

# Ideas For A Dystopian Novel



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I've been kicking around some ideas for a dystopian novel lately, and I was hoping readers might be able to provide me with some feedback.

I'm picturing a story set in a world where everyone's a slave but doesn't know it. People think thoughts they believe they came up with themselves, make decisions and lifestyle choices that they think are their own, buy things they sincerely believe they want, consume entertainment they honestly feel they enjoy, vote for political candidates they truly think they support, when in reality they're all marching in complete obedience to an elite ruling class whose high-level mastery of mass-scale psychological manipulation has bent the public to their will.

In my novel people will be funneled from early childhood through an education system designed by plutocrats and social engineers to create efficient and compliant gear-turners, then when they are grown their programming continues in the form of mass media indoctrination. If they become politically aware they are funneled into artificially constructed ideological perspectives that are designed to look truthful and appealing but which don't challenge existing power structures in any meaningful way.

In the same way, the political system in this dark alternate reality is designed to *look* free and democratic, but there's no real connection between how people vote and the way their civilization actually functions. An unacknowledged, unofficial alliance of plutocrats and government operatives makes the actual decisions about how money, industry, government, and military forces will behave from day to day, and this secretive alliance controls the official political system the public believes is responsible for overseeing those matters. What people call "elections" are actually just the public choosing between two lackeys of that ruling alliance, and their only meaningful disagreements are on how the will of those rulers should best be advanced.

My dystopian society is built on endless violence, oppression and exploitation, but because in this world the science of mass-scale psychological manipulation is so advanced, people don't even know that it's happening. Mass murder is committed continuously in nonstop military operations overseas, and the public is successfully convinced that it's to promote freedom and democracy and keep them safe from terrorism. People have to work multiple jobs in the wealthiest nation in the world just to put food on the table, and they are brainwashed into believing it's their fault for not making better life choices. People die of exposure on the streets while billionaires rake in exponentially more wealth, and the public is programmed to believe it's because the latter work harder than the former. Police forces and prison systems keep expanding in order to exert more control and people are trained to believe it's to make them safe from crime. Journalists are imprisoned for telling the truth and people are told it's to protect national security. Information on the internet is aggressively controlled and people are propagandized into accepting that it's to protect them from dangerous speech.

In my dystopian novel the powerful will simply do as they please and then promote narratives to explain why those actions were justified. If a smaller, weaker government isn't sufficiently obedient to the world's dominant power structure, reasons will be manufactured to explain why they must be ousted. If it's necessary to exert more control at home or abroad, justifications will emerge for why military expansionism is needed in this or that geostrategically important region or why increased domestic surveillance is required to keep people safe. The armed goons and war machines move wherever they are needed, and the public is either kept in the dark about those movements or told made-up stories explaining why they must occur.

Endless mass military slaughter is essential for the existence of the ruling power structure in this dystopia, because without it the world's governments would simply behave in whatever way advances their own

interests. The government is so profoundly corrupt that the corporations who manufacture military weaponry are inseparably intertwined with the decision-making apparatus of its foreign policy establishment and are permitted to actively lobby for more wars so that more of its expensive weaponry will be used. Mountains of human corpses are amassed for no other reason than because it is more profitable to launch weapons at them than to leave them alone. Nuclear weapons are stockpiled and placed around the world for no other reason than because it is profitable to make more of them.

It's the same with environmental and economic policies. A global system is held in place at gunpoint in which mass-scale human behavior is driven by the pursuit of profit for its own sake, so environmental and economic policies just like military policies are formed not based on what would be best but on what would be most profitable for the plutocrats who shape those policies. Industry moves in whatever way rakes in the most money, no matter who it hurts, no matter how badly it imperils humanity.

And everyone just marches along with it, because they are manipulated into accepting this disaster by sophisticated propaganda systems, by movies and TV shows designed to normalize the dystopia they exist in, by tightly controlled information access, and by their own psychological compartmentalization since the reality of their situation is too disturbing to look at directly. They turn the gears of their dark world and then stay up late binging on soulless comedy shows to distract them from the horrors lurking just beneath the surface.

Obviously such a dystopia would be completely unsustainable and the most obvious ending would be to kill the whole world off within a few books by nuclear war or ecological disaster or something equally terrible, but maybe I could have the populace simply wake up to the manipulations and take back their will and shrug off the elites' control like a warm coat on a summer's day? I dunno. Something tells me that for some unknown reason

today's readers are too inured with learned helplessness and knee-jerk pessimism to be able to even imagine such a scenario, let alone accept it as a believable development.

Anyway, that's my pitch. What do you all think? Does this thing have legs? Or is it too different from today's world for people to relate to?

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