



Burke County Public Library

Morganton ♦ Valdese ♦ C.B. Hildebrand

# YA Fiction Addiction Book Discussion Group January 2012



## DYSTOPIAN FICTION

\*A dystopia is the idea of a society in a repressive and controlled state, often under the guise of being utopian. Dystopian societies feature different kinds of repressive social control systems, various forms of active and passive coercion. Ideas and works about dystopian societies often explore the concept of humans abusing technology and humans individually and collectively coping, or not being able to properly cope with technology that has progressed far more rapidly than humanity's spiritual evolution. Dystopian societies are often imagined as police states, with unlimited power over the citizens.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dystopia>

# DYSTOPIAN FICTION

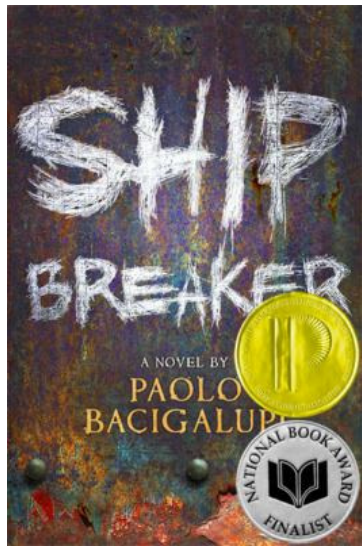
This month we will be focusing on the Science Fiction sub-genre, Dystopian Fiction.

Fictional dystopias are often set in a future projected virtual time and/or space involving technological innovations not accessible in actual present reality.

Some characteristics of dystopian fiction are as follows:

- **Back Story**—Because a fictional universe has to be constructed, a selectively told back-story of a war, revolution, uprising, critical over-population, or other disaster is often introduced early in the narrative.
- **Hero**—Unlike utopian fiction, which often features an outsider to have the world shown to him, dystopias seldom feature an outsider as the protagonist. While such a character would more clearly understand the nature of the society, based on comparison to his society, the knowledge of the outside culture subverts the power of the dystopia. The story usually centers on a protagonist who questions the society, often feeling intuitively that something is terribly wrong, such as Guy Montag in Ray Bradbury's novel Fahrenheit 451. The hero comes to believe that escape or even overturning the social order is possible and decides to act at the risk of life and limb; this may appear as irrational even to him or her, but he or she still acts.
- **Conflict**—In many cases, the hero's conflict brings him or her to a representative of the dystopia who articulates its principles. There is usually a group of people somewhere in the society who are not under the complete control of the state, and in whom the hero of the novel usually puts his or her hope, although often he or she still fails to change anything.
- **Climax**—The story is often (but not always) *unresolved* even if the hero manages to escape or destroy the dystopia. That is, the narrative may deal with individuals in a dystopian society who are unsatisfied, and may rebel, but ultimately fail to change anything. Sometimes they themselves end up changed to conform to the society's norms. This narrative arc to a sense of hopelessness can be found in such classic dystopian works as Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell. It contrasts with much fiction of the future, in which a hero succeeds in resolving conflicts or otherwise changes things for the better.

# EXAMPLES OF YA DYSTOPIAN FICTION



## Ship Breaker by Paolo Bacigalupi (2010)

### Summary:

In America's Gulf Coast region, where grounded oil tankers are being broken down for parts, Nailer, a teenage boy, works the light crew, scavenging for copper wiring just to make quota--and hopefully live to see another day. But when, by luck or chance, he discovers an exquisite clipper ship beached during a recent hurricane, Nailer faces the most important decision of his life: Strip the ship for all it's worth or rescue its lone survivor, a beautiful and wealthy girl who could lead him to a better life. . . In this powerful novel, award-winning author Paolo Bacigalupi delivers a thrilling, fast-paced adventure set in a vivid and raw, uncertain future.

## \*NEW\* Eve by Anna Carey (2011)

### Summary:

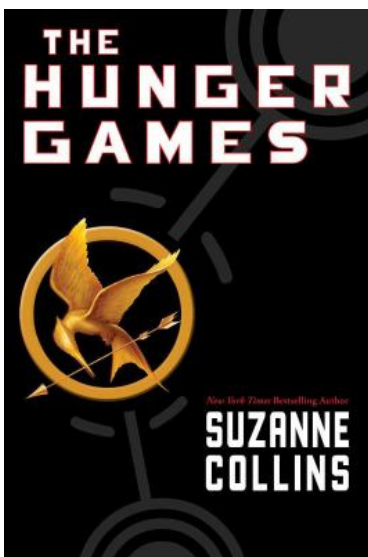
In 2032, sixteen years after a deadly virus has wiped out most of the earth's population, Eve discovers the terrible fate that awaits students when they graduate from their all-girls school, and she sets off on a treacherous journey into the wilds of The New America, searching for a place where she can survive.

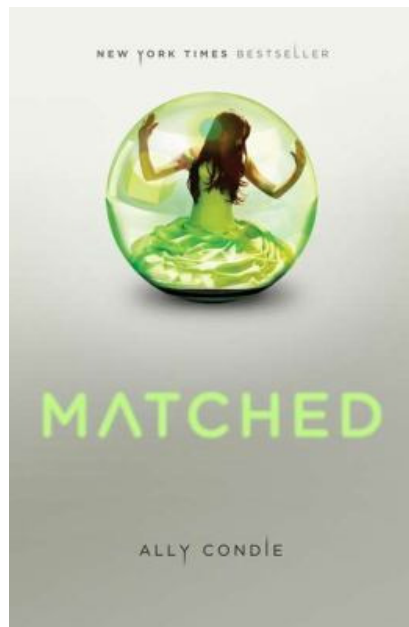


## The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins (2008)

### Summary:

In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. The Capitol is harsh and cruel and keeps the other districts in line by forcing them to participate in the annual Hunger Games, a fight-to-the-death on live TV. One boy and one girl between the ages of twelve and sixteen are selected by lottery to play. The winner brings riches and favor to his or her district. But that is nothing compared to what the Capitol wins: one more year of fearful compliance with its rule. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives alone with her mother and younger sister, regards it as a death sentence when she is forced to represent her impoverished district in the Games. But Katniss has been close to dead before - and survival, for her, is second nature. If she is to win, she will have to start making choices that weigh survival against humanity and life against love.





### Matched by Ally Condie (2010)

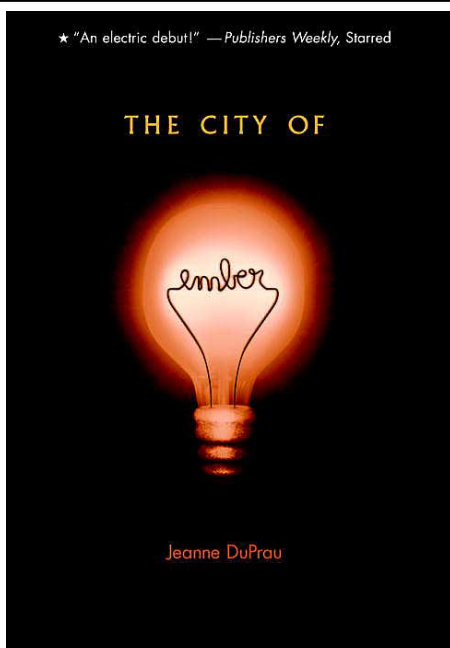
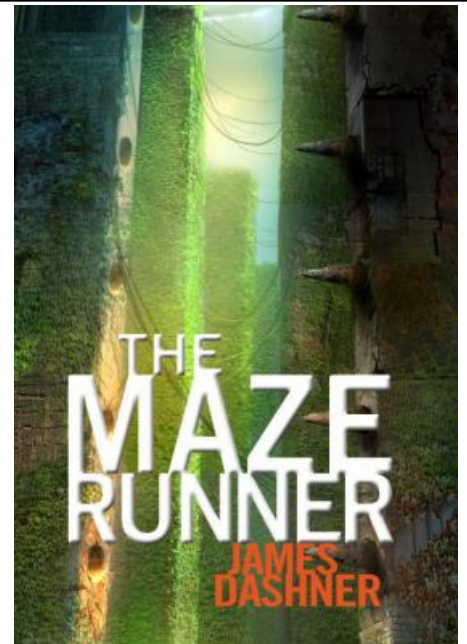
#### Summary:

Cassia has always trusted the Society to make the right choices for her: what to read, what to watch, what to believe. So when Xander's face appears on-screen at her Matching ceremony, Cassia knows with complete certainty that he is her ideal mate . . . until she sees Ky Markham's face flash for an instant before the screen fades to black. The Society tells her it's a glitch, a rare malfunction, and that she should focus on the happy life she's destined to lead with Xander. But Cassia can't stop thinking about Ky, and as they slowly fall in love, Cassia begins to doubt the Society's infallibility and is faced with an impossible choice: between Xander and Ky, between the only life she's known and a path that no one else has dared to follow.

### The Maze Runner by James Dashner (2009)

#### Summary:

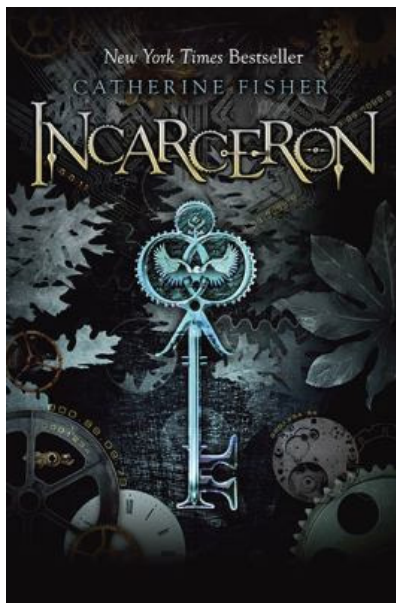
When Thomas wakes up in the lift, the only thing he can remember is his first name. His memory is blank. But he's not alone. When the lift's doors open, Thomas finds himself surrounded by kids who welcome him to the Glade—a large, open expanse surrounded by stone walls. Just like Thomas, the Gladers don't know why or how they got to the Glade. All they know is that every morning the stone doors to the maze that surrounds them have opened. Every night they've closed tight. And every 30 days a new boy has been delivered in the lift. Thomas was expected. But the next day, a girl is sent up—the first girl ever to arrive in the Glade. And more surprising yet is the message she delivers. Thomas might be more important than he could ever guess. If only he could unlock the dark secrets buried within his mind.



### The City of Ember by Jeanne Duprau (2003)

#### Summary:

The City of Ember was built as a last refuge for the human race. Two hundred years later, the great lamps that light the city are beginning to flicker. When Lina finds part of an ancient message, she's sure it holds a secret that will save the city. She and her friend Doon must decipher the message before the lights go out on Ember forever!



## Incarceron by Catherine Fisher (2010)

### Summary:

Incarceron is a prison so vast that it contains not only cells, but also metal forests, dilapidated cities, and vast wilderness. Finn, a seventeen-year-old prisoner, has no memory of his childhood and is sure that he came from Outside Incarceron. Very few prisoners believe that there is an Outside, however, which makes escape seem impossible. And then Finn finds a crystal key that allows him to communicate with a girl named Claudia. She claims to live Outside - she is the daughter of the Warden of Incarceron, and doomed to an arranged marriage. Finn is determined to escape the prison and Claudia believes she can help him. But they don't realize that there is more to Incarceron than meets the eye, and escape will take their greatest courage and cost more than they know. Because Incarceron is alive.

## \*NEW\* Legend by Marie Lu (2011)

### Summary:

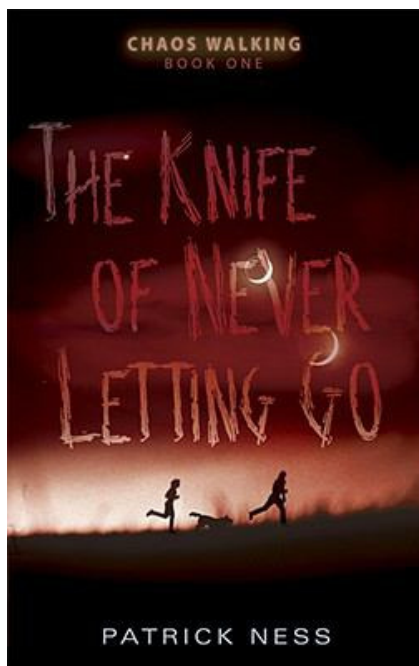
What was once the western United States is now home to the Republic, a nation perpetually at war with its neighbors. Born into an elite family in one of the Republic's wealthiest districts, fifteen-year-old June is a prodigy being groomed for success in the Republic's highest military circles. Born into the slums, fifteen-year-old Day is the country's most wanted criminal. But his motives may not be as malicious as they seem. From very different worlds, June and Day have no reason to cross paths--until the day June's brother, Metias, is murdered and Day becomes the prime suspect. Caught in the ultimate game of cat and mouse, Day is in a race for his family's survival, while June seeks to avenge Metias's death. But in a shocking turn of events, the two uncover the truth of what has really brought them together, and the sinister lengths their country will go to keep its secrets.



## The Knife of Never Letting Go by Patrick Ness (2008)

### Summary:

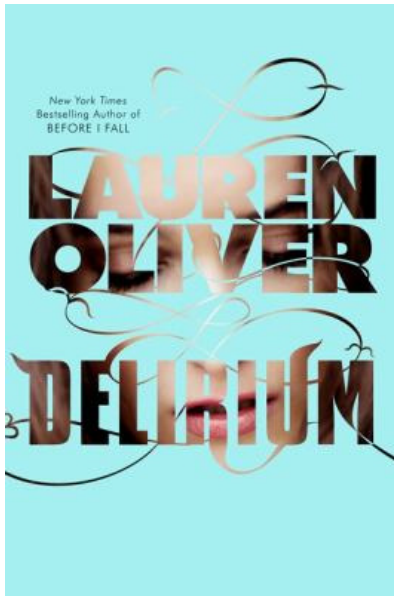
Pursued by power-hungry Prentiss and mad minister Aaron, young Todd and Viola set out across New World searching for answers about his colony's true past and seeking a way to warn the ship bringing hopeful settlers from Old World.



Delirium by Lauren Oliver (2011)

Summary:

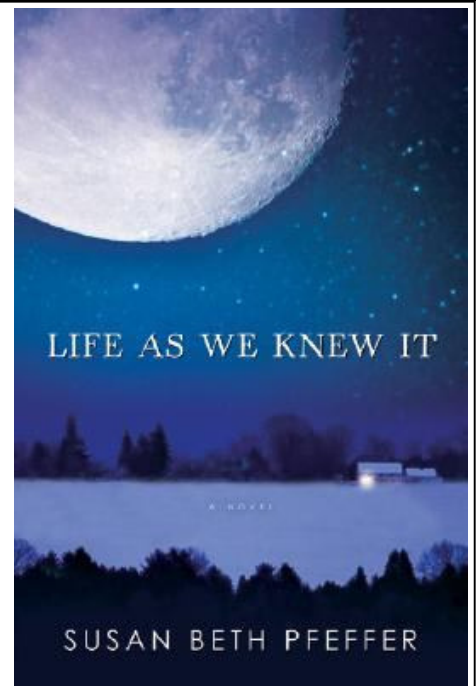
Lena looks forward to receiving the government-mandated cure that prevents the delirium of love and leads to a safe, predictable, and happy life, until ninety-five days before her eighteenth birthday and her treatment, when she falls in love.



Life As We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer (2006)

Summary:

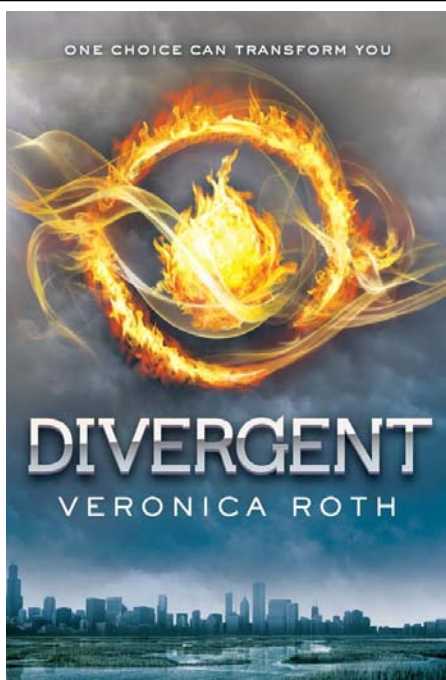
Miranda's disbelief turns to fear in a split second when a meteor knocks the moon closer to the earth. How should her family prepare for the future when worldwide tsunamis wipe out the coasts, earthquakes rock the continents, and volcanic ash blocks out the sun? As summer turns to Arctic winter Miranda, her two brothers, and their mother's retreat to the unexpected safe haven of their sunroom, where they subsist on stockpiled food and limited water in the warmth of a wood-burning stove. Told in journal entries, this is the heart-pounding story of Miranda's struggle to hold on to the most important resource of all--hope--in an increasingly desperate and unfamiliar world.



Divergent by Veronica Roth (2011)

Summary:

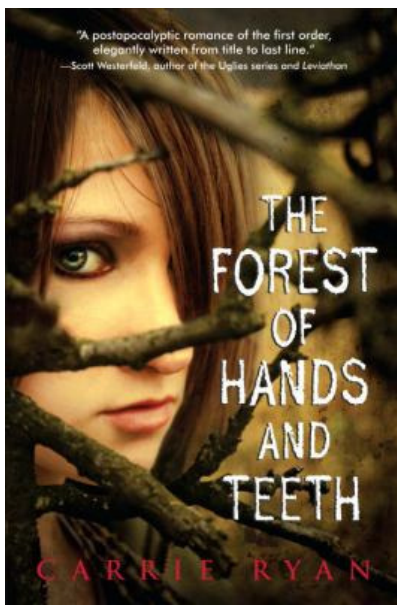
In a future Chicago, sixteen-year-old Beatrice Prior must choose among five predetermined factions to define her identity for the rest of her life, a decision made more difficult when she discovers that she is an anomaly who does not fit into any one group, and that the society she lives in is not perfect after all.



## The Forest of Hands and Teeth by Carrie Ryan (2009)

### Summary:

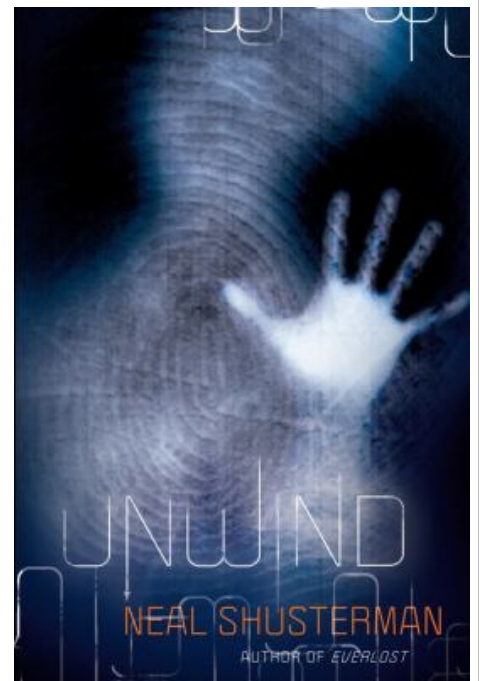
In Mary's world there are simple truths. The Sisterhood always knows best, and the fence that protects her village from the Forest and Hands and Teeth must remain intact. After the fence is breached, Mary's world is thrown into chaos, and she must choose between her village and her future.



## Unwind by Neal Shusterman (2007)

### Summary:

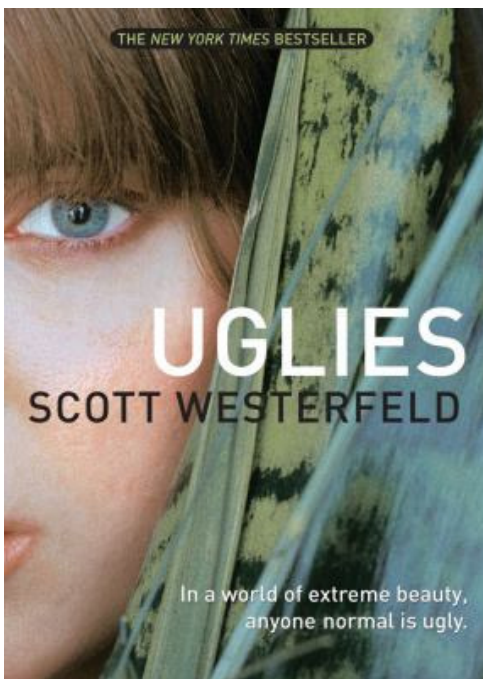
In a society where unwanted teens are salvaged for their body parts, three runaways fight the system that would "unwind" them. Connor's parents want to be rid of him because he's a troublemaker. Risa has no parents and is being unwound to cut orphanage costs. Lev's unwinding has been planned since his birth, as part of his family's strict religion. Brought together by chance, and kept together by desperation, these three unlikely companions make a harrowing cross-country journey, knowing their lives hang in the balance. If they can survive until their eighteenth birthday, they can't be harmed -- but when every piece of them, from their hands to their hearts, are wanted by a world gone mad, eighteen seems far, far away. In *Unwind*, Boston Globe/Horn Book Award winner Neal Shusterman challenges readers' ideas about life -- not just where life begins, and where it ends, but what it truly means to be alive.



## The Uglies by Scott Westerfeld (2005)

### Summary:

Everybody gets to be supermodel gorgeous. What could be wrong with that? Tally is about to turn sixteen, and she can't wait. Not for her license -- for turning pretty. In Tally's world, your sixteenth birthday brings an operation that turns you from a repellent ugly into a stunningly attractive pretty and catapults you into a high-tech paradise where your only job is to have a really great time. In just a few weeks Tally will be there. But Tally's new friend Shay isn't sure she wants to be pretty. She'd rather risk life on the outside. When Shay runs away, Tally learns about a whole new side of the pretty world -- and it isn't very pretty. The authorities offer Tally the worst choice she can imagine: find her friend and turn her in, or never turn pretty at all. The choice Tally makes changes her world forever.



## **DYSTOPIAN CLASSICS**

Planet of the Apes by Pierre Boulle

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury

Lord of the Flies by William Golding

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka

Perelandra by C.S. Lewis

The Iron Heel by Jack London

The Giver by Lois Lowry

1984 by George Orwell

Anthem by Ayn Rand

The Time Machine by H.G. Wells

## **OTHER DYSTOPIAN NOVELS**

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood

The Year of the Flood by Margaret Atwood

The Pest House by Jim Crace

Hellstrom's Hive by Frank Herbert

Flashback by Dan Simmons

The Scourge of God by S.M. Stirling

The Sword of the Lady by S.M. Stirling

The High King of Montival by S.M. Stirling

The Gladiator by Harry Turtledove

## **DYSTOPIAN MOVIES**

\*\*Children of Men (2006)

\*\*A Clockwork Orange (1971)

\*\*City of Ember (2008)

\*\*Fahrenheit 451 (1966)

\*\*The Hunger Games (2012)

The Matrix (1999)

Minority Report (2002)

\*\*Planet of the Apes (1968 & 2001)

\*\*V for Vendetta (2005)

WALL-E (2008)

**NOTE:** All **book**

titles listed in  
this packet are  
available at  
Burke County  
Public Library.

\*\* Indicates—>based on a  
book.