

# The Search for Utopia: Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*

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## **Recent Publications:**

*Instructors Resource Guide to The American Pageant* (13/e)

*The Quizbook: A Test Manual for Instructors to The American Pageant* (13/e)

Edward Bellamy: *Looking Backward* (Fall - 2006: The Center for Learning)

AP U.S. History Workbooks (revised edition, 3 volumes) - The Center for Learning, forthcoming

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## **A Bit O' Irish:**

[www.orgsites.com/tx/ap-us-and-european-history/index.html](http://www.orgsites.com/tx/ap-us-and-european-history/index.html)

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# A History of Utopian Literature

Genesis: The Garden of Eden; first book of the Bible, which describes a utopian paradise where Adam and Eve first live; however, they are banished from this place because of sin.

Homer: 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC; blind Greek poet known for two works, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. These two works center around the Trojan War, a battle that took place between the Greek kingdoms and Troy over a woman; the most important element in these for the purposes of utopian literature are the descriptions of the “Elysian Fields” in *The Odyssey*. The “Elysian Fields” is a place reserved by the gods for those specially chosen to live there in the after-life.

Hesoid: 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC; Greek poet know best for his *Works and Days* (in which he describes the Five Ages of Humanity and gives some how to advice on how live the good life) and the *Theogony* (in which he describes the origin of the world and the gods). In *Works and Days* Hesoid describes the “Island of the Blest” in which former heroes (which he calls Demigods) dwell in the after-life in the lap of luxury.

Aristophanes: 448 – 380 BC; Greek playwright best known for the following utopian plays, *Ecclesiazusae*, *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, *The Birds*, and *The Clouds*. Aristophanes role in the history of utopian literature is the author of some of the earliest utopian satires.

Plato: 427 – 347 BC; Greek philosopher and most famous student of Socrates who wrote a number of dialogues in Socrates appears as the main character. The main utopian literary works of Plato are *The Republic* (in which Socrates describes the perfect society in which philosophers rule the land as kings), *The Timaeus* and *The Critias* (in which a history of the island of Atlantis is described).

Lucian: born in Syria around 120 AD; authored many satires in the utopian genera, the most important of these was *The True History*, sometimes translated as *A True Story*. Lucian attacked almost every element of society in his writings, from philosophy, politics, economics, religion, and more.

Saint Augustine of Hippo: 354 – 430; born at Thagaste in North Africa, Augustine became interested in philosophy at an early age and he wrote an enormous number of books, his *Confessions* and *City of God* are considered cornerstone documents in the history of Christian thought.

Dante Alighieri: 1265 – 1321; born in Florence, was a student of philosophy and theology, and wrote one of the most important utopian poems in Western Civilization *The Divine Comedy* (vol. 1: Inferno, vol. 2: Purgatory, and vol. 3: Paradise) which he began about 1308 while in political exile. The poem traces Dante’s voyage through Hell, Purgatory, and then up to the ultimate utopia Heaven.

Thomas More: 1478 – 1535; author of *Utopia* (1516). More was an English statesman who served as Lord Chancellor of England under the reign of Henry VIII, this position ended up costing More his life as More strongly opposed the divorce between King Henry and Catherine of Aragon and the creation of the Anglican Church. More coined the term utopia, there is much debate among literary scholars as to the etymological origin of the word, but most agree that it is a Latin word derived from the Greek words ou (meaning ‘no’) or eu (meaning ‘good’) and topos (meaning ‘place’).

François Rabelais: 1484 – 1553 (although there is much controversy about both the exact date of his birth and his death); French writer of satire, physician, and Franciscan monk, who is most famous for his semi-utopian work *The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532 – 1552).

Michel de Montaigne: 1533 – 1592; French writer of *The Essays* (first version, 1580), of which the essay entitled “Of the Cannibals” is the most famous of his utopian type works. The discoveries of the New World led to many writers speculate on the ideal of the noble savage, sometimes called “primitivism,” in this essay Montaigne reflects on the similarities of the savages of the New World with that of the Europeans of the Old World.

Tommaso Campanella: 1568 – 1639; Dominican monk who wrote *The City of the Sun* (1623). Campanella was the first of the utopian writers to develop and expand on a socialistic type economic system, in which all individuals work for the common good, which would serve as the foundation for later utopian works.

Francis Bacon: 1561 – 1626; English writer, scientist, and politician who wrote *The New Atlantis* (1627). Bacon’s utopia is centered on an island community dedicated to the pursuit of scientific knowledge and understanding.

Daniel Defoe: 1660 – 1731; English merchant and writer who also served as a secret agent, but is best known for his utopian novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). An exciting adventure story, Crusoe is shipwrecked on a deserted island and is forced through any means necessary to rebuild the society he left behind; the plot focuses on the themes of man against man, man against nature, and man against God. In this story we see the creation of utopia from scratch.

Jonathan Swift: 1667 – 1745; English writer of satire, best known for *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). Swift’s utopia consists not of the traditional utopian narrative, in which all the action takes place and is centered on the discovery of one society, but Swift’s utopia contains voyages to many unusual societies. One society consists of people who are only six inches tall, where another community consists of people who are 60 feet tall, another community consist of philosophical scientists who live on a floating island dedicated to the life of contemplating knowledge, and yet another society in which the animals are the ones endowed with reason and the humans are the brutish animals.

Lewis Carroll: 1832 – 1898; English mathematician and logician, wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) as adventure children stories, satire on Victorian England, and as a manual on logic and reasoning.

Edwin A. Abbott: 1838 – 1926; English mathematician who wrote *Flatland* (1884), as a parody of Victorian society.

Samuel Butler: 1835 – 1902; successful English sheep farmer, turned artist, musician, and eventually novelist, his utopian novel *Erewhon* (1872) is nowhere spelled backwards – it was meant to be a satire on the English manners and customs of the day. The most interesting characteristic of the Erewhonian society is the complete absence of any technology as it was abandoned for fear that it would evolve and one day take over the world.

William Morris: 1834 – 1896; British leader of the arts and writer, whose utopian novel *News From Nowhere* (1890) was a direct response to the utopian vision of Bellamy, Morris believed that Bellamy overemphasized work.

Ignatius Donnelly: 1831 – 1901; Minnesota politician who was instrumental in founding the Populist Party and whose work *Caesar's Column: A Story of the Twentieth Century* (1890) was one of the first dystopian novels in English. The story tells of a traveler to New York City who is so impressed with the technology and apparent wealth of the city, but comes to realize that all this is built upon a very repressive society in which the wealthy bosses use and abuse the labor of the lower classes.

William Dean Howells: 1837 – 1920; American writer who wrote his utopian novel *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894) and its sequel *Through the Eye of the Needle* (1907) as a response to Bellamy, Howells novels center on a rural utopia, instead of the urban city.

Mark Twain: 1835 – 1910; American satirist and writer who wrote a number of very popular American novels, William Dean Howells referred to him as “the Lincoln of our literature.” One of the more popular of his utopian writings was, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Hank Morgan, is cracked over the head by a crowbar in the nineteenth century, wakes to find himself in King Arthur's England.

\* **Edward Bellamy**: 1850 – 1898; American writer who wrote two utopian novels, *Looking Backward* (1888) and *Equality* (1898). Bellamy tells the story of unsuspecting time traveler Julian West, who one day, after waking up from a hypnotic sleep, realizes that he has awoken 100 years into the future. The Boston of the future is very different from the Boston of the nineteenth century – the future America is now a socialist utopia.

L. Frank Baum: 1856 – 1919; New Yorker who wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900).

H. G. Wells: 1866 – 1946; English author of many utopian and dystopian novels in the first part of the twentieth century, *A Modern Utopia* (1905) and *Men Like Gods* (1923) are the two best representations of his utopian works. In *A Modern Utopia* Wells offers up a blueprint for the ideal society.

Jack London: 1876 – 1916; American writer, whose dystopian novel *The Iron Heel* (1907) tells the story of American revolutionist Ernest Everhard.

Yevgeny Zamyatin: 1884 – 1937; Russian engineer and writer, whose dystopian novel *We* (1920) was an inspiration for George Orwell's *1984*. Zamyatin tells the story of the future of humanity, set in the twenty-sixth century, when all individualism is surrendered to a collective dream – even relationships are monitored and controlled by the all powerful “Benefactor.”

Katherine Burdekin: 1896 – 1963; British novelist and feminist author of many utopian and dystopian works, her *Swastika Night* (1937) was a dystopian novel about the brutal rule of the world under totalitarian fascism.

Sinclair Lewis: 1885 – 1951; American writer from Minnesota who authored the dystopian novel *It Can't Happen Here* (1935). In this novel, Lewis tells of an America in the future in which Senator Berzelius “Buzz” Windrip, a right-winged demagogue modeled on Huey Long, seizes control of the American presidency and establishes a Fascist regime in America to help unburden the middle-class American from the detrimental effects of the Great Depression.

Aldous Huxley: 1894 – 1963; British author of *Brave New World* (1932) and *Island* (1962). Huxley is most noted for his dystopian novel, *Brave New World* which became one of the defining dystopian novels of the twentieth century.

Nathaniel West: 1903 – 1940; American writer, his dystopian novel was *A Cool Million* (1934).

B. F. Skinner: 1904 – 1990; American psychology professor at Harvard University and one of the leading founders of behaviorism, Skinner also wrote a utopian novel *Walden Two* (1948). Skinner tells of a utopian community founded on the principles of behaviorism.

George Orwell: 1903 – 1950; real name was Eric Blair, Orwell was an English journalist who penned the two most famous dystopian novels of the twentieth century, *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) which both focused on the rise of Fascism and Totalitarianism.

Ursula K. Le Guin: born 1929; author of *The Dispossessed* (1974).

## Edward Bellamy - Brief Biography

Whether we are aware of it or not, almost all of us have some kind of connection to Edward Bellamy at some level, his cousin Francis Bellamy (a Baptist minister) was the person who wrote the American Pledge of Allegiance in 1892. Francis and Edward were both tireless champions of economic socialism; motivated by what they believed to be a morally, economically, and religiously superior economic system than that of capitalism.

Edward Bellamy was born on March 26, 1850 in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, to a long line of New England Baptist ministers. He was educated in America and Germany and at the age of twenty-one he was admitted to the Massachusetts bar, but quickly abandoned law as a career after only one case (he evicted an elderly woman from her home). From there he turned to journalism and writing, to which he would dedicate the rest of his life and career. He wrote a total of six novels and a collection of short stories, he also founded two magazines (the *Nationalist* 1888 - 1891 and the *New Nation* 1891 - 1894) both of which served to promote his theories of socialism - or Nationalism, as he called it.

Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward* is an important document in American social, political, and economic history. In it Bellamy sketches out a blueprint for the perfect society - one in which hunger, crime, disease, and poverty have been virtually eliminated. On the surface the novel is a fanciful story, where unsuspecting time-traveler Julian West finds himself waking up from a hypnotic sleep 100 years into the future. But on a deeper level the novel is a biting commentary and critique of nineteenth century American values and institutions. Bellamy's novel is considered a timeless classic, which was an immediate best seller when first published in 1888 (by December of 1889 *Looking Backward* was selling ten thousand copies a week and had reached the two hundred thousand mark - it was one of the most widely discussed books of the century) and vaulted Bellamy into an elite circle of American literary figures.

Bellamy's sequel to *Looking Backward* was written in 1897 and was titled *Equality*; however, it never gained the popularity that *Looking Backward* had. Edward Bellamy died on May 22, 1898, with tuberculosis and possible cancer of the throat, at the height of his career - he is buried in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts.

It would be easy for us to dismiss this book as a failure in economic ideology and confine Bellamy and *Looking Backward* to the ivory tower of intellectual academia, where only professional historians live and reside; however, I believe this would be a mistake. The fact of the matter is that capitalism failed - the capitalism that Bellamy was attacking did not survive, it adapted itself and evolved. This evolution was brought about by a number of factors, one of which was the literary attacks, transformed into social action, by writers like Edward Bellamy.

## Selections From: *Looking Backward: 2000 - 1887*

### Two Views of History:

Humanity, they argued, having climbed to the top round of the ladder of civilization, was about to take a header into chaos, after which it would doubtless pick itself up, turn round, and begin to climb again. Repeated experiences of this sort in historic and prehistoric times possibly accounted for the puzzling bumps on the human cranium. Human history, like all great movements, was cyclical, and returned to the point of beginning. The idea of indefinite progress in a right line was a chimera of the imagination, with no analogue in nature. (*Looking Backward*, pg. 8)

### The Great Trust:

Meanwhile, without being in the smallest degree checked by the clamor against it, the absorption of business by ever larger monopolies continued. In the United States there was not, after the beginning of the last quarter of the century, any opportunity whatever for individual enterprise in any important field of industry, unless backed by a great capital. . . . These syndicates, pools, trusts, or whatever their name, fixed prices and crushed all competition except when combinations as vast as themselves rose. Then a struggle, resulting in a still greater consolidation, ensued. . . . The fact that the desperate popular opposition to the consolidation of business in a few powerful hands had no effect to check it proves that there must have been a strong economical reason for it. . . . Oppressive and intolerable as was the regime of the great consolidations of capital, even its victims, while they cursed it, were forced to admit the prodigious increase of efficiency which had been imparted to the national industries, the vast economies effected by concentration of management and unity of organization, and to confess that since the new system had taken the place of the old the wealth of the world had increased at a rate before undreamed of. . . . Early in the last century the evolution was completed by the final consolidation of the entire capital of the nation. The industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons at their caprice and for their profit, were intrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. . . . The epoch of trusts had ended in The Great Trust. (*Looking Backward*, pg. 26 - 27)

### Human Nature:

"Human nature itself must have changed very much," I said. "Not at all," was Dr. Leete's reply, "but the conditions of human life have changed, and with them the motives of human action." (*Looking Backward*, pg. 29)

### The Story of the Umbrella:

Dr. Leete, who was walking ahead, overhearing something of our talk, turned to say that the difference between the age of individualism and that of concert was well characterized by the fact that, in the nineteenth century, when it rained, the people of Boston put up three hundred thousand umbrellas over as many heads, and in the twentieth century they put up one umbrella over all the heads. . . . As we walked on, Edith said, "The private umbrella is father's favorite figure to illustrate the old way when everybody lived for himself and his family. There is a nineteenth century painting at the Art Gallery representing a crowd of people in the rain, each one holding his umbrella over himself and his wife, and giving his neighbors the drippings, which he claims must have been meant by the artist as a satire on his times." (*Looking Backward*, pg. 74)

# The Small Group Seminar:

## Seminar Rules:

1. Participants may not express an opinion without first referencing the text.
2. No reference may be repeated.
3. Participants will take turns (you **MAY NOT** talk until it is your turn).
4. Participants will value the opinions of the other participants.
5. Participants will treat one another with respect.

## Seminar Questions:

Question 1: *Have you ever heard of Bellamy before, what do you think about him?* (everyone must answer this question – you do not need to reference the text for this question): the order is to the left of the leader.

Question 2: *Do you think history is cyclical or linear? Why – what evidence do you have to support that? What do you think Bellamy thinks about it?* (anyone may answer this question – you must reference the text before answering): the leader will recognize those who wish to answer this question.

Question 3: *Bellamy makes the case that monopolies are good for the economy – how does he support this claim, do you agree with him? Why or why not?* (anyone may answer this question – you must reference the text before answering): the leader will recognize those who wish to answer this question.

Question 4: *Bellamy seems to fall on the side of nurture in the nature-nurture controversy – do you agree with him on this? Why or why not?* (anyone may answer this question – you must reference the text before answering): the leader will recognize those who wish to answer this question.

Question 5: *Do you think the story of the Umbrella is a fair criticism of the nineteenth or twentieth century United States? How could one counter what Bellamy is saying about our society?* (anyone may answer this question – you must reference the text before answering): the leader will recognize those who wish to answer this question.

Question 6: *Do you like this strategy – what would and would not work in your classroom?* (everyone must answer this question – you do not need to reference the text for this question): the order is to the right of the leader.

**NOTE:** In the first and last questions, if you wish to speak more than once - after the entire circle has spoken - then you may raise your hand, then the leader will recognize you and you may say additional comments.

## In Practice - How It's Used in Class

I try to use this strategy about once every two weeks or so, sometimes more sometimes less depending on the material we are covering - the students love it. I usually give them a short reading quiz on the material and then give them a daily grade based on their participation in the seminar. I use a scoring rubric for their daily participation grade (it looks something like this):

Name	Preparation	Relevant, Instructive, and Critical Questions and Answers	No Interruptions	Constant Eye Contact and Active Listening	Referenced Text and Did NOT Repeat a Reference	Total Score
1.	20	15	10	20	20	85
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						

**Tricks of the Trade:** Over the years, I have been doing this particular strategy for several years now, I have developed a number of tricks to help make this strategy more successful for both me and my students.

- ❖ Rotate the students that are in each of the groups, after a few times of being together; they will tend to get off task quicker. Mix up the group members - it keeps them honest.
- ❖ I prefer to use the multiple group classroom set-up; you can always have an inner / outer circle set-up or one big group (depending on the size of your class). For me the multiple group set-up is the best. My class sizes are about 30 per class, last year I had two classes that had 38 students in it and we still pulled off this strategy.
- ❖ Because I use the multiple group set-up, it can get a bit noisy (that is ok, I always tell my students there is a difference between good noise and bad noise). But in order to control the noise level in class, I have a collection of stuffed animals that I use to help control the noise level. The group leader is responsible to passing the animal - you are only allowed to talk if you are holding the animal.
- ❖ Always give a reading quiz - hold them accountable for the reading.
- ❖ Always give a grade for participating in the seminar - hold them accountable for participating in the strategy.
- ❖ Nothing is out on their desk except the questions and reading.
- ❖ Give the students the reading in advance; I usually give my students all of their readings 6wks in advance with a schedule of when each one is due.
- ❖ Don't give them the questions ahead of time.
- ❖ Teach them the strategy before you start to expect results with the content. I always do one of these the first or second week of school; the purpose of this is to teach the students the strategy - I don't care about the content in this first attempt. I usually have one group go and the rest of the class circles around them watching and I give feed back.
- ❖ Don't expect outstanding results unless you encourage active participation in your classes. Students must feel comfortable with speaking in class in order for this to be effective - if they are used to sitting and copying notes in a lecture format, it will be awkward for them at first.
- ❖ Rome was not built in a day - this is a difficult but effective strategy, if it is not successful the first time, keep trying, the students have to get comfortable with it as well as you.
- ❖ Once you get this down, you and the students will love it. I always enjoy these days more than anything - and it's very rewarding seeing students who were in my first period class walking through the halls seventh period still arguing about the seminar topic in history. It does not get any better than this - for teachers.

## The Simpsons: "They Saved Lisa's Brain" (AABF18), May 9, 1999

Wiggum: [cocking his pistol] What's going on? Where's the mayor?

Skinner: He skipped town.

Wiggum: Really? [lowers his weapon] So, who's in charge?

Hibbert: Well, that's a good question. Let's, uh, take a quick look at the town charter. [takes it down from the wall, and lays it on the mayor's desk. The Mensans begin to read]

Lindsay: Done!

CBG: Done!

Lisa: Done!

Hibbert: Done!

Skinner: Done!

Frink: [sing-song] Fin-ished.

Skinner: According to the charter, should the mayor abdicate, a council of learned citizens may rule in his stead.

Lisa: Well, there's no one more learned than us.

Hibbert: So I guess [chuckles] we're in charge.

Wiggum: Wha? Lemme see that. [takes the charter and starts reading] See here . . . We the people . . . cruel and unusual . . . blah, blah, blah . . . ritual circumcission . . . yak, yak, yak, ah, geez, I'll take your word for it. [puts the charter back on the desk] I guess you are in charge! [Mensa group cheers]

Lisa: With our superior intellects, we could rebuild this city on a foundation of reason and enlightenment. We could turn Springfield into a utopia!

Skinner: A new Athens!

Lindsay: Or Walden II.

Wiggum: Yeah, a real Candyland. [the others stare at him] Of the mind, the mind. I'll just go now. [he and the other cops start to leave] Bunch of dorks.

Three days pass, and Kent Brockman drops by city hall to interview the "Bright Pack."

Brockman: So, Lisa, what do you and your fellow eggheads have planned for the city? Business as usual?

Lisa: No, Kent, we're going to use the power of good ideas to change things for the better.

Brockman: [laughs] Well, excuse this jaded reporter if he says he's heard that before.

Lisa: Oh, well, we really mean it.

Brockman: [shocked] Ahh! You do?

Lindsay: Yes. For example, no one was showing up for jury duty, so we made the experience more exciting by synergizing it with his comic book collection.

[cut to Moe's tavern. Moe opens an envelope]

Moe: [reading] You have been chosen to join the Justice Squadron, 8 a.m. Monday at the Municipal Fortress of Vengeance. Oh, I am \*so\* there.

[back to City Hall]

Frink: We studied the traffic patterns and found that drivers move the fastest through yellow lights. So now, we just have the red and yellow lights.

[cut to Lenny, driving on the street. The light turns from red to yellow, and Lenny floors it]

Lenny: C'mon, stay yellow, stay yellow! Man, I'm making record time! [wistfully] If only I had some place to be.

[back to City Hall]

Skinner: And we've really elevated the level of discourse at the dog track.

[cut to the track, with Skinner's explanation as a voice-over]

We've replaced the fanfare with classical music, and instead of chasing a rabbit, the dogs chase a diploma.

[back to City Hall]

CBG: The world has already taken note of our accomplishments. [points to a computer listing of cities] Springfield has moved up to #299 on the list of America's most livable 300 cities. Take that, East St. Louis!

The learned council conducts a weekly status meeting. Skinner proudly reports that the trains are now running on time – metric time. Lisa asks for proposals to give at the State of the City address. CBG has a plan for eliminating female obesity. Lindsay brushes this off and suggests building a shadow-puppet theater (both Balinese and Thai). CBG sarcastically dismisses the idea, which pegs Frink's sarcasm detector.

Ooh, a sarcasm detector. Oh, that's a \*real\* useful invention. [the detector beeps rapidly and explodes]

The council dissolves into bickering.

Lisa welcomes the town to the State of the City address.

Lisa: Welcome, everyone! Today we embark on a new era of intelligent governance.

Crowd: [chanting] Gov-er-nance! Gov-er-nance! Gov-er-nance!

Skinner: [clears throat] We have some new rules and regulations that you're just going to go ape-poop over. Professor Frink? [yields the mike to Frink]

Frink: [clears throat] Well, first of all, we're going to ban such barbaric sports as bullfighting and cockfighting. [cheers from the crowd] Also boxing, both, uh, kick and the kinds with the gloves, there. [less enthusiastic cheering] And hockey, football, push-ups, and anything in general where you have to take off your shirt, which is embarrassing. [crowd murmurs]

Lisa: [whispering to Lindsay] I don't remember discussing that.

[CBG takes the microphone]

CBG: Inspired by the most logical race in the galaxy, the Vulcans, breeding will be permitted once every seven years. For many of you, this will be much less breeding. For me, much, much more.

Willie: You cannot do that sir! You don't have the power! – East St. Louis is starting to look better.

As the crowd grows more unsettled, the council begins to argue amongst themselves again. The talk degenerates into an "I'm smarter than you are" contest, which is interrupted by a man in a wheelchair.

Council: Stephen Hawking!

Skinner: The world's smartest man!

Lisa: What are you doing here?

Hawking: I wanted to see your utopia, but now I see it is more of a Fruitopia.

Skinner: [chuckles] I'm sure what Dr. Hawking means is . . .

Hawking: Silence. I don't need anyone to talk for me, except this voice box. You have clearly been corrupted by power. For shame.

Homer: Larry Flynt is right! You guys stink! [the crowd cheers in agreement]

Dr. Hawking tells Skinner he's not sure what's the bigger disappointment: his own failure to formulate a unified field theory, or Springfield's egghead cabal.

Skinner objects, and Hawking punches him with a spring-loaded boxing glove he has mounted on his wheelchair.

The fight incites the crowd to take action.

Homer: Come on, you idiots! We're taking back this town!

Carl: Yeah! Let's make litter out of these literati!

Lenny: That's too clever – you're one of them! [punches Carl]

Lisa meekly asks the crowd to stay calm, but a full-scale Springfieldian riot quickly develops. Hawking figures it's time to make his escape and activates his automatic toothbrush. Oops . . . wrong button. His second try starts a set of helicopter blades and small thrusters, which enable Hawking to fly away from the gazebo.

As the roof is about to collapse upon her, Lisa yells for help.

Hawking uses his chair's telescoping grappling arm to grab Lisa, and rescue her in the nick of time. The two land safely some distance away from the fighting.

Marge: Lisa, thank God you're okay!

Homer: Did you have fun with your robot buddy?

Lisa: [embarrassed] Da-aad! [to Hawking] Oh, Dr. Hawking, we had such a beautiful dream. What went wrong?

Hawking: Don't feel bad, Lisa. Sometimes, the smartest of us can be the most childish.

Lisa: Even you?

Hawking: No. Not me. Never.

Marge sums things up nicely, by saying that everyone has their own idea of what makes a perfect world. Unfortunately, the sentiment isn't exactly hers – she read it off Dr. Hawking's voice computer screen. Trying to relieve the awkwardness of the moment, Marge suggests going out for some beers.

Hawking says, "That's the smartest thing I've heard all day."

So, the gang ends up at Moe's Tavern.

Hawking: Your theory of a donut-shaped universe is intriguing, Homer. I may have to steal it.

Homer: Wow, I can't believe someone I never heard of is hanging out with a guy like me.

Moe: All right, it's closing time. Who's paying the tab?

Homer: [imitating Hawking's voice box] I am.

Hawking: I didn't say that.

Homer: [still imitating] Yes I did. [the glove comes out again, bopping Homer in the face] [still imitating] D'oh.

# HARRISON BERGERON

by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

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THE YEAR WAS 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General.

Some things about living still weren't quite right, though. April for instance, still drove people crazy by not being springtime. And it was in that clammy month that the H-G men took George and Hazel Bergeron's fourteen-year-old son, Harrison, away.

It was tragic, all right, but George and Hazel couldn't think about it very hard. Hazel had a perfectly average intelligence, which meant she couldn't think about anything except in short bursts. And George, while his intelligence was way above normal, had a little mental handicap radio in his ear. He was required by law to wear it at all times. It was tuned to a government transmitter. Every twenty seconds or so, the transmitter would send out some sharp noise to keep people like George from taking unfair advantage of their brains.

George and Hazel were watching television. There were tears on Hazel's cheeks, but she'd forgotten for the moment what they were about.

On the television screen were ballerinas.

A buzzer sounded in George's head. His thoughts fled in panic, like bandits from a burglar alarm.

"That was a real pretty dance, that dance they just did," said Hazel.

"Huh" said George.

"That dance-it was nice," said Hazel.

"Yup," said George. He tried to think a little about the ballerinas. They weren't really very good - no better than anybody else would have been, anyway. They were burdened with sashweights and bags of birdshot, and their faces were masked, so that no one, seeing a free and graceful gesture or a pretty face, would feel like something the cat drug in. George was toying with the vague notion that maybe dancers shouldn't be handicapped. But he didn't get very far with it before another noise in his ear radio scattered his thoughts.

George winced. So did two out of the eight ballerinas.

Hazel saw him wince. Having no mental handicap herself, she had to ask George what the latest sound had been.

"Sounded like somebody hitting a milk bottle with a ball peen hammer," said George.

"I'd think it would be real interesting, hearing all the different sounds," said Hazel a little envious. "All the things they think up."

"Um," said George.

"Only, if I was Handicapper General, you know what I would do?" said Hazel. Hazel, as a matter of fact, bore a strong resemblance to the Handicapper General, a woman named Diana Moon Glampers. "If I was Diana Moon Glampers," said Hazel, "I'd have chimes on Sunday - just chimes. Kind of in honor of religion."

"I could think, if it was just chimes," said George.

"Well-maybe make 'em real loud," said Hazel. "I think I'd make a good Handicapper General."

"Good as anybody else," said George.

"Who knows better than I do what normal is?" said Hazel.

"Right," said George. He began to think glimmeringly about his abnormal son who was now in jail, about Harrison, but a twenty-one-gun salute in his head stopped that.

"Boy!" said Hazel, "that was a doozy, wasn't it?"

It was such a doozy that George was white and trembling, and tears stood on the rims of his red eyes. Two of the eight ballerinas had collapsed to the studio floor, were holding their temples.

"All of a sudden you look so tired," said Hazel. "Why don't you stretch out on the sofa, so you can rest your handicap bag on the pillows, honeybunch." She was referring to the forty-seven pounds of birdshot in a canvas bag, which was padlocked around George's neck. "Go on and rest the bag for a little while," she said. "I don't care if you're not equal to me for a while."

George weighed the bag with his hands. "I don't mind it," he said. "I don't notice it any more. It's just a part of me."

"You been so tired lately-kind of wore out," said Hazel. "If there was just some way we could make a little hole in the bottom of the bag, and just take out a few of them lead balls. Just a few."

"Two years in prison and two thousand dollars fine for every ball I took out," said George. "I don't call that a bargain."

"If you could just take a few out when you came home from work," said Hazel. "I mean-you don't compete with anybody around here. You just set around."

"If I tried to get away with it," said George, "then other people'd get away with it-and pretty soon we'd be right back to the dark ages again, with everybody competing against everybody else. You wouldn't like that, would you?"

"I'd hate it," said Hazel.

"There you are," said George. The minute people start cheating on laws, what do you think happens to society?"

If Hazel hadn't been able to come up with an answer to this question, George couldn't have supplied one. A siren was going off in his head.

"Reckon it'd fall all apart," said Hazel.

"What would?" said George blankly.

"Society," said Hazel uncertainly. "Wasn't that what you just said?"

"Who knows?" said George.

The television program was suddenly interrupted for a news bulletin. It wasn't clear at first as to what the bulletin was about, since the announcer, like all announcers, had a serious speech impediment. For about half a minute, and in a state of high excitement, the announcer tried to say, "Ladies and Gentlemen."

He finally gave up, handed the bulletin to a ballerina to read.

"That's all right-" Hazel said of the announcer, "he tried. That's the big thing. He tried to do the best he could with what God gave him. He should get a nice raise for trying so hard."

"Ladies and Gentlemen," said the ballerina, reading the bulletin. She must have been extraordinarily beautiful, because the mask she wore was hideous. And it was easy to see that she was the strongest and most graceful of all the dancers, for her handicap bags were as big as those worn by two-hundred pound men.

And she had to apologize at once for her voice, which was a very unfair voice for a woman to use. Her voice was a warm, luminous, timeless melody. "Excuse me-" she said, and she began again, making her voice absolutely uncompetitive.

"Harrison Bergeron, age fourteen," she said in a grackle squawk, "has just escaped from jail, where he was held on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the government. He is a genius and an athlete, is under-handicapped, and should be regarded as extremely dangerous."

A police photograph of Harrison Bergeron was flashed on the screen-upside down, then sideways, upside down again, then right side up. The picture showed the full length of Harrison against a background calibrated in feet and inches. He was exactly seven feet tall.

The rest of Harrison's appearance was Halloween and hardware. Nobody had ever born heavier handicaps. He had outgrown hindrances faster than the H-G men could think them up. Instead of a little ear radio for a mental handicap, he wore a tremendous pair of earphones, and spectacles with thick wavy lenses. The spectacles were intended to make him not only half blind, but to give him whanging headaches besides.

Scrap metal was hung all over him. Ordinarily, there was a certain symmetry, a military neatness to the handicaps issued to strong people, but Harrison looked like a walking junkyard. In the race of life, Harrison carried three hundred pounds.

And to offset his good looks, the H-G men required that he wear at all times a red rubber ball for a nose, keep his eyebrows shaved off, and cover his even white teeth with black caps at snaggle-tooth random.

"If you see this boy," said the ballerina, "do not - I repeat, do not - try to reason with him."

There was the shriek of a door being torn from its hinges.

Screams and barking cries of consternation came from the television set. The photograph of Harrison Bergeron on the screen jumped again and again, as though dancing to the tune of an earthquake.

George Bergeron correctly identified the earthquake, and well he might have - for many was the time his own home had danced to the same crashing tune. "My God-" said George, "that must be Harrison!"

The realization was blasted from his mind instantly by the sound of an automobile collision in his head.

When George could open his eyes again, the photograph of Harrison was gone. A living, breathing Harrison filled the screen.

Clanking, clownish, and huge, Harrison stood - in the center of the studio. The knob of the uprooted studio door was still in his hand. Ballerinas, technicians, musicians, and announcers cowered on their knees before him, expecting to die.

"I am the Emperor!" cried Harrison. "Do you hear? I am the Emperor! Everybody must do what I say at once!" He stamped his foot and the studio shook.

"Even as I stand here" he bellowed, "crippled, hobbled, sickened - I am a greater ruler than any man who ever lived! Now watch me become what I can become!"

Harrison tore the straps of his handicap harness like wet tissue paper, tore straps guaranteed to support five thousand pounds.

Harrison's scrap-iron handicaps crashed to the floor.

Harrison thrust his thumbs under the bar of the padlock that secured his head harness. The bar snapped like celery. Harrison smashed his headphones and spectacles against the wall.

He flung away his rubber-ball nose, revealed a man that would have awed Thor, the god of thunder.

"I shall now select my Empress!" he said, looking down on the cowering people. "Let the first woman who dares rise to her feet claim her mate and her throne!"

A moment passed, and then a ballerina arose, swaying like a willow.

Harrison plucked the mental handicap from her ear, snapped off her physical handicaps with marvelous delicacy. Last of all he removed her mask.

She was blindingly beautiful.

"Now-" said Harrison, taking her hand, "shall we show the people the meaning of the word dance? Music!" he commanded.

The musicians scrambled back into their chairs, and Harrison stripped them of their handicaps, too. "Play your best," he told them, "and I'll make you barons and dukes and earls."

The music began. It was normal at first-cheap, silly, false. But Harrison snatched two musicians from their chairs, waved them like batons as he sang the music as he wanted it played. He slammed them back into their chairs.

The music began again and was much improved.

Harrison and his Empress merely listened to the music for a while-listened gravely, as though synchronizing their heartbeats with it.

They shifted their weights to their toes.

Harrison placed his big hands on the girls tiny waist, letting her sense the weightlessness that would soon be hers.

And then, in an explosion of joy and grace, into the air they sprang!

Not only were the laws of the land abandoned, but the law of gravity and the laws of motion as well.

They reeled, whirled, swiveled, flounced, capered, gamboled, and spun.

They leaped like deer on the moon.

The studio ceiling was thirty feet high, but each leap brought the dancers nearer to it.

It became their obvious intention to kiss the ceiling. They kissed it.

And then, neutraling gravity with love and pure will, they remained suspended in air inches below the ceiling, and they kissed each other for a long, long time.

It was then that Diana Moon Glampers, the Handicapper General, came into the studio with a double-barreled ten-gauge shotgun. She fired twice, and the Emperor and the Empress were dead before they hit the floor.

Diana Moon Glampers loaded the gun again. She aimed it at the musicians and told them they had ten seconds to get their handicaps back on.

It was then that the Bergerons' television tube burned out.

Hazel turned to comment about the blackout to George. But George had gone out into the kitchen for a can of beer.

George came back in with the beer, paused while a handicap signal shook him up. And then he sat down again. "You been crying" he said to Hazel.

"Yup," she said.

"What about?" he said.

"I forget," she said. "Something real sad on television."

"What was it?" he said.

"It's all kind of mixed up in my mind," said Hazel.

"Forget sad things," said George.

"I always do," said Hazel.

"That's my girl," said George. He winced. There was the sound of a riveting gun in his head.

"Gee - I could tell that one was a doozy," said Hazel.

"You can say that again," said George.

"Gee . . ." said Hazel, "I could tell that one was a doozy."

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Interested individuals should consult the works of individual writers mentioned on the outline.