.

Asimov, Isaac. Robot Visions. New York: Byron Preiss Visual Publications, Inc., 1990.  
This is a broad collection of Asimov's Robot stories and essays. It includes seven of the stories from the I, Robot collection and many others. The essays are particularly useful for giving educators and learners background on Asimov's writing process.

Bradbury, Ray. Fahrenheit 451. 40th anniversary ed.: New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.  
This novel explores a dystopian future with a hedonistic society where reading, and by extension critical thinking, is outlawed. An interesting exploration of societal extremes.

Bradbury, Ray. The Martian Chronicles. Fortieth anniversary ed.: New York: Doubleday, 1990.  
This is a collection of short stories about human beings living on Mars. The stories can be read separately or as a narrative whole. They offer a vision of a possible future and a new possible world.



Butler, Octavia. Bloodchild and Other Stories. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005

This collection of Butler's short stories includes "Bloodchild," "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" and "The Book of Martha." It also includes essays Butler wrote about writing and becoming a writer, which would also be worthwhile for reading in class.

Calvino, Italo. Invisible Cities. Trans. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.

This is a fantastic genre-bending, postmodern text that unfolds as conversation between Marco Polo and Kublai Kahn. It can be viewed as a novel or a collection of short stories. Texts provide imaginative examples of cities and societies that would be useful models for learners creating their own possible worlds.

Cowan, Douglas. The Religious Movements Homepage Project. May 22 2005. University of Virginia. May 30 2008. <<http://web.archive.org/web/20060907005952/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/re/move/>>

This website offers a comprehensive directory for religions and religious communities worldwide. This is a great resource for research of historical or contemporary religious utopian communities.

Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006. This novel presents a highly-regimented, technologically advanced society. The World State at first appears successful and satisfying for its citizens, but through the introduction of the character of John/the Savage the World State's darker side is exposed. This novel is a central part of this unit on Possible Worlds, but could be leveraged in any unit on utopian/dystopia literature or science fiction.

Lowry, Lois. The Giver. New York: Bantam Books, 1993.

This young adult novel would provide a high-interest read for my learners and a strong introduction to the concept of utopia and dystopia.

Miner, Horace. "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." American Anthropologist New Series, 58.3 (1956): 503-507.

This essay presents geographical and anthropological information about an unknown people. The body and hygiene rituals are discussed in a way that makes them seem foreign and strange, but upon closer examination the Nacirema are actually revealed to be Americans. This article is an excellent teaching tool for exploring bias and perspective with learners.

More, Thomas. Utopia Ed. and trans. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

This novel introduces the utopia, both as a good place (“eutopia”) and a non-place (“outopia”). The utopia is therefore both essentially perfected possible world and an essentially unattainable one. The reading would be challenging for many high school students, but excerpts would be useful in setting the tone and providing historical background on Utopias. Also a good example for utopian writing used as a tool for critiquing contemporary political structures.

Mumford, Lewis. The Story of Utopia. New York: Boni and Liveright Inc. 1922.

Accessed online at sacred-texts.com. Scanned June 2007. May 30 2008.

<<http://www.sacred-texts.com/utopia/sou/sou00.htm>>.

This is a comprehensive overview of Utopias by prominent historian Lewis Mumford. The text investigates the idea of the utopia as it appears in literature from Plato to H.G. Wells.

Poscock, Emil. Utopian Communities in the United States. August 30 2004. American Studies at Eastern Connecticut State University. May 30 2008.

<<http://www.easternct.edu/depts/amerst/utopia.htm>>

This is a directory of American Utopian Communities that are open to the public. Provides links to many of the communities’ websites and other resources.

Robbins, Robert H. WWW Resources on Alternative and Utopian Communities. Date of Posting/Revision Unknown. State University of New York Plattsburgh. May 30 2008.<[http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/utopia\\_www\\_resources.html](http://faculty.plattsburgh.edu/richard.robbins/legacy/utopia_www_resources.html)>

This site offers an extensive list of resources and links to websites about historical and contemporary Utopian Communities.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A. School of the Future Humanities Curriculum

Appendix B. Long Range Planning for the Unit (with Humanities Standards).

**Appendix A. School of the Future Humanities Curriculum**

*This curriculum is a work in progress. It was developed by the Humanities educators at the School of the Future, in the spring of 2008.*

LEARNING ENGAGEMENT: Humanities (English & Social Studies) - 200 Level						
ALIGNMENT: (English 2 and World/US History)						
1st Learning Cycle		2nd Learning Cycle		3rd Learning Cycle		
201		202		203		
Unit	Intensified Hemispheric Interactions (1000 – 1500 CE )	The Three Worlds Meet (USA Beginnings to 1620)	Emergence of the First Global Age (1450 – 1770)	US Colonization and Settlement (1585 – 1763)	US Expansion and Reform (1801 – 1861)	The Development of the Industrial USA (1870 – 1900)
Themes	<i>Systems, Change, Expansion</i>					
Essential Questions	<i>How are we affected by the systems in which we live? How do we change or affect the systems in which we live?</i>					
	<p><b>Standard 1</b> The maturing of an inter-regional system of communication, trade, and cultural exchange in an era of Chinese economic power and Islamic expansion</p> <p><b>Standard 2</b> The redefining of European society</p>	<p><b>Standard 1</b> Comparative characteristics of societies in the Americas, Western Europe, and Western Africa that increasingly interacted after 1450</p> <p><b>Standard 2</b> How early European exploration and colonization resulted</p>	<p><b>Standard 1</b> How the transoceanic interlinking of all major regions of the world from 1450-1600 led to global transformations</p> <p><b>Standard 2</b> How European society experienced political, economic, and cultural transformations in an</p>	<p><b>Standard 1</b> Why the Americas attracted Europeans, why they brought enslaved Africans to their colonies, and how Europeans struggled for control of North America and the Caribbean</p> <p><b>Standard 2</b> How political, religious, and social</p>	<p><b>Standard 1</b> United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external powers and Native Americans</p> <p><b>Standard 2</b> How the industrial revolution, increasing immigration, the</p>	<p><b>Standard 1</b> How the rise of corporations, heavy industry, and mechanized farming transformed the American people</p> <p><b>Standard 2</b> Massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity</p>

<p>and culture, 1000-1300 CE</p> <p><b>Standard 3</b> The rise of the Mongol empire and its consequences for Eurasian peoples, 1200-1350</p> <p><b>Standard 4</b> The growth of states, towns, and trade in Sub-Saharan Africa between the 11th and 15th centuries</p> <p><b>Standard 5</b> Patterns of crisis and recovery in Afro-Eurasia, 1300-1450</p> <p><b>Standard 6</b> The expansion of states and civilizations in the Americas, 1000-1500</p> <p><b>Standard 7</b> Major global trends from 1000-1500 CE</p>	<p>in cultural and ecological interactions among previously unconnected peoples</p>	<p>age of global intercommunication, 1450-1750</p> <p><b>Standard 3</b> How large territorial empires dominated much of Eurasia between the 16th and 18th centuries</p> <p><b>Standard 4</b> Economic, political, and cultural interrelations among peoples of Africa, Europe, and the Americas, 1500-1750</p> <p><b>Standard 5</b> Transformations in Asian societies in the era of European expansion Standard 6 - Major global trends from 1450-1770</p>	<p>institutions emerged in the English colonies</p> <p><b>Standard 3</b> How the values and institutions of European economic life took root in the colonies, and how slavery reshaped European and African life in the America</p>	<p>rapid expansion of slavery, and the westward movement changed the lives of Americans and led toward regional tensions</p> <p><b>Standard 3</b> The extension, restriction, and reorganization of political democracy after 1800</p> <p><b>Standard 4</b> The sources and character of cultural, religious, and social reform movements in the antebellum period</p>	<p>developed amid growing cultural diversity</p> <p><b>Standard 3</b> The rise of the American labor movement and how political issues reflected social and economic changes</p> <p><b>Standard 4</b> Federal Indian policy and United States foreign policy after the Civil War</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze cause and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze cause and effect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze cause and effect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze multiple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze cause-and-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze cause-and-</li> </ul>

	<p>effect relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze multiple causation</li> <li>• Analyze the importance of ideas</li> <li>• Appreciate historical perspectives</li> <li>• Assess the importance of the individual</li> <li>• Clarify information on the geographical setting</li> <li>• Compare and contrast different values and institutions</li> <li>• Compare and contrast differing institutions</li> <li>• Draw comparisons across regions and eras</li> <li>• Draw upon data in historical maps</li> <li>• Draw upon visual sources</li> <li>• Evaluate the implementation of a decision</li> <li>• Examine the importance of ideas</li> <li>• Examine the influence of ideas</li> <li>• Formulate a position or course of action on an issue</li> <li>• Formulate historical questions</li> <li>• Identify historical antecedents</li> <li>• Identify issues and problems in the past</li> <li>• Interrogate historical</li> </ul>	<p>relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze multiple causation</li> <li>• Appreciate historical perspectives</li> <li>• Assess the importance of the individual in history</li> <li>• Compare and contrast different economic institutions, political systems, sets of ideas, and social organizations</li> <li>• Compare and contrast the influence of ideas</li> <li>• Consider multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Draw upon data in historical maps</li> <li>• Examine the influence of ideas</li> <li>• Explain the influence of ideas</li> <li>• Hypothesize the influence of the past</li> <li>• Identify historical antecedent</li> <li>• Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration</li> </ul>	<p>relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze multiple causation</li> <li>• Appreciate historical perspectives</li> <li>• Clarify information on geographic setting</li> <li>• Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas</li> <li>• Compare and contrast different sets of ideas and values</li> <li>• Consider multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Demonstrate and explain the influence of ideas</li> <li>• Draw upon visual data and literary sources</li> <li>• Draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources</li> <li>• Employ quantitative analysis</li> <li>• Evaluate the implementation of a decision</li> <li>• Evidence historical perspectives</li> <li>• Examine the influence of ideas, human interests, and beliefs</li> <li>• Explain historical continuity and change</li> <li>• Formulate a position or course of action on an issue</li> <li>• Formulate historical questions</li> <li>• Hypothesize the influence of the past</li> </ul>	<p>causation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate historical perspective</li> <li>• Assess the importance of the individual</li> <li>• Compare competing historical narratives</li> <li>• Consider multiple perspective</li> <li>• Hypothesize the influence of the past</li> <li>• Identify gaps in the historical record while constructing a sound historical interpretation</li> <li>• Interrogate historical data</li> <li>• Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances</li> <li>• Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration</li> <li>• Utilize quantitative data</li> <li>• Utilize visual and mathematical data</li> </ul>	<p>effect relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze multiple causation</li> <li>• Appreciate historical perspectives</li> <li>• Assess the importance of the individual in history</li> <li>• Compare and contrast different patterns of settlement</li> <li>• Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas</li> <li>• Consider multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations</li> <li>• Draw upon literary and artistic sources</li> <li>• Evaluate the implementation of a decision</li> <li>• Examine the importance of the individual</li> <li>• Examine the influence of ideas</li> <li>• Hypothesize the influence of the past</li> <li>• Identify issues and problems in the past</li> <li>• Identify relevant historical antecedents</li> <li>• Interrogate historical data</li> <li>• Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage</li> </ul>	<p>effect relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze multiple causation</li> <li>• Appreciate historical perspectives</li> <li>• Assess the importance of the individual in history</li> <li>• Compare and contrast differing economic patterns</li> <li>• Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas</li> <li>• Compare competing historical narratives</li> <li>• Consider multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Draw upon data in historical maps</li> <li>• Draw upon visual sources</li> <li>• Employ literature, architecture, diaries, and artifacts</li> <li>• Evaluate alternative courses of actions</li> <li>• Evaluate the implementation of a decision</li> <li>• Examine historical perspectives</li> <li>• Examine the influence of ideas</li> <li>• Explain historical continuity and change</li> <li>• Formulate historical questions</li> <li>• Hypothesize the influence of the past</li> <li>• Interrogate historical data</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>data</li> <li>• Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances</li> <li>• Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration</li> <li>• Utilize mathematical and quantitative data</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify issues and problems in the past</li> <li>• Identify gaps in available records</li> <li>• Interrogate historical data</li> <li>• Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances</li> <li>• Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration</li> <li>• Utilize visual and mathematical data</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain historical data</li> <li>• Read historical narratives imaginatively</li> <li>• Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration</li> <li>• Utilize quantitative data</li> <li>• Utilize visual and mathematical data</li> </ul>
Core Curriculum Alignment– Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World History Unit 1: Time, Continuity and Change: First Human Societies to the Modern World C.E.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US History Unit A: Human Migration (Beginnings to the 1754)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World History Unit 2: Power, Authority and Governance -1500-1900 C.E.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US History Unit A: Human Migration (Beginnings to the 1754)</li> <li>• US History Unit 1: Creating a Nation, 1754–1816</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US History Unit 1: Creating a Nation, 1754–1816</li> <li>• US History Unit 2: The Young Republic, 1816–1850</li> <li>• US History Unit 4: The Birth of Modern America 1865-1900</li> <li>• Social Science (Spring)-Unit 3: How the Free Enterprise System Works</li> <li>• Social Science (Spring)-Unit 4: The U.S. Government and the Economy</li> </ul>
PA Standards for Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PA State Standard: 5.1.12: Principles and Documents of Government</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 5.4.12: How International Relationships Function</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.1.12: Economic Systems</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.2.12: Markets and the Functions of Governments</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.3.12: Scarcity and Choice</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.4.12: Economic Interdependence</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 7.1.12: Basic Geographic Literacy</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.1.12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.2.12: PA History</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.3.12: United States History</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.4.12: World History</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PA State Standard: 5.2.12: Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 5.3.12: How Government Works</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 5.1.12: Principles and Documents of Government</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.1.12: Economic Systems</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.2.12: Markets and the Functions of Governments</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.3.12: Scarcity and Choice</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.4.12: Economic Interdependence</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.5.12: Work and Earnings</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 7.1.12: Basic Geographic Literacy</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 7.4.12: The Interactions Between People and Places</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.1.12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PA State Standard: 5.3.12: How Government Works</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 5.1.12: Principles and Documents of Government</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.1.12: Economic Systems</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.2.12: Markets and the Functions of Governments</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.3.12: Scarcity and Choice</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.4.12: Economic Interdependence</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 6.5.12: Work and Earnings</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 7.1.12: Basic Geographic Literacy</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 7.4.12: The Interactions Between People and Places</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.1.12: Historical Analysis and Skills Development</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.2.12: PA History</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.3.12: United States History</li> </ul>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.2.12: PA History</li> <li>• PA State Standard: 8.3.12: United States History</li> </ul>	
Core Curriculum Alignment- English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English II Unit 1: The Story Keeper: Beginnings and Endings</li> <li>• English II Unit 2: Slaying the Dragon</li> <li>• English II Unit 3: Transformations and Journeys</li> <li>• English II Unit 4: Love, Gender, and Poetry</li> <li>• English II Unit 5: Morality and Tough Choices</li> <li>• English II Unit 6: Non-Conformity</li> <li>• English II Unit 7: Mortality</li> <li>• English II Unit 8: Endings and Beginnings</li> <li>• English IV Unit 3: The Tragic Hero: Hamlet</li> <li>• English IV Unit 4: Satire, Wit, and Poetry: The Individual's View of Society</li> <li>• English IV Unit 8: The Legacy of Colonialism</li> </ul>		
PA Standards for English	<p>PA State Standard: 1.1.11: Learning to Read Independently</p> <p>PA State Standard: 1.2.11: Reading Critically in All Content Areas</p> <p>PA State Standard: 1.3.11: Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature</p> <p>PA State Standard: 1.4.11: Types of Writing</p> <p>PA State Standard: 1.5.11: Quality of Writing</p> <p>PA State Standard: 1.6.11: Speaking and Listening</p> <p>PA State Standard: 1.7.11: Characteristics and Functions of the English Language</p> <p>PA State Standard: 1.8.11: Research</p>		
Genres of Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare &amp; Contrast Essay (Time Periods, Eras, works of Literature)</li> <li>• Guided Research Paper</li> <li>• Poetry Analysis &amp; Composition</li> <li>• Persuasive Writing (Arguing for/against a position)</li> </ul>		

**Appendix B. Long Range Planning for the Unit (with History Standards).**

Template provided by Elizabeth M. Harvey.

Week #	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Week 0				Sept 4	5
Week 1	8	9	10	11	12
Week 2	15	16	17	18	19
<b>Unit 1: Major global trends from 1000-1500 CE . Systems of communication, trade, and cultural exchange in an era of Chinese economic power and Islamic expansion.</b>					
Week 3	22	23	24	25	26
Week 4	29	30	Oct 1	2	3
<b>Unit 2: The redefining of European society and culture, 1000-1300 CE. How early European exploration and colonization resulted in cultural and ecological interactions among previously unconnected peoples</b>					
Week 5	6	7	8	9	10
Week 6	13	14	15	16	17
<b>Unit 3: The rise of the Mongol empire and its consequences for Eurasian peoples, 1200-1350</b>					
Week 7	20	21	22	23	24
Week 8	27	28	29	30	31
<b>Unit 4: The growth of states, towns, and trade in Sub-Saharan Africa between the 11th and 15th centuries Patterns of crisis and recovery in Afro-Eurasia, 1300-1450</b>					
Week 9	Nov 3	Staff Only	5	6	7
Week 10	10	11	12	13	14
<b>Unit 5: The expansion of states and civilizations in the Americas, 1000-1500 Comparative characteristics of societies in the Americas, Western Europe, and Western Africa that increasingly interacted after 1450.</b>					
Week 11	17	18	19	20	21
<b>Final POU: Possible Worlds Project</b>					
Week 12	24	25	26	27	28