

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Teaching Dystopian Literature to Secondary Schools' Students

Based on Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993)

Auteur : Alice Prévost
Promoteur(s) : Véronique Bragard
Lecteur(s) : Guido Latre
Année académique 2018-2019
Master en langues et lettres modernes, orientation générale, à finalité
didactique (anglais-espagnol)

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Introduction

Most children's literature, no matter how fanciful, contains lessons to be learned. It is an inherently pedagogical genre, and with crossing writing, children learn more and more as they reread at different times in their lives. Likewise, utopian literature is "generally didactic" (Sargent, 1994, 6). Combined with children's and young adult literature, it can be a powerful teaching tool.

(Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 7)

Dystopias are often characterized as being the opposite of utopias, utopias gone sour, negative utopias or even anti-utopias. Dystopian novels always depict a world considerably worse than the one in which the author and readers live and which is usually described as being horrific and nightmarish. By contrast, utopias convey collective life and idealism. Nevertheless, despite the fact that these two genres represent two extremes, they also are intimately linked especially considering their function and the message they try to convey. Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry refer to the link dystopias and utopias have in their book *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*:

We are living in very troubles times. More than ever before, we need utopian and dystopian literature. I say utopian *and* dystopian because, despite differences, these kinds of literary works emanate from a critique of "postmodern," advanced technological societies gone awry – and from a strong impulse for social change. As much as we are in need of this literature, especially for young readers, to provide hope for a different and more humane world.

(Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. ix)

Utopias and dystopias are both intertwined as they have the same aim, which is to question the present raising awareness of the main issues of society and encourage readers to change their behavior and to take action in order to work these problems out. Actually, these genres are often referred to as being highly didactical. In fact, Dystopias and utopias depict worlds that are different from readers' reality which consequently invites them to question their society based on what is proposed in these fictional worlds. Kay Sambell explains in her chapter in Hintz and Ostry's book that dystopian and utopian novels make readers face extreme situations, either in an idealistic or horrific way. These visions tend to shock the reader which challenges his/her perception of how the world could be. "It seeks to shock its

readership into a realization of the urgent need for a radical revisioning of current human political and social organization, and even of human nature itself. If people do not change, it warns, the future looks devastatingly bleak” (Kay Sambell, p. 163). Through this argument, Sambell implies that literature has power and can change people’s perception on their reality and on the role they play in it. This idea regarding the fact that literature is powerful is what the present dissertation is based on. First of all, literature can be said to be essential in order to keep a track of time. Indeed, a lot of novels are about historical events and seek to make people remember the past and the errors that should not be repeated. Other literary texts like dystopias offer different visions on how the present world could evolve into something else. In dystopias, these possible futures usually look dark and terrifying but this is because these fictions have to be regarded as warnings or cautionary tales which readers can choose to heed or not. Through that, these authors do not aim to change the world, they only want to give their own perception of the world and how it could evolve. Some authors also seek to have a certain impact on their readers in order to encourage them to challenge how they see the society in which they live and their place in it. For example, George Orwell’s *1984* (1949) can help people reassess the concept of authority and make them question their perceptions regarding personal freedom and individuality.

Considering this argument, dystopias can have some impact on secondary schools’ students. In order to prove this statement, the first chapter includes a thorough and detailed definition of the dystopian genre to help teachers understand its concept, its evolution and how dystopias are particularly related to young adults. This definition is first based on the concept of utopias and how dystopias differ from them. Despite their differences, these two genres still have an intimate link that binds them together. This link being very strong, it is not always easy to dissociate dystopias from utopias and the other way around. For example, despite the fact that dystopias portray horrible worlds, they are also plenty of utopian dreams. Actually, this strong relation between the two genres is what inspired Margaret Atwood when she first mentioned the concept of ustopias. Ustopias are worlds which combine both a utopian and a dystopian side. In fact, as Atwood argues in an article published in *The Guardian* on the concept of ustopias, dystopia and utopia “each contains a latent version of the other.”

Chapter one shows how utopias and dystopias can serve as mirrors on readers’ reality and thus help them question and challenge their own vision and perception of the world. Indeed, these two genres can urge people to reconsider some beliefs they have had fixed in

their minds for many years. Dystopias make reassess ethical, political and social debates. This is possible as a lot of dystopias tend to portray matters with which readers can easily relate as these fictions show how some aspects of our contemporary society could evolve into being devastating. Recent dystopias are even said to be increasingly closer to the present even if they are supposed to be settled in the future which can be terrifying.

Two generations of dystopias are identified by Ewan Morrison in his article published in *The Guardian* “YA dystopias teach children to submit to the free market, not fight authority”. In fact, the first generation of dystopias can be situated from the publication of the first dystopian novel bringing a political meaning to the genre, Zamyatin *WE* in 1924 to the first dystopian novel for young adults (YA), Lowry’s *The Giver* written in 1993. The second generation already differs from the first one as it became popular through films and series rather than through literary works. The novels belonging to the first generation like Orwell’s *1984* (1949) and Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) tend to share the same framework portraying people living in a society governed by an all-powerful force described as a totalitarian state. The novels of the more recent generation, the second one, usually also reconsider political structures and the problems these can create like the first one. In addition, they also tend to innovate including themes which are more characteristic of the time in which they were written like climate change, terrorism and women’s rights for example. These two generations also usually promote different political messages that are also representative of the period in which they were published.

The first chapter finally studies how the second generation of dystopias is strongly related to young adults and how it can be used in the ESL classroom. In fact, the most recent dystopian novels published from the 1990s until now are considered to be young adult dystopias and thus particularly adapted to adolescents. This can be perceived through the themes these novels often raise like the realization of the self, which is something young adults are experiencing during adolescence and with which they can then easily identify.

In the last section of the first chapter, the definition and the different characteristics of the dystopian genre are illustrated through a concrete example, Lois Lowry’s YA dystopian novel, *The Giver* (1993). This novel is used as an illustration of the genre but also as an example to support the arguments of the thesis throughout the essay.

As *The Giver* is central to this dissertation, the second chapter offers a critical analysis of the novel. *The Giver* was written in 1993 by Lois Lowry. The American writer has written a lot of works for young adults and children as she believes they are the ones who will build

the world of tomorrow. In her dedication that opens *The Giver* she writes: “For all the children to whom we entrust the future” (Lois Lowry, 1993). It can then be assumed that she wrote this dystopian novel in the hope that it will influence young adults into shaping a better future.

The Giver tells the story of Jonas, a twelve-year-old boy who lives in a community governed by the Elders whose chief is the Chief Elder. After an important catastrophe, the Elders decided to take matters in hand in order to rebuild a more solid community based on the principle of Sameness. This principle implies that no difference will be tolerated between the members of the community to avoid dangerous feelings like jealousy, envy, hatred which can lead to disastrous events like war. To reach this idealistic state, the Elders erased from their world a lot of things like colors, races, religions, money, weather, love and many other elements considered dangerous for the harmony of the community. Jonas lives like any other member of the community, happily and passively in this world which seems perfect on the surface. It is only when he receives his new position in the society which is to be the Receiver of the memory of the past that, through these memories passed on to him by the Giver, he begins to understand the dystopian nature of his world. The awakening of the protagonist encourages readers to question, like Jonas, their own world. The utopian facet of Jonas’ world challenges readers to go beyond appearances.

The second chapter gives information about Lois Lowry, about the story of Jonas but also about the sequel to *The Giver* as Lois Lowry wrote three other novels to continue Jonas’ story. This chapter also provides one with an analysis of *The Giver* which has been structured according to the different themes central to the novel: family, the sustainable system of the community or how love is perceived in this superficial society which looks inviting on the surface but which eventually reveals itself to be a nightmare. This critical analysis of *The Giver* is supported by different sources like Davis’ essay on “Writing the erasure of emotions in dystopian young adult fiction: Reading Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* and Lauren Oliver’s *Delirium*” and Susan Louise Stewart’ article “A return to normal: Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*”.

This dissertation aims to show how the study of dystopian literature in ESL classes can be inspiring regarding our perception of the world as they invite us to reassess our vision of it. Young adults, as Lois Lowry believes it, represent the future of this world and it is then crucial to make them think about the issues of their western society but also about the positive aspects of it that should be cherished. To do so, dystopias can help them as they bring up a lot of pertinent themes and ideas which can stimulate young readers. This statement is explained

and proved in the third chapter about the political advantages there are to include dystopian literature within the English class. These advantages are illustrated through various dystopian novels like Orwell's *1984* (1949), Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), Collins's *The Hunger Games* (2008) and McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), for example. Moreover, the research that has been carried by the Pew Research Center on "Politically Apathetic Millennials" in 2010 shows that adolescents can be regarded as being increasingly more "apolitical". Considering this affirmation, the third chapter will consider if they can really be regarded as ignoring and not being interested in the political debates that characterize their society. Also, whether this affirmation is true or not, studying this kind of literature is a way to familiarize them with politics and prompt them to engage with it. The question this third chapter aims to answer is: to what extent dystopias raise awareness of the young adults and how can it be used in the classroom?

Chapter four is about the didactical advantages of studying dystopias with secondary schools' students. Indeed, the ESL class first aims to improve the learners' competences in the target language. The use of literature can also have some positive outcomes regarding the skills of the ESL learners. First of all, it gives them tools to critically analyze and study literary works. Reading a dystopian novel can undoubtedly improve their reading skills and the activities that can be carried around the text like debates or inventing the story's ending can improve the other skills that they have to master in the language they are learning (the oral, the writing as well as the listening competences). Dystopias for young adults can be used as a powerful motivating force for these adolescents to learn more eagerly the language. Dystopias offer students a different approach to English as these novels are usually complex, ambivalent and convey an idiomatic language that young readers will have to decipher in order to understand their meaning. These novels bring these learners something new that goes beyond language skills, they enable them to feel emotions brought by a text but also to feel empathy for the characters which is not possible with the flat ones in the usual textbooks that are given to them at school. Studying literature with young adults also gives them the opportunity to develop and express their creativity to the full. Dystopias can even help these adolescents to forge themselves an identity as the dystopian novels for young adults picture young protagonists searching for their identity. Finally, some teaching strategies and objectives are proposed in the fourth chapter in order to help teachers willing to include dystopias in their ESL class. Moreover, if these teachers want a more concrete example, a typical teaching sequence on dystopias based on Lois Lowry's *The Giver* is provided in the last

chapter. This teaching sequence offers many activities that can be done around the book as well as ideas of debates and discussions on the novel.

The present study addresses researchers in literature, researchers in didactics and, more importantly, teachers of English in secondary schools in order to show them the many advantages that can come out of this experience of including young adult dystopian literature within their ESL class. This dissertation will not only prove them the interest of doing so but it will also give them many clues and pieces of advice to put it into practice.

Chapter 1: Defining the Dystopian Genre

On the 25th of June 1982, was released in about 1.290 theatres, the very first version of *Blade Runner* (1982), a neo-noir science-fiction and dystopian film. Nearly 40 years after that, on the 3rd of October 2017, appeared the sequel to this movie, still having as an actor for the protagonist, Harrison Ford. The return of this dystopia in theatres is a good illustration of how the dystopian genre that emerged in the 80s made its reappearance in the past few years, and is still very central and at the heat of our world in 2019.

As a matter of fact, a lot of new dystopias have known a significant success, such as *The Hunger Games* (2008), *The Maze Runner* (2009) and *Divergent* (2011), which are recent dystopian novels for young adults. Recently, people's interest has shifted to series rather than to films and novels, probably due to the emergence of new devices that enabled their production and facilitated the access to them, such as "Netflix". Amongst all the series, there are a lot of dystopian ones that have an important popularity. *Black mirror* (2011-present), *The Rain* (2018-present) and *The 100* (2014-present), are some of the most popular ones. There is also the *Handmaid's tale* (2017-present), based on the dystopian novel of the same name, written by Margaret Atwood (1985). This book is also one that was published in the 80s, in 1985, and that could make its reappearance through the series, in 2016.

These examples obviously show how the dystopian genre is currently experiencing an important success, even more significant than in the 80s when it first gained interest; mainly through novels such as *1984* (1949) by George Orwell, Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). However, despite this popularity, dystopias as a literary and cinematographic genre, still remains unclear. This could partly be due to the fact that, it is not always easy to provide it with a precise definition.

For this reason, this chapter will be dedicated to this complex but essential task and will attempt to provide a description of the genre as thoroughly as possible, in order to make clear what it is and what its limits are. In order to do so, the concept of utopia being much more common and clear in people's minds, the following definition of the dystopian genre will be based on it as a point of reference and comparison.

1.1 Defining dystopias based on the concept of utopias

The main plot of utopias is nearly always the same and consists in the fact that, a person went on a journey to some unknown, isolated place. This place is usually represented as an island because it is outside and far from the author and readers' world. The protagonist,

through the narration, offers readers a guided tour of this place. After that, he/she comes back and with a certain retrospective, describes the particularity of this place, how it was better from our world and why we should take it as a model. For this reason, utopias are often described as being didactical because they provide us with ways in which we could improve our own world.

Arthur Blaim and Ludmila Gruszeska Blaim give a more insightful definition of utopias in their book; *Mediated Utopias: From Literature to Cinema* arguing that:

The utopian world identified with an ideal (or the best possible) state explicitly or implicitly projects its negative counterpart representing the author's reality. This distinction between the ideal and the real defines the expressed programmatic function of the utopian construct as a normative model. A radical critique of the present inheres in the very act of creating the utopian model whose most conspicuous attributes are assumed to be absent in the author's world.

(Artur Blaim and Ludmila Gruszevska-Blaim, p. 9)

This definition explains that a utopia is an ideal world depicted by the author in contrast to the real world in which he and his/her readers live.

Subsequently, dystopias, considering the etymology of the word which means "bad utopia", should be defined as the opposite of an ideal world, and thus as a world that is worse than the one in which the author and readers live. The authors of this theoretical book deepen the definition of dystopias explaining that: a "[...] dystopia embodies unfreedom and exposure to the constantly capricious rule of a supremely powerful force, which may be human, natural, superhuman or utterly artificial" (Claeys 17 quoted in Artur Blaim and Ludmila Gruszevska-Blaim, p. 10). To explain this in more simple terms, dystopias negatively mirror utopias offering a world in which people in the society are forced to respect some strict rules imposed by a powerful and sometimes even supreme force that controls everything. A dystopia world could also be thought of as a utopian dream gone sour. It is a fictional portrayal of a society in which evil or negative social and political developments have the upper hand.

Nevertheless, dystopias leave some space for a certain opposition to rebel against this particular force. This opposition is often embodied by a person who sees the world differently and who is given with another vision on the society. This vision will enable him to understand that they all live in a dystopian world and are being blinded by this force that has all power on them. Artur Blaim and Ludmila Gruszevska-Blaim describe this rebellious figure with some traits that usually characterize it:

the individualization of the dystopia's protagonists as if excises them from the negative context and reveals their 'otherworldly' potential. A shift from the position of participant to that of observer, crucial for the emancipation of the dystopia's main characters, parallels an unguided, experiential, and pointillist process of acquiring knowledge of the dystopian reality. The awakening of the protagonist and his / her recognition of the dystopian lie, typically ignited by some blatantly counterfactual or emotionally cataclysmic event, come as an epiphany rather than a methodical accumulation of information.

(Artur Blaim and Ludmila Gruszevska-Blaim, p. 11)

This person, through his/her awakening on the dystopian nature of his/her world, will be able to restore everything to normality and lead the story to a presumably happy ending.

The protagonists of utopias and dystopias always have a different perspective on their own world than the other people but it is often due to the fact that, at some point in their journey, they are confronted with another world than their own and in comparing the two, they are able to see more clearly the flaws of their own society.

Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro explains this phenomenon in more details in her chapter "Suffering in Utopia: Testing the Limits in Young Adult Novels" in Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry's book *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*. She argues that it is also linked with some suffering that these protagonists experience during their evolution and she illustrates that through some examples of dystopias and utopias for young adults:

In Madeleine L'engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) and *Gathering Blue* (2000), J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), and Sonia Levitin's *The Cure* (1999), the protagonists suffer from some defect that makes them aware that they are different and that their maladjustment threatens the harmony of the larger community. Each protagonist longs for an end to his or her suffering, and soon each discovers a new society (or the almost tangible knowledge of one) in which he or she is no longer a misfit. By experiencing the contrast between two different worlds, the hero comes to understand the nature of his or her suffering, and of his or her community of origin as primarily utopian or dystopian. Armed with a new, practical knowledge, the hero must then decide where he or she belongs.

(Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro, p. 129)

There is then, a suffering that causes the protagonists to feel apart from the other members of their community and, while discovering another world than their own, which is thus very different from it, they are able to open their eyes on the dystopian or utopian nature of their society. Consequently, they will have to decide where they feel they belong best and act in order to change how things are.

Through these definitions, dystopias can be thought of as warnings, because they point out the imperfections of the system which are revealed through the protagonists' eyes. They are cautionary tales in which humankind is put in a society that may look inviting on the surface but in reality is a nightmare.

1.2 Dissociating the genres

Having a better understanding of the dystopian genre through the previous definitions, it is then also crucial to perceive the subtle difference which distinguishes both concepts of dystopias and utopias. Dystopias are often referred to as the opposite of utopias, as it has also been described previously in this dissertation. The difference that exists between the two has not always been obvious, as Angel Galdón Rodríguez explains in his article but, three elements enable the dystopian genre to stand out from other genres and, consequently, the utopian one.

Dystopian works took several centuries to be clearly distinguishable from utopias. If we consider Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* as an initial stage of the development of this genre, there are common traits matters that have made these novels recognizable over other moral or political works of fiction. Firstly, most of antiutopian novels place their characters in a different age from the author's own present. This device is used to make the readers contemplate the scenery shown as a distant reality, so that we can judge its virtues unbiasedly.

(Angel Galdón Rodríguez, p. 166)

"Secondly, it is common to find totalitarian regimes that control every aspect of their citizens' life. Sometimes there is also a semi-sacred leader heading the government, as a substitute of religious worship" (Angel Galdón Rodríguez, p. 166).

"In the third place, the past is a feature to be erased, depicted by the ruling power as a dark time prone to war and lacking morals. In fact, this past was, at the time in which the works were published, the author's and the readers' own time, linking the characters to the current socio-political context and creating empathy" (Angel Galdón Rodríguez, p. 166).

These points explain that, contrary to utopias and other genres, dystopias always take place in the future compared to the author's time, which enables readers to have an objective judgment on its qualities. These nightmarish worlds are usually guided and controlled by some sort of leader, who the community tends to idolize and who tries to keep his people away from the past either by deleting it or by demonizing it. This past usually corresponds to the author and readers' reality which creates a link between them and the story. However, the

past is not the only thing that is forbidden, going outside the place where the community lives is also banned.

life outside the dystopian metropolis is considered barbaric. [...] A result of the junction of these devices is the total alienation of the population. Nevertheless, the totalitarian state, which has also the control over education, brings up citizens in the belief that the ruling power has always been the protective hand against savagery and, sometimes, undefined enemies. Love towards power is thus enforced as family has also vanished and the Nation becomes the only focus for any love people can feel.

(Angel Galdón Rodríguez, p. 166)

This power thus indoctrinates the population into believing that the past and the outside are dangerous and that there is no place safest than their own community.

Dystopias can also be perceived as the embodiment of utopias' death. This is partly because, dystopias tend to project the idea that things, as they are in the present, cannot be changed as radically as they often are in utopias, but that the change has to be thought of as a large process. Also, dystopias have as a difference from utopias that they seem to be closer to us in time. Indeed, even if they are portrayed in the future, they give us the impression that they could happen now, in the present which is scary but interesting at the same time as it could provoke a greater electroshock for people to understand that things have to change.

1.3 Defining the limits between dystopias and utopias; the concept of utopias

Despite these criteria that define the dystopian genre, its difference with the utopian one is still very subtle and the boundary between the two is not always easy to perceive. This argument is also mentioned in the text by Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry: "Arguments can be made for including almost any book for children and young adults, provided that the definition of utopia is stretched far enough, thus rendering the category less useful" (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 3). "How does one discern the dystopian as a distinct category from the utopian?" (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 3) To answer this pertinent question, the authors of this book argue that the difference between utopias and dystopias is not always the same for everyone and that their conceptualization can even depend on the time a person lives in: "fashions change in utopias; most sixteen-century eutopias horrify today's reader even though the authors' intentions are clear. On the other hand, most twentieth-century eutopias would be considered as dystopias by a sixteen-century reader and many of them would in all likelihood be burnt as works of the devil" (Sargent, 1994, 5 quoted in Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 3).

Furthermore, “Perspectives can change within a single work, as seemingly ideal societies are exposed as dystopian, or characters disagree about the ideality of their society” (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 3). Indeed, “We have learned even while teaching Thomas More’s Utopia that one person’s ideal world may be dystopia for another” (Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro, p. 127). This is the case in *The Giver* (1993) for example as, the Elders, the members of the government, with the rules and order they have imposed, think they have created a real utopia where everybody lives in good conditions and where there is no more reason for negative and destructive things to happen such as war and hate. However, for Jonas, who is the only one with the Giver of the memory to discover what his community and himself have been deprived of, the society in which he lives is a dystopian one as it imposes upon them a utopian society which they did not choose.

This intricate relation between the concepts of dystopias and utopias inspired authors for the notion of *ustopias*. Ustopias are worlds that combine both dystopias and utopias. Indeed, texts that are characterized as such, present both an imaginary perfect society and its opposite. This principle is also based on the idea that in every utopia, there is a dystopia looming in the horizon, but also that in every dystopia, there is a utopia worth fighting for. Margaret Atwood is considered to be the forerunner of this genre. This author wrote *The Handmaids’ Tale* (1985), for example. She also defines ustopias in an article of *The Guardian* as:

a world I made up by combining utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other. In addition to being, almost always, a mapped location, Utopia is also a state of mind, as is every place in literature of whatever kind.

(Margaret Atwood, 2011)

Indeed, in every story people can imagine that it can be a dystopia for a character while being a utopia for another one. The line between the two is very thin and the difference between the two concepts mainly depends on the point of view through which a story is looked at.

1.4 Dystopias and utopias as mirrors on reality

Nevertheless, both utopias and dystopias have an important common trait which is that even if some portray ideal worlds and others nightmarish ones, they all implicitly express the desire and the possibility to aim at a better society in the real world. In *Utopian and Dystopian Writings for Children and Young Adults*, Maureen Moran confirms this argument pointing at the intrinsic link that exists between model and dream that shows through in

utopias. She explains that one could ask if these utopias were really invented as attainable ideals of society or just as some dream that could never be reached (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 3). Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry continue arguing that this genre could still be considered as a model “as writers show both the unrealizable dream and visions that are meant to lead more directly to social improvement” (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 4). “Utopia can be more of a space for self-conscious speculation than a model of unrealizable, perfect space or political engagement” (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 4). Considering that, it can be understood that utopias and dystopias preferably tend to depict the different improvements that could be made in the authors’ reality rather than only a dream which adaptation to the real world is completely unconceivable. Moreover, if a utopian dream was to be reached, it would end up showing its own flaws as once applied to the real world, a utopia is not one anymore.

This also explains why Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry quote as a major criterion for a work to be considered as utopic and that makes it differ from works that only present worlds with very positive environment: “an awareness of social organization” (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 4). Indeed, a utopia has to aim at a better acknowledgement of the most important issues of our contemporary times in order to trigger readers to change that within the realm of possibility. Consequently, “Dystopias are likewise precise descriptions of societies, ones in which the ideals for improvement have gone tragically amok” (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 4). Dystopias thus, either portray a society in which the problems of our world have become so important that they are now unbearable or a society in which the improvements that were set up in order to solve these problems were too idealistic and lead to a worse reality. The major aim of utopias and dystopias is then to help people look forward in the future and to something that could have an impact for future generations. This explains why familiarizing young people with this literature could help them perceive some of the main issues of their world and through that, encourage them to act for a better future.

1.5 Two different generations of dystopias: evolution of the characteristics of the genre

What is also important to acknowledge while referring to dystopias is that there has been a major evolution in the genre. Actually, this evolution can be divided into two distinct generations. The first novel that really gave a political meaning to dystopias and thus that gave birth to modern dystopias is *WE* (1924) by Yevgeny Zamyatin, a Russian novel written to denounce the political system under Putin and Lenin. This novel introduced the first

generation of dystopias which began in the 1920s and continued until the 1990s. This generation was more considered as a genre dedicated for adults as its novels were very dark and depicting serious political and social issues.

A lot of very famous dystopias are part of this first generation such as George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and *Logan's run* (1967) written by William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson. These novels were denouncing the fact that some political governments often have too much power and tend to use it in an excessive and detrimental way.

As a matter of fact, some dystopias even happened in reality. Nazism and communism can be considered as two sorts of dystopias that really took place. Hitler, Lenin and Putin all implemented some kind of dictatorship which enabled them to be the supreme power of their respective country. For these dictators, what they were doing for their people was, in some ways, building a utopia but the problem is that when an utopia is imposed on people it is not one anymore and it becomes a dystopia for the people forced to follow the rules. This is again a good illustration of the fact that one person's utopia can be someone else's dystopia.

The second generation of dystopias emerged around the 1990s and is considered as being adapted for adults but also, and more especially, for young adults. This generation is different from the first one in the sense that it tends to focus more on the theme of self-discovery rather than on political aspects. The fact that the theme of self-discovery is more prominent in these dystopias is a major explanation of why they are more dedicated to adolescents who, themselves, are experiencing this phenomenon in their lives during adolescence.

The political aspect is less focused on maybe due to the political developments in those years but, nevertheless, is still present and these more recent dystopias do still predominantly represent a supreme force as a government, imposing its rules and order on the community it controls. They also depict rebellious against the state, thereby promoting "a tacit right-wing liberalism" (Ewan Morrison, 2014). This is often criticized as being a way for the authors of those novels to implicitly support right wing ideas claiming that when a person has too much power, it can become very dangerous.

Another critique regarding this generation is that, as mentioned in the article by Ewan Morrison in *The Guardian*, these dystopias still picture as the supreme force and thus as the 'bad ones', "not the corporations but the state and those well-meaning liberal leftists who want to make the world a better place" (Ewan Morrison, 2014). The problem is that at the

time in which these novels were written, the states are not usually the ones having total power anymore but the big corporations. Also, it is important to remember that if the states do not exist, then nobody will be there to keep order. Some examples of novels for young adults belonging to this second generation are; *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Divergent* (2001), *The Maze Runner* (2009) and Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) which enabled the genre to become popular near this audience of young adults in 1993.

Angel Gardón Rodríguez, in his theoretical text, confirms that *The Giver* is part of the second generation of dystopias, the most recent one. The author also points out that these two generations are not only distinguishable chronologically and for what they politically evoke, but also regarding their plot.

Huxley's *Brave New World* will be analysed here as it contains a character brought up in values compatible with our own and is then taken to a futuristic society based on pleasure. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* will be studied as an instance of later dystopias because it shows the opposite inner conflict: a citizen of a futuristic society finds remains from our own civilization. In both cases the State supplies protection, delight and plenty of nourishment. Nevertheless, the main characters in both novels rebel against power.

(Angel Gardón Rodríguez, p. 167)

The Giver (1993) is then comparable to *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) as Jonas, the protagonist of the story, finds himself in a futuristic society and will get to know about the past or readers' times through the memories of the past that he will be able to get thanks to his new honoring task of being the new Receiver of memory.

Finally, these two generations of dystopias also tend to evoke different themes through their narrations. The first one includes novels that, in most cases share the same general theme. This one is about totalitarian states, governments that have all power on their people who are blinded by these, except the protagonists of the stories, who at some point will open their eyes on the dystopian nature of the societies in which they live. In the second generation of this genre, the themes evoked in the different novels and even within a single novel, are more diversified. There is still this presence of a powerful force that controls everything but other themes appear progressively and are obviously related to the reality in which the novels were written. Some of the themes that begin to appear massively in dystopian novels from the 1980s-1990s are; climate change, scientific progress and its costs but also the end of humankind. This is particularly observable in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy and *The Children of Men* (1992) written by P. D.

James. A theme that also gradually emerged in these novels has to do with the denunciation of the situation of women as, for example, in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) in which women's bodies are used and controlled in order to maintain a rate of reproduction. These women are also controlled through political submission as they are not given the right to vote, hold property or even have a job, which clearly denounces the situation of women in some societies. However, situating Atwood's novel in one of the two generations is not very easy. Indeed, *The Handmaid's Tale* could be considered as being some kind of precursor of the second generation as it was written before the beginning of this one but it already innovates compared to the first generation putting a new theme on the table. Nevertheless, this theme can also be observed in later dystopias like Lois Lowry's *Gathering Blue* (2000), the first book of the sequel to *The Giver* (1993), in which women are not allowed to have any kind of power but are also forbidden from reading and writing.

This illustrates well how the genre has evolved through these two different generations whether it is in their plot, in their themes or intentions. Moreover, it also reveals how dystopias always tend to portray the main issues of the world in relation to the period of time in which they were written. Showing this evolution to young adults could enable them to understand that dystopias go beyond naïve stories about some hero figure who fights against oppressive governments.

1.6 Dystopias and young adults

Consequently, one can easily perceive the interest of teaching this genre to this particular audience of young adults. Different articles agree that most literary works for children usually include utopian elements as these works often picture fantastic worlds that enable these children to dream and enhance their creativity as they imagine them:

It would be misleading to argue that every story written for children is utopian, or to assert that there is an “essential” utopian nature to writing for young people. There is, however, a utopian tendency of telling and writing in general that helps explain why it is we feel so compelled to create and disseminate tales and why we are enthralled by particular stories.

(Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. ix)

A lot of examples of utopian worlds created for children and young adults can be quoted such as “Neverland, Narnia, Hogwarts, Middle Earth, Oz” (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 1).

Children and young adults imaginatively travel to many fantasy worlds. From Lewis Carroll's nonsensical Wonderland to the contiguous worlds of Philip Pullman's His

Dark Material series, hundreds of children's and young adult books have presented invented "secondary worlds" that go by their own rules and conventions. In many of these alternative worlds, utopian elements abound. Some books present nonexistent societies that, in the utopian and dystopian tradition, are meant to depict environments that are measurably better or worse than the reader's own.

(Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 1)

Utopian literature can also be perceived as closely related to the child's world as it is "a space and time apart from the corruption of everyday adult life" (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 5). This provides an escape for young readers from a world that they do not always understand.

It is also argued that utopias are often depicted in children's literature in order to shape them to the ideals of other worlds that show how their own world could be improved. Familiarizing them with the issues of the real world through the presentation of idealistic or nightmarish worlds is a first step toward shaping them into better citizens:

Finally, new utopias and dystopias for children and young adults are being written today, reflecting the uncertainties and possibilities of our time. Utopian and dystopian writing for children and young adults will continue to be central, both for the young readers who are shaped by its questions and challenges, and for those who seek to trace its significance through scholarship.

(Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 17)

Presenting these idealistic fictions to children can through these worlds, help them reflect and understand better their own reality, its positive aspects as well as its flaws, "As child or adolescent readers enjoy speculative fiction that treats imaginary worlds significantly different than our own, they develop their imaginative powers. Escapism also plays a role; individuals under pressure form imaginative havens where none exist in real life" (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 6). "Fantasy can also mirror and criticize reality, forcing readers to consider reality, ironically at the same time as they are escaping from it. Fantasy texts, especially those with specifically utopian or dystopian concerns, can be more than escapist: they can offer an improved vision of the future, or address deep and possibly unresolvable fears" (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 6). Dystopias thus give the opportunity to young readers to escape from their own reality and while they are getting away from it and entering another world, they also question their world and reassess their perception of it.

Consequently, the reality they will perceive from this experience can often be really challenging and even terrifying. In response to that, Lois Lowry, the author of *The Giver*

(1993), in her interview gives an insightful answer regarding whether or not young adults and children could handle this phenomenon:

Young people handle dystopia every day: in their lives, their dysfunctional families, their violence-ridden schools. They watch dystopian television and movies about the real world where firearms bring about explosive conclusions to conflict. Yes, I think they need to see some hope for such a world. I can't imagine writing a book that doesn't have a hopeful ending.

(Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. xi)

It is true that these children and young adults are permanently exposed to dystopian realities, through movies, series but also in the real world. However, in these dystopias, no hopeful ending is proposed while it is the case in young adult dystopian novels. This touch of hope is essential as it encourages these young people to believe that there is hope for happiness in this world which often seems bleak.

As a conclusion, confronting children and young adults with this literature could then, through mirroring the real world in imaginary utopian or dystopian worlds, incite this audience to engage themselves for a better future helped by this “hopeful ending” which is consequently essential for these texts not to provoke the opposite effect. Considering that, in order to teach this literature to this audience, teachers will have to be very careful while choosing the works they will present to their pupils, keeping in mind this criterion.

1.7 Dystopias and Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993)

The dystopian genre has been defined previously in this dissertation as well as its defining characteristics. This genre has also been divided into two different categories which are; the first generation of dystopias from the beginning of the genre in the 1920s to the next generation that emerged in the 1980s, which is characterized as being more dedicated to young adults. Lois Lowry's novel, *The Giver*, has been published in 1993 and is thus part of the second one. It is also a dystopia for young adults as she mentions it herself. As illustrated above, this book also includes different elements that novels of this generation should have.

Dystopias have been described as utopian dreams gone sour. Indeed, it has been explained that these were either caused by the invasive and unbearable importance that the problems that already existed in the world have taken which forced the implementation of some drastic changes. These nightmarish worlds can also be due to the improvements that were set up to

solve these issues but that were too idealistic and thus lead to a worse reality than the initial one. Also, dystopias often occur after a significant event that brought chaos in the world.

In the case of *The Giver*, it is after an important catastrophe that the government of the Elders took over and decided to re-create their community erasing all the possible threats to the new established harmony. Consequently, it is a society in which the improvements, put into place to reach this new stability, lead to this nightmarish reality. In order to do that, the Elders decided to get rid of colors, races, religions, social classes, feelings, love, arts and even family as the “families” in which they live are only foster families that they call “family units”. These are randomly picked up for a newborn after the careful check-up done by the nurturers in order to see whether babies have all the criteria required to be part of the community, otherwise they will be released “elsewhere”, which basically means killed.

This eugenic system, that has been used by several dictatorial regimes such as the Hitlerian one, is also part of the functioning of this community and shows how what appeared to be a good solution to a problem can lead to radical systems established on extremely strict criteria that, in the end, only create a more horrible world than the previous one.

Moreover, Arthur Blaim and Ludmila Gruszeska Blaim defined dystopias as the embodiment of “unfreedom and exposure to the constantly capricious rule of a supremely powerful force, which may be human, natural, superhuman or utterly artificial” (Claeys 17 quoted in Artur Blaim and Ludmila Gruszevska-Blaim, p. 10). This supreme force that controls everything is one of the major criteria a dystopian novel should have in order to be categorized as such. The Chief of the Elders represents this figure in *The Giver*. She is the representation of the totalitarian state that imposes a lot of extremely strict rules. These chiefs obviously think they are doing the right thing and that their community is better thanks to their established order. For them, their community lives in a utopian world. Even the majority of their people believe that the Elders are doing everything they can in the interest of the community. It is also for this reason that a dystopia can be described as being inviting on the surface but, in reality, is a nightmare. This phenomenon is due to the fact that the Elders, who themselves believe that they are doing everything for the best of their people, also indoctrinate them to think that they are safe only thanks to this power that protects them from the supposedly dangerous outside world.

The Elders also strongly claim that the past and all the memories must be forbidden as they convey all these destructive elements that they had to eradicate from their community. Subsequently, the Giver and Jonas, being the Receiver of the memory, are the only ones

knowing about the past, the other people of the community have no idea that before their own time, it was different. Even for Jonas, the notion of past is difficult to understand at first:

The man shook his head. "No, no," he said. "I'm not being clear. It's not my past, not my childhood that I must transmit to you." He leaned back, resting his head against the back of the upholstered chair. "It's the memories of the whole world," he said with a sigh. "Before you, before me, before the previous Receiver, and generations before him." Jonas frowned. "The whole world?" he asked. "I don't understand. Do you mean not just us? Not just the community? Do you mean elsewhere, too?" He tried, in his mind, to grasp the concept. "I am sorry. I don't know what you mean when you say 'the whole world' or 'generations before him.' I thought there was only us. I thought there was only now."

(Lois Lowry, pp. 74-75)

The Elders, themselves, are not aware of all these memories because they do not want to suffer from them either. When the past is described by Jonas and the Giver, the reader can easily relate it to his own reality. The other people, not knowing about the past and the outside world, except from the fact that it is dangerous, have no other option than to trust the Chiefs as their guide or even sometimes as a "semi-sacred leader heading the government, as a substitute of religious worship" (Angel Galdón Rodríguez, p. 166). The Elders can also be considered as even having the power of life and death on their people.

For this reason, the rebelling figure is essential in a dystopia. Indeed, without this person, these worlds could be thought of as being utopian but thanks to the different and insightful vision this protagonist has on it, their dystopian nature can progressively be revealed. This person, in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, is Jonas, the 12-year-old protagonist, who is different from the other people of his community or at least he seems to have a very different vision on the world (for example, as he apparently is the only one capable of seeing colors), this partly reveals his "otherworldly potential". This feeling of being different will become clear to him right from the moment when he will be proclaimed the new Receiver of memory, a unique role in the community: "Now, for the first time in his twelve years of life, Jonas felt separate, different. He remembered what the Chief Elder has said: that this training would be alone and apart. But his training has not yet begun and already, upon leaving the auditorium, he felt the apartness" (Lois Lowry, p. 62). Thanks to his particular vision that will be enhanced by his new position in the community which is to be the Receiver of all the memory of the past, Jonas will be able to understand how he and his community have been deprived of a lot of beautiful things such as colors, diversity, love and *passion* by the government of the Elders and thus perceive the dystopian nature of his world: "Jonas reached

the opposite side of the river, stopped briefly, and looked back. The community where his entire life had been lived lay behind him now, sleeping. At dawn, the orderly, disciplined life he had always known would continue again, without him. The life where nothing was ever unexpected. Or inconvenient. Or unusual. The life without color, pain, or past” (Lois Lowry, p. 158).

Passion is often the clue element that awakes the rebellious force in dystopias as explained by Angel Galdón Rodríguez in his text explaining that in the new generation of dystopias “the main character is first fitted ideologically in his own society although, in a second moment, he feels something that makes him a dissident target for the government: passion. The process to be found is the way in which passion appears and how it is perceived by the others” (Angel Galdón Rodríguez, p. 167). Consequently, Jonas is going to become a participant of the story and not an observer anymore, by rebelling against this force crossing the forbidden line that will enable him to bring back all the memories of the past to his community and, doing so, to also return these beautiful things that they have been deprived of.

The suffering of the rebellious figure is crucial as it is also one of the elements that will enable his/her awakening on the dystopian nature of his/her world. This suffering is also usually related to the discovering of another world than the one in which this person lives. In the case of Jonas it begins when he understands that he has the capacity of “seeing beyond” which the other people of his community do not have and about which he cannot speak to anyone. This creates the feeling of apartness and loneliness for Jonas. In this case, the new world that the boy discovers is the world of the past or the world of the author and readers. In fact, Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro explains in her theoretical work that:

“*The Giver* is immediately more complicated because Lowry placed her protagonist within a seemingly happy world in which he is well adjusted. Jonas fits in, and he knows how well adjusted he is, because he has seen others, like his friend Asher, who deviate from the norm. To limit the power of those unfortunate misfits, the community Elders either more severely trains them or executes them by lethal injection, an act they call “releasing.” But soon Jonas notices an abnormality in his vision, and the Elders realize Jonas can see what others cannot. Still, they do not release but instead reward Jonas for his talent, giving him the most important position in the community. He will be a Receiver of Memory, receiving from the Giver all communal and individual images, colors, and emotions deemed unsafe for the average citizens.”

(Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro, p. 131)

The isolation is particularly powerful for Jonas as “he can never explain to his family that they are shallow. In turn, they can never know him” (Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro, p. 131). Because of that everything in Jonas’ life is going to change: “The encounters with family and with friends that had once bound them together in empathy prove daily to remind him that he is different. He can no longer hope to fit back in. He sees and feels too painfully the inherent contradiction in the utopian – now dystopian – construction. He is no longer at home” (Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro, p. 131). Jonas understands that he is a misfit in his world but even in his own family and this is why he will begin to suffer but also to realize that there is something wrong in their community.

Consequently, Jonas, through the memories, wakes up and progressively understands that things have to change:

“Things could change, Gabe,” Jonas went on. “Things could be different. I don’t know how, but there must be some way for things to be different. There could be colors. “And grandparents,” he added, staring through the dimness toward the ceiling of his speelingroom. “And everybody would have the memories. “You know about the memories,” he whispered, turning toward the crib. [...] “There could be love,” Jonas whispered.

(Lois Lowry, p. 123)

He will then decide to go on a perilous adventure to restore the memories to his community to at the risk of his own life. The novel then ends on a hopeful but mysterious note, “We are left to wonder what happens to Jonas and to his community, but we know he has chosen to increase his own suffering in exchange for the possibility of a better society” (Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro, p. 132). Indeed, despite the fact that he could never come back from his adventure or even die, he goes for it and tries to do everything he can to bring justice back to the members of his community.

Chapter 2: Analysis of Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993)

The dystopian novel for young adults, written by Lois Lowry, *The Giver*, is the one that has been chosen in the frame of this dissertation in order, not only to illustrate the different characteristics of a dystopia, but also to show the sort of novel that could be used in order to teach a literature lesson on dystopias to young adults, more especially, students in secondary schools. In this chapter, a summary of the novel as well as its sequel will be provided. After that, an analysis of this novel will be carried including the description of the different aspects of the society portrayed in the story which will certainly disambiguate the question around the dystopian or utopian character of this world which is not as easy to define as one may think.

2.1 *The Giver*: The author, Lois Lowry

The Giver was written by Lois Lowry and was published in 1993. Lois Lowry was born as Lois Ann Hammersberg on the 20th of March 1937, in Honolulu, Hawaii. She was part of a family of 3 children with a Norwegian father and a mother who had German, English and Scots-Irish origins. Her older sister, Helen, died of a cancer when she was 28 years old. This experience of losing someone really close inspired Lowry for her very first book: *A Summer to Die* (1977) which is about a teenage girl learning about her sister's illness. This novel is a subplot for *Number the Stars* (1989) for which Lowry won a Newbery Medal in 1990 and which is a historical fiction about a Jewish family forced to leave their country during World War II.

Lowry travelled a lot with her family, across the United States, but also across the World, mainly due to the fact that her father was a dentist in the Army. She even went to Junior High School in Japan because it was there that her father was stationed during World War II. At the age of nineteen, in 1956, she married a U. S. Navy officer named Donald Grey Lowry. With this man, Lowry had four children with whom she continued to travel a lot due to her husband's career. Despite all these travels, she managed to get her degree in English Literature at the University of Portland.

At that time, she also was a freelance journalist and a passionate and professional of photography, especially pictures of children. Her journalistic articles enabled her to get herself noticed by an editor of the Houghton Mifflin who asked her to write books for children and who edited her first book; *A Summer to Die*. This opportunity was for her a dream come true as she has, since her childhood, always written little stories and poems.

Lowry mentioned many times in different interviews that her writing is always what kept her going forward, even in the most difficult times of her life, such as the day when her son died in the crash of a fighter plane in 1995. His death was for her a way to understand that everybody has to join together and put an end to all the conflicts that endanger our fragile earth. She has always expressed her interest in making the future a better place, as, as a grandmother, she wants her children and grandchildren and all the generations to come, to raise awareness about the fact that this planet's future and consequently, our future depends on our actions, "upon our caring more, and doing more, for one another". This explains her passion for dystopias; she uses her novels as a way to make people understand that, if they want a better future, they have to begin to change things now. Her novels tend to address humorous and difficult themes at the same time and are usually related to what she experienced during her life. Some of the themes she addresses are very complex issues such as racism, the Holocaust, murder and terminal illnesses.

2.2 The Giver: Overview

In *The Giver*, Lois Lowry challenges authority. She wrote and published the first novel of the quartet in 1993. With it, she got her second Newbery Medal. This novel sold massively all over the world and had an enormous success; it even appears on many reading lists in middle schools. Indeed, the book is often described as being very didactical as it helps students perceive important and current issues of the society through the themes that are alluded to in the story. Despite the many criticisms it received especially concerning its lack of originality and thus the fact that it does not bring anything new to the dystopian genre, it was also considered as being among the fourth best novels for children of all time, by a survey that was carried out in 2012 in the U. S. *The Giver* has a sequel which is composed of 3 other novels which stories take place in the same world and era which are: *Gathering Blue* (2000), *Messenger* (2004) and *Son* (2012). In 2014, a film adaptation was released and gained some success in the United States but not so importantly in Europe and in other parts of the world, contrary to other dystopian movies such as *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Divergent* (2014). The film's leading roles are interpreted by Meryl Streep, Jeff Bridges and Brenton Thwaites.

2.3 Summary of the novel

The story focuses on a 12 year-old boy, Jonas who lives in a futuristic society based on the concept of *sameness* and in which people are often “released” to “elsewhere”¹ when they do not correspond to this criterion. In order to live in a peaceful world, the Chiefs of the community, known as the Elders, decided to definitely get rid of fear, envy, war, hatred and anger, and to do so, they had the idea of imposing *sameness*. This implies that everything and everyone in the community is identical. It then entails that all the elements that differentiated people had to be erased from their world. As a consequence, love, colors, religions, money, art, seasons, races, feelings and self-expression, among many other things, have disappeared and the community does not even know about it. Indeed, memories of the past have also been wiped out from people’s minds. “The Giver” refers to the only one that has access to the memory of the community in order to advice the Elders when necessary in order to help them avoid repeating the errors of the past that lead to destruction.

Jonas, the main protagonist, right from the beginning of the story, appears to be a little different from the others. This difference can be perceived at some specific moments in the story like, for example, when Jonas and his friend, Asher, are playing with an apple when suddenly, Jonas perceives that something is different about the apple but he seems to be the only one seeing it (Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 23). What he is sometimes able to briefly see, are colors but he does not know what they are and how they are called. Later on, Jonas will be able to understand his difference when the Elders will reveal to him that he has the capacity of “seeing beyond” and, for this reason, they will proclaim him the new Receiver of memory. This honorary position in the community consists in receiving from the Giver all the memories from the past. When all of these will be transferred to Jonas, or at least the most important ones, Jonas will obtain the title of the Giver of memory.

From that moment on, Jonas is able to discover new feelings, new emotions through the memories the Giver passes on to him during their daily sessions which take place in what is called the Annex. Through these memories that cover different ages, places and cultures, Jonas also learns about unknown objects such as *sleds* and *hills*, but even meteorological phenomenon like *snow* or *sunshine*, for example. The Giver begins the sessions handing to Jonas beautiful and happy memories like some of families celebrating Christmas or people dancing. The more Jonas is in contact with the past, the more he is able to understand his

¹ Euphemism used to express deaths by lethal injections.

capacity of “seeing beyond” and to progressively perceive all the different colors very neatly. However, the Giver also has to transfer to Jonas more painful memories and he progressively passes him sad and even cruel memories beginning with innocuous pain such as sunburn and will then give him more terrifying memories such as warfare. This vision of cruelty inflicted by men on their peer will be unbearable and traumatic for Jonas.

Nevertheless, Jonas is also able to be familiarized with wonderful moments of kinship and love which leads him to wonder about the unfairness of hiding all these things from the people of the community who are not even aware that before, in the past, it was different. Progressively, Jonas will start feeling some anger against this injustice and along with the Giver, they will find a way to try to change this situation. Their plan consists in reaching the place beyond the limit of the community, forbidden to everyone and even more to them as doing so will enable the memories to flow back to the community. The Giver decides to stay within the limits in order to help people deal with all the memories, and avoid chaos. Before doing that, the Giver decides that Jonas should know one last piece of information about the functioning of his community. He shows the boy that his own father, while “releasing” people to “elsewhere”, does, in reality, kill them. After that, Jonas understands that people are also killing others without even knowing what they are doing. He also knows that Gabriel, the little boy who has been staying with him and his family for a few weeks, is scheduled for “release”. Consequently, Jonas will take the baby on his adventure to save him from death.

This journey is very harsh and painful and nearly brings Jonas and Gabriel to their death but suddenly, they find themselves on the hill full of snow that Jonas had seen in one of the memories. He then perceives the same sled and decides to take it and eventually end up where the memory had brought him, near a home where some kind of music can be heard. From then on, he knows they will be welcomed and safe. He also has the impression that some music is coming from the place he has just left, “but perhaps it was only an echo”(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 171). Readers are left to wonder what is going to happen to Jonas and Gabriel in this new unknown place but also how the community will manage to receive all the memories they had not been in contact with for many years or even never told about. This mysterious and ambiguous ending has often been criticized by many reviewers of the book as described later on in this dissertation.

2.4 The companions to *The Giver*

The sequel to *The Giver* is composed of three other books, *Gathering Blue* (2000), *Messenger* (2004) and *Son* (2012). Lois Lowry refers to them as companions to the Giver. Through these stories, readers are able to understand that this fictional world is divided into different parts in which there are different communities (cf. map of the communities page 33 from Lois Lowry's *The Giver quartet*, 2014). All of these are very different from one another and from Jonas' one. Through these four books, readers are offered different perceptions and approaches to the world of the characters.

In the first one, *Gathering Blue* (2000), readers discover the story of Kira, a girl who is about the age of Jonas but whose environment surely contrasts with Jonas' one as it is obviously less inviting. Indeed, the story begins in this dark and menacing place where women have such an inferior position to men that they are even prohibited from reading. Kira's narrative starts with a dreadful event, the death of her mother which makes her an orphan. In this cruel community, the rules are explicitly harsh and considering Kira's situation of being an orphan and a disable, having a twisted leg, she should have been sent to the fields to die. Indeed, this is how the Chiefs of this community deal with people considered "useless". However, both plots are quite similar as Kira will, like Jonas, be honored for her difference and will be given the task of repairing the Singer's robe which tells the story of the past of their world. By means of her new role, her situation is going to change drastically; from her poor life in her little cottage to a life in the Council Edifice where she lives like a princess. Even while being there and working on the precious robe, she will keep in touch with her friend Matt, who lives in the poorest and dirtiest part of their community. She will also meet Thomas the carver who, like her, has been required to carve the Singer's staff and who consequently also lives in the Council Edifice.

Despite Kira's nearly magical talent for sewing, she will learn how to create colors out of natural ingredients with an old woman called Annabella who lives in the mysterious forest. This woman will also teach Kira how to produce the color blue which has disappeared and will tell her that the plant necessary to make this color can be found in a nearby place, outside their community. Kira will try to remember all the instructions given by Annabella but Thomas will also help her to do so, writing down everything for her. Even if women are forbidden to read and to write, Kira, trying to decipher Thomas' writing, will progressively learn how to read.

On different occasions, Kira and Thomas will hear a child crying. One night, they decide to find out who it is. They will discover a little girl who has also been selected for a special role in the community: the new Singer. Progressively, Kira is going to wonder about the fact that this little girl, Jo, as well as Thomas and herself, all mysteriously lost their parents and were brought here for some kind of talent they have which will serve the Council.

On the day of the Gathering, Kira discovers that the Singer, wearing the robe she repaired and the staff Thomas carved, has a heavy chain around his leg and, at that moment, she understands that they are all prisoners of the Council. She will then meet Matt, who had been missing for a few days, who brought her two presents: a blue piece of cloth and a blind man wearing a blue shirt. This man will then reveal himself to be Kira's father, who was supposedly dead, killed by the beasts in the forest. He explains that he has found a new place where people, who are injured like him and Kira, are welcomed and taken care of. He offers her and her friends to come with him.

Kira figures that the Council has killed Thomas', Jo's and her own parents in order to kidnap these three talented people (even if her dad has apparently survived). She also comprehends that if they have asked Kira to weave the future on the robe it is because they will be able to shape it according to what they want the community to believe in order to control their behavior. For this reason, Kira decides to stay in order to design a future on the robe that includes her and the people of the community's own visions and not the Council's ones.

Kira's story is intimately linked to the one of Jonas especially through the importance of the past. Indeed, they both have to keep a track of it in their own way. They also both have to act in order to ensure a better future for their respective community. Kira's story also ends on a mysterious note as no one knows if she is going to succeed in changing the future and if she is going to join her father at some point in this mysterious place where he now lives.

In *Messenger* (2004), it is Kira's friend Matty² who narrates his story a few years after what happened in *Gathering Blue*. Matty lives in the place where he had found Kira's father and the color blue with an old blind man who, readers progressively understand to be Kira's father, and who has changed his name from Christopher to "Seer". Matty is also waiting for his name to become "Messenger" as the names in this community are given based on what people do best. Through the narration, we discover that this is the place where Jonas and

² Matt's name has become Matty because in Kira's community, when a person becomes older, he or she gains a letter in his/her name.

Gabriel landed after their difficult journey in *The Giver*. Jonas is now much older and is called “Leader”.

This community is composed of people like Seer, Matty, Gabriel and Jonas, who escaped their previous life and who were welcomed in this isolated community called Village where people are mostly characterized by their altruism. Indeed, they are always happy to help people especially disabled people who are often rejected from their own homes. The others were born in that place. The Villagers fear the forest that surrounds them. Forest gives warnings through injuries to prevent people from coming back again or they will die. Matty is the only one that Forest seems to tolerate as he can easily connect with it and it is for this reason that he can be the “Messenger” as he can cross the forest to deliver messages to other communities. In Village, a gathering often takes place where people trade things, but this activity becomes more and more violent and dangerous. Because of that, the Villagers do not want other people from other communities to enter Village anymore. After hearing this, Seer fears that his daughter, Kira, will not be able to join him and decides to send Matty to get her.

Their journey in the forest becomes very dangerous. Leader Jonas is alerted by their situation thanks to his ability of “seeing beyond” he will try to rescue them but will, himself, get caught by the forest. Thanks to Kira’s talent to weave messages in her thread and cloth, she manages to contact Leader to tell him to ask Matty to use his special power. Matty does not really understand how it works but he has the power to heal people. He then uses it on the forest and restores its integrity and saves the others’ lives putting his own in danger. Thanks to that, he will be called the “Healer”.

In the conclusion of *The Giver, Son* (2012), the plot is divided into 3 different parts. The first one is called *Before*, the second one *Between*, and the last one *Beyond*. *Before* tells the story of Gabriel’s birthmother, Claire, at the time when she was still living in the Community of Jonas and was still assigned the task of giving birth to babies. Her first pregnancy occurs when she is 14 years old, but during the labor some complications occur and she is then designated to become a Fish Hatcher as she won’t be able to bring other babies to life anymore. Before going to the Fish Hatchery, she wants to know how her baby is doing and the person in charge accidentally gives her the baby’s number (thirty-six) and also tells her that it is a boy. She decides to volunteer at the nurturing center to be able to see him. She progressively begins to *love* him and she also understands that she is the only one feeling this emotion. She consequently finds out that the others take pills in order not to feel emotions but that, as a birthmother, she was not supposed to take them. She then learns that her son is going

to be taken to “Elsewhere” because we understand that he has not reached the Community’s standards for a baby. She wants to save him but before that, Jonas takes him. She subsequently decides to follow them with a boat but will have an accident with it on the way which will lead her on a little piece of land. In *Between*, Claire lands on a little beach where a woman, Alys, welcomes her. When her memories eventually come back after a momentary amnesia, Lame Einar helps her escape this place to find her son back. She manages to climb up the cliffs to the Trademaster who proposes her to trade her youth in exchange of meeting with her son, she accepts the offer.

Finally, in *Beyond*, Claire, now having the appearance of an old woman, meets Jonas and Gabriel. Jonas understands that she is Gabe’s mother and convinces him of it, explaining that the Trademaster has taken her youth. Gabriel believes him and understands that the Trademaster has to die. Thanks to his power of seeing through people’s minds, Gabriel learns that this evil entity manages to live through people’s suffering. He then tells him that the people he had tried to destroy are now happy and doing so puts an end to the Trademaster’s life and gives back to the people of the community what they had lost because of him, like his mother and her youth.

2.5 *The Giver*: A misleading utopia

The Giver can be considered to be, in many ways, a misleading utopia as, through the narration, this world that seemed utopic on the surface will reveal its real dystopian nature. Contrary to a lot of dystopias, the world in which Jonas lives seems to be peaceful and could even be perceived as being perfect in some ways. However, perfection often hides faults and this world will eventually turn out to be the opposite of perfection. Many articles and reviews have been written on Lowry’s novel and the opinions are sometimes conflicting. This analysis will then be supported by Susan Louise Stewart’s “A Return to Normal: Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*” (2007) and Rocío G. Davis’s “Writing the Erasure of Emotions in Dystopian Young Adults Fiction: Reading Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* and Lauren Olivier’s *Delirium*” (2014).

In terms of political organization in *The Giver*, the situation is comparable to mostly any dystopia, as the community is governed by an all-powerful government which has supreme power and controls everything and everyone. The Elders are the ones representing this position in the community. Like in Orwell’s *1984* (1949), which is one of the epitomes of the dystopian genre, this government can spy on its people whenever it wants to. The Elders are, in this case, like Big Brother who watches you: “Jonas nodded. During the past year he had

been aware of the increasing level of observation. In school, at recreation time, and during volunteer hours, he had noticed the Elders watching him and the other Elevens. He has seen them taking notes” (Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 14).

What is different in the case of Jonas’ world is that the Giver and the Receiver are said to be more important than the Elders. However, later in the story, it can be understood that they do not have much power on this government as explained by the Giver to Jonas when the latter asks him about how often the Elders seek for his advice.

Rarely. Only when they are faced with something that they have not experienced before. Then they call upon me to use the memories and advise them. But it very seldom happens. Sometimes I wish they’d ask for my wisdom more often—there are so many things I could tell them; things I wish they would change. But they don’t want change. Life here is so orderly, so predictable—so painless. It’s what they’ve chosen.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 99)

However, their roles are essential because if they want to forget about the past, they still need an access to the memories in order to shape a better future and to avoid repeating the same mistakes, and the Chiefs are well aware of this. Another evidence of their unique power is that Jonas and the Giver are the only ones able to switch off the camera and the speaker that enable the Elders to spy on them.

the man rose and moved first to the wall where the speaker was. It was the same sort of speaker that occupied a place in every dwelling, but one thing about it was different. This one had a switch, which the man deftly snapped to the end that said OFF.” Jonas almost gasped aloud. To have the power to turn the speaker *off*! It was an astonishing thing.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 76)

The surprise of Jonas illustrates that being able to stop the Chiefs’ surveillance for a moment usually never happens and shows that the Giver must have quite a lot of power in order to be allowed to do that. Even if the Chiefs probably give him this power in order not to suffer by possibly hearing some harmful memories, they still take the risk to give him freedom and thus to lose control on him, this explains Jonas’ astonishment.

Ultimately, the Elders are the only ones who take all the decisions. They have such power because they had to re-build the community after a very destructive catastrophe and they decided to change a lot of things in order to have a more solid base. To do so, they decided to impose *sameness* which could only be reached through the eradication of colors, races, religions, social classes, art, feelings, love and a lot of other concepts which can

differentiate people from one another. For this reason, they decided to ban the access to the past and to the outside of the community because otherwise, people would have access to these things and it could bring chaos again. They also inject daily medication into their people's bodies in order for them not to feel any emotions and feelings which the Elders believe to be too dangerous as, for example, anger can lead to war. They also impose a lot of different rules that must not be broken. If the rules are broken by somebody, this person would probably be "released". Indeed, the Elders also have the power of life and death on their people. Throughout the story, readers, in various occasions, are able to understand that people sometimes suddenly disappear from the community, they are said to be "released", which means killed but they don't know what killing is: "If he were released, they would not see him again. Ever. Those who were released—even as newchildren—were sent Elsewhere and never returned to the community" (Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 41).

When someone vanishes, it is either because he does not conform to the norms established or because he has broken a rule, as, for example, when Jonas' mother, who has an important position in the Department of Justice (Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 8), explains to her family that she had to deal with someone who had already broken the rules before.

"I feel frightened, too, for him," she confessed. "You know that there's no third chance. The rules say that if there's a third transgression, he simply has to be released." Jonas Shivered. He knew it happened. There was even a boy in his group of Elevens whose father had been released years before. No one ever mentioned it; the disgrace was unspeakable. It was hard to imagine.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 8)

While reading this, the fear is already palpable. The Elders pretend to give total freedom to their community but, in the end, they control them through fear which is a really powerful tool. Even if the people in the community do not know what "to be released" really imply, they still know that it is bad and that they should abide by the rules if they don't want to experience it. However, the reason for someone's disappearance is not always as explicit, like for Jonas' predecessor as Receiver of memory.

"It was a female. But we are never to speak the name, or use it again for a newchild." Jonas was shocked. A name designated Not-to-Be-Spoken indicated the highest degree of disgrace. "What happened to her?" he asked nervously. But his parents looked blank. "We don't know," his father said uncomfortably. "We never saw her again."

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 64)

The mystery regarding the motive of a person's "release" creates even more fear as it shows that anyone could be rejected from the community and sometimes without even knowing why.

To conclude, through the analysis of the political organization of this community this image of perfect world begins to break itself into pieces and to let emerge the dystopian nature of this world. The Chief Elder seems to offer a peaceful world in which every inhabitant is happy and free of pain, anger and war in exchange of which the members of the community have given up the possibility of making their own choices. Even if the people in the community seem to be happy to live like that, they do not perceive that they are being controlled in many ways but more importantly through fear. This manipulative tool clearly breaks the image of wonderful world and, in addition to that, as Rocío G. Davis explains in his article: "Totalitarian adhesion to the created reality becomes, in these novels, the place of the dystopia" (Rocío G. Davis, p. 61). In order to clearly show this contrast between the utopian shallow and the dystopian reality, Lowry exaggerated the perfect aspect of this society as she "has intentionally constructed its society to solve many contemporary problems, particularly those likely to be of significance to twelve year olds and their parents" (52 quoted in Susan Louise Stewart, p. 23). Later in the story, Lowry contrasts this image of a paradise with the description of this totalitarian power of the Elder that imposes all the rules which have to be respected and through which the Elders control everyone in the style of Big Brother.

Sameness is the key principle imposed on the community by the Elders as it is thanks to this major criterion that their lives can be stable and happy again, avoiding all sorts of threats. But, it implies that no difference between the members of the community will be tolerated. Consequently, there are no religions, no social classes and even no races. People are all white and as colors have disappeared, it is also impossible to make a distinction between people's hair or eye color at the exception of Jonas, the Giver, Gabriel as well as a 5-year-old girl from the community who all have pale and clear eyes in comparison to the others. Even mentioning the difference of their eye color is considered as breaking the rules of politeness.

Almost every citizen in the community had dark eyes. His parents did, Lily did, and so did all of his group members and friends. But there were a few exceptions: Jonas himself, and a female Five who he had noticed had the different, lighter eyes. No one mentioned such things; it was not a rule, but was considered rude to call attention to things that were unsettling or different about individuals.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 18)

Difference regarding the color of the skin is something that the Giver has to explain to Jonas during his training when he begins to see colors on people's faces.

The Giver shook his head. "No, flesh isn't red. But it has red tones in it. There was a time, actually—you'll see this in the memories later—when flesh was many different colors. That was before we went to Sameness. Today flesh is all the same, and what you saw was the red tones." [...] "Our people made that choice, the choice to go to Sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences." He thought for a moment. "We gained control on many things. But we had to let go of others."

(Lois Lowry, 1993, pp. 90-91)

Susan Louise Stewart explains in her article that "the Elders of the community [...] have dispensed with racial diversity. Rather than embrace racial difference, they erase it and choose whiteness, or at least lightness, as their universal standard" (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 64). This could obviously make readers wonder about how the Elders got rid of people who were of another color than white. This is typical of dystopias and utopias; a lot of people had to disappear in order to reach some idealistic society but it is never explained how. In the case of *The Giver*, one could suppose that they were released and that when babies are born and do not conform to this criterion, they are also directly sent "Elsewhere". This is again part of the eugenic system established by the Elders. Lowry possibly wanted, through her novel, to show her readers how beautiful diversity is and how we should embrace it. She does that through Jonas' discovery of this diversity in the memories and the fact that he is outraged by the absence of difference in the community because of the Elders.

In Stewart's article, she agrees on that but she also deplores Lowry's failure regarding the fact that she eventually reasserts rather than challenges racial issues: "*The Giver* fails to address alterity, reinforces cultural continuity, and actually diminishes opportunities to think in terms of difference because of its overriding humanist impetus" (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 26). She explains her observation demonstrating that despite Jonas' relevant questioning towards diversity which absence he deplores, "those questions and observations are reduced to a matter of choice: what color of tunic he wants to wear in the morning, marriage patterns, and employment" (Stewart, S. L., p. 27). It is true that one could regret that Lowry did not go far enough in her reasoning but only reduced it to a matter of choice of color of clothes.

Readers could also believe that in *The Giver*, there is even some kind of reassertion of white people's superiority:

Additionally, light skin becomes the norm. This is reinforced when we discover that the only people who have the “Capacity to See Beyond” (63 quoted in Susan Louise Stewart, p. 27), a mysterious ability that not even the Elders can explain, are those who have “different lighter” eyes (20 quoted in Susan Louise Stewart, p. 27).

(Susan Louise Stewart, p. 27)

In the end, Lowry fails, in a way, to address this contemporary issue about races by reducing it to something minor and by reasserting the superiority of white and light-eyed people. This superiority is perceived through the fact that she associates these lighter-eyes, which readers can understand to be blue due to the various associations with water and paleness, to a certain “depth” of the mind which supposes that the rest of the community lacks, “both in eye color and in their level of thought” (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 28). Susan Louise adds: “the remainder of the dark-eyed, light-skinned community consists of drones who seem to have no desires except to maintain the status quo” (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 28). In conclusion, one could say that Lowry does not really engage the debate on multiculturalism and diversity as “there is no basis for argumentation because, with the exception of Jonas and The Giver, everyone seems relatively content with the circumstances” (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 28).

In terms of gender, the society is characterized by a total equality between men and women and no difference is made between them, gender roles are not imposed neither. They are considered in the same way, they receive their role in the community like everybody, based on what they do best: the Elders spy on them during their childhood and adolescence to see what they like doing during their volunteer hours (or free time) and what they are good at, for example, Fiona as she loves taking care of old people will become a Caretaker in the House of the Old. They really seem to be considered equals, but this is also part of the concept of *Sameness*; not to treat people differently based on their sexual attributes. Even if this aspect is usually criticized in some articles about *The Giver* as the members of the community have no choice to make in terms of career, it is still relevant as it shows how men and women can be considered in the same way being equally suitable for all the different roles in the community. The only negative aspect is that avoiding differences also implies a lack of choice in terms of sexuality. The couples are formed by the Elders and they always consist in a male and a female. People in the community have no other choice than to be heterosexual but this is also part of the concept of sameness. However, even if they had a different preference in terms of sexuality, they would not be able to know it themselves as any sexual impulse is regulated by the daily medicine they receive.

Nevertheless, if gender inequality is not really present as a theme in *The Giver*, it surely is in *Gathering Blue*, the next book of the sequel in which Kira, who is about the same age as Jonas, narrates her story which occurs at approximately the same time but in a different community. In this one, there is a strong difference between how men and women are treated. First of all, only the people considered to be important and powerful in the community have the chance to live in the Council Edifice, which is a very luxurious place, while all the others live in the little and poor cottages. These people in charge of the community are only men; no woman has an important role in this story except Kira who has the task of repairing the Singer's robe and the little girl who has been selected to become the next Singer even if, in the end, they should be considered as prisoners rather than as welcomed guests. Moreover, in this community, women are prohibited from reading and writing which only Kira will secretly learn to do by herself and thanks to her friend Thomas.

This volume portrays a very patriarchal society in which women have fewer rights than men. This is completely the opposite in Jonas' community as, even the most powerful person among the Elders, the Chief Elder, is a woman. Through this important contrast between the two, Lois Lowry mirrors the differences concerning gender inequalities in the real world which vary according to certain cultures and countries. Also, she certainly wanted us to learn from Jonas' world, at least on that point as gender equality, in 2019, is still something that needs to be worked on in order to be reached in a number of countries and communities.

Even if Sameness has a positive impact on equality between people, it also imposes people to standardize their behavior and to fit in. They cannot express themselves and be who they truly want to be. Indeed, Davis explains that: "Having decided to embrace "Sameness" and obliterate historical and cultural memory, the people have trapped themselves in a dystopia that rejects real individual originality as it purports to celebrate community harmony" (Rocío G. Davis, p. 53). The daily medicine also restricts them from revealing themselves as it impedes them from feeling things, they do not have any particular personality to express. They are also all dressed in the same way, have no color, hair or skin differences; they are identical. This supposes an absence of individuality which implies the end of diversity and of the possibility of choosing.

"It isn't fair that nothing has color!" "Not fair?" The Giver looked at Jonas curiously. "Explain what you mean." "Well . . ." Jonas had to stop and think it through. "If everything's the same, then there aren't any choices! I want to wake up in the morning

and *decide* things! A blue tunic, or a red one?" He looked down at himself, at the colorless fabric of his clothing. "But it's all the same, always."

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 93)

The members of the community are then stuck in the costume carefully chosen by the Elders and are forbidden from displaying any kind of difference and this element also reveals the dystopian side of this world especially when compared to the reader's own as illustrated by Stewart in the following quote.

As represented, the utopian/dystopian world is a viable and desirable alternative to what we presently experience. There is no war, no hunger, no racial tension, no unemployment, no concern about the future, and no worries about the elderly. And ultimately, in the contexts of Jonas's world and the one in which readers live, the "real" world (our world), because we have choice (or at least the illusion of it), is preferable to Jonas's world. Thus, through Jonas's journey to choice, to Elsewhere, nothing changes for readers. It simply serves as a reaffirmation of what readers have probably learned to value.

(Susan Louise Stewart, p. 29)

At the same time, this reassertion could also trigger readers to see what is positive in their own world while confronting it with Jonas' one. Dystopias and utopias can also sometimes show what is positive in our real world and what we should fight for in order to keep or improve and not always what should be changed.

Education is a central theme in Lowry's novel. Rules are very strict in Jonas' community due to the major importance that is given to them. All children have to go to school because it is an obligation and they have different sorts of classes like language and communication; commerce and industry: science and technology; civil procedures and government (Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 85). At the age of twelve, they are assigned their future job for which they have to follow a specific training while they continue going to school. They are also able to do some volunteer work in several institutions in order to see what they like to do and what they are good at doing which helps the Elders decide which job they will be attributed.

Moreover, in the first pages, Jonas is always searching for the words that best fit what he wants to express. Later, the reader is able to understand that it is because, the Elders have imposed a rule that is called "precision of language" which requires everybody to use only the words that are allowed and also to use them appropriately.

Now, thinking about the feeling of fear as he pedaled home along the river path, he remembered that moment of palpable, stomach-sinking terror when the aircraft had

streaked above. He searched for the right word to describe his own feeling. [...] *Apprehensive*, Jonas decided. That's what I am.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, pp. 3-4)

There also are other rules like the one which prohibits people from lying or the rule of politeness which are also very strict. The place of education especially concerning speech and language is deeply important in Jonas' world but for a specific reason: controlling the population. In fact, Davis explains in his article that: "people do not actually have to learn for themselves, as even what appears to be sites of learning (both protagonists go to school) are actually sites of indoctrination disguised as security. Passivity becomes an ideal as citizens are encouraged to appreciate the life they have and fear anything that would disrupt the society" (Davis, R. G., p. 61). The rules concerning politeness and precision of language are also considered central in the education system of the community. Moreover, when a reader looks deeper into the text, he/she can understand that these are also tools used by the Elders to control their people.

Lowry makes the community deploy rhetoric as a tool for control. Emphasis on precise and accurate speech enables members of the community to control each other, particularly with regard to the expression of feelings. Though it seems that people are allowed to feel emotions [...] the community has clearly privileged the more benign forms of emotions and erased the others, partly through pills that suppress them and partly by linguistic redirection.

(Rocío G. Davis, pp. 55-56)

Because of all these rules Jonas has been confronted with since his birth, when he receives the new rules he will have to follow during his training as the new Receiver, he finds difficulties with some of them which go against what he had to learn during all these years. This is especially the case regarding the rule that makes him able, for the first time in his life, to lie.

Finally he steeled himself to read the final rule again. He had been trained since earliest childhood, since his earliest learning of language, never to lie. Once, when he had been a Four, he had said, just prior to the midday meal at school, "I'm starving." Immediately he had been taken aside for a brief private lesson in language precision. He was not starving, it was pointed out. He was *hungry*. No one in the community was starving, had ever been starving, would ever be starving. To say "starving" was to speak a lie. An unintentional lie, of course. But the reason for precision of language was to ensure that unintentional lies were never uttered.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 67)

This new rule will also bring him to doubt about whether or not others have received the same kind of instructions and are also allowed to lie. At that moment, Jonas also probably

understands that even the Elders maybe allowed to lie which would mean that everything they say is probably not always true. This will really disrupt Jonas and it also implies as a message to readers, especially young adults, that they should be aware that people in power, especially politicians, do not always tell us the truth, quite the opposite, and because of that, they should remain critical and analyze what they are told within distance.

Besides, children are also imposed a lot of rules. They are divided in groups depending on their age. At different stages of their lives, they will be allowed to do certain things. For example, it is only at the age of nine that they can learn to ride a bicycle which is a powerful symbol of independence and freedom especially for women in the 90s and which, in this case, marks a first step toward their emancipation from their parents. Even their outfits indicate their age.

The little girl nodded and looked down at herself, at the jacket with its row of large buttons that designated her as a seven. Fours, Fives, and Sixes all wore jackets that fastened down the back so that they would have to help each other dress and would learn interdependence. The front-buttoned jacket was the first sign of independence, the first very symbol of growing up.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 38)

Everything is thought for them to learn things that are adapted to their age. These elements give children the impression that while growing up, they are gaining freedom but this is only to give them the illusion of it because actually, they have no freedom at all and will have to behave like all the other members of the community. Doing so, Lowry exaggerates the authoritarian image of the Elders to show how this society is imperfect in the end through its rigidity that is pushed to extremes especially through its education system.

It is also only at the age of twelve that children can finally be differentiated in order to be assigned a job that fits them independently. The Chief Elder explains it in her speech at the Ceremony: ““This is the time,” she began, looking directly at them, “When we acknowledge differences. You Elevens have spent all your years till now learning to fit in, to standardize you behavior, to curb any impulse that might set you apart from the group. “But today we honor you differences. They have determined your futures.”” (Lois Lowry, 1993, pp. 48-49) This moment will be the only one when differences between people of the community are tolerated and even honored; otherwise they always have to blend in with the crowd. This moment is particularly ironical as the Elders claim to be celebrating these children’s differences but they are not different at all, they just have different preferences in terms of occupations but they are not different because they cannot be and are not given the

opportunity to be so. If they were, they would have been rejected from the community, they are just identical to everybody in this community and they have to fit in. Moreover, they say that their differences have determined their futures in order to give them the illusion that they are partly responsible for their own future but, in the end, the Elders are still the ones who choose what they are going to do and the children could not have done anything to change what they have decided. Everything is done by the Elders in order to indoctrinate children and adults into believing that they live in the best possible world and that everything outside their community is dangerous and barbaric. Through this Lowry warns readers “of the dangers of rhetorical manipulation and ideological rule.” (Rocío G. Davis, p. 61)

The severity concerning education in Jonas’ community can more clearly be noticed through some narrative details that are mentioned in the text and that arouse attention. Indeed, there is, for example, a discipline wand used on babies but also on old people. This wand is used on them when they are disobedient and consequently deserve some punishment. This also shows the type of didactic attitudes used by the Elders, which are not the most usual ones. This object is first brought up by Fiona, who has begun her training to become a Caretaker of the Old, and who learns about their utilization on old people. Later, Jonas’ father also talks about these objects: “The first steps of a newchild were always the occasion for celebration at the Nurturing Center, Father said, but also for the introduction of a discipline wand. Now Father brought the slender instrument home with him each night, in case Gabriel misbehaved” (Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 129). Using this type of instrument to punish people for their behavior seems to be completely normal to them but is, in reality, extremely violent. For the reader, this is completely outrageous and the fact that nobody rebels against this type of practice is unconceivable. Through that, the reader will really perceive how imperfect this world is since people are entirely passive while faced with these unfair rules and practices. At that point, Jonas can be considered as being really different from the habitual protagonists of dystopias as he does not rebel and does not embody a heroic figure at all. Readers while reading the book would probably like to shake him up in order to awake him. However, this inaction which characterize the members of the community is certainly, again, an exaggerated way for Lowry to trigger her readers to understand that they do not have to reproduce what the members of the community in Jonas’ world do but, on the contrary, they have to take action when they believe something is not fair in their society and act in order to improve how things are.

Another aspect characterizing this community and really worth of interest is its sustainable aspect; the environmental one and the economic one. First, the economic system of the community is not explicitly mentioned. Reading between the lines, one can understand that there seems to be no currency, no money. In fact, as every “family unit”³ receives in its “dwelling”⁴ everything they need in order to eat and to get dressed, they do not need any money to buy all these things. Their jobs exist because the community has to work properly and for that, all of these are necessary but they do not work in order to earn money but only for the proper functioning of this well-ordered system established by the Elders. This functioning could be perceived as being idealistic and even utopian as an entire community living without any money is not easily conceivable. Nevertheless, this system was probably chosen in order to avoid differences between rich and poor people and differences in terms of salary. In fact, money is usually one of the strongest causes of jealousy between people. Poorer people often tend to envy those who have more money and who can thus afford to live more comfortably. Envy and jealousy being two feelings considered to be very dangerous by the Elders, having no currency enables them to avoid these and it is also part of the sameness principle. Moreover, it also eradicates poverty and subsequently starvation and this is the utopian kind of society that the Elders wanted to establish.

Then, this community is also very sustainable in terms of environment as it seems to be very well organized and ordered. A first important point is that there are no cars, which totally contrasts with most readers’ reality. On the other hand, there are still buses, trucks and airplanes in order to travel within the limits of the community and beyond where it is authorized. However, people do not use these means of transport very much but they rather wander from place to place with their bicycles that they are able to get at the age of nine. Before that, they just have the possibility to walk. This is also feasible because they have to stay within the community which is not very vast and can then easily be crossed on a bike.

What is also surprising is that there are no animals in this community and its members do not even know what the word animal really refers to. People only use this word to describe someone’s behavior: “Lily considered, and shook her head. “I don’t know. They acted like . . . like . . .” “Animals?” Jonas suggested. He laughed. “That’s right,” Lily said, laughing too. “Like animals.” Neither child knew what the word meant, exactly, but it was often used to describe someone uneducated or clumsy, someone who didn’t fit in.” (Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 5) Once again, one could wonder where the animals are and how they were gotten rid of but no

³ Term used to refer to families.

⁴ Term used to refer to homes.

answer is proposed in the book. Readers can only imagine the answers when reading through the lines.

Also, climate is something that they have managed to control and thanks to that they were able to apply the *Sameness* principle to it. Because of that, snow, sunshine, rain, clouds, all the different meteorological aspects have disappeared from their world. There are different reasons why they wanted these to stop existing. The Giver teaches Jonas about some of them:

Climate Control. Snow made growing food difficult, limited the agricultural periods. And unpredictable weather made transportation almost impossible at times. It wasn't a practical thing, so it became obsolete when we went to Sameness. And hills, too," he added. "They made conveyance of goods unwieldy. Trucks; buses. Slowed them down. So—" He waved his hand, as if a gesture had caused hills to disappear. "Sameness," he concluded.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, pp. 80-81)

This is a major thought-provoking point for many readers who are, in 2019, living in a world in which young people are currently fighting for their planet and everything its nature provides them with. It would then be for them unconceivable to eliminate the seasons, animals and most importantly the sun and all the natural environments from their lives just for things to be more "practical". This, once again, shows how Lowry exaggerates; she pushes every aspect of the novel to extremes to show her readers what they should defend, what they should fight for.

Despite some contradictions through the positive aspects which could make readers believe that this world is perfect in terms of sustainability, like the massive use of bicycles instead of polluting engines, Climate Control impedes people from knowing about what nature really is. The members of the community are unaware of the beauty of the seasons and the different pleasures they involve but also about animals, for example. This gives us, readers, a reminder of how important nature is to us and how the little joys it gives us are essential. This is especially true in Jonas' observations of the new world he discovers outside the community being on his journey toward Elsewhere.

All of it was new to him. After a life of Sameness and predictability, he was awed by the surprises that lay beyond each curve of the road. He slowed the bike again and again to look with wonder at wildflowers, to enjoy the throaty warble of a new bird nearby, or merely to watch the way wind shifted the leaves in the trees. During twelve years in the community, he had never felt such simple moments of exquisite happiness.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 164)

It is also true that climate control could be regarded as being positive as thanks to it there are no forest fires, floods, natural catastrophes in general or more importantly, no climate change. This principle enables a stability which clearly contrasts with our environment's situation in 2019. However, in the previous extract from *The Giver*, readers follow Jonas in his discovery of nature with which he had never been in contact as in his community, there was nothing of nature, no weather and consequently no biodiversity. Here, being outside the community for the first time in his life, he is able to know the joys and the beauty nature can provide people. Feeling Jonas' amazement in front of this beautiful environment which readers have the chance to be in contact with can trigger them to understand how lucky they are to have all this marvelous natural landscape around them and that they should really take care of it.

A last element that arouses attention regards family and the notion of love. Firstly, on the surface, there are families, called "family units" living in their respective dwellings. However, these are only "foster" families; children are being assigned to them after having passed the test that enables them to be part of the community or, otherwise, to be released. These healthy and strong babies are then dispatched in their new families among the ones who have applied for a baby and who do not have more than one child yet. A family can only be composed of two parents and two children; one male and one female. Everyone knows that their parents are not their biological ones as the only ones allowed to give birth are the birthmothers for who it is the role that they have been given in the community. This system echoes the one represented in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). In fact, in Atwood's novel the only few remaining fertile women are forced into giving birth to children who are then given to upper-class families who were not able to have their own in this society characterized by a growing number of infertile women due to pollution and radiation. Control over reproduction seems to be a theme shared by a lot of dystopian narratives as it is also evoked in older dystopias like in Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) in which the state controls birth through technology but also with medicine as, for example, they even surgically remove ovaries from women. In this dystopian novel, the state uses this technique of technological reproduction also in order to modify people genetically. Moreover, the situations in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Giver* sadly mirrors how women in the real world are often reduced to their body as if they were only objects of reproduction.

In Lowry's novel, the members of these family units seem to be happy and benevolent to one another but, in the end, they are not real families as they do not *love* each other. This is because this feeling does not exist as their emotions are restricted through the daily medicine

they mechanically and passively take every morning. Even the couples are not real ones as they did not even choose their partner, they only have to apply for a spouse and will be given one, but they have no choice:

Even the Matching of Spouses was given such weighty consideration that sometimes an adult who applied to receive a spouse waited months or even *years* before a Match was approved and announced. [...] All Matches had been monitored by the Committee of the Elders for three years before they could apply for children.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 46)

For any reader, the absence of love is maybe the most difficult element to imagine or to consider. Imagining living a life in which there would be no love, no real bonds with other people is, for any human being, unconceivable. This is a clue element in the text as it really creates a gap between readers and Jonas' world because love is universal and nobody would like to live in a world in which people are not even aware of its existence. This mechanical way to create couples is extreme and reminds us of the importance of love and, at the same time, gives us warnings about these new techniques that enable people to find partners virtually through dating sites, for example. Through this, Lowry probably wanted to reassert the value of spontaneous interactions and encounters that can really bring love and happiness.

When Jonas begins to stop taking his pill, he starts feeling things that he does not understand. The Giver will then have to explain them to him through his favorite memory of a family gathering for Christmas.

“What did you perceive?” The Giver asked. “Warmth,” Jonas replied, “and happiness. And —let me think. *Family*. That it was a celebration of some sort, a holiday. And something else—I can’t quite get the word for it.”

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 118)

Jonas hesitated. “I certainly liked the memory, though. I can see why it’s your favorite. I couldn’t quite get the word for the whole feeling of it, the feeling that was so strong in the room.” “Love,” The Giver told him.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, pp. 119-120)

This new feeling that Jonas is able to discover will make him understand that without it, families are not really complete. He will even try to introduce it in his own family unit but without success.

“Father? Mother?” Jonas asked tentatively after the evening meal. “I have a question I want to ask you.”[...] “Do you love me?” There was an awkward silence for a moment. Then Father gave a little chuckle. “*Jonas*. You, of all people. Precision of

language, *please!*” “What do you mean?” Jonas asked. Amusement was not at all what he had anticipated. “Your father means that you used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it’s become almost obsolete”

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 121)

This rejection from his own “family” is very hard for Jonas and triggers readers to identify with the protagonist and to feel some pity for him. Nobody would like to live a moment like this and through that, Lowry embarks her readers in Jonas’ quest to bring back love to his community.

Furthermore, many criticisms have been made regarding *The Giver* as Stewart acknowledges in her article, especially regarding this novel’s lack of depth while bringing up some challenging ideologies.

The Giver reifies several ideological foundations without providing a space to openly interrogate them. I further assert *The Giver* only reinforces many of our cultural values. True, many of those cultural values are worthy of reinforcement, but I do not believe we should accept those values without question, especially considering the world in which we now participate.

(Susan Louise Stewart, p. 23)

Stewart also criticizes the ending of the novel for two different reasons. First of all, she denounces it in terms of plot as it is true that Jonas rebels against the idea that they have not the possibility to make choices in their community but he himself will decide to make a choice for the entire community without having their opinion.

The Giver and Jonas take matters into their own hands, and decide that Jonas should leave the community, which will release all of the memories he has received from The Giver. With that decision, they make a choice to leave the remainder of the community without choice, which represents a fundamentally ironic and deconstructable moment. The people of the community have no choice but to accept the inevitable flood of memories they will receive when Jonas leaves them.

(Susan Louise Stewart, pp. 24-25)

She also adds that even if Lowry puts Jonas in that position for readers to consider him as a hero and as a figure of bravery, it is not entirely realistic to consider him as such taking into account what he does as “we often label people who take matters into their own hands for some purported good of the community “despots” or “psychopaths” or “fanatics.” (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 26). Moreover, Jonas represents ambiguity in terms of heroism. Indeed, he is not really like the other protagonists of other dystopias who clearly and vigorously rebel against their condition and the unfairness of the world in which they live. In *The Giver*, Jonas,

at least at the beginning, lives happily and passively like any other member of the community. He is completely blinded by the utopian aspect of the place in which he lives. When he stops respecting some rules like taking his pills and being honest it is not because he wants to rebel against the system, it is only because the new rules he receives for his new position in the society allows him to do so. It is only because of the memories of the past that he will realize that at some point he will realize that he lives in a dystopian world and that he will try to change things but his rebellion is still as sensible as ambiguous.

Concerning this ending one could also regret that the complexity brought by the mysterious ending of the novel is completely wiped out through the sequel in which Lowry destroys readers' possibility of having their own creative interpretation regarding this ending. Stewart describes *The Giver's* ending as ambiguous and claims that ambiguity often suggests complexity but explains that with "the publication of *Messenger*, which continues Jonas's story—extratextual considerations—*The Giver* loses its complexity and defeats ambiguity" (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 29). This is also surprising from Lowry as in many interviews, regarding her readers' questions about the mysterious ending of her novel, she made it clear that she would not involve her own visions and opinions in the story. She wanted that in order to leave an open space for the interpretation of her readers and to their own beliefs and feelings (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 30). Nevertheless, she always mentioned that, for her, the ending should be considered in a hopeful and optimistic way (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 30) as it is important to do so, especially for young adults when confronted with dystopian worlds. Despite that, through the sequel she later published, she "expunges that choice" (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 30) and "that she does diminish readers' choices does make a difference" (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 30) as readers are not able to read this ending according to their own truth anymore. Nevertheless, it is also true that knowing about the adventure of Jonas' outcome is comforting in a way for many readers.

Despite these few issues, *The Giver* is still recognized as being relevant to be taught in the classroom to young adults. Obviously, the students must be warned that such a text can be manipulative in many ways but if they can develop their critical mind while reading this novel, only positive outcomes will result from this experience. Indeed, even if Stewart claims that "In *The Giver*, we are encouraged to critique Jonas's culture and not our own" (Susan Louise Stewart, p. 33), this novel can still be used as a way to bring students to question their own world like Jonas does it with his own. Moreover, as readers follow Jonas in his discovery of the past and the different aspects of life erased from the community portrayed as being

wonderful, readers are able to understand the importance of all these things and how lucky they are to have them in their everyday life. Through Jonas' narration, Lois Lowry clearly wanted to give her readers a message which tells them that they have to stop taking all these wonderful things for granted and to start enjoying them and working in order to keep them. She also praises "the quality of one's character, the role of the individual in society, and the importance of cultural diversity" (Mark A. Fabrizi, p. 1). This explains why it could be relevant to analyze this didactical novel with young adults.

At night, while Gabriel slept beside him, Jonas lay awake, tortured by hunger, and remembered his life in the community where meals were delivered to each dwelling every day. [...] You have never been starving, he had been told. You will never be starving. Now he was. [...] His thoughts continued. If he had stayed, he would have starved in other ways. He would have lived a life hungry for feelings, for color, for love.

(Lois Lowry, 1993, p. 165)

Lois Lowry herself expresses her desire for future generations to change the world for a better one in her dedication in *The Giver*: "For all the children to whom we entrust the future" (Lois Lowry, 1993). This sentence really shows her desire to inspire young readers and change their vision on the world through her books. Hopefully, these novels will affect readers in the way she expected.

Chapter 3: Engaging Adolescents Politically through Dystopias

Dystopian literature is, as mentioned in the previous chapters, a pedagogical genre which can help adolescents improve their language skills, literary skills but also accompany them during adolescence which can sometimes be a difficult period of their life. But apart from all of these advantages, this genre also offers these young readers the opportunity to open their eyes not only on their own self and on their own existence but also on the society in which they live. Dystopias and utopias “have been often regarded as a relatively attractive way of promoting certain political, social, and economic ideas, and / or verbalising one’s objections to the existing order” (Artur Blaim and Ludmila Gruszevska-Blaim, p. 7). Indeed, Ames explains this in her paper on how post-9/11, dystopian literature could engage “apolitical” adolescents. She writes that there was a sudden importance given to dystopian literature after the event of 9/11 when, at the same time, some research like the one carried by the Pew Research Center in 2010 showed that adolescents born between 1980 and 2000 can be considered as being apolitical. This situation is paradoxical considering the fact that the increasing popularity of dystopian fictions among young readers shows that on the contrary, they are interested in politics. In fact, dystopias usually depict the main political and social issues of society which then show that these adolescents are interested in these concerns but in their own way. “Post-9/11 climate has contributed to the popularity of these YA dystopias⁵ as they present fictional fear-based scenarios that align with contemporary cultural concerns. [...] they all provide social commentary that is relevant to society today” (Melissa Ames, p. 4). Considering this argument, dystopian fictions could then be used to encourage more vigorously these adolescents first, to be interested in the political issues of their world but also to be more active in political actions.

3.1 “Apolitical” adolescents?

The generation of adolescents born between 1980 and 2000 as well as the following one is often referred to as being apolitical which basically means uninvolved and even uninterested in political and social matters regarding society. As mentioned previously, this has been proved by some research as the one carried by the Pew Research Center in 2010. However, more than only being apolitical, this generation is often thought of as even being dull and in some extreme cases, illiterate. People often tend to describe adolescents as being highly

⁵ Young Adult Dystopias are dystopias dedicated to adolescent readers. This genre is often said to have started with Lowry’s *The Giver* in 1993. Other examples of this genre are Collins’ *The Hunger Games* (2008), Roth’s *Divergent* (2011) and Dashner’s *The Maze Runner* (2009).

egocentric and as only being interested in popular culture and most importantly in entertainments like television, movies, series, videogames and music. Adults often complain that young adults are not interested in the news and consequently blind themselves from the main problems of their society. Melissa Ames explains that “Barnhurst (1998), a media researcher, argued that young people today feel disconnected from traditional sources of political information such as the news” (Melissa Ames, p. 5). This shows that adolescents do not feel concerned by the information given in the news which then triggers them to ignore these. The problem is then more related to the fact that this generation is not interested in these traditional sources of political information but not that they are not at all interested in the issues of society in general. The popularity of dystopian novels, movies and even series for young adults is an element which proves that these young readers feel concerned with the issues of the society in which they live but that they are just looking for a medium that suits them best and is more adapted to them. An example of that is the well-known dystopian novel for young adults written by Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (2008) which even managed to exceed the huge success in sales of the *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) by J. K. Rowling. Ames argues that the success of Collins’ books “and the YA dystopias following them, indicate that this is more than just a mere marketing achievement” (Melissa Ames, p. 6) as it shows the interest of these readers in the social and political problems of their society. These dystopian novels do, indeed, tackle some essential themes such as climate change like in *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy, human’s rights in Orwell’s *1984* (1949) and individualism as in *The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry and many other aspects which are at the core of our western society’s main worries.

3.2 Dystopias to empower the future generations

First of all, as it has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, dystopian literature is a good way to empower adolescents. Many teenagers are often regarded in a negative way as rebellious and out of control but in dystopias, they are portrayed as the heroes of the community in which they live. Reading this genre of literary texts could first of all give them assurance in their voice and their power and thus trigger them to fight for what they find worthy. Empowering these young readers is the first and certainly most crucial step in order to shape them into better citizens. They could also be empowered by the fact that reading literature in which the characters have the same problems as readers is also a way for them to understand that these adolescents are not alone. It will also help them to find their place in the society, which is not always easy to do especially if others tend to consider them as useless.

This is also what Rocío G. Davis mentions in his paper: “depictions of adolescent personal problems, inviting writers and their readers to “speculate about the way individuals position themselves in reference to a wider collective”” (p. 254 quoted in Rocío G. Davis, p. 49). He also quotes Hintz (2002) to explain that:

Freedom, for example, is figured simultaneously as a political issue (should we allow ourselves to be brainwashed by a computer into a perfectly efficient society?) and a negotiation between adolescents and their families or friends. Presumably, this conflation is meant to help adolescent readers cope with difficult political and social ideas within a context they can understand: their own narrative of development. Good citizenship within the ideal society (or in opposition to the dystopian society) is figured as a process of both achieving the autonomy of adulthood and keeping the clarity of vision held by a child. (p. 263)

(Rocío G. Davis, p. 50)

Dystopian literature thus gives an enjoyable and familiar context for young readers to open their eyes more easily on some political and social issues of society. This role is normally the one of Newspaper and mass media’s culture but adolescents tend to disregard information given through these ones. They tend to have the impression that these messages are for adults and not for them. Because of that they prefer informing themselves through other devices which simplify the message like social networks or short videos summarizing the most important information or even critical reviews of the news. Nevertheless, dystopian novels are especially intended for them and they depict adolescents like them being participating in the political life of their society to change the future. Being faced with these protagonists’ attitude could obviously have a more powerful impact on this generation and this is partly what teachers aim at when confronting their learners with this literature.

Moreover, a lot is usually expected from this generation because adults tend to think that it is the role of these adolescents to fight for their future and for the world in which they would like to live. However, if they are, at the same time, considered as being powerless and insignificant, they won’t be able to feel confident enough to really take action. Regarding this statement, Melissa Ames argues that “Perhaps if their interests [of the young readers] and concerns—as evidenced by their reading material—are addressed more regularly in the public sphere, and if they feel their voices will count in the democratic process, future research and poll will reflect a very different political reality” (Melissa Ames, p. 18) which maybe would show that adolescents are very involved in politics. Fictions are then very important as they enable these adolescents to perceive their world within distance through fictional ones. Young adults often think of fictions as being films and series and are already familiar with a lot of

dystopian ones. Consequently, confronting them with a dystopian novel for young adults could be deeply relevant and add the literary aspect which could be interesting from a didactic point of view.

3.3 Examining society through dystopias

Once they feel more powerful and as legitimate as adults, secondary schools' students will be more easily willing to think about how they could try to change the world and more especially regarding the political and social problems of their society. Dystopias are very powerful in order to do so as they usually portray the most important problems of the world. This is also what Susan Louise Stewart explains in her article "A Return to Normal: Lois Lowry's *The Giver*".

sf [science-fiction] does have the potential to help readers accomplish some interesting tasks. Indeed, depending on the nature of the reader, accomplishing those tasks can be an aesthetic experience in itself. But the nature of the genre allows—demands—that readers attend to the political aspects of the texts and by extension, their culture. As a genre sf, and dystopian fiction in particular, tends to make our social dilemmas larger-than-life. It is also quite manipulative, but then, nearly all literature written for young readers is in some ways. The problem that arises is not that a text is manipulative, but in how it manipulates readers or what it asks readers to do, see, or to not see.

(Susan Louise Stewart, pp. 32-33)

It is true that literature manipulates us because authors of literary works want to give their readers a message that is important to them. The nature of this message can either be political or not but the importance is for the reader to understand it and to make his/her own opinion about it. Young readers will then have, with the help of their teacher, to find the messages implied by dystopian authors in their texts, to analyze them and to reflect upon them in order to have their own opinion regarding what is said. It is also necessary for the teacher and his/her students to take some distance with the text and to analyze how this one challenges them and what it seeks to make them believe. After that, they can decide whether they agree with the text or not. Doing so develop their critical minds. Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver* (1993), for example, encourages readers to believe that the state is the bad guy of the story and thus supports right-wing political ideas. Readers, after having understanding this political message, can decide to agree or not with what is said through the text. The political aspect that can be found in dystopias will be detailed later on in this chapter.

This type of literary texts is then particularly relevant for a teacher who wants to awake his/her learners on some specific problems that characterize their society. School is probably the best place for adolescents to realize the importance of taking action to change how things are if they want to live in a more peaceful place. Indeed, as explained by Rocío G. Davis “Dystopian Young Adult texts blend the traditional developmental narrative with a heightened concern with issues regarding the individual against society (generally in the form of strict political organization), often in the context of a post-apocalyptic world” (Rocío G. Davis, p. 48). These narratives are there to provoke these young readers and to challenge them as they confront them with the worst case scenarios of the future world in which they could possibly live. Being faced with these dystopian worlds is also a way for adolescents to try to criticize their own world and to perceive what in their real society could have been the starting point of these horrible worlds depicted in these novels. These fictions “function as critiques precisely by inviting parallels with certain aspects of contemporary culture, encouraging teens to be more thoughtful about politics and society and their place in it” (Rocío G. Davis, p. 60).

The authors of dystopias for young adults dedicate their stories to these young generations and thus know how to arouse their interests, which is not always easy to do. They manage to do so by using characters with whom they can easily identify but also by locating “their protagonists’ personal development within a political context. That is, the maturity they achieve transcends individual self-awareness as it involves political insight into systems of corruption that they are compelled to challenge which, eventually, leads them to abandon their homes” (Rocío G. Davis, p. 60). Including the personal growth of these adolescent protagonists within a more global and political setting is a good way to have readers understand that these global and political problems also affect them. These narratives are also thought-provoking as they mirror the situation of these adolescent readers and try to guide them into taking action: “The plots of the novels focus on their personal itineraries of self-awareness, as they are transformed from innocent children who wholeheartedly support the status quo to teenagers willing to risk their lives to change it” (Rocío G. Davis, p. 61). Obviously readers will hopefully not follow this literally and risk their lives but they will, at least be awakened and realize that they can choose to shape their future in some ways if they decide to act for it. For example, while reading Lowry’s *The Giver*, young readers could be willing to follow his ambition to realize the imperfections of his world and to take the initiative to try to improve them.

3.4 Dystopias' warnings regarding environmental, social and technological issues

When adolescents will read a dystopian novel, they will have to create the world they are reading about in their minds. Imagining such a horrible and nightmarish world could terrify them as it is not easy to deal with this type of dark predictions. However, this vision can also bring them to understand that they do not want their future to look like this dystopian world. Nevertheless, these dystopias cannot be too pessimistic and consequently should preferably end on a hopeful ending otherwise young readers could believe that there is no hope for a better future and that it is not worth fighting for something that could never happen. Actually, a majority of dystopias for young adults do end “with a healthy dose of didacticism and hope, two complementary prerequisites often found in young adult dystopia” (Melissa Ames, p. 14). These dystopias could then have a great impact on readers especially a young audience who has to fight for its future. In order to have this impact, dystopian fictions usually convey themes that represent the main issues of the era in which these were written. Authors of dystopias want to have an impact on their readers and to arouse their interest regarding major societal issues that some people often tend to forget about.

Dystopian themes and political concerns have filled the pages of YA novels since their beginnings. [...] many novels have been founded on the premise of technology to society's downfall [...]. Others have focused on dystopic scenarios resulting from human-caused environmental disasters [...]. And still others have featured versions of totalitarian societies where quests for complete control or human perfection have led to dystopian conditions.

(Melissa Ames, p. 8)

Melissa Ames, in the above quote, names the different and most popular themes often evoked in dystopias. She also further mentions that in YA dystopias the recurrent themes are “the effects of technology driven, surveillance-ridden societies”, “the culture of narcissism inspired by social networking”, “the consumerist nature of the media-saturated world” and “the infringements of personal liberties” (Melissa Ames, p. 9). These themes are not only global contemporary issues but these are also issues that concern young generations and these might well relate to these topics and even might be able to perceive the warnings contained through these narratives. These warnings are not always obvious and readers might want to read between the lines and in depth to grasp the message that is being conveyed to them by the authors of these dystopian fictions. These themes are of course not the only examples, there are many more among which some will be explored in the following section.

3.4.1 Dangers of technology in YA dystopias

In 2019, the adolescents present in the classrooms are often said to be part of the Generation Z. This generation follows the Generations X and Y and includes all people born between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s. The parents of those who belong to this generation are usually part of Generation X. These young people were born and given access to a lot of technologies at a very early age. They were born and raised surrounded by all of these new, cutting-edge technologies which were not at all something new and revolutionary for them as it was the case for people of Generation X who saw the emergence of these devices that drastically changed people's way of life. Because of that, they may be less concerned by the possible dangers of these technologies and by their many implications on their life. This is one of the reasons why dystopian texts can be considered as being cautionary tales for these young adults: "Above all, portrayals of technology alert young people that no matter what technology is used, and the extent to which it is used, it must be used wisely" (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 11).

The dangers of technological progress are real and are often referred to in dystopias for young adults in order to raise their awareness of them. One of the dangers these developments cause is, for example, the mass surveillance imposed on the population through technological devices. People are sometimes not even aware that they are being observed. Orwell, with his early dystopian novel *1984* (1949), anticipated this statement in his book in which he had already imagined what it could be to be under permanent surveillance by extreme powers. Recent dystopias reuse this theme in many ways and an example of this is the novel *Matched* (2010) written by Condie who is an American writer of novels for young adults. This novel critiques the contemporary society in which people tend to forget that technology might fail at some point and that one should not be overly dependent on it otherwise it could result in an overload of information. Technology is then represented as something people totally depend on in order to survive which could lead to chaos in case it disappeared but it is also depicted as a way to gain control on people.

Dystopian worlds like the ones in *1984* (1949), *The Giver* (1993) or *The Hunger Games* (2008) are usually characterized as authoritarian and totalitarian societies in which there is a ruling and extreme power possessing all rights and control on its population. These fictions find different means through which people are being controlled in these societies which may be through information, strict rules, medication or technology as well as many

others. Even when technology is the means used to control people it can be employed in different ways. For example, technology can be used to control people's bodies, control a city or even control people's minds. In *1984*, the control is enforced on people by Big Brother through strict rules and the use of the Thought Police but also through technology as people are always under surveillance through Telescreens, for example, which function as televisions, microphones and cameras at the same time. This novel, written in 1949 and part of the first generation of dystopias, is a good prediction of how the world is today. Indeed, we are, in some ways, always observed through technology, through our mobile phones and our computer for example but also through the personal information we give on social networks.

In Anderson's *Feed* (2002), readers are able to know about another way of using technology to control people. This novel was written more recently and is part of the second generation of dystopias as mentioned in the first chapter. It depicts a post-apocalyptic world which serves as a way "to critique the effects of advanced technology on humankind and the environment" (Melissa Ames, p. 15). In this case, people are controlled through technology which is directly implanted in people's brains: "in this technology-saturated society, the majority of the population had computerized information feeds implanted in their brains. These feeds constantly brought them to endless streams of information, usually in the form of advertising for consumer products" (Melissa Ames, p. 15). Nevertheless, this dystopian novel is particularly intriguing as it is, in many ways, different from usual dystopias of the second generation. First, the dystopian nature of this society is not said to be due to the State as it is nearly always the case in other dystopias, but in this case, the blame is put on large corporations who are the ones benefiting the technology used to control people. This is positively surprising as dystopias of the second generation like this one have often been criticized for the specific reason of placing the blame on the State rather than on big corporations which would be more representative of the reality of our world. Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) is another example of dystopian novel which does not follow the same framework most recent dystopias do depicting the state as evil. This statement will be detailed later on in the chapter. The second aspect that differentiates this novel from others of the same genre is the fact that this dystopian story does not portray a teenage hero as the main character. The protagonist, Titus, is an adolescent but he is not a hero in the sense that he does not try to challenge authority and to rebel against it.

Feed is one of the few YA books that crafts a main character who aligns with the research on young adults today regarding civic illiteracy, political disinterest, etc. By

placing a character like Titus into the typical worst-case scenario setting of a YA dystopia, the novel speaks to the concerns older adults have for the future of the country if this so-called apathetic generation remains civically disengaged despite escalating national and global problems.

(Melissa Ames, p. 16)

This author's choice regarding the plot has as a consequence that the story is even more provocative than other dystopias and manipulates even more readers. In fact, the majority of them will be frustrated by the non-action of the main protagonist and this could awake them to their own passivity regarding their own world's issues. This is what Ames explains in her paper: "If teen readers are frustrated by, or disapprove of, Titus's lack of action, perhaps this text has the potential to spark self-reflection and generational critique in ways that the previously discussed texts [*Matched* (2010), *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Little Brother* (2008), *Uglies* (2005)] do not" (Melissa Ames, p. 16). This is a very relevant way of awaking these adolescents to their own inactivity and maybe that being confronted with texts like this one could really change their vision on what they should do concerning the problems of the society in which they live. The mirror created between the protagonist and the reader shows the latter how frustrating it is to see somebody not doing anything to change unfair situations while he could change things. This could urge this young reader to realize he/she is in the exact same situation and this could be an effective way to change his/her mindset regarding this attitude.

Another theme linked with technological problems but more related to how television often tends to manipulate people is represented in one of the most popular YA dystopias, *The Hunger Games* (2008) written by Collins. This novel was inspired by the many recent reality television shows to which many adolescents are now completely addicted. These shows often document individuals who are not famous actors or actors at all and who are filmed while living everyday life situations. These are often spiced up with a specific aspect of life: finding one's soulmate, surviving in harsh conditions, fulfilling one's dream job, etc. These clearly marked the beginning of voyeurism. This new television trend also echoes these dystopias like *1984* (1949) or *The Giver* (1993) in which people living in these societies are being spied on all the time. Orwell's story was taken as an inspiration even to the point that one of the first shows was titled according to the name of the authoritarian symbol of this novel, "Big Brother", which could really make one wonder why some people wanted to recreate a dystopian world in real life. The only difference between the two is that, in television shows, the people who are being filmed and spied on by millions of viewers have agreed on doing so.

This is also something that is different in *The Hunger Games* as the participants to this reality television show did not have any choice to do so as they were randomly picked up by the members of the Capitol. Collins wanted to criticize how we tend to be addicted to television but also our choices in terms of programs and entertainments like these reality television shows and the negative influences these have on younger and even older generations. Obviously, in this novel as in many other dystopias, the scenario of the show is exaggerated and pushed to extremes as it involves a fight to the death between the participants that will eventually lead to the deaths of all of them except for the one and only survivor left who will subsequently become the winner of the Hunger Games.

In dystopian fictions it is often the worst case scenarios that are being presented to readers in a highly exaggerated way but this is so for two major reasons: the first one is most probably to keep a certain distance between the reader's reality and the one depicted in the novel for the former not to be too involved in the horror. The second one could be to really give readers an electroshock concerning the issues of their world and the importance to change things in order to solve these problems. Furthermore, some new dystopian fictions like the series Black Mirror seem to be very close to our present reality which is terrifying. Another theme that is brought by the narration of Collins' novel is analyzed by Melissa Ames as she writes that this series:

can be read as an allegory for the state of both capitalism and education today as, like the competitors selected from various fictional districts, "some children start with advantages due to wealth. Other children—the unprepared ones, the ordinary ones—die unceremoniously, as the children with advantages temporarily band together to kill everyone else first before turning on each other."

(Hall & Slate, 2011, para. 14 quoted in Melissa Ames, pp. 10-11)

The organization of the different districts (the different communities of people) in *The Hunger Games* already reflects this idea of high economic imbalance between people in which these are born either lucky in the most prosperous district or unlucky in the poorest one. The districts are classified from district one to district twelve, the first district is the wealthiest one and the last one, district twelve is the poorest community of all. Moreover there is also the Capitol which is "depicted as a place of rich and ridiculous abundance, and the citizens themselves embodied this aura of excess through their obsessions with frivolous fashion fads. The contrast between the appearance of these individuals and the poor inhabitants from the districts is noteworthy" (Melissa Ames, p. 11). In addition to that, the inequitable characteristic of this society is pushed to extremes as the chance of being selected to be a

participant of this horrible game also depends on the district you live in. If you live in the poorest one, you will have more chance to be selected for the game in addition to being less trained than the people living in the wealthiest districts. This situation also echoes many other dystopian societies like the one in Lowry's *Gathering Blue* (2000) in which normal people live in poor cottages while important people live in a beautiful property where people live like princes and princesses.

Fear is also a means that is often used as a way to control people in a more subtle way and is usually linked with this idea of mass surveillance which reflects "our current culture of forced surveillance" (Melissa Ames, p. 11). In *The Hunger Games* it is used as a way to control all the people in the different districts in order for them not to rebel against their government. Fear is also used to control the participants of the game through the fact that they know they are under surveillance which impedes them from doing what they want at the risk of being punished: "Katniss reflected on the dangers of speaking out against the Capitol" (Melissa Ames, p. 12). This again echoes the situation of Jonas in Lowry's *The Giver* as even if their community seems much more utopian on the surface they are all under permanent surveillance by the Chief Elder. Fear in *The Giver* is what is used by the Elders to control their people but in a way that is less noticeable in order for the people not to acknowledge that they are being controlled.

These different means through which authoritarian figures in dystopian fictions use technology to control people are good examples of how technology could evolve and become really dangerous and these consequently reveal the possible downward slides of technology. Moreover, it could also show to this younger generation that some technologies are already dangerous and are already used as a way to spy on them especially through some social media which creators have already been accused several times of using personal information provided by users of these devices.

3.4.2 Loss of individualism

In dystopian novels like Orwell's *1984* (1949) or Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), people are usually reduced to identical copies of one another. This can also clearly be noticed in Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) through the concept of "Sameness" that the chiefs of the community have imposed on all the people living within the community's boundaries. This concept implies that nobody is different from the others, they are just mere copies of one another and this is true for their physical appearance as well as for their personality, emotions

and character traits which are regulated through a daily medication that is being implanted in their body. This is the case in many dystopias but Melissa Ames refers to one in particular, Westerfeld's *Uglies* (2005).

“Uglies” series focused on a post-apocalyptic society where cosmetic surgery was mandated at age sixteen in order to rid citizens of physical differences, such as race and beauty, that in the past resulted in inequality and even war. Accompanying this physical transformation, unknown to those who experience it, was a mental one wherein the participants’ brains were altered so that they remained in a permanent state of “bubbly” (ignorant) bliss.

(Melissa Ames, p. 13)

This novel really criticizes how in our western ideals people tend to be manipulated by the images given through magazines which also triggered this new cosmetic surgery trend. Even the cosmetics industries promote a certain vision of beauty which people tend to trust and follow and which will eventually reduce us all to identical beings. “Through this exaggeration, his fictional world draws attention to our own time period’s problematic focus on beauty, while still allowing us to seem less drastic in comparison” (Melissa Ames, p. 13). Ames also adds that the author through this novel gives the “underlying message that beauty is nothing but a social construct” (Melissa Ames, p. 14). This book also alludes to voyeurism especially regarding celebrities’ life but also denounces materialism. Consequently, it also criticizes consumerism which is an issue that particularly regards adolescents who often tend to be more easily manipulated by this consumerist society also because “consumer goods are among the few ways that [they] can establish status boundaries” (Detora, 2006, p. 28 quoted in Melissa Ames, p. 14). This novel addresses other themes like environmental ruin which is also a theme central to dystopias.

3.4.3 Dystopias and the environment: the concept of ecodystopias

Environmental ruin is a major theme addressed in many dystopian fictions but now even other types of fictions are more and more using this theme as a setting for the plot. This is not really surprising when one observes the current situation of the world which, from an environmental point of view, can be considered as being quite chaotic. Despite the sudden increase in interest regarding this issue especially by young people who are currently protesting in the streets to have more attention from politicians on this main issue, the problem is still major and a lot of people still continue to ignore it. Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) is one of these novels that tackle this crucial theme. Atwood decided to depict a world in which a man, Crake, fed up by the chaotic situation of the planet, decides to replace human

beings by Crackers. These are beings looking like humans but who have different features that are not destructive for the planet and who, for example, only rely on grass for their energy. This fiction also alludes to the question regarding how humans could be more sustainable and adapt themselves to their landscape in a more respectful way. This novel is written in a less tragic and horrible tone than other dystopias tackling this theme like, for example, *The Road* (2006) written by Cormac McCarthy. This story is the one of a father and his son who are trying to survive in a post-apocalyptic world. The landscape has been entirely destroyed by some sort of natural phenomenon which origin is not really specified but which has eradicated any sort of life except for some human beings who have managed to survive in these harsh conditions. Even if this story is mainly a story of hope and fighting for your life no matter what, it also gives a horrible vision of what could happen to our planet if it remains in such conditions even if it is not explicitly said that climate change is responsible for this disaster in the novel.

These novels are only two novels among many others which tackle the environmental concern because due to the overload of information concerning climate change and all the new policies and rules put into place in order to improve the situation of our planet, this theme has become a major one in literature but also in movies, series and even video-games. This genre is often referred to as the eco-dystopian genre which more recent popularity has even led to a new word ‘cli-fi’ “to identify this new body of work that centrally addresses the issue of climate change and its associated environmental consequences” (Hughes Rowland and Pat Wheeler, p. 2). The fact that climate change is often portrayed in dystopias probably illustrates that the authors of these books deeply wanted to have an impact on readers in order for them to realize how big the problem is and most importantly, how urgent is the solution to it.

Though we are not yet at the stage of environmental apocalypse – not quite – it is certainly true that climate change is most commonly, and most forcefully, communicated in the language of disaster, which seems to provide the most compelling and persuasive means of persuading its audience, not only of the devastation being wreaked upon global ecosystems, but of the human consequences of that devastation.

(Hughes Rowland and Pat Wheeler, p. 2)

It is true that even if placing this issue within an apocalyptic scenario encourages readers to perceive this issue only as a remote problem or even only as a minor entertainment, trying to convey such an essential theme through less radical means would probably result less

effective. This is especially true regarding the urgency of the problem, it is something that people have to be aware of, that people have to realize now if we want to be able to at least try to improve the condition of our planet.

Perhaps, this can be best explained by a rapidly increasing sense of urgency, by the awareness that ‘measured and prudent’ responses, to use MacFarlane’s terms, may not be sufficient to intervene in the course of events. Apocalyptic visions have the power to transfix their audience with horror, to command attention and shock people out of a position of comfortable apathy, in a way that strict adherence to the data cannot, even if the long-term implications of that data are terrifying enough in themselves.

(Hughes Rowland and Pat Wheeler, p. 2)

Considering these arguments, it is then not surprising to find so many eco-dystopias in more recent literature, authors want to make people aware of this major issue and want them to begin to change things in order to have the possibility to live in better conditions and to have a healthier planet. This theme is then evoked in many different ways:

Rapid advances in genetic research, the growth of the internet, and fears of pandemic viruses have each provoked a variety of responses in contemporary dystopian literature and cinema. [...] The plethora of texts and films that express anxiety over artificial intelligence, cybernetics and, more recently, virtual reality and genetic engineering, are closely related to those that express anxiety over the large-scale alteration of ecological processes, which have led to species extinctions and global warming.

(Hughes Rowland and Pat Wheeler, p. 3)

The ending of the novels that tackle this theme are also often very similar in the sense that they share a certain ambiguity. These novels often end on a situation that can be interpreted in two different ways, either positive or more negative. These endings often give a vision of climate change “as a potential new beginning as well as a cataclysmic ending” (Hughes Rowland and Pat Wheeler, p. 5). This is the case in the eco-dystopia that has been mentioned above, McCarthy’s *The Road* as in the end, the son loses his father but manages to reach the south which they had thought of as being the Promised Land. The son then encounters a new family with which he is going to continue his quest of a warmth and welcoming place to live. The question that then comes to mind while interpreting this ending is whether or not this is the beginning of a new era with this family that is going to repopulate the world or whether it is just the end and the boy with this new family is going to witness human extinction. “McCarthy’s pronounced emphasis on the literal and metaphorical importance of sight and blindness, which permeates the text, prompts the reader to consider the role of human beings as witnesses to, if not agents in, the end of the world as we know it” (Hughes Rowland and

Pat Wheeler, p. 5). This shows that some authors, more than awaking their readers on the environmental problems of the planet, want to make it clear that the blame for this chaotic situation has to be put on us, humans and all the destructive technologies we have invented and used in an abundant way. “*The Road* makes clear that our power as a species is limited, if not illusory, and that we are not immune to the damage we inflict” (Hughes Rowland and Pat Wheeler, p. 5). Readers of eco-dystopias have then now no excuse not to understand and be aware of the seriousness of the environmental situation of the planet and to begin to act for their future.

In conclusion, there are many themes evoked in dystopias that are almost always representative of the issues that characterize our contemporary society. This is not surprising as the dystopian genre is usually described as being didactic and pedagogical in the sense that the works belonging to it always try to convey a message to readers in order to open their eyes on the often sad realities that characterize their world. Many themes have been evoked in this chapter but these are not the only ones. Margaret Atwood offers through *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) a feminist fight for women's rights and independence, *The Chrysalids* (1955) by John Wyndham shows how religion can control people and even the entire world. This is only a short list of very relevant themes that can be found in dystopian novels and which can be pertinent to teach to students within the classroom. Hopefully these novels will really have an impact on readers and thus on our future.

3.4.4 Maximizing the effects of dystopias

How these cautionary tales are going to be interpreted and what impact they will have are elements that nobody can predict. Some readers would probably read these and then forget about them and about the message they implied. Others might not even grasp the warnings given through these dystopian novels which would only result in a mere entertainment for these readers. One can never be sure that the effects searched for in dystopias will really influence readers and especially young readers who are the ones targeted through YA dystopias. Often, the way these teenagers will read the book will not correspond at all with what the authors or teachers would have expected. Usually, as Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry argue, this “literature encourages people to view their society with a critical eye, sensitizing or predisposing them to political action” (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 7). However, sometimes readers, especially younger ones, need to be accompanied through the reading of

these novels in order to fully discern what is implied and to benefit from the effects that these fictions often seek to create.

Reading these novels within an educational setting could then be a good opportunity, “these texts are often taught in educational settings and strategic instruction often increase their overall impact” (Melissa Ames, p. 16). Ames continues this argumentation quoting Wolk (2009) who “stated that reading dystopian novels allows “students to question the world we have and envision a better world we could have” because these texts “offer unique opportunities to teach these habits of mind”” (p. 668 quoted in Melissa Ames, p. 17). Through this literature and the help of teachers or other literary skilled people, adolescents could be willing to get involved in the political sphere and to take real actions to shape their own future. Familiarizing these teenagers to this literature could then help molding them “into more politically engaged citizens” (Melissa Ames, p. 18).

Will reading young adult dystopias alone cause this political transformation? Not likely. And does the consumption of print texts often spark revolutionary change? No, but perhaps it is a start. Rather than predicting a bleak future for the young persons of today, this dystopian trend may very well be pointing toward a more positive future, at least in terms of political engagement.

(Melissa Ames, p. 18)

Consequently, dystopias will probably not change the world but reading them is already a way to understand that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Dystopias can help people being more optimistic about their world and their situation as they are always less chaotic than the ones depicted in these novels. This encourages them to believe that a better future is still possible if people are willing to change.

3.5 Developing critical thinking towards literary texts and the world

Teaching dystopian literature to young adults could also help them develop their critical mind regarding literary texts which often tend to depict certain ideologies and values. Indeed, Ronald Carter in his chapter refers to “the essentially non-linguistic criterion of the extent of identification made by a reader with the writer’s culture in the broadest sense of the word, i.e. his or her presuppositions, themes, areas of concern, attitudes to ways of living, and so on” (Ronald Carter, p. 220). The problem that he identifies regarding this statement is that “the position of the author in particular texts can affect the position of the reader” (Ronald Carter, p. 221). Consequently, the teacher will have to familiarize his/her students with this aspect of literature and make them aware of how they could be manipulated and indoctrinated to a

certain vision of the world through these texts. Moreover, as it has previously been mentioned in this chapter, dystopian texts are particularly manipulative and that regarding that, “the problem that arises is not that a text is manipulative, but in how it manipulates readers or what it asks readers to do, see, or to not see” (Melissa Ames, p. 33). Indeed, the fact that dystopian narratives manipulate readers is not new and neither surprising as authors want their works to be didactic and to have a certain impact on readers. What is more relevant to bear in mind is how these authors through their texts manage to manipulate us and what does their message really imply in the end. This section is very relevant especially if one considers teaching these texts to a young audience of learners as the teacher will then have to explain that these texts manipulate them and will have to show how they should always read these dystopian fictions, or other fictions, within a certain critical distance. This again proves the importance of accompanying these readers in the deciphering of these literary works.

Ultimately, readers must go beyond plot and genre and examine the text critically as a way to fully examine the embedded assumptions of the text and potential solutions for our present and future problems. To do so requires textual, contextual, and extratextual considerations. That is, readers must understand the ambiguity Lowry creates and then back out of the text, and contemplate the text, what Lowry discloses through her interviews, and *Messenger*. Only then will readers have an opportunity to see that *The Giver*, while interesting and provocative, has the potential to be more.

(Susan Louise Stewart, p. 33)

Stewart, here, refers to Lowry’s *The Giver* to illustrate her argument which demonstrates the importance of reading the text through and between the lines but also the importance of having certain knowledge of the various contextual elements which could have influenced the author and the statement he/she makes through his/her narration. Lowry’s novel also belongs to the more recent dystopias which are often said to be different from the older ones in many ways.

First of all, as detailed in the first chapter, these two generations of dystopias often depict different themes but, what has not yet been pointed at is that these two also convey different political messages behind their narrations. The difference is not always easy to perceive but it does well exist and clearly differentiates these dystopian novels. This is explained and detailed in an article that was published in *The Guardian* by Ewan Morrison and which title already illustrates the argument advanced: “YA dystopias teach children to submit to the free market, not fight authority”. This author mainly argues that this recent generation of dystopias for young adults like *The Hunger Games* (2008), *The Giver* (1993) and *Divergent* (2011) all

tend to depict and defend the same political message or at least the same political ideology. This ideology expressed regards right-wing libertarianism.

As briefly mentioned previously in this chapter, this can already be perceived in the choice of the authors concerning the “bad guys” of the stories. These bad guys are in these dystopian fictions represented as being the state which is portrayed as an extreme authoritarian and totalitarian power having all control and all rights on the population. Actually, these dystopias offer the same underlying narrative with “a unique individual who lives in a stable, peaceful, carefully structured society graced or cursed with extraordinary skills which mark them out from the conformist communities around them” (Ewan Morrison, 2018). These all-controlling governments which impose a lot of very strict rules that the population has to follow also often present themselves as having created the perfect utopian society in which everything is done in the interest of the people, which is obviously not true at all. What Morrison critiques is the fact that this is not representative of the reality of readers as, in the real world, big corporations have more power than the state in certain countries and thus, these fictional dystopian societies should normally also be ruled by these and not by the state. One of the few exceptions to this characteristic is the novel mentioned previously in this chapter *Feed* (2002) written by Anderson in which the villain is portrayed as being big business and not the state. Another example is the recent dystopian movie starring Emma Watson and Tom Hanks, *The Circle* (2017) based on the 2013’s novel written by Eggers. This movie can be considered as being a dystopian one even if it is referred to as being a techno-thriller film. In this story, it is the biggest technological and social media company which is also the most powerful one in the world who has a lot of power. Like in many dystopias, this power is used in order to spy on people in a permanent way which challenges the limits of privacy and intimacy as well as freedom. However, many YA dystopias still tend to depict the state or at least what looks like it as being the evil characters of these worlds.

The problem is not only the unrealistic aspect of the bad-guys being the state, there is also the fact that doing so implicitly supports right-wing political ideas. Indeed, by depicting the state as being the villain of the story it gives a negative image of “those well-meaning liberal leftists who want to make the world a better place” (Ewan Morrison, 2018). Surprisingly, when one looks at these dystopian texts closely, it can be understood that these fictions denounce left-wing political ideologies. According to Morrison these messages expressed implicitly through these narratives are:

substantial attacks on many of the foundational projects and aims of the left: big government, the welfare state, progress, social planning and equality. They support one of the key ideologies that the left has been battling against for a century: the idea that human nature, rather than nurture, determines how we act and live. These books propose a laissez-faire existence, with heroic individuals who are guided by the innate forces of human nature against evil social planners.

(Ewan Morrison, 2018)

It is true that when taking *The Giver* as an illustration, readers can understand that the state, embodied by the Elders, is the villain of the story who has imposed on the people equality through the principle of “Sameness”. Equality is in this case portrayed as something negative that has been enforced on people which shows how a critique of left-wing ideas and initiatives, which are supposed to be positive for the people, is made through the narration. Nevertheless, one could also argue that the Elders could also be considered as being a big corporation using medicine and technology as a way to control people. The nature of these all-powerful and authoritarian entities depicted in the second generation of dystopias is often ambiguous and nothing really indicates that they actually are states.

However, this ideology is not at all the one expressed through the dystopian novels of the first generation. These, on the contrary, rather promoted left-wing political ideas but not at all right-wing libertarianism ideologies. This, obviously, also chronologically coincides with certain political changes which undoubtedly influenced the message expressed in the dystopian fictions written subsequently.

In this period the capitalist dystopia was a respected left wing “cultural strategy” and its dominance endured till around 1993 which, coincidentally or not, was the time of the fall of the old left and the rise of neoliberalism. The dystopian narratives which are currently consuming the minds of millions of teens worldwide are now communicating right-wing ideas.

(Ewan Morrison, 2018)

Morrison, in his article, draws a comparison between this argument and the story in Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*, showing how strongly this novel, as many others of the same genre, really destroys everything what has been done by leftist politicians in the past even regarding the positive progresses they brought to the world.

The *Giver* it is after unendurable exposure to human suffering that the specialists attempted to construct a perfectly-controlled society.

(Ewan Morrison, 2018)

In *The Giver*, the evil social structure is something called ‘Community’ and the genetic nuclear family has been banished (this was once a long term plan of the communists). Men and women have total gender equality in the workplace and the job that the father of the protagonist Jonas does is a “nurturer” – he takes care of babies. (You might be able to see the Marxist feminist project here being traced as a burgeoning hell on earth.) Children do not know their biological parents and are raised in their first years communally – a project originally envisaged by the communist Alexandra Kollontai.

(Ewan Morrison, 2018)

Consequently, the message implied in literary texts also mirrors the political situation of the time in which they were written. Considering that, it is then crucial to make readers of this type of literature aware of the fact that fictions can also manipulate us and indoctrinate us to certain ideologies. The problem is that younger people sometimes have a less developed critical mind and it is then essential that the teacher helps them while deciphering the messages given by authors of dystopian works. As mentioned previously, this can be done through keeping in mind the context in which the book has been written and even the life of the author in order to understand the ideologies implied in a particular text while analyzing it. Readers, especially learners of a certain language reading in a tongue that is not their mother tongue, need to be taken by the hand while reading dystopias in order not to be too easily manipulated but also to be able, later, by themselves to perceive and critique these subtleties.

Another aspect that young readers need to be taught when reading dystopias is that despite the fact that the literary texts they will read are entirely fictional even if these portray problems occurring in the real world, some utopias and/or dystopias really happened in the past. Indeed, some people have known real dystopias and there are many of them. These young people have to know and understand that what happened, like, for example, with Hitler’s dictatorship, can be perceived as a dystopia which became a reality. Adolf Hitler subtly settled his dictatorship from 1933 until the year in which he died, 1945. When he came to power and had the control over the whole Germany, he decided to establish a lot of new rules and regulations which were for him a way to make Germany a better place to live. Doing so, he was creating a utopian world. The problem is that, as it has already been explained in this dissertation, when a utopia is imposed on people without asking their opinion, it cannot be considered as being a utopia anymore but it then becomes a dystopia. Later on, with all the atrocities he inflicted on a lot of people, especially Jewish people, the dystopian reality of his government became more violent for people. This story undoubtedly echoes the fictional ones expressed through dystopias and this is also because the aim of this genre of literature is to

give warnings about social and political problems that really exist in the world in order to prevent other dystopias from becoming reality. This aspect of dystopian literature is also an element that would need to be focused on by teachers with their young readers as they have to understand that, unfortunately, dystopias always imply a sad part of our reality that needs to be paid attention to and taken as warnings.

Chapter 4: Didactical and Pedagogical Advantages of Reading Dystopias

Teaching dystopian literature to secondary schools' students could, indirectly, be a way of improving their skills in English and probably in many other domains. Indeed, it is important to understand that these literature lessons will be taught in the frame of the English class. Actually, doing so could reconnect these young adults with literature and thus develop their literary skills but also enhance their mastery of the targeted language. This argument is partly based on the idea that, in the early years of the 20th century, the teaching of languages focused importantly on literature. This method practiced by several teachers was, later on, considered as being archaic and insufficient especially regarding the speaking and listening skills, which constitute the fundamentals of a good communication in another language which is now the main focus in ESL. Nevertheless, it is now strongly believed that if using literary texts and creative narratives is applied correctly, this is to say; not abundantly and adapted to the new ESL classroom way of teaching languages, it could really be considered as an added value to the language classes. This chapter and the arguments stated above are mainly based on *Literature and Language Teaching* edited by Brumfit and Carter which includes some research of different authors who interested themselves to the didactical value of literature.

4.1 Evolution of the place of literature within the language classes

In Brumfit and Carter's book *Literature and Language Teaching*, Michael Short and Christopher Candlin, explain in their essay on "Teaching Study Skills for English Literature", how literary texts were included in English class at the beginning of the early 20th century, the different issues it aroused and how these can be avoided. The main idea is that the literature which at that time was proposed to learners of English mainly consisted in the classics of English literature. Teachers of English believed that having their students reading the best of English literature could have an impact on their language skills and encourage them to write and express themselves in the same way the authors of those famous texts did: "The assumption was that if the students were continually exposed to the best uses of the English language, it would in some sense 'rub-off' on their own performance in the language" (Michael Short and Christopher Candlin, p. 91). The problem that arose concerned the difficulty and complexity of those texts which were inaccessible for those non-native learners of English.

As a consequence, literature teaching began to disappear from the 'language' classroom, to be replaced by a surrogate literature, commonly in the form on textbook dialogues and

short tales, where learners were presented with the appearance of literature in the form of text devised to carry structure, but with none of its literary effect.

(Michael Short and Christopher Candlin, p. 91)

The canonical texts were then replaced by little dialogues and other artificial texts in the textbooks as these were considered to be more adapted to the audience but also more representatives of real life situations. This is also due to the fact that, throughout the years, the teaching of languages evolved to a more pragmatic vision. This reject of meaningful literature also caused the language to be learned away from its historical and cultural background. Indeed, the little dialogues and texts offered in textbooks do not give access to authentic texts representing a culture and a history but also different writing styles which should be considered as being a major part of the learning process of a language.

It can thus be understood that, in the past, this method was used as a way to enhance the students' skills in English through the reading of literature some classics representing a high and elevated language. One can easily assume that this approach could not really be efficient as non-native learners of a language need to be familiarized with it gradually; beginning with easy and everyday language and hopefully ending with more elaborated words and structures. It is also true that, nowadays, teachers tend to use, as reading material, little dialogues or short texts that do not have any insightful meaning and that cannot be really considered as literature being exclusively pragmatic.

Consequently, as Christopher Brumfit writes in his essay, literature has progressively disappeared from the English classrooms. However, in more recent years, there has been an increasing interest in having more meaningful literature in addition to the pragmatic texts provided in textbooks. "Most attempts to provide motivating and communicative material for learners are strong in technique but weak in any sense of developmental structure" (Moskowitz 1978; Maley and Duff 1978; Melville *et al*, 1980 quoted in Christopher Brumfit, p. 184). Brumfit explains that there was a progressive awakening regarding the need to have some literature within the teaching of languages because without it, the learning would only be based on artificial texts and situations not representative of this language and most importantly, not at all authentic.

Considering these arguments, even if literature has almost disappeared from the English classrooms despite its important use as a main source of teaching in the past, it is still important to use it while teaching English as it could clearly enhance the pupils' skills in

English in many ways. For example, literature will provide learners with cultural and historical knowledge of the language studied giving them a more global vision and understanding of it but it will also enable them to get to know other cultures in general and other types of societies and ways of living consequently giving them a larger opening on the world. Nevertheless, in order to avoid the problems that this method encountered in the past, a right balance should be found regarding how it is used and through which kind of literature this method should be applied. Moreover, considering globalization and the fact that English is at the center of the world in terms of communication, learners are able to access many sources in English through the media and social networks for example. Non-native English speakers are also very much interested in series and films which already give them access to more cultural aspects of the language. Nevertheless, even if in 2019 literature can be considered as being less adapted to our world, it is still much less pragmatic but also highly more authentic than other texts used in the teaching of languages. It also provides a true and broad perception on the cultures, arts and history of a language which proves that literature has its place in the language class.

4.2 Advantages of merging both literature and language learning

One could wonder *why* there is so much interest given to this question about whether or not literature should have its place within the ESL classes. Multiple answers can easily be found to elucidate this question as it is not in vain that teachers often resort to this method. First of all, as argued in Brumfit and Carter's book mentioned previously:

We shall not attempt at this stage to 'justify' the teaching of literature. Suffice it to say that for us, as for many teachers, the personal experience of reading major literature is sufficiently important to us to wish to communicate this need to our students and to help them develop the capacity to read for themselves in this way.

(Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 31)

Therefore, if one were to justify the place of literature in the language classroom anyway, it could be argued, as a first argument that it could give to the students more passion for literature and make them "appreciate more fully the nature of literature as literature" (Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 14). As mentioned previously, in 2019, more and more importance is given to series and films because these are increasingly more appealing and abundant but literature should not be put aside and forgotten about. Consequently, it is important to remind adolescents about the power and importance to read literary texts, to study and to analyze them as these can be a vehicle of insightful messages. Having these

young adults read in class, could also trigger some of them to discover themselves a new passion about literature. In addition to this advantage, Brumfit and Carter mention two major arguments to teaching literature within the context of the ESL class. The first one is that “Many teachers use literature to assist the development of competence in the language” (Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 25) and the second one is “in order to teach culture” (Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 25).

Regarding the first argument, it is true that literature would certainly have a positive impact on the learners’ language performances as there is a strong link between language and literature, as explained by Michael N. Long: “Both literature and language teaching involve the development of a feeling for language, of *responses* to ‘texts’—in the broadest sense of the word—in both written and spoken discourses.” (Michael N. Long, p. 42) Consequently, merging both literature and language fields could be an efficient way to improve the performance of the learners of a specific language. This theory is also agreed on by Michael Short and Christopher Candlin when they claim that teaching literature and language to a class by the same teacher could trigger a mutual reinforcement of both lessons, and in this case, the language lesson is the one that is targeted to be reinforced. This can be explained by the fact that:

Literary texts, or extracts from them, can be used to break up language classes and used to identify difficulties that students experience in reading in general and reading imaginative texts in particular. Similarly, there is no reason whatsoever why time should not be taken in a literature lesson to focus for a moment on a portion of text relevant to a previous language class.

(Michael Short and Christopher Candlin, p. 92)

Actually, as Sandra MacKay argues in her essay on “Literature in the ESL Classroom” literary texts can be used to broach the grammatical aspect of a language. She argues that literary texts provide a sample of vocabulary which can then extend learners’ language usage but also that these enable to focus on some specific grammatical points detected in these texts.

Furthermore, vocabulary expansion is dealt with by attention to word forms and common expressions. Povey (1972: 187), in summarizing the aims of using literature in ESL classes, argues that ‘literature will increase language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax’.

(Sandra McKay, p. 190)

Brumfit and Carter also add that while reading a literary text which can sometimes be rather complex in terms of meaning and language, the students will have to search in the text and even outside the text (their experience and common knowledge, for example) in order to understand what is implied in the text. These experiences of trying to unravel what authors really wanted to express will undoubtedly have positive consequences on the learners' ability to understand a message and will consequently help them to have a better understanding of the targeted language and how it functions.

Literature can encourage in students an ability to infer meanings by interacting with the text. That is, things are often deliberately left unclear in literary text. The nature of the communication can be problematic, and the student has to search both backwards and forwards, in and across and outside the text for clues which might help to make sense of it. [...] Such training in deciphering the communication, in working out its status as a communication, is a crucial factor in the development of language learning abilities.

(Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 14)

Michael N. Long agrees with this argument claiming that: "Literature does, however, allow the development of techniques for finding meaning from context, for distinguishing between the important and the unimportant (which the native speaker is able to do without trouble), and for discovery of those items of lexis which one expects to be known, but which are not" (Michael Long, pp. 58-59). Being able to find the important information hidden in a literary text is also a skill that ESL learners will have the chance to acquire while being familiarized with literature within their language classes. This knowledge will help them to be critical once confronted with a text in general.

The use of literature can then be a way for learners to be familiarized with good English writings which could give them the tools for enhancing their own knowledge regarding English through vocabulary and syntactic elements present in these texts. Nevertheless, literature should not be the only focus of the English class and should be used in accordance with the audience of young learners. Consequently, the texts provided to these learners must not be too difficult and should be easily understandable by these.

The second argument of Brumfit and Carter is about the importance of the cultural aspect of the language while learning this one. Indeed, it is true that, now, a real importance is given to teaching the students of a specific language, the culture of the places where this one is spoken in the world. Literature could then, be a useful tool in order to do so. First, the students in general need to be aware of other cultures, other societies and ways of living. They

need to know that they are not alone in this vast world and that not everybody lives in the same way as they do in the western world. Moreover, for learners of a language it is even more important that these know about the cultures of the countries in which the language they are learning is spoken. One would hardly imagine learning a language without knowing anything about its culture and history. Learners of a language need to know where this one comes from, how this one evolved towards its current state. Knowing about the history, art and culture of a language can also be a way to motivate learners to be more eager about it. This is also reflected in didactical research as, more and more, an importance is given in the teaching programs and textbooks. This really proves a will to know about the other and to identify with the culture of the language that is being learned and this will should be passed on to younger students too. Literature is complex and often ambiguous and this also reveals information about its cultural background and gives to students the opportunity to debate on these aspects in the targeted language.

Additionally, the authors of *Literature and language teaching* argue that “It is also, we want to stress, the case that when literature is used (though never exclusively), it can be much more enjoyable and stimulating for the learner” (Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 14). Therefore, it is true that literature, as being a pleasant activity to most of the learners, could bring them the necessary motivation to learn more quickly and eagerly a language but its use still has to remain within certain limits and used as a kind of complementary activity. Literature should not be used as an exclusive tool to teach a language as this could reduce the eagerness of the learners towards it and then diminish its pedagogical and motivational impact. First, it is a source of motivation as it enables them to see the language in authentic contexts which can trigger them to be more eager to get to know this language in more depth. Actually, even despite the increasing importance of series and films, some young adults are still very much passionate about literature and would then be delighted to have it included in their language classes.

Literature does indeed have a place in the ESL curriculum. For many students, literature can provide a key to motivating them to read in English. For all students, literature is an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use and for introducing cultural assumptions. Our success in using literature, of course, greatly depends upon a selection of texts which will not be too difficult on either a linguistic or a conceptual level.

(Sandra McKay, p. 198)

Michael Short and Christopher Candlin support this idea claiming that “Many students enjoy reading literature. As enjoyment plays an important factor in any learning process, literature is

a potentially useful aid to language teacher” (Michael Short and Christopher Candlin, p. 91). This can be explained by the importance of storytelling which is now used and displayed through different media but still most importantly through literature. Storytelling is used as a way to entertain but also to convey a certain culture and preserve it as each culture has its own stories to tell. This social activity enables people to learn about a person’s story and to get involved in it through empathy which also enables to identify with a character or a person. This empathy and the possibility to identify with a fictional or real character is generally what creates the feeling of enjoyment because readers want to understand the character, they want to feel close to him and to identify with him in order to be totally involved in the story and consequently, to enjoy it. Subsequently, creating this empathy and this identification between the learners and the characters can indeed be a motivating force both to learn the language and to read more literary texts which would be harder to do with the artificial texts offered in textbooks.

Finally, the teaching of literature should be made dynamic and interactive as to be considered part of the new ESL classroom which involves more individual attention to each learner as well as more free and natural interactions between the learners but also with the teacher. For example, in the article “What do successful language learners and their teachers do?” by the Cambridge University Press, Philp explains that having the pupils analyzing a literary text in pair can help them understanding it more easily and also train their ability to explain the meaning of a text to another person: “For example, peer interaction may help relate the topic of a difficult text to the students’ own experience so that they are able to exploit personal knowledge and make more informed guesses about unclear sections of a text. This can train students to draw on a variety of sources to make sense of unfamiliar language or complex ideas” (Philp J., p. 7). Having complex ideas within a text is important because the more a text is ambiguous and complex, the more it will arouse debates between the students which always create good opportunities to practice the language orally.

To conclude, literature could then give the learners some interest in literature but also be a way to make them discover all the different cultures in which the language that is being learned is used through the various authors from different countries who evoke varied cultural topics. It would also certainly enhance their knowledge and appreciation of literature, helping them see how a text can be dissected and analyzed but also and most importantly, it could improve their competences in the language that they want to learn. Through the reading of these literary texts but also through the discussions that would take place in class and the

many other activities that can be done around it, they can most probably master the language more easily and more fluently.

4.3 Possible problems while teaching literature

Some problems can also occur while teaching literary works to students. It is not always easy for the teacher to deal with this, especially if the latter wants to provide his/her learners with an eclectic variety of texts. In fact, these texts will represent different cultures and thus various types of ideologies. These will not always be compatible with what some students might believe in or understand. For this reason, the teacher will have to introduce these novels and contextualize them through their authors and the cultures they depict. The aim is to avoid any conflict between a learner's ideology and the one evoked in a text, but also between the students who could have distinctive opinions on some topics. Everyone has to feel free to express himself/herself but in the respect of others' perspectives. Obviously, this conflict between ideologies can happen with any text, literary texts are often more complex and nuanced as they are more free contrary to the texts in textbooks which usually represent right-wing ideas. This ambivalence can bring a more interesting aspect to the class as the complexity can be interpreted in different ways and then creates engaging debates. Nevertheless, in order for the learners to understand the discourses expressed in literary texts and to be able to express themselves in these, the teacher would have to introduce this text in details beforehand and also to have a discussion on it with the students afterward.

Such 'contact literatures' exhibit stylistic and discursal characteristics which differ markedly from the traditional canons of English literature and bring with them related culture-specific problems of interpretation. Students of language and literature in different parts of the world, as well as teachers designing their syllabuses, need to be able to discuss such matters in a systematic way.

(Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 19)

As stated by Brumfit and Carter above, the second problem that could come up is that the students could have an insufficient literary level which could block them in the study of the texts proposed by the language teacher. In order to avoid that, some pieces of advice are given by the authors:

This is that teachers need to make provision for sensitizing students or, to put it another way, developing in them the necessary literary competence to be sensitive to the kinds of styles, forms, conventions, symbolization etc. which writer communicating in the Western European English-medium literary tradition would assume his or her readers were acquainted with and to which they might be expected to respond accordingly. These are

effectively strategies of reading, but they form a component of a culture-specific set of norms and expectations which often need to be explicitly taught in the development of literary competence.

(Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 18)

Subsequently, some hours of the class should be dedicated to literature lessons in order for the learners to be aware of the different styles of writing which can vary according to some cultures. This is crucial if the teacher wants his/her students to be able to fully understand the message produced by the author even if it is very subtly implied. These hours should also aim at having the learners understand the different ways of writing in idiomatic English. Indeed, literary texts can represent different varieties of English and even different styles as some can, for example, be very poetic. Different styles of writing can even be present in one text which also shows the difficulty and the necessity to have some knowledge of literature before reading challenging writings.

4.4 Entering practice

In order to avoid these problems, it is then important to include some hours to explain some useful and essential literary concepts in the language classes in a good way. The first fundamental step while organizing a literature lesson within the language class, is to adequately select the literary works that will be studied. As mentioned previously, it is important to avoid some difficult canonical pieces. These are too complex for non-native speakers of a language as they have to approach it in a progressive way. It is important for the students to be able to go through the text, extracts or adaptations of these texts, without the teacher's help and to also be able to respond directly to what they have read. "So we need to select texts to which students can respond immediately, without the mediation of the teacher. Only then can we guide the students' response, rather than impose it from the outside" (Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 32).

While the form of the text has to be taken into account, the content also has to be adapted to the learners' knowledge as well as to their concerns about the world. This means that these texts should engage with issues that matter to the audience of students to which these are being taught because if the teacher wants to captivate his/her learners' attention, he or she should select some material that fits their general interests and concerns.

The commitment for the literature teacher is to texts which can be discussed in such a way that the events, or characters, or anything else in the fictive world of the book are closely related to the personal needs of readers and learners as they attempt to define themselves

and understand the human situation. The choice of books made by teachers, therefore, will reflect on profound and serious issues, and will draw upon widely recognized tradition of 'serious' literature. But the methodology should encourage students to introduce into the discussion any books they read themselves which they themselves perceive to be relevant.

(Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 33)

In order to do so, Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) could then be considered as being a relevant example as it raises different issues that could affect adolescents and consequently, create debates. First, it denounces the absence of freedom, individuality, choice and diversity through the eugenic system it uses. These elements are used to criticize totalitarian governments which have supreme power on people. It is also a story about self-discovery for the young adult protagonist with which the students could easily identify. Other dystopias challenge other themes that can be relevant for the adolescents of our contemporary society as, for example, Cormac McCarthy's dystopian novel *The Road* (2006) which tackles in a very grave tone climate issue which probably is the most fundamental problem and concern of this generation. Atwood's *The Handmaid's tale* (1985) is another example which represents another relevant theme as its narration echoes today's booming of feminism. All these dystopias have in common that they leave some space to a great diversity of visions and will undoubtedly give the students an opportunity to escape.

Societal questions can be raised in many genres of literature but can also be challenged more in depth in some of them. In fact, fictional texts are the ones considered as being best to provoke questions on life, as for example, the fantastic and science-fiction genres, and thus the dystopian genre. Actually, texts belonging to these genres can help readers question many aspects of their life as how their society functions and how they find their place in this society as an individual or also about what is evil and what is good. These texts can also make people think about the afterlife or diversity for example.

Whether the text offers definitive answers or merely illustrates the complexity of the issues, students of fantasy can find numerous opportunities to engage with the text in writing—challenging the author, pondering the questions raised, acknowledging the author's viewpoint, or analyzing the diversity of views presented among several of the texts. Additionally, works of fantasy provide an escape from our often prosaic existences.

(Mark A. Fabrizi, p. 1)

This escape is offered to readers through these fictional texts through the empathy these will feel for the characters and the identification they will certainly establish with these. This would also, through the discovery of new worlds, be a motivational source for students since,

as Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro argues in the book *Utopian and Dystopian writing for children and young adults* (2003), the best way to educate is to do it through entertainment:

More and Bacon knew that the only way to educate was to entertain, and what better way to entertain a reader than by creating a wondrous or even monstrously curious new world? What better way to educate than by creating a kinship between protagonist and reader through common enemies and shared, practical solutions? More and Bacon gave their readers slow and detailed steps to follow in assessing what was lacking in their contemporary environments and in moving toward the future with strength. Writers of young adult novels have always carried this identical burden, educating their readers through the pains of social and physical metamorphosis while entertaining them.

(Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro, p. 135)

Fiction is then a genre that enables readers to question their own life and the world in general via entertainment and other worlds. This phenomenon could be reinforced if the literary texts are adapted to the right audience and, in this case the audience being adolescents, young adult and children literature should have a stronger impact on this one:

Most children's literature, no matter how fanciful, contains lessons to be learned. It is an inherently pedagogical genre, and with crossing writing, children learn more and more as they reread at different times in their lives. Likewise, utopian literature is "generally didactic" (Sargent, 1994, 6). Combined with children's and young adult literature, it can be a powerful teaching tool.

(Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 7)

It is true that in many young adult and children books, there are a lot of elements that make readers challenge their own perceptions of the world and even of themselves. These genres are then truly didactical because they enable readers to learn a lot of things regarding their life, their world and their ideas.

Nevertheless, the texts should then evoke meaningful ideas which enable learners to formulate content questions about which they could discuss: "Questions are liable to become 'content' questions, so that literary texts without heavy content (lyrical poems for example: cf. Widdowson's paper) will be neglected." (Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 38) Indeed, these questions could lead to debates for which students will have to speak in the targeted idiom, which would certainly enhance their language skills. In order to enable these discussions, students should not be blocked by the meaning of the text which could be sometimes difficult to decipher and the teacher has to help them and explain them what they do not understand in order for the learner to avoid being frustrated.

There is no point in leaving learners to grope their way towards understanding without direct intervention to clarify what might otherwise remain inaccessible for so long that they will abandon literature in frustration if they are not helped. Nor, conversely, is there any point in insisting on detailed examination of points which, while obscure, do not impede initial response.

(Alice Jenkins, p. 24)

Not too much should be asked of learners when they read a text, the activities that will be carried around it like simple vocabulary exercises, analysis through the themes evoked or more challenging debates for example, should be progressive and should be grading ones (Alice Jenkins, p. 24) that will enable readers to gradually infer more elements about the text and provoke different questions at each stage. For this reason, the language level of the students should not be too low either because otherwise the teacher would have to dedicate all his/her time to vocabulary explanation. This argument is further explained by Jenkins in her chapter:

For all of these, though, we must conceive of the reading of works of literature as primarily an experience. And this experience presupposes the ability to gain access to it, at least in some crude sense. A person who has not the reading or comprehension fluency to make sense in general of words on the page is not in a position to respond to the literariness of the text.

(Alice Jenkins, p. 31)

To organize the analysis of literary works, the teacher should not do it in an overly rigid and planned way but must rather leave some open space for improvisation and a more random program. However, the aims of this literary activity should be clearly exposed to the learners and even discussed with them beforehand. Brumfit and Carter agree on this statement explaining that some works of literature can be particularly complex and if a rigid and schematic study and analysis is brought on these texts it will only result in an insensitive study while subtle creations like these would need to be approached in a more sensitive way. Also they mention that teachers cannot force students to like a book but can only help them try not to dislike it because these texts are too difficult for them to decipher or even inaccessible. These authors also nuance their argument adding that the teacher can still be systematic when it comes to explaining the aims of studying particular works:

Even if we assume that the development of a sensitive and omitted appreciation of literature is no going to be explicitly taught, we can still be as systematic as possible about the principles with which we operate. [...] Any successful teacher, therefore, has a responsibility to be as clear as possible about the principles—in so far as they can be publicly stated—on which that success can be based.

It is only when all these criteria are respected, that the teacher can, while studying these books, try to provoke some verbal responses from readers about the texts that they have been reading. In fact, literature has often been imposed on ESL learners of a language as if they were native-speakers. This method only encourages readers to translate all the unknown expressions and structures in their mother tongue as responses to the texts but this is not at all what we want to aim at when presenting literary texts to ESL learners. Indeed, we want them to respond by interpreting and comparing the elements of these texts to their own experience of the world, but this is not possible as long as learners encounter too many difficulties when deciphering these texts. As a result, “The teaching of literature is an arid business unless there is a response, and even negative responses can create an interesting classroom situation (as then the learner has to say *why* he or she dislikes the text). Teaching literature to non-native speakers should seek to develop responses.” (Michael N. Long, p. 42) These responses basically refer to the interactions that learners can have with the teacher about the text. “The response of the reader is not simply part of a transaction with the written word; it *transforms* the written word into something meaningful.” (Janet Alsup, p. 7) What teachers absolutely have to avoid while seeking these responses is to confuse them with criticisms. The learners should not be asked to write critical essays except if they have an advanced level which enables them to do so. Otherwise, they should only be required to interact with other students or with the teacher on the basis of literary texts. These interactions, or responses, can also sometimes be provoked by the teacher as explained by Michael N. Long:

It does not follow from this that literature is ‘that which invites questions on it’. Nor does ‘response’—in this case, a verbal response—depend solely on a question or series of questions. On the other hand, the questions are an *aid* to a response, leading the learner/reader to get an insight into the text which might not be possible otherwise.

(Michael N. Long, p. 45)

In order for these responses and interactions around the texts to occur, it is essential to also privilege group discussions and activities among the learners. It is not always easy for all students to interact with the teacher because they often feel inferior to him/her and, consequently, does not dare to express his/her own opinion. Discussing with other learners who have approximately the same level can be a good way for them to feel free and not judged while doing so. Furthermore, “a ‘group dynamics’ approach can involve both a considerable stimulus to learning, and a lessening of teacher-centeredness” (Christopher

Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 37). This is also mentioned in the article “What do successful language learners and their teachers do?” when Philp writes that: “When students enjoy working with their peers in class, and feel supported and safe in their learning environment, they are much more likely to participate fully and be prepared to take the risk of making mistakes” (J. Philp, p. 8).

Michael N. Long also argues that these discussions among the students will be easier if they are based on meaningful authentic texts rather than on the pre-conceived little dialogues and short stories that can be found in ordinary teaching materials.

Thus, literature is by definition authentic text, and both verbal response and activity response are genuine language activities, not ones contrived around a fabricated text. Moreover, current methodology—for ‘communicative’ language teaching—favours group activities and learner-learner interaction. Predicting, creating a scenario, debating topics on or around a text (see Carter and Long, forthcoming) all seem to develop naturally out of literary text, while they are either difficult or impossible with the type of text favoured by ‘English for Specific Purposes’.

(Michael N. Long, p. 58)

Philp also agrees on that: “In place of rote learning, translation, exercises that focus on the patterns of language, and the use of simplified texts created just for language learners, there is more time spent on reading and hearing 'authentic' spoken and written texts, and more time using language for 'real world' purposes.” (J. Philp, p. 2) Concerning the discussions on these authentic texts among the learners, this author also adds that not too much attention should be given to the form through which learners speak during these debates because at that particular moment, the aim is for them to be able to respond to a text, to communicate with the others and most importantly, to be able to express their own idea and beliefs.

Research suggests that in these kinds of oral tasks, learners often make many errors – but the focus here is not accuracy. What is important is the opportunity for learners to put their resources into action by trying to communicate something that is meaningful to them. In such oral tasks, students tend to focus on lexical items or pronunciation rather than on grammatical form.

(J. Philp, p. 15)

If a teacher wants his/her learners to speak in the targeted language without feeling under pressure, it is true that he/she should not stop them while they are speaking in order to correct them on their pronunciation or on a grammatical mistake. He/she should rather let them speak freely and maybe just write down some recurrent mistakes which can be mentioned after the discussions have taken place. This is important otherwise the students will not feel at ease to

speak in the language they are learning because they know that if they make mistakes they are going to be stopped. This technique also enables the teacher to point at the errors made by all the students in general rather than to target one student in particular who could feel ashamed of his/her mistakes. Moreover, when having a discussion on a text, more importance should be given to how the students are able to express their opinion and vision on this text and not only to how they express it.

4.5 The place of creativity

Teaching literature within the ESL classes could also help students develop their creativity. It is then even more important to choose meaningful literary texts rather than dialogues, poems or informational texts. This is well explained in the introduction of *Literature and Language Teaching*. The difference between these types of texts regards the relation they bear with reality. Literary texts depend on reality like informational texts but many elements from the former, if they are taken together, represent another reality which only exists in this text. The student while being confronted with this fictional world will have to try to create it in his/her mind based on the language used to describe it and on his/her vision of his/her own world.

His relationship to a literary text thus differs in important respects from that of a reader of an informational text. The reader's creative (or rather, 'co-creative') role, and the imaginative involvement engendered by this role, encourage a dynamic interaction between reader, text and external world, in the course of which the reader is constantly seeking to form and retain a coherent picture of the world of the text. The possibly static and unquestionable reality of the informational text is replaced by a fluid, dynamic reality, in which there is no final arbiter between truth and falsehood.

(Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, pp. 14-15)

These authors focus on the fact that if students are confronted with consistent literary and imaginative texts rather than informational texts, different advantages will come out of this experience. First, they will be able to develop their creativity through the fact that while reading these texts they are forced to imagine the world depicted in the narrations which trains their creative abilities. Then, this experience also triggers more fluid and spontaneous discussions about what the students have read as they will also have the opportunity to confront what they have imagined with their classmates' perceptions. Michael N. Long also agrees on the fact that an advantage of creative texts is that they enable easier and more fluent conversations between readers.

It is, however, the creative response channel which seems to be the strongest justification for the teaching of literature. It is here that opportunities for language use occur most naturally and in most varied form—with suitably inventive presentation by the teacher—and the results effectively combine the behavioral goals of both literature teaching and language teaching. Moreover, it is here that the language of literature, adapted for group interaction activities, overcomes the restrictive element (perhaps necessarily so) of language teaching, and encourages the learner to test the dimensions of words. In short, it creates a feeling for language.

(Michael N. Long, p. 59)

Thanks to literature, the teacher can create a lot of opportunities for the learners to speak in the targeted language on meaningful and challenging contents. The interpretation they will be able to form after having read a text is a useful creative tool in order to provoke discussions and debates among the students based on the variety of interpretations that could result from a text. Both literature and language being combined, the students will be able to perceive language differently and to possibly acquire more eagerness to learn it.

4.6 Teaching strategies and objectives

In *Literature and Language Learning*, Ronald Carter lists various teaching strategies in order to include literature in the learning of a language. Three very pertinent techniques are more particularly worthy of interest: predictions, summary and forums.

The first one is concerned with *Predictions*. A good teaching strategy that often triggers the learners' motivation and attention is when they are asked to imagine what follows, what comes next in a story. "This requires careful preparation before the story is read in class. The technique is for the teacher to stop the reading at key points and to elicit predictions of how the narrative will develop" (Ronald Carter, p. 111). Some examples of this are also offered by Carter: "The title can be omitted and, after the story had been read, students can be invited to predict what it should be" (Ronald Carter, p. 111). After a few chapters, "students might be asked to predict, [...], what the story is going to be about. This can be an important stage in sensitizing students to the function of the opening of the story in an interpretation of the whole" (Ronald Carter, p. 111). But it also works for the end of the story which allows an interesting predictive focus (Ronald Carter, p. 111). This exercise can then either create interesting writing opportunities or even speaking ones as the pupils could be asked to perform what they have imagined in front of the others or simply discuss the different ending possibilities of a story with each other. Indeed, Carter specifies that "such activities can be a basis for stimulating and motivating class oral work and discussion. There is no reason why in

some cases this should not be done in the students' own language, but the target language should be used wherever feasible" (Ronald Carter, p. 112). It could also help the students to be more eager to stay focus on the story and to be more involved in the reading because the students will want to see if their hypotheses will be either verified or refuted: "The teaching point to underline is that a heightened degree of attentiveness to the story can be brought about by prediction. There is increased involvement from natural desire of seeing one's own expectations fulfilled or contravened" (Ronald Carter, p. 112). The competitive feeling that will arouse from this activity will really involve the students in the classes until they know whose prediction is the closest to the one in the text they are reading.

The second point concerns *Summary*. This is another way of helping students focus on the story and on the main message it implies. Nevertheless, this method is sometimes criticized and overused and this is why Carter gives us some ways of doing it within a good balance.

Indiscriminate use of summary has its dangers, and instructions need to be fairly precisely formulated, because otherwise there is a danger of committing the heresy of paraphrase by suggesting that there is a paraphrasable meaning to the story. The technique should be seen rather as an enabling device for students in their personal process of interpretation or engagement with the text. It is useful to impose a word limit for the summary.

(Ronald Carter, p. 114)

Summarizing is still very important as it enables the students to gain the capacity to decide which information is important or not. This is essential also because it encourages them to see the text with a more critical eye and to be able to grasp what is really important in a literary text. Nevertheless, this activity should not be used in an excessive way but at some strategic moments of the class, when the teacher believes it is relevant to do so. Also, summarizing can be done in more playful and dynamic ways like through the use of drawings or oral discussions among learners and the teacher, for example.

Last but not least, the concept of *Forums* is also a good way to teach literature in a more dynamic and interactive way. Forums follow the same principle as debates; it is meant for people to exchange different opinions on a particular theme. The learners use the targeted language to express their ideas which gives them more fluency but also confidence in their mastery of this tongue.

The exercise is one which lends itself to small group-based activity with groups being allocated to defence of either one of the propositions, even if this may not be their own personal view. The group (and then its spokesman/woman) adduces evidence from combination of world knowledge and the text in question to support points relevant to the

‘argument’. The other groups listen and try to provide counter-examples. Either the whole class can participate or a section of the class can be assigned the task of judging and then voting for which propositions they consider to have been most persuasively argued.

(Ronald Carter, p. 115)

Forums also create opportunities for group discussions which enable the students to speak in the language they are learning about something that is meaningful and that can interest them. This is also a relevant activity regarding literature as it will show the students that different interpretations can be made while reading the same text and that these can all be justified in some ways. Through that, they are also invited to try to understand and to respect their classmates’ opinions and viewpoints as they will even be asked to defend other people’s interpretation.

As a conclusion, it can be said that many advantages to including literature in the ESL classes can be found. It has been mentioned that not only the learners’ literary appreciation would be improved but also their cultural knowledge, their creative abilities but also, and more importantly, their English performances. Indeed, being confronted with literary texts can destabilize the learners regarding both the form, away from pragmatism, and the content which will certainly have a positive impact on their cultural awareness and creativity. Literature is also a good source of motivation especially if it is used in a way in which learners feel at ease and which encourages discussions and debates on the texts studied and thus with texts within the reach and the interests of this audience of learners. If the teacher organizes these literary lessons in a good way, the results could be very successful and positive for both the teacher and his/her students.

4.7 Forging adolescents’ identity through dystopias:

Further than teaching adolescents literary and language skills, literature also goes far beyond that and can help these young adults to shape themselves an identity. This means to help them becoming engaged with the world, positioning themselves in it finding how they can feel part of the community and at the same time, find their own place and identity in it. Teachers often tend to perceive the audience they have in front of them as being students, learners, but it is crucial to remember that they are also adolescents and that as adolescents they are going through an important phase in the development of their identity but also, they are discovering themselves in many ways. Indeed James R. Gilligan explains in his chapter that:

“According to psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, the unique developmental task of adolescence is to solidify a personal identity” (2005, p. 71 quoted in James R. Gilligan, p. 47). Once an adolescent understands—either consciously or subconsciously—that he or she must undertake the development of an identity, he or she must then decide how precisely this monumental and critical task is to be accomplished.

(James R. Gilligan, p. 47)

Gilligan further argues that the identity that the adolescent creates during this development will not necessarily remain exactly the same for the rest of his/her life as his/her identity will change at different moments depending on cultural and social factors. The culture surrounding which then plays a major role in the shaping of one’s identity also includes literature: reading and writing and especially the process of creating stories. Actually, Gilligan argues that the language used in a narrative “may serve as a focal medium for many aspects of the adolescent’s surrounding culture and allow him or her to distill many elements of that culture into intelligible story that he or she tells about him- or herself” (James R. Gilligan, p. 47). Moreover, he also adds that “in using language to construct stories, the adolescent can negotiate issues of power and self-empowerment, a salient theme in the development of one’s identity” (James R. Gilligan, p. 47). This can also be done through the empathy the learner will feel for the character with who he/she will probably tend to relate and identify which will enable him to redefine his/her own position as an individual.

Consequently, the school being the place where these teenagers spend the most of their time, teachers, as well as other members of the educational system, need to help these young adults in their development happening during adolescence. Concerning the teacher of English, they could accompany their students during this stage also because as Janet Alsup mentions it in her book *Young Adult Literature and Adolescent Identity Across Cultures and Classrooms* (2010): “English teachers believe in the power of literacy and, furthermore, that through the study of literature students can become more effective and critically aware language users” (Janet Alsup, p. 12).

Given the focus on identity development during adolescence, and the importance of building narratives of the self, might not adolescence be the perfect time to read and explore literary narratives that encourage critical reflection? Perhaps literature teaching might be key to positive identity growth and development for teen readers.

(Janet Alsup, p. 4)

Literature is a good way for teachers to help these adolescents as it is known for having a lot of power on readers. Students while reading and analyzing the literary texts proposed by their teacher could be greatly impacted by what they read and this could, in a certain way, help them to grow and understand aspects of their identity of which they were not aware before. Janet Alsup writes in her book about the power of literature:

However, something everyone seems to recognize is that literature is indeed powerful. It does something to the reader, especially when the reader is engrossed in the reading process, or, as Victor Nell (1988) writes, “lost in a book”, as his book-length work is titled. Readers can change through vicarious experience; they can grow, develop, ask new questions, think new thoughts, and even feel new emotions. All from reading a book—particularly, Nell argues, a fictional narrative. Total engagement in a narrative world is powerful and can create internal, personal narratives of self that, some argue, might guide a reader’s behavior in the future.

(Janet Alsup, p. 5)

Reading these narratives could trigger these young readers to create their own story having themselves as protagonists which will help them understand who they are and who they would like to become. This would then be a way to help these adolescents grow up and develop a more mature identity. In order to reach this goal, the task of the teacher would then also be to help students enter the book and be totally captivated by it. This is not always easy to do and even less in a classroom as it can be difficult to have all students interested in the same way in one book as they all approach literature in different manners. Nevertheless, the teacher has to try to captivate his/her students in the story if he or she wants them to learn something significant from it. As it has already been mentioned before in this dissertation, the use of literature within the classroom is not new and this is most probably linked to the fact that the power of literature is something that people have been aware of for a long time. “These questions of literature and literature teaching are not new. Plato recognized the power of literature and feared it. He banished the poets from his ideal republic, arguing that they ruled by the affect and imagination, not logic or analytical thought, and hence distorted reality and corrupted their audience.” (Janet Alsup, p. 5) Even through some literary texts we are able to understand the power of literature as, for example, in many dystopias, literature is often banned, destroyed or not given access to everybody by the authoritarian rulers. This is so because literature is thought of as being dangerous as it has the power to make people think about their own conditions and about their world which could trigger them to realize the unfairness of the dystopian society in which they live.

Literature is indeed a way to make people think about their own condition and to have them understand some things about their life and about themselves. If teachers want their students to open their eyes on some realities about their society, one effective way to do so would then be through literature and more especially through young adult literature as it is designed to have an impact especially on this particular generation. Actually, Alsup explains that young adult literature is particularly relevant for teens as through this genre, they are faced with teen characters “having life-like problems” (Janet Alsup, p. 4) which could then prompt these learners and support them in their identity development. This author also claims that emotions play an important role in the awakening of readers on reality as “these emotions, particularly when they resonate with our experience and we can identify with them, may lead to behavior change” (Janet Alsup, p. 6). She also mentions that this is even truer when it comes to adolescents:

In this so-called “me generation,” when adolescents in our schools are more “confident, assertive, entitled, and more miserable than ever before” according to author and psychology professor Jean M. Twenge (2006), perhaps attending to the emotional and psychological needs of our students through literary study is more important than ever.

(Janet Alsup, p. 6)

Providing these teenagers with this genre could help the teacher having a higher number of students immerse more easily in the story told in these literary texts intended for them especially adolescents who are not really interested in literature.

adolescents who are often unmotivated to read and who don’t see books as relevant to their lives. When they are allowed to read books that do focus on characters, settings, or situations familiar to them (such as in much YA literature), and when they are allowed to respond personally to these texts prior to engaging in any critical analysis, teens often respond more positively to reading.

(Janet Alsup, p. 6)

When the suitable young adult literature is provided as well as favorable conditions to optimize the effect of this literature on the students, this literary experience could even, for some adolescents, result being therapeutic in some ways. Having them feeling new emotions, new thoughts and helping them to talk about these is a human experience that could result being really positive for some of the learners. Moreover, as Alsup states it, the teacher’s task even implies teaching his/her students how to become better human beings which makes this work become a more personal act, “perhaps even a type of therapeutic experience (i.e.,

bibliotherapy), as readers come to terms with developmental problems and challenges through vicarious experience of the trials and tribulations of teen protagonists” (Janet Alsup, p. 7).

This experience could also be beneficial for teenagers as, in their reality, they are often faced with a society in which adolescence is perceived as something quite negative as adolescents are often thought of as being rebellious and out of control. In young adult literature and even more in dystopian fictions, adolescents are not portrayed in a negative way at all. This argument is explained in more details by Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry:

During adolescence, one is indeed faced with decisions that mirror those made by society as a whole: What are the proper limits of freedom? To what extent can one rebel? At what point does conformity rob one of his or her identity? The bloom is off the rose, as society views the teenager in far more negative terms than it does the child. In contemporary literature, there is no “Romantic teenager” following the Romantic child. Little wonder that books featuring adolescents who successfully rebel against an oppressive adult society is so common. In the average young adult dystopia the adolescent knows best.

(Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 10)

Dystopias in particular tend to depict adolescent characters as being the heroes and this could help teenagers exposed to this literature to perceive themselves and their fellows in a more positive way in contrast to the negative perception often depicted by the society and the adult world. Having a better image of themselves could trigger them to be more confident and to understand that they are legitimate and that they can speak up for themselves. Indeed, adolescents are usually surrounded by authorities: their parents, their teachers, their headmaster and all the adults around them. This situation can make these teenagers feel submissive and can give these teenagers the idea that they have no power at all and cannot make any decision without having the consent of these authoritarian figures. In dystopian worlds, the authorities with which adolescents are often faced are depicted in an exaggerated way, as totalitarian rulers against which nobody dares to stand up. This can be thought of as a metaphor to express how adolescents feel regarding all these adults with who they have to deal in their everyday lives which could even sometimes give them the impression to live in a totalitarian system like in many dystopian societies. The fact that these fictions depict teenagers who find the courage to challenge these rulers show to these adolescent readers that they can do the same and that they have a certain power and a voice that they can use. “Utopian and dystopian does give teenagers and important Romantic characteristic, as they often save the world from destruction. This literary pattern reverses the hierarchy in which real children and young adults are at the bottom” (Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, p. 10).

Regarding this argument, teachers of English or of other languages could really consider teaching this genre of literature to their audience in order to help their students find their place in society and feel empowered rather than useless and powerless.

However, some problems while teaching literature to adolescents can be encountered especially regarding the therapeutic effect that it could have on some readers. Indeed, some teachers would rather not be involved in the private life of their students. Some teachers prefer to keep a distance with their students and more especially to avoid merging both school life and private life as the discussions raised by the readings could bring these young readers to reveal some personal information and details. Consequently, some teachers believe that this could bring them to be too involved with their students and then lead to a lack of objectivity regarding the pedagogical aspect of the class.

Moreover, some teachers do not feel qualified to teach literature and neither to act as “therapists” (Janet Alsup, p. 7) toward their students. It is true that all teachers may not be suitable for this task if the motivation to do so is not present but despite this criterion, any teacher is highly qualified to help teenagers during adolescence as they have all experienced it themselves.

Others also fear that they could be accused of indoctrinating their students to certain ideologies and values through the literature they propose and the analysis brought with it. In order to solve this concern about teaching literature, it is important to remember that teaching it is a way to help students express themselves and their opinions but also to learn how to be critical once confronted with the ideologies expressed in a literary text or in other contexts. “The literature teacher must encourage and allow personal response, but must also teach students to be critical readers who can step back and detach themselves from a narrative in order to understand and experience it fully.” (Janet Alsup, p. 8) Alsup also quotes Deanne Bogdan who studied these kinds of issues concerning reader-response within the classroom as she offers a very relevant viewpoint:

Identification as a form of psychological projection is inseparable from literary knowing engendered by emotional engagement with the text, but so is withdrawal of that projection through critical detachment. That is why students need both the experience of literature as life and the aesthetic awareness that distances literature from life. The enjoyable reading of literature and the study of its craft, historicity, and ideology does give with one hand and take away with the other. But it is just this capacity of literary language to work against itself that justifies its educational significance as perhaps the best pedagogical tool we have for both individual growth and social criticism.

(Janet Alsup, p. 8)

While teaching literature to secondary schools' students, it is then essential to both help them identify with the characters in the story in order to reflect on their own existence and identity but also to show them that a distance must be kept regarding the text. This is essential because literary texts often contain a certain vision of the world, a certain ideology that needs to be detected and questioned in order not to be blinded by what literature tells us. It is also why some teachers fear that their students would identify too strongly with the characters and get lost in the character's identity. Indeed, as the effect brought by some books on teenagers can be really powerful, teachers must remain attentive to how their students react.

Young adults authors often state they write books about teens for teens just for this purpose: so teen readers can identify with the main characters and their struggles and hence learn about themselves. Teachers often teach young adult novels for a similar reason: they believe their teenage students can relate to the characters and situations and hence will be more interested in the books and become more engaged readers—readers who react emotionally to books and who allow books to affect them.

(Janet Alsup, p. 9)

Subsequently, the problem for students is that they should not identify too strongly with a character and forget to observe this character's attitudes within critical distance especially once confronted with characters whose actions and values are not particularly exemplar. A right balance must be found in the relation readers create with the person described in novels which should enable them to identify with them and reconsider their own existence based on that but also do so through a critical eye. Alsup quotes Woodward who defines what "true identification" is in the sense that it should not be considered as a

simplistic, one-to-one correspondence. Rather, when you truly identify with a character there are enough similarities to make the connection, but you are also given the opportunity to see differences and potentially even choose to be unlike the character in some ways. Hence, the process of identification is a critical exercise in self-exploration.

(Janet Alsup, p. 10)

To manage to reach this true identification, it is then crucial to discern both the similarities and the differences between the reality of readers and the world depicted in a literary text. This is important in order to create a "gap" between the two worlds because without it "it is difficult to create the so-called educated imagination or the holistic reader—the reader who is able both to *experience* a textual world and to *view* it with distanced aesthetic awareness as a creation of the author's imagination" (Janet Alsup, p. 11). Considering that, a teacher who

wants to familiarize his/her learners with literary texts and to enable them to create this balanced identification that will help them to shape their identity, should pick literary texts that depict worlds sufficiently different from his/her students' reality. This is why the dystopia genre is a good example of the type of literature that could be taught to this audience as "science-fiction, fantasy, or graphic novels (that) create a generic or formal separation between the narrative and the reader, even if there are conceptual points of connection between the main character and the adolescent student" (Janet Alsup, p. 12).

Finally, adolescence can be considered as being one of the most important moments in the creation of a person's identity because these young adults have to deal with their increasing consciousness of the fact that being different is not easily accepted in our society. If during their development, they feel different from the "norms" imposed by the society, it will be even more difficult for them to go through this stage of their life. "Seeing one's personal subjectivity as part of a larger system of social relationships which often become politicized, thereby seeming to disconnect individual identity from the objectives of the larger social group, is an important, and sometimes difficult, part of maturation" (Janet Alsup, p. 13). Literature is then again one of the best remedies to undergo this experience as it can be used "not only to help teens grow individually but to help them understand how they can gain agency in a culture which too often discriminates against those who are un-white, un-Protestant, and un-heterosexual" (Janet Alsup, p. 13). Indeed, reading young adult literature might help them understand that they are not alone feeling excluded and that they should assert their identity freely and unashamedly.

In conclusion, one could argue that a part of a teacher's job is to help students grow and shape themselves an identity during this decisive stage of their life. The School is also there to create better citizens of tomorrow out of adolescents who will then eventually quit this place with more knowledge about life and about their own identity. This will have been partly brought to them through the study of some significant texts which would have impacted them, hopefully, in a positive way. Nevertheless, literature should not only be used by teachers to reach this objective but also within a pedagogical and didactical perspective.

While essential to the literary experience, individual actualization cannot be all we attempt to give our students. In order to promote real growth, the cognitive and emotive must be tapped in tandem. The reading of literature is a combination of direct experience *and* distanced analysis; a merging of emotional, personal response and socio-cultural criticism.

(Janet Alsup, p. 12)

When all the different outcomes of literature are aimed at and eventually reached within the classroom, the potential of this experience will be fully exploited and could then have a very positive impact on both the learners and teachers of a language. The arguments mentioned in this chapter show that language and literature are closely linked and that once used together, they can have a powerful impact on people and if this is done in the creative way, the result can only be positive.

Chapter 5: Teaching Sequence on “Dystopian Literature” based on Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993)

This teaching sequence has been created to give a concrete example of what a class on dystopian literature could look like and to give some pieces of advice about how it could be taught to secondary schools’ students. A specific level of pupils has been selected to make this example more concrete and relevant but it can easily be adapted to other levels of English. However, it is still recommended to teach dystopian literature to an audience that already has a good mastery of English.

Technical information:

- Level of the pupils: 6LM1 4h/week (B2)

Objectives (based on the Core Inventory for General English by the British Council):

At the end of this sequence, the pupils will be able to:

- Fully understand the concept of dystopia and explain it
- To read a dystopian novel in English without too much difficulty
- To debate on the book they have read in clear and correct terms using the tools that will have been given to them in order to do so: developing arguments, expressing agreements and disagreements, encouraging and inviting another speaker to come in, expressing abstract ideas, expressing opinions and justification, concede a point, defending a point of view persuasively, developing an argument systematically, expressing certainty, probability and doubt, responding to counterarguments.
- To write an essay or dissertation and be critical regarding texts: synthesizing, evaluating, glossing info
- They should also be able to discuss a novel or a movie

I. Overview table of the sequence:

Hour	Activity – brief description	Skills	Type of activity	Material	Time +/-	N° of the activity
1	Warm-up activity: brain-storming about the dystopian genre	Speaking	In pairs and then the whole class	Sheet with the different pictures and a table with two columns per pair	20m	1.a
1	Theory about the dystopian genre	Listening	The whole class listens to the teacher	/	10m	1.b
1	Quiz	Reading	Individual	Sheet of paper with the quiz	10m	1.c
1	Feedback on the quiz	Listening and speaking	The whole class	/	10m	1.d
2	Reading of an article about the dystopian genre	Reading and pronunciation	Individually and then the whole class	A sheet with the article for each pupil	10m	1.e
2	Vocabulary exercise regarding the previous article	Reading and vocabulary	In pairs	A sheet with the article per pupil	10m	1.f
2	Feedback on the vocabulary exercise and explanation of the difficult words	Speaking and vocabulary	The whole class	The answers of the pupils, the black board	15m	1.g

2	Watching a short video of Lois Lowry's interview about <i>The Giver</i> and filling the gaps	Listening	Individually	A sheet with the transcription of the listening per pupil	10m	2.a
2	Feedback on the listening exercise	Listening and vocabulary	The whole class	The sheet with the transcription	5m	2.a
3	Reading of a summary of <i>The Giver</i> individually and then out loud	Reading and pronunciation	Individually and then the whole class	The summary, one per pupil	10m	2.b
3	Reading exercise on the summary, replacing the pictures in chronological order	Reading and speaking	In pairs	The summary and pictures, one sheet of each per pupil	5m	2.c
3	Feedback on the exercise	Speaking	The whole class	The answers of the pupils, the pictures and the blackboard	5m	2.c
3	Speaking activity about the summary	Speaking	In groups of 3	The summary	20m	2.d
3	Presentation based on the speaking activity on the possible ending of <i>The Giver</i>	Speaking	In groups of 3, in front of the whole class	A PowerPoint presentation if they want	30m	2.d

4	Warm-up activity: Quiz (Kahoot) about the 3 first chapters of <i>The Giver</i>	Reading and speaking	In groups of 5	Either smartphones per each group or a set of panels of 3 different colours per group	20m	3.a
4	Brainstorming on the first 3 chapters of <i>The Giver</i>	Speaking	In groups of 5 and then the whole class	Their book of <i>The Giver</i> and a sheet of paper per group	30m	3.b
5	Discussion on chapters 4 to 7	Speaking	In groups of 3	The book <i>The Giver</i>	10m	3.c
5	Brainstorming and debate on the ideas	Speaking	The whole class	The book <i>The Giver</i> and the blackboard	15m	3.d
5	Writing activity: love, elsewhere, environment, education, surveillance and order	Writing	The class in divided in 5 different groups	A sheet of paper with a theme on it per group and different per each group	25m	3.e
6	Feedback on the writing activity	Speaking	The class is divided into 5 different groups	Each group with its description	30m	3.f
7	Brainstorming on chapters 7 to 11: Free	Speaking	The whole class and	/	10m	3.g

	discussion between the teacher and the pupils regarding these chapters		the teacher			
7	Listening activity: video of Orwell's <i>1984</i>	Listening	Individually	The video of the trailer or an extract of the movie	20m	3.h
7	Feedback on the video: "wooclap" or paper version of the "wooclap"	Speaking	Individually and then with the whole class	A mobile phone or a computer per pupil with the application "wooclap" or a sheet of paper	20m	3.i
8	Brainstorming on chapters 11 to 13: climate, sameness, rules and order	Speaking	In groups of 5	Three columns on the black board with as a title for each: climate, sameness, rules and order	10m	3.j
8	Feedback on the brainstorming on chapters 11 to 13: climate, sameness, rules and order	Speaking	The whole class and the teacher	Three columns on the black board with as a title for each: climate,	15m	3.k

				sameness, rules and order		
8	Reading activity: extracts of <i>Divergent</i> and <i>Gathering Blue</i>	Reading	In pairs	Two different sheets with the two different extracts one of each per group of two	5m	3.1
8	Speaking activity based on the reading activity	Speaking	In pairs	Two different sheets with the two different extracts one of each per group of two	10m	3.m
8	Feedback on the speaking activities	Speaking	The whole class and the teacher	/	10m	3.n
9	Listening activity (<i>The Truman Show</i>)	Listening and speaking	The whole class and the teacher	A projector and the video	10m	4.a
9	Speaking activity on the video	Speaking	In pairs	/	5m	4.b
9	Feedback on the speaking activity	Speaking	The whole class and the teacher	/	5m	4.c
9	Speaking activity on the utopian side of	Speaking	In groups of	/	15m	4.d

	the world in <i>The Giver</i>		4			
9	Writing activity on the utopian side of the world in <i>The Giver</i>	Writing	Individually	/	15m (+time at home to finish)	4.e
10	Feedback on the writing activity	Speaking	The teacher to the whole class	/	5m	4.f
10	Debate on the end of <i>The Giver</i>	Speaking	The whole class divided into two groups	/	15m	4.g
10	Final writing task on the end of <i>The Giver</i>	Writing	Individually	/	30m	4.h
11	Discussion and comparison of the world in <i>The Giver</i> and the pupils' real world	Speaking	In groups of 4	A sheet of paper including a table of comparison with the different themes per group	50m	5.a
12	Presentation of the projects "for a better future"	Speaking	In groups of 4 in front of the whole class and	A PowerPoint presentation if the groups want to have	40m	5.b

			the teacher	one		
12	Conclusion about dystopias and <i>The Giver</i>	Listening	The teacher explains to the pupils	/	10m	5.c

II. Detailed organization of the sequence

1. Discovering the genre

a. Warm-up activity on the dystopian genre:

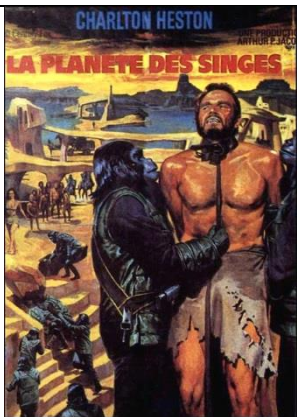
Brain-storming about the dystopian genre: the pupils are given pictures of different series and movies and with these pictures, they have to create two categories and classify the pictures in these two categories. The categories they should eventually find are; dystopian movies/series and utopian movies/series. After a few minutes of discussion to find that, the whole class including the teacher debate on what they have found. Then, the teacher asks some questions to the pupils regarding these movies and novels and others from the same genres. These questions are part of the process of *set induction* which creates “mental attitude for receptivity” (Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, 1986, p. 47).

Example of questions:

-What do you know about the movies/series from the list?

-What seems to be the different characteristics that all of these movies and series share?

-Have you already heard about the dystopian/utopian genres? If yes, what do you know about these?

Utopias	Dystopias
	





b. Theory about the dystopian genre:

The teacher explains the three categories she was expecting and what they consist in. The teacher also goes a bit further into details concerning the dystopian genre, giving some easy definitions and illustrating them with some accurate examples. The pupils are invited to take some notes and ask any questions.

Example of definitions and illustrations:

-A Utopia = A utopia is a place often isolated from the rest of the world where people live by their own rules and habits and live happily in their own way. In this place, which is often organized as a little community or society, there are no problems and it seems to be a perfect place to live. This place is represented as being much better than the author and readers' one. Utopian fictions usually belong to the science-fiction genre and these stories are normally settled in the future compared to the time of readers. **Examples:** Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), Aldous Huxley's *Island* (1962), etc.

-A Dystopia = A dystopia is a place which is often isolated from other places or communities and where people live under the rules and regulations established by the power who controls

the people living in this community. This place is portrayed as being worse than the one in which the author and readers live. Dystopian fictions are set in the future and often begin with a focus on the protagonist who, at the beginning, believes he lives in a utopian world but who, through the development of the narration, is going to progressively understand the dystopian nature of his/her society and will then engage in a rebellion against the unfairness of the system in place. **Examples:** Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993), Suzanne Collins *The Hunger Games* (2008), George Orwell's *1984* (1949).

-The concept of Utopia = This concept has been elaborated by the Canadian author Margaret Atwood as an in-between category between dystopias and utopias. This concept is based on Atwood's idea that utopias and dystopias "each contains a latent version of the other" (Margaret Atwood, 2011). It is then based on the fact that someone's utopia is usually another person's dystopia. Utopias then combine both the most perfect imaginary society and its opposite. **Examples:** Huxley's dystopian novel *Brave New World* (1932) and its utopian counterpart *Island* (1962).

c. Quiz about the dystopian genre:

A little quiz on dystopias and utopias is then proposed to the pupils in order to see if they have understood the concept. The pupils have to answer the quiz individually on their sheet of paper.

Quiz on the utopian/dystopian genre:

1. What is a utopia?
 - a. An island on which survivors of a catastrophe are living
 - b. An isolated place where everything seems to be perfect (an isolated place where people live according to their own rules and are happy with this situation, there are no problems in this place)**
 - c. An awful place where nobody wants to live
2. What is a dystopia?
 - a. A futuristic world where technologies have had a great impact on people's life
 - b. A horrible place where people have to follow very strict rules and are totally under control (People living in a dystopian community are completely controlled by a powerful ruler who has all rights on these people)**
 - c. A horrible world where people are controlled by robots

3. Is the difference between utopias and dystopias always easy to make?
 - a. True
 - b. False (why: Sometimes a utopia is a dystopia for another person and this is also why the concept of utopia exists)**
4. What is often the message implied through dystopias and utopias?
 - a. That we should question our present and its issues in order to improve our future (a lot of lessons can be found through dystopias and utopias in order to make readers aware of the problems that exist in their reality and to trigger them to act in order to change these things)**
 - b. That we should absolutely reach these models
 - c. That there is no hope for a better future
5. Do people living in a dystopian world are aware of it?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No (usually, except from the main character who will progressively discover the dystopian nature of the world in which he lives, nobody really perceives that they live in a horrible society in which they have no rights)**

d. Feedback on the quiz:

The teacher corrects the quiz with the pupils out loud, picking pupils randomly in turn to give the right answers. For each answer, the teacher gives a bit more information (provided here between parentheses).

e. Reading exercise about the dystopian genre:

The pupils read individually an article about the dystopian genre to get a more thorough understanding of it. They first read it silently on their own and after that, the teacher answers their questions on the text.

Example of article: Moira Young's "Why is dystopia so appealing to young adults?" in *The Guardian*

Why is dystopia so appealing to young adults?

Why is the current crop of dystopian fiction so popular with teenage readers?



Moira Young. Photograph: Benjamin Harte

Vampires, fallen angels and their brooding kin still crowd the young-adult shelves of your local bookstore. But they are having to make room for a new wave of dystopian fiction, kicked off by the jaw-dropping success of Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, set in a post-apocalyptic North American totalitarian state.

Books for young people set in a post-apocalyptic or dystopian worlds are not new. Three notable early examples are Madeleine L'Engle's science fantasy *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), William Sleator's suspense novel *House of Stairs* (1974) and the politically intriguing *The Giver* (1993) by Lois Lowry. Some of the big names of the new wave, along with Collins, are British-based American author Patrick Ness, *Mortal Engines* writer Philip Reeve, and young adult science-fiction novelist Scott Westerfeld. But what is it that attracts teenage readers to dystopian fiction?

There are a number of opinions, but the main drift seems to be that books set in either chaotic or strictly controlled societies mirror a teenager's life; at school, at home, with their peers and in the wider world. Let's call it the "my own private dystopia" theory.

I'm going to offer a much simpler explanation. Teenagers like to read dystopian fiction because it's exciting. It all comes down to the story. The story comes first, and the setting – extraordinary though it may be – is of secondary importance.

For the most part, dystopian fiction owes more to myth and fairytale than science fiction. These are essentially heroes' journeys – they just happen to be set in an imagined future world. The hero, reluctant or willing, is just as likely to be female as male. Something happens – an event, or a messenger arrives bearing news – and the teenage protagonist is catapulted out of their normal existence into the unknown. They cross the threshold into a world of darkness and danger, of allies and enemies, and begin a journey towards their own destiny that will change their world. They will be tested, often to the very edge of death. The stakes are high. The adults are the oppressors. The children are the liberators. It's heady stuff, far removed from the routine of everyday life.

The outer, global journey of the characters is matched by an inner, emotional and psychological journey. These are no cartoon superheroes. They, like their teen readers, have to deal with recognisable concerns and problems, including friendship, family, betrayal, loss, love, death and sexual awakening.

A new wave of dystopian fiction at this particular time shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone. It's the zeitgeist. Adults write books for teenagers. So anxious adults – worried about the planet, the degradation of civil society and the bitter inheritance we're leaving

for the young – write dystopian books.

We create harsh, violent worlds. These are dark, sometimes bleak stories, but that doesn't mean they are hopeless. Those of us who write for young people are reluctant to leave our readers without hope. It wouldn't be right. We always leave a candle burning in the darkness.

And we write good stories. That's why teenagers read them.

f. Vocabulary exercise:

The pupils, in pairs, try to find in the same article than the one used in the previous activity, all the vocabulary that they think is related to cinema, series and novels.

English	Français
Dystopian fiction	Fiction dystopique
Trilogy	Trilogie
To be set in	Se dérouler
Post-apocalyptic world	Monde post-apocalyptique
Science fantasy	Fantaisie scientifique
Suspense novel	Roman à suspense
Politically intriguing	Politiquement intrigant
Author	Auteur
Writer	Écrivain
Novelist	Romancier
Book	Livre
To read	Lire
Story	Histoire
Setting	Cadre
Myth	Mythe
Fairy-tale	Conte de fées
Science-fiction	Science-fiction
Heroes' journey	Le parcours des héros

Imagined future world	Monde imaginaire future
Hero	Héro
Protagonist	Personnage principale (protagoniste)
Characters	Personnages
Cartoon superheroes	Superhéros de dessins-animés

g. Feedback on the vocabulary exercise:

The pupils give their answers regarding the previous exercise and the teacher corrects their answers with them and gives further explanation about the meaning of those words and gives extra vocabulary regarding this topic.

English	Français
An action movie	Un film d'action
To be engrossed in	Être absorbé par
To be a big reader	Être un grand lecteur
To be based on	Être basé sur
A box office hit	Avoir un énorme succès financier
To be heavy-going	Être difficile à lire
A blockbuster	Film qui suscite un important succès commercial
To catch the latest movie	Aller voir le dernier film sorti au cinéma
To get a good/bad review	Obtenir une bonne/mauvaise critique
The central character	Le personnage principal
A classic	Un classique (de valeur sure)
To come highly recommended	Être fortement recommandé
Couldn't put it down	Impossible de s'arrêter de lire
An e-book	Un livre digital
An e-reader	Un appareil électronique qui permet de lire des livres

To flick through	Parcourir un livre
A historical novel	Un roman historique
A low budget film	Un film à petit budget
On the big screen	Au cinéma
A page turner	Livre captivant
Plot	Intrigue
To read something from cover to cover	Lire un livre d'un bout à l'autre
Sci-fi	Science-fiction
To see a film	Voir un film (au cinéma)
To watch a film	Regarder un film
To tell the story of	Raconter l'histoire de
To take out (a book from the library)	Emprunter un livre
Special effects	Effets spéciaux
Soundtrack	Bande son
Showings	Projection d'un film

2. Introduction to Lois Lowry's *The Giver*

a. Listening exercise: an interview of Lois Lowry:

The pupils listen to an interview of Lois Lowry, the author of *The Giver*. They then watch the video of the same interview and try to fill the gaps in the transcription of the interview that they would have received after the first listening. The teacher then corrects the fill-in the gaps with the pupils and answer their eventual questions about the vocabulary or the content of the listening.

Example of interview and exercise:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wo2gIijEU6I>

I: Lowry what were you thinking about when you (wrote) *The Giver*?

L: My initial reaction when you mentioned *The Giver* is to remember what I was thinking about when I began to (write) it and oddly enough it's different from what I thought about it at the end. I began to write it thinking of the concept of (memory) and how important (memory) is and the role it plays in our lives and what would happen if we could (manipulate) our own memories. Then of course when I started writing it, it turned into something much more than just memory all the memory played a part in the (plot) and I never anticipated what would happen after the book was (publishes) and the Newbery Medal and the (censorship) and the controversy and what it's become.

I: Well that's something we have to talk about the controversy over *The Giver* what do you think of it?

L: I'm always puzzled by it and to me it seems a very (moral) book so to have it held up as immoral it's so startling to me I should be used to it by now but I think I never will get used to it. I think people pull out a little to particular places out of (context) and I think often they don't read the book because if they read that in context still I don't know what they can find to object to.

I: Why did there have to be a giver? Why do people have to remember the past even it was just one person?

L: That's the question the book asks and I don't attempt to answer that I think people reading the book can answer it for themselves in whatever ways they choose. For me, creating the Giver, the man of the Giver was part of the (story) and as a (writer) I try to create a plot, move the plot along and have a little (suspense) and so I needed the character of the Giver for that but on a deeper level I think we all of us have those people in our lives and I bet you could name one or more than one I certainly could we have the people who come before us who (pass along) to us what we're part of and that's important and I think kids reading the book and perhaps with (guidance) can begin to understand how important that is to have a past and to have memories on which to draw.

b. Reading of the summary of *The Giver*:

The pupils first read the text individually and then the teacher chooses several pupils to read the text, in turn, out loud and the teacher corrects their pronunciation.

Example of summary:

“After The Ruin, a civil but colorless, drug-dampened, equalitarian society eschewing memories of the past emerged, where everyone followed established rules of politeness enforced by a council of ever-watchful Elders. On the ceremonious day of graduation,

teenagers leaving childhood are assigned careers chosen by the Elders. Jonas, who feels different from his appointed parents and his two best friends, Fiona and Asher, finds himself assigned to the rare position of Receiver of Memories, trained by a mentor (later called The Giver), who telepathically imparts memories of the world before The Ruin. Jonas learns emotions such as love, fear, excitement, loss and the concept of family, but when the planned elimination of a baby named Gabriel, whom he comes to love as a brother, enters his awareness, Jonas decides society needs to change, which the Chief Elder will do anything to stop.”

c. Reading activity:

The pupils, in pairs, have to replace the pictures they are given by the teacher in the correct chronological order on the basis of the summary they have just read. After that, the pupils and the teacher correct the previous reading exercise together placing the pictures on the blackboard in the right order.



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)



(7)

d. Speaking activity about the summary:

In groups of 3, the pupils discuss together what they think *The Giver* is about and what is going to happen in the end. They, then, perform as a play the possible ending they have invented to the class which should be as funny and original as possible.

3. Analysing *The Giver*

a. Warm-up activity:

Quiz on the first three chapters of the novel: The teacher sets up groups of five pupils. The pupils have to answer the different questions of the quiz that appear on the screen and have to answer either on a smartphone with the application “Kahoot” or with panels of green, red, yellow and blue colours and raise the colour that corresponds to the colour of the correct answer that appears on the screen.

Example of questions for the quiz:

1. At the beginning of the story, which word Jonas finally decides to choose to describe how he feels regarding the Ceremony of Twelve?
 - a. stresses
 - b. Worried
 - c. **Apprehensive**

2. Why is it so important for him to find the adequate word?

- a. **Because precision of language is one of the rules of the community**
- b. Because he wants to be able to express himself correctly
- c. Because his parents asked him to do so

3. How are official news transmitted to the community?

- a. Through emails
- b. Through phone calls
- c. **Through holograms**

d. Brainstorming about the three first chapters of *The Giver*:

The teacher first sets up groups of five pupils. The teacher then writes on the blackboard the different themes (environment, rules and order, genre, education, family, love...) that can be implicitly or explicitly present in dystopias or a utopias explaining how, through these themes, authors tend to have an impact on the real world through their works. Then the pupils, in their groups, have to talk together and find which themes they were able to find in the three chapters of the novel that they would have previously read. After twenty minutes the teacher discusses with the pupils about what they have found and debates with them on the topic. The themes they should find in these first three chapters are: rules and order through the fact that people are “released”, disappear when they do not respect the rules (see page 8 of the book) but also through the fact that they are being spied on all the time by the Elders (see book page 14). The teacher could draw a parallel with Orwell’s *1984* (1949) and Big Brother who “watches you”. Family is also an important theme as readers discover that these are “family units” which are foster families in which the parents are not the biological ones and can only have one daughter and one son (see book page 8 and 19). The teacher can also already mention how it can already be perceived that Jonas seems different from the other people of his community even only due to the colour of his eyes which are blue while the other members of the community except a female Five have dark eyes (see book page 19). Readers can also already perceive that Jonas seems to see things differently (see book page 23).

e. Discussion in groups on chapters four to seven:

In groups of three, the pupils discuss these chapters, what they think about what happened and what they think is going to happen. They also talk about the different themes they managed to

detect in these chapters and discuss about these themes and on how these convey a world really different from readers' world.

This activity presupposes familiarity with group work, and that the class can form groups in seconds and with the minimum disruption. Discussion is then unstructured and unmonitored. [...]. The only 'rule' is that it should not go on for too long. In any single sessions of this type, the teacher should not expect great success, but over a period of time, learners will express their own private responses to text in this type of work. Such responses might be more original than those elicited by formal questioning.

(Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, p. 49)

f. Brainstorming and debate on the students' ideas:

Each group designates a spokesperson who will talk about all the different themes they found and what they think is different from their world. The teacher interacts with the pupils and also lets the pupils of all the different groups interact with each other. The themes that should be brought up are: education, environment, rules and order (people released "elsewhere") and the notion of love/family. These themes show how different this world is from the real world as the education is extremely strict and a lot of rules are imposed on them like the rule of politeness, precision of language and the prohibition to lie which also shows how severe the rules are and the order imposed on the community. Education is also unique, as specific rules apply to people of a specific age, for example, children who are four, five and six years old have a jacket that fastens in the back in order for them to learn interdependence and it is only at the age of seven that they are given a jacket which buttons fasten in the front which shows that they are becoming independent (see book page 38). The environment is entirely different too as the members of the community live in a black and white world in which there are no natural elements, no seasons, no sun, even no animals (see page 5 of the book). There are also no cars, only some buses and trucks. People can only travel with a bicycle or on foot (see book page 39). For family and love, in the three first chapters, the students could understand that the families are foster families in which the parents are not the biological ones and, in chapter six, they can understand that even the couples are not together out of love and choice but due the choice of the Elders (see book page 46).

g. Writing activity:

The class is divided into five different groups. Each group receives a sheet of paper with one of the themes discusses previously (love, education, environment and rules and order). Then,

all the groups, regarding the theme they have received, have to write a description of how they imagine this theme in more details in the world of Jonas.

h. Feedback on the writing activity:

Each group receives their description back which would have been previously corrected by the teacher and prepare a five minutes presentation to explain to the class what they have written. Each group then present their description to the class.

i. Brainstorming on chapters seven to eleven:

The teacher discusses with the whole class on these four chapters of *The Giver*. It is a free discussion in which everyone is free to give his/her opinion and this discussion can be based on the themes previously evoked if it helps.

Example of themes and topics that could be brought up:

- Jonas' difference: readers understand that Jonas' difference is referred to as "the capacity of seeing beyond" which one can easily understand as the capacity to see colours. Even the Elders acknowledge his difference and consequently give him a specific role in the community (see book page 60). This new function will make him feel even more different from the others and even separate, because of that he will begin to suffer in a way (see book page 62). This difference is also emphasized when Jonas learns about the new rules he will have to follow which enable him to do things that are usually forbidden like lying (see book pages 66-67). These new rules will also bring him to doubt everything and everybody and more especially the honesty of the other members of the community and even the Elders' sincerity as, if he is allowed to lie why not everybody? (see book page 68).
- Rules and order: readers can understand that the Elders hide things from the people of the community like some information about some members' release or disappearance (see book page 64). The teacher could then make the link with the dystopian novel of Orwell 1984 (1949) in which information given in the news are modified. In Orwell's novel, some pieces of information are even in some cases hidden which is also the case in *The Giver* as it can be understood in chapter ten (see book page 75).

j. Listening activity on George Orwell's novel, *1984*:

The teacher shows a video of the trailer or of an extract of the movie *1984* based on the novel written by George Orwell. The pupils have to take some notes of the video that they are able to view two times.

Example of trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urrqW4_3IBg

k. Feedback on the listening activity ("Wooclap"):

The pupils all have a mobile phone or a computer with the application wooclap. The pupils, once on this application, have to write in the space provided, all the concepts and/or themes from the movie *1984* that they find similar to some concepts present in *The Giver*. If an access to mobile phones or computers is not possible, the pupils can write their words on pieces of paper. The teacher then either shows the results of all the words written by the pupils on wooclap on the white screen or reads all the words written on the pieces of paper out loud and writes the most frequent ones on the black board.

The teacher deliberates on these words with the pupils and discusses with them on the topic insisting on the aspect of the past that in dystopias is often erased (people disappear, the past is forgotten or erased). This also sadly echoes our reality in which some newspapers or people tend to spread fake information or to hide others and that it is then really important to remain critical once confronted with information. Moreover, the teacher can ask them if this story makes them think of a concept which exists in real life. To this they could think of the reality television shows which are based on dystopias and the teacher can even explain that the first reality television show was called Big Brother.

l. Brainstorming on chapters eleven to fourteen:

The teacher draws 3 columns on the black board each having a different title, which can be: climate, sameness or rules and order. In groups of 5, the pupils discuss the 3 themes on the basis of chapters eleven to fourteen of *The Giver*. Then, a member of each group comes to the blackboard and writes, under each title, a word or a sentence that summarizes what happens in these chapters concerning these themes.

m. Feedback on the brainstorming:

The teacher discusses what they have written in the three columns with them. For climate: we discover in these chapters that the Elders have preferred getting rid of concepts like seasons and thus sun, snow, rain and wind as they think it is too dangerous as these natural elements cause too many catastrophes such as hanger, fires and inundations. For sameness: it is understood in these chapters that everything was made in order to reach sameness, everything and everyone in the community are the same. Climate is part of sameness as they have erased all the different natural elements in order to also reach sameness regarding climate but it is also why they got rid of colours, races and religions, for example. For rules and order: the government appears really strict as they even have a special discipline wand for old people and children who disobey the rules.

n. Reading activity on *Divergent* (2011) and *Gathering Blue* (2000):

The pupils are in pairs and are given two different texts; one is a summary of the novel *Divergent* written by Veronica Roth and the other is a summary of Lois Lowry's *Gathering Blue*. Each member of the group picks one of the texts and reads it individually trying to highlight and remember the elements which seem the most important to them.

o. Speaking activity on the reading activity:

Each pupil of the group, in turn, explains what he has just read and tells his impressions on the text to his companion and they exchange their thoughts on both texts and then write on a sheet of paper the similarities they are able to find between these two texts and *The Giver*.

p. Feedback on the speaking activity:

The pupils share with the class and with the teacher what they have found as similarities between *Divergent*, *Gathering Blue* and *The Giver*. The teacher then insists on the aspect of *difference* in these texts that is very important. Indeed, in these three texts, if people are different from the norm, they are usually eliminated from the community except the protagonists of these three texts who are going to convert their difference into strength. Jonas will be honoured for his difference of “seeing beyond” being proclaimed the new Receiver of memory. Kira, in *Gathering Blue*, who should have been banished for her twisted leg, is given the noble task of repairing the robe of the Singer of the Ruin song. Tris in *Divergent* is considered as a divergent as she does not fit in any factions of her community but she will

build a strength out of that and fight against the unfair government. The teacher can also allude to the fact that getting rid of people who are different from the established norm is exactly what Hitler and other dictators did with the so-called eugenic system.

4. Interpreting *The Giver*

a. Listening activity:

The pupils all watch a video in which the protagonist changes vision on his own world. For example, the trailer of the movie *The Truman Show* (1998) in which the protagonist discovers he lives in a fake world with fake people because he is just a star of a reality-show on his life. Then, the teacher and the pupils have a discussion on the video.

Examples of questions that could be asked to them:

- Do you know people who really have a show about their life? (Like the Kardashian family)
- Would you like to have a show about your life?

b. Speaking activity on the video and comparison with *The Giver*:

The pupils, in pairs, discuss the video and how they think it can be considered as similar to *The Giver* especially regarding the chapters thirteen to eighteen.

c. Feedback on the speaking activity:

The teacher and the pupils discuss the similarities they have found between the video and *The Giver*. The teacher then explains that these two stories are similar as in *The Truman Show*, the protagonist discovers that his entire world is an artificial one like in these chapters of *The Giver*, Jonas, the protagonist begins to understand that he does not live in a utopian world like he thought before but more in a dystopian one in which he is deprived of colours which are, for Jonas, so wonderful.

d. Speaking activity on the utopian side of *The Giver*:

In groups of 4, the pupils discuss why the world of Jonas could be considered as a utopia as the members of the community perceive it.

e. Writing activity on the utopian side of *The Giver*:

Individually, the pupils write an essay based on the previous speaking activity in which they mention all the different advantages of living in the world of Jonas and describe it as a utopian world as if they wanted to attract people there. They can finish at home if they want to as it is not always easy to directly have inspiration and to be totally focused in class.

f. Feedback on the writing activity:

The teacher exposes to the pupils the different arguments expressed in their writing tasks that enable to consider the world of Jonas in *The Giver* as utopian and briefly discusses them with the pupils.

Example: For the Elders, their world is a utopia as everybody has equal rights, nobody is disadvantaged or privileged. There are no differences neither between men and women, they have the same rights and are respected in the same way. The education being very important, children grow up and learn a lot of important values which will help them being good and responsible citizens. There are no more climate change problems as they manage to regulate everything. There is no reason for war, fights, sadness or any other unpleasant elements. People live happily all together and no one is jealous from the other, they all feel equally treated and considered.

g. Debate on the end of *The Giver*:

The pupils form two different groups, one in which the pupils believe that, on the basis of the end of the novel, a possible development of *The Giver* could have a happy ending and one in which the pupils believe the novel could not have a happy follow-up. The pupils, in order to do this exercise of debate correctly, are given a sheet of paper in which several expressions and typical phrases of debates are proposed to them.

Phrases to present the most important point

- The most important argument for ... is ...
- The main idea/thing is ...
- The most important idea is...
- Most importantly, I want to mention that...

- The primary argument for... is...
- Two/three... important arguments support my point of view...

Conceding an argument

- It's true/obvious/evident that ... However, ...
- While you might say that ..., it's important to remember that ...
- I agree with you that ... On the other hand, ...
- Although/even though it is true that... I believe that...
- I agree/admit that..., but we must remember that...
- I can understand that... Nevertheless, ...

Sequencing a list of arguments

- First of all, I'd like to state ...
- Firstly, ... Secondly, ...Thirdly, ...
- The second argument in favor of ...
- To begin with, ...
- I'd start by...
- For a start, ...
- The next argument I'd like to state is...

Adding an argument to strengthen your point

- In addition to that,...
- You also have to consider...
- Furthermore,...
- Moreover,...
- What is more,...
- I might also add that...
- Perhaps / maybe I should also mention...
- Not to mention the fact that...
- Not only that but also...

Concluding

- Let me recap/recapitulate my point ...

- As a final word, let me summarize my point of view ...
- My final thought is ...
- In a nutshell, what I am trying to say is ...
- To sum up, ...
- Finally, ...

h. Final writing task on the end of *The Giver*:

The pupils, individually, write what could happen after this mysterious end of the novel as if they were Lois Lowry writing the final development of the end of the story of Jonas. They would have to include in their story; what they think will happen next, where Jonas really is, if he will be able to meet people and survive in these harsh conditions or not and what will happen to the Giver and to the community now that they all have recovered the memories from the past as well as colours, passion, love, emotions and so on.

5. Comparing the world in *The Giver* to the students' reality

a. Discussion and comparison of the world in *The Giver* and the pupils' real world:

The pupils are going to put themselves in Jonas' shoes who was able to compare his own world to the world of the past thanks to the memories. Indeed, they are going to compare their own world with the one of Jonas in order to perceive the flaws but also the good aspects of their own reality. In order to do that, the pupils, in groups of four, fill in a comparison table between their reality and the reality of Jonas in *The Giver*. They then, taking their comparison into account, make a list of the different things that we could take as an example from *The Giver* and adapt to our real world and the things that we should not take as a model in order not to make the same mistakes as in the novel.

b. Presentation of the project "for a better future":

The different groups display to the class and to the teacher what they have agreed on in the previous activity, namely, their project for a better future. The teacher and the other pupils can then ask questions or make some critical and constructive remarks on their project.

c. Conclusion:

The teacher concludes this class on dystopia and on *The Giver*, insisting on the fact that these kinds of texts are written in order to open people's eyes on their own reality and invite them to take action in order to fight for what they find worthy among the many issues of the western contemporary world (climate change, women's rights, terrorism, etc.). In order to illustrate that, the teacher can also allude to the quote of Lois Lowry in her dedication that opens *The Giver*: "For all the children to whom we entrust the future".

Conclusion

The analysis brought by the present study proves that the affirmation of Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry, which argues that utopias and dystopias can be “powerful teaching tools” is indeed justified. Literature has proven to be powerful enough to change some readers’ vision of the world and even of their own selves. It is then relevant to provide adolescents with significant literature as they can have the opportunity to understand that literature even when it is fictional, is a mirror on their reality and can help them find their own truth regarding the world. Literature also guides people. Young adults are often somewhat lost during adolescence as they have to decide who they want to be and consequently, they could use this guide to find their own way into life. Moreover, dystopian fictions represent cautionary tales and/or warnings for the future. This genre announces that if we do not take action for our future, it could look chaotic. Dystopian worlds portray the negative aspects of our western society pushing these to the extreme. Doing so, they tend to create a shock in the reader’s mind which enables him/her to understand the urgency of the need for actions in order to improve his/her society’s situation. This argument has been proved throughout the dissertation and more especially in the first chapter in which the dystopian genre is defined.

The first chapter offers a detailed definition of the dystopian genre. As mentioned previously, dystopias are highly didactical through the shock they create to make readers understand the urgency to find solutions to their contemporary society’s issues but also through the meaningful and thought-provoking themes they often bring. This genre can be divided into two different generations, the first one which includes older dystopias and the second one. The latter is the one that has been considered as being most adapted for the audience that is addressed through this dissertation, secondary schools’ students. In fact, this second generation consists of more recent dystopias that are characterized as young adult (YA) dystopias as they are more particularly dedicated to this public. Indeed, these fictions like Collins’ *The Hunger Games* (2008), Roth’s *Divergent* (2011) and Dashner’s *The Maze Runner* (2009) depict young adults as protagonists of the stories. Portraying adolescents as heroes is a way to show young people that they have power, that they have an important part to play in their society contrary to how adults usually consider them. Dystopias for young adults help teenagers see they are not useless and that some people recognize them for who they really are. As it has been explained in the first chapter, through picturing an adolescent hero, these dystopias empower young adults and give them confidence to speak up for themselves and for what they want.

Also the dystopian fictions of the second generation, which became popular through films rather than through novels, evoke themes that matter to younger generations. These dystopias narrate stories about the devastating effects of climate change in eco-dystopias like Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the dangers of technology and mass surveillance in Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008) and the recent techno-thriller film based on the novel of the same name *The Circle* (2017) or the loss of individualism in Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) and Westerfeld's *Uglies* (2005).

The question that often comes up when evoking the idea of studying dystopias with young adults is whether or not they will be able to bear these horrible futuristic visions of the world. As explained in the first chapter, these adolescents already have to handle dystopian situations in their everyday life, through what they see on television, in series and films but also in real life. The advantage that dystopian novels for young adults have over these real dystopias is that these books offer a hopeful ending which enables readers to believe that even in the most desperate times, there is hope for happiness. Indeed, as explained in the present dissertation, dystopias represent horrible worlds but which are plenty of utopian dreams. The teacher's task would then be to select dystopian works offering this hope and to invite his/her students to understand that even if in every utopia there is a dystopia looming in the horizon, it is more important to keep in mind that in every dystopia there is a utopia worth fighting for.

This chapter finally proved that despite some critics that can be made about it, Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) still remains a novel that perfectly fits what is expected from a dystopian fiction for young adults considering the criteria mentioned previously. This can also be observed in the analysis of the book proposed in chapter two.

The second chapter, through the analysis of *The Giver* (1993), reveals that this dystopia actually is a misleading utopia. Indeed, despite the fact that this novel first tries to manipulate readers into believing that the world of Jonas is a utopian one, its dystopian nature eventually surfaces. Reading this literary work shows young adults the importance of looking beyond appearances of texts but also of everything in general. Moreover, it proves that people can easily be manipulated and that if they do not try to scratch the surface, they will continue to live in a naïve and passive way. This is what happens for Jonas, as it is only when he begins to compare his world with the one of the past that he understands that he lives in a horrible world in which all the beautiful elements which they believed were dangerous have been erased despite the beauty they can bring to the world. He eventually decides that he does not want to live in a place in which people are not able to choose who they are and how they

want to live and leaves his community. This ending is very ambiguous and complex. However, this complexity is very positive as it leaves some space for readers' imagination regarding what could happen next. This urges young adults to use their creativity and develop it through this experience. This novel also challenges young adults' ideas as it can be considered as being political as it conveys a certain ideology that the students can try to decipher and reflect upon with the help of their teacher. This novel makes us understand that giving too much power to the state can be very dangerous as it enables it to do whatever it wants, to control everything and everyone without letting any choice to people. Through the novel, Lowry reiterates the importance of choosing and of making one's voice heard and how lucky people are in the western society to have the opportunity to do so. This work also shows the value of nature and how people could be more respectful of it in order to keep it. This theme is especially adapted to young adults who, in 2019, are making their voice heard in the streets to claim their rights to live on a cleaner and more sustainable planet. *The Giver* is political but is also, more importantly, inspiring as it gives ideas for the future regarding what could be changed. It questions the present and shows how it could evolve into something else. This is inspirational for young people but also for any person willing to challenge his/her perception of the world.

The political aspect of dystopian novels is essential as it helps students being aware of some issues they do not know or tend to forget about. It cannot be stated with certainty that dystopias and utopias will change the world but these can surely be used as tools to do so. Adolescent students are the ones shaping the world in which they are going to live in the future and if some useful and meaningful tools are offered to them and if they are given accurate instructions for use, they could actually have some impact on the world. Indeed, if they know what the problems in their society are they will be able and they will still have time to find solutions to those issues in order to solve them for the future.

Before doing so, these adolescents need to be empowered. Indeed, in the third chapter of the present study it had been stated that adolescents are often referred to as being "apolitical" as shown in the study by the Pew Research Centre. This is because they don't seem to be interested in the news and in the political debates of their society. However, as it has been proved through the present analysis, one cannot claim that this 2019 generation of young adults is not interested at all in what is happening in the world. In fact, in order to get the information, they just find other means which are more adapted to their generation and time like through social networks, through short videos they find on the web or even through

series and films. It is not because some of them do not read newspapers that they disregard information and the problems happening in their contemporary society.

The third chapter shows that in 2019, politics can be considered in a broader sense because people have access to it through more media than before. Adolescents are interested in politics but in a way that is more adapted to their time and generation. Consequently, the study of a dystopian novel is relevant as they already know a lot of dystopias through series and films. In order to reconcile social networks' popularity and literature, going back to dystopian novels is an interesting way to do so as they are already familiar with this genre through films and series. For example, a lot of young adults already know the film *The Giver* (2014) but haven't necessarily read the book which offers them complexity and ambivalence that films do not always have. Studying dystopias also provides them with a new or different vision on politics. Young adults need to be invited to reflect upon their society's political, social and ethical issues, the role they play in this one and their identity and someone can encourage them to do so. Reading dystopian novels like *The Giver* (1993) enables them to identify with the protagonist and encourages them to act like him. Jonas reflects on his society and decides to change it insofar as possible. This is the message young readers can choose to bear in mind and this is an attitude they could be inspired by and be willing to reproduce.

The fourth chapter shows why dystopias can have a positive impact on the ESL classes. Through this chapter, was explained how the place of literature evolved through times until now and revealed that there is a lack of authentic texts in the class. ESL teachers in 2019 tend to massively use textbooks which can be described as being artificial and consequently not really motivating. However, literature must not be used in an excessive and abundant way or it would lose its stimulating and dynamizing effect but can be used when the teacher finds it relevant and significant. Nevertheless, literature and language are intimately linked and if they are merged together it could really give students a passion for language and also for literature. The latter can bring a better knowledge of the language to the learners. Reading complex, ambivalent and idiomatic language develops young people's perception of it and how they use it.

Dystopian novels are challenging as they evoke meaningful themes and imply certain ideologies. These fictions consequently provoke discussions and debates in which the students participate and defend their own ideas and opinions. Through these oral activities and all the others that can be carried around the texts, the learners also acquire more fluency and ease using this language. Secondary schools' students are also adolescents and are experiencing an

important development in the construction of their identity. Dystopias for young adults represent adolescents also going through a period of self-discovery and this can help the students identify with the characters which can help them find themselves. Sometimes, literature can even have some therapeutic effect on readers as it proves them that they are not alone going through difficult moments but also offers them escapism. As mentioned previously, through the reading of ambivalent novels like Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, students also get the chance to develop their creativity as they will have to create and imagine the story in their minds but also to interpret the text and the ending which is often the most ambiguous part of texts.

To conclude, literature can be perceived as a mirror through which people are able to perceive their world within some distance and with a more critical eye. Fictions also enable people to foresee different possible futures either idealistic or horrific. In both cases, the goal is to make people compare these futures with their present and to make them realize that they have the power to change their present in order to either try to reach this ideal or impede the nightmare from becoming reality. Nevertheless, literature enables people to understand that they still have time to shape the world of tomorrow, they only have to realize it and to eventually make their voice heard. Indeed, one should not forget that every human being is entitled to express him/herself and should be given the right to have some impact on his/her own future. Once the students will have realized the urgency and the necessity to wake up, the teacher could then help his/her learners to make their voice heard. The present dissertation has not offered many detailed explanation regarding how the teacher and his/her students could speak out for themselves in a significant and striking way. Consequently, this matter could be reflected upon more thoroughly and in more details as it can be relevant for teachers willing to go further in their use of dystopias with their students to have more information regarding how they could do it.

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