

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Brave New World

(Competition Version)

By
DOUGLAS POST

Based on the book by
ALDOUS HUXLEY

Dramatic Publishing Company
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMXXVI by DOUGLAS POST

Based upon the book *Brave New World* by ALDOUS HUXLEY

Printed in the United States of America

All Rights Reserved

(BRAVE NEW WORLD [Competition Version])

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:

Georges Borchardt, Inc.

228 E. 45th St., 14S

New York, NY 10017

ISBN: 978-1-61959-377-0

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play must give credit to Aldous Huxley as the author of the book and Douglas Post as the dramatizer of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The names of Aldous Huxley and Douglas Post must also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and must appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on Aldous Huxley and Douglas Post, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

PREFACE

For 10 years, I was a student of acting, meaning throughout high school, college and at the start of what I hoped would be a life in the theatre, I found ways to appear in plays. I didn't know it at the time, but there is no better training ground for a playwright than to be onstage attempting to bring the text of a published author into that time and place we call a live performance. It teaches you what works, what doesn't work, what dialogue helps drive the character forward, what falls flat and how everything connects to the center of the story. You are a participant in someone else's world, but you have to make it your own. And you begin to understand how a play is constructed, not by standing at a distance and looking at it, or simply reading it, but by being inside it.

Located on the North Shore of Chicago, Deerfield High School had a thriving fine arts department when I enrolled as a freshman, and I was lucky enough to be cast in some classic full-length plays such as Howard Richardson and William Berney's *Dark of the Moon* and Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. But the first opportunity I got to perform in a one-act play came with our drama club's abbreviated version of George Orwell's *1984*, where I took on the role of Winston Smith. After a single performance for the fellow members of our thespian society, we were asked to recreate our stage piece for the Fine Arts Evening, where we trod the boards alongside truncated versions of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*. It was a night of one-act plays, with fledgling actors engaging with some of the finest writing of our time. I doubt that any one of us hit the heights, but we struggled mightily to bring these great works to life.

At the start of my junior year, my family moved to Houston, where I found myself studying at a brand-new facility called Stratford High School. This is where I first learned of the Texas UIL One-Act Play contest, which was at the time and remains the world's largest high-school play competition. That first year, we put on a production of Nevil Malin's *King of the Castle*, and I was asked to be The Masked Player, a part that didn't exist until our drama teacher made it so. I believe we advanced through the first round of the contest but didn't survive the second. However, my senior year, our fortunes changed with Herbert W. Payne's *The Summoning of Everyman*, in which I portrayed the title character. We took our one-act version of this medieval morality play through five levels of competition and achieved second place in the state. Considering we were competing against almost 900 other schools, we felt pretty good about ourselves. For my efforts, I received the Best Actor Award and the Samuel French Award for Outstanding Performer. And had I attended the University of Texas at Austin, I would have gotten a small scholarship.

Instead, I went to Trinity University in San Antonio, where I double majored in drama and English. Rather than focusing on a specific area, our theatre instructors encouraged us to learn about all aspects of the performing arts and so I ended up working on 16 shows during my time at this institution. Near the end of every school year, our department produced something called the Spring Happening, which was a festival of one-act plays directed, designed and acted by college students. And, yes, a few of them were also written by those of us who were taking playwriting courses. I got two such very young and early works produced this way and had a third one-act staged as part of a classroom showcase.

All of this is to say that my affection for this particular form of theatre, meaning a play that usually runs under 40 minutes yet is complete in and of itself, has been with me from a fairly young age. So when Dramatic Publishing asked if I would consider creating a competition version of my stage adaptation of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, my answer was yes. I could approach this assignment not only as a working playwright but as someone who had stood on the other side of the footlights and taken part in these contests. It seemed fun and interesting, and I might even be giving something back to the arena in which I'd trained. Now I had to figure out how to do it.

I knew this play would have to feel like it could move fast. And I knew it would need to be done with a minimal amount of set changes. But the main challenge was how to communicate the large sections of dramatic action that, for the sake of time, had to be cut. Then I recalled a device that Huxley utilized in his novel and that I had made use of at the top of the second act of my play. Bernard Marx is asked to deliver a series of daily reports to Mustapha Mond, one of ten World Controllers of the World State. These missives concern John, "the Savage," whom he has brought back to "civilization" from his excursion to Malpais. I wondered what would happen if Bernard extended these reports so that he felt the need to start at the beginning of his story and thus tell Mond exactly how his friendship with John developed before "the Savage" came to a tragic end. This allowed me to create a framing device for the shorter version of this saga and also gave Bernard the last word. He repeats the single Shakespearean phrase he has learned from John, only he restates it ironically.

As I pointed out in the preface to my full-length version of *Brave New World*, any scribe taking an epic piece of prose and turning

it into a play is by definition a servant of two masters. One needs to be true to the source material, but one also needs to be true to the new medium in which one is working. As such, changes were made along the way and it is worth mentioning a few of them here. At the end of the novel, John is alone as he climbs the steps to the top of a lighthouse and hangs himself. In my stage play, John takes his own life by plunging a knife into his heart. This happens in full view of a gawking populace that has been egging him on to perform an act of violence for their amusement. In Huxley's tale, Bernard Marx tends to drift away before the big finish, having been sent into exile with his friend Helmholtz Watson. I found a different ending for Bernard that seemed more appropriate for a man who has always wanted to fit in and find acceptance. As for Lenina Crowne, I felt the need to show that she has a distinct change of heart and mind, and hopefully one that takes her on a variant path to another place. In this way, the three main characters of the novel now have slightly different arcs but are still very much the same people created by Mr. Huxley.

I also chose to rewrite many sections of dialogue so that the idiom is less specifically British and slightly more neutral. In this way, the play can be performed by American actors without them having to adopt accents. The location of the main action has also been changed from London to New London, so this fictive metropolis could be almost anywhere. Having said that, I do think the play could be performed in the U.K. with local accents intact and still be highly effective.

Finally, for a variety of reasons, I made the decision to take the tribal ritual that Bernard, Lenina and John witness at Malpais and move it off the stage and into the house as if we in the audience were the participants. It is now something they see happening in front of them while facing straight out staring at

us and so react with a mixture of emotions. Incidentally, it is no accident that the citizens of New London refer to the people of this region as “savages” living in “a savage reservation.” A contemporary audience may take offense at these terms, but I think that is exactly what Huxley intended. He wanted to show the extreme racism and prejudice that has been programmed into the occupants of the World State. And it is clear that his sympathies were not with their notion of “civilization,” but instead lay with John and the other members of his tribe who are living a more authentic life.

As I mentioned earlier, pace is important for this play. The thing needs to move at a pretty good clip. This hustle and bustle matches the energy and efficiency of the World State and also spills over into the speedy manner in which Bernard and Lenina experience Malpais. And I have purposely kept the scenery to a minimum. All that’s necessary is a table and chair in one scene and a small platform in another. Everything else can be accomplished through sound and light on a unit set.

It’s my hope that these comments are helpful in staging a successful production of this play and that they provide some insight into the choices I have made and the history behind those choices.

Ford be with you.
Better yet, good luck.

Douglas Post
September 2026

Brave New World

(Competition Version)

CHARACTERS

BERNARD MARX

DIRECTOR

FIRST STUDENT

SECOND STUDENT

THIRD STUDENT

LENINA CROWNE

HENRY FOSTER

MUSTAPHA MOND

BENITO HOOVER

FANNY TROTSKY

HELMHOLTZ WATSON

RECEPTIONIST

JOHN

LINDA

DR. TURGENEV

MISS KEATE

PILOT

HUMAN ELEMENT MANAGER

SOMA DISTRIBUTOR

PEOPLE OF NEW LONDON including WORKERS, POLICE,
CROWD, etc.

TIME: A future.

PLACE: A city called New London and a village called Malpais.

CASTING: Of course, more actors are preferable in order to create a sense of the city, with the people of New London—Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons—coming and going, but this is the minimum. Alternatively, this play can be performed by as few as 13 actors (9m., 4w.) with the following doubling:

Bernard Marx

Director/Pilot

First Student/Human Element Manager

Second Student/Miss Keate/Receptionist

Third Student/Dr. Turgenev/Soma Distributor

Lenina Crowne

Henry Foster

Mustapha Mond

Benito Hoover

Fanny Trotsky

Helmholtz Watson

John

Linda

Brave New World

(Competition Version)

Scene 1

(BERNARD MARX is discovered dictating a report.)

BERNARD. To his fordship, Mustapha Mond. As you have requested, I will observe the behavior of the Savage known as John as he comes to know civilization for the very first time here in New London. But, to be fair, honest and above board, I must tell you that my own friendship with John goes back to a brief encounter I had with the woman known as Lenina Crowne. It started out one singular day at our Central Hatchery and Conditioning Center. You were there, as it turns out, and, well ... this is my report.

(We are now in the Central Hatchery and Conditioning Center. There is a flurry of activity and a feeling of forward motion as the WORKERS enter from various directions and tend to their tasks within this hive of industry. The setting needs to allow for a variety of locations as we are often in more than one area at a time. We need to move freely from here to there so everything should be suggested and little should be literal. Of course, it is essential to note that we are operating somewhere in the future. Or a future. Or perhaps a future as imagined from the perspective of 1931. The DIRECTOR enters with a group of three STUDENTS as BERNARD exits.)

DIRECTOR. And so to give you a general sense of how the Center is laid out, we'll move through each of the main areas. Tomorrow you'll be settling down to serious work and won't have time for generalities. In this direction, you can see the doors of the Fertilizing Room. As you know, a standardized spermatozoon moves rapidly to find its ova. Alpha and Beta eggs are then returned to their incubators, while Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons are brought out after a day and a half to proliferate—

FIRST STUDENT. Divide!

DIRECTOR. Yes! Up to ninety-six times! Creating standardized citizens in uniform batches. For the first time in history, we have community, identity and stability. From there, the eggs go to the Bottling Room where they're labeled according to caste, and then ... ?

SECOND STUDENT. The Embryo Store.

DIRECTOR. This way.

(The tour moves into a different room. At the same time, LENINA CROWNE is revealed working in another part of the Center. BERNARD enters behind her and stands silently.)

DIRECTOR (*cont'd*). Take a good look, everyone. These are the men and women of tomorrow.

(LENINA turns and sees BERNARD.)

LENINA. Bernard. You startled me.

BERNARD. I was, uh ... watching you work.

LENINA. Was I doing something wrong?

BERNARD. No, I was only, uh ... that is, I can come back if ...

LENINA. What's the matter?

(The DIRECTOR and STUDENTS move into another area, where they find HENRY FOSTER.)

DIRECTOR. Ah, Mr. Foster. Why don't you tell our young students about the Decanting Room?

HENRY. Certainly, Director.

BERNARD. I'm planning on taking a small trip this month. To a Savage Reservation. And I thought, perhaps if you'd never been, that we could ... that you might like to travel with me, if you weren't already engaged, that is.

LENINA. Oh, I see. Is that all? I thought you had some terrible news.

HENRY. We condition the embryos while we continue the Predestination process and decant babies as socialized human beings. As Epsilon Semi-Morons or Alpha-Plus Intellectuals. As future sewage workers or ... *(With a nod to the DIRECTOR.)* Future Directors of Hatchery and Conditioning Centers.

LENINA. Well, I'll let you know by the end of the week. You're sure you're all right, Bernard? Perhaps a gram of soma?

BERNARD. No. Thank you.

(The tour continues, with HENRY joining in, and arrives at LENINA's area.)

HENRY. Well, Lenina.

LENINA. Henry. Director.

DIRECTOR. And this charming young lady is Miss Crowne. She's one of several nurses in the Heat Conditioning Area. What Mr. Marx is doing here, I have no idea.

BERNARD. I was, uh ... observing.

DIRECTOR. Your responsibilities lie in the Psychological Conditioning Clinic, do they not?

BERNARD. Yes, sir.

DIRECTOR. Then perhaps you'd better get back there before someone notices you're missing.

(BERNARD exits.)

DIRECTOR *(cont'd)*. We shall conclude the tour in the nurseries. Thank you, Mr. Foster. Miss Crowne.

(HENRY tosses a glance at LENINA.)

HENRY. Ten to five this afternoon, on the roof, as usual.

LENINA. I won't forget.

(LENINA and HENRY exit in separate directions. The tour moves on to another area and a recorded voice is heard.)

RECORDED VOICE *(V.O.)*. And Delta children wear khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are even worse. They're too stupid to read or write. Besides, they wear black, which is such a hideous color. I'm so glad I'm a Beta. I get to wear mulberry. Alpha children have to wear grey. And they have to work much harder than we do because they're so smart. I'm glad I'm a Beta because I don't have to work so hard. And then we are much better than Gammas and Deltas. Gammas all wear green. And Delta children wear khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons ...

DIRECTOR. By now you should all be familiar with the concepts behind Sleep Teaching. This particular recording will be repeated until the child's mind is these suggestions and the sum of the suggestions is the child's mind. And the adult's mind, too.

ANOTHER RECORDED VOICE (*V.O.*). Main Day-shift off duty. Second Day-shift take over. Main Day-shift off duty.

(The tour is winding down.)

THIRD STUDENT. But there was a time, wasn't there, when the education and development of the children, well ... the process wasn't supervised by the State.

DIRECTOR. Oh, yes. In the days before our Ford and for some centuries afterwards.

FIRST STUDENT. And what were the results?

(MUSTAPHA MOND enters.)

MOND. The results were terrible.

DIRECTOR. Controller! What an unexpected pleasure. Students, this is our Resident World Controller, his fordship, Mustapha Mond.

(HENRY and BENITO HOOVER enter the Men's Changing Room and change from their work clothes to play clothes.)

BENITO. Afternoon, Henry.

HENRY. Benito.

BENITO. Going to the feelies this evening? I hear the new one at the Alhambra is first-rate. There's a romp on a bearskin rug.

MOND. You all remember that beautiful and inspired saying of Our Ford: History is bunk. That is why you're not taught any, but today you'll learn a little. It's all right, Director. I won't corrupt them.

(LENINA and FANNY TROTSKY enter the Women's Changing Room and also change.)

LENINA. Hello, Fanny.

FANNY. Lenina.

MOND. Have you ever heard the term “parent?”

FIRST STUDENT. Yes. Well ... of course.

MOND. And what does it mean?

FIRST STUDENT. Well, human beings used to be ... viviparous.

MOND. Yes.

FIRST STUDENT. And when babies were decanted—

MOND. Born.

FIRST STUDENT. Yes, well, then they were the parents. I mean, not the babies, of course. The other ones.

MOND. In brief, the parents were the father and the mother. (*The STUDENTS wince.*) These are unpleasant facts, I know, but then most historical facts are unpleasant.

FANNY. Who are you going out with tonight?

LENINA. Henry Foster.

FANNY. Again?

MOND. Do you know what “home” was? (*The STUDENTS shake their heads.*) It was an unsterilized prison where one lived with one’s family. (*The STUDENTS react again.*) Yes, you may well shudder.

(*BERNARD enters the Men’s Changing Room to change.*)

BENITO. And after that there’s another rumpus in the backseat of a heliochop. Hello, Marx. Going to the feelies this evening?

BERNARD. Ah ... no.

FANNY. How long have you been with him?

LENINA. Only four months.

FANNY. Only four months! An eternity! And what's more, there's been nobody except Henry all that time, has there?

LENINA. No, there hasn't, and I honestly don't see why there should be.

FANNY. Because it's disgraceful behavior, Lenina, that's why. And you know how the Director objects to anything long or drawn out.

MOND. Family, monogamy, romance. It was terrifying. A narrow channeling of impulse and energy.

BENITO. Henry, what's your opinion of Lenina Crowne?

HENRY. Oh, she's a splendid girl. Everyone says so.

LENINA. You're right, of course. To tell you the truth, I'm beginning to get a little bored with nothing but Henry every day. Do you know Bernard Marx?

FANNY. You don't mean to say—?

LENINA. Why not? Bernard's an Alpha-Plus. Besides, he's asked me to go with him to one of the Savage Reservations.

FANNY. But his reputation—

LENINA. What do I care about his reputation?

FANNY. They say he doesn't like Obstacle Golf.

LENINA. *They* say.

FANNY. And that he spends most of his time by himself, alone.

LENINA. Well, he won't be alone when he's with me, will he?

MOND. Our ancestors were so stupid and short-sighted that when the first reformers came along and offered to deliver them from those horrible emotions, they wouldn't have anything to do with them.

HENRY. Fanny Trotsky's a nice girl, too, although not as stimulating as Lenina.

(BERNARD is becoming increasingly irritated by this conversation.)

MOND. There were speeches about liberty and freedom. Liberty to be inefficient and miserable. Freedom to be a round peg in a square hole. There was a thing called religion. And a concept known as God.

BENITO. Why so glum, Marx?

MOND. We have the World State now. And Ford's Day celebrations and Community Sings and Solidarity Services. And, perhaps most importantly, we have our youth straight through till the age of sixty-five. And then, crack! The end.

HENRY. Glum, Marx. Glum.

MOND. And, if you ever were to feel despondent or in a slump, there's always soma.

HENRY. What you need is a gram of soma.

MOND. Delicious soma. Half a gram for half a holiday. One gram for a weekend. Two grams for a trip to the East. Three for a dark eternity on the far side of the moon.

(BERNARD turns on them.)

BERNARD. Curse you! Curse you both!

BENITO. My dear fellow.

HENRY. Bernard, do try to remember, there's nothing worse than a curse when soma is so magnificent.

(HENRY and BENITO leave the Changing Room, laughing as they go.)

BERNARD. Idiots! Swine! Talking about her as though she were a piece of meat! Ford, how I hate them! Ford, how I hate them all!

(LENINA leaves the Changing Room. After a moment, FANNY follows her out. BERNARD leaves his Changing Room, and LENINA sees him.)

LENINA. Bernard! I was looking for you. I wanted to talk to you about our plans. Our upcoming trip. *(She intentionally says this loudly enough for several other WORKERS to overhear.)* I'd love to go with you, that is, if you still desire my company.

BERNARD. Lenina. Shouldn't we talk about this privately? Somewhere else?

LENINA *(laughs)*. How funny you are, Bernard. You'll give me at least a week's warning, won't you? And now, I must fly. Henry gets angry when I keep him waiting. Let me know about the date.

(She blows him a kiss and exits.)

MOND. Ford's in his flivver and all's well with the world.

(MOND makes the sign of the "T" across his chest, and the DIRECTOR and the STUDENTS do the same. BERNARD stands in a state of shock and then shakes himself out of it to continue his report.)

Scene 2

BERNARD. I regret to say that I skipped my Solidarity Service that evening and went straight to the domicile of Helmholtz Watson, who had his own troubles.

(HELMHOLTZ WATSON enters as MOND, the DIRECTOR and the STUDENTS all exit. We are in HELMHOLTZ's domicile.)

HELMHOLTZ. I've been cutting all my committees lately, Bernard, as well as my girls and anything social. You can imagine what a commotion they've been making about it at the College. I have a feeling that I've got something important to say and the power to say it. The fact is I'm pretty good at writing phrases for the Emotional Engineers, but it's not enough that the phrases are good. What you *make* with them ought to be good, too.

BERNARD. But your things *are* good, Helmholtz.

HELMHOLTZ. Oh, as far as they go, but they aren't enough. Words can be like x-rays, that's what I teach my students. If you use them properly, they'll go through anything. I've actually written a poem on this subject. I may read it in class.

BERNARD. There's someone at your door.

HELMHOLTZ. Oh, Bernard.

BERNARD. I'm sure of it.

HELMHOLTZ (*goes to look*). No one.

BERNARD. I'm sorry. I suppose I just get nervous when you start talking this way. I've had a very strange afternoon.

HELMHOLTZ. You finally talked to Lenina Crowne?

BERNARD. Oh, yes. All these months of indecision. I looked and longed, and I despaired of ever having the courage to ask her.

HELMHOLTZ. She said no?

BERNARD. She said yes!

HELMHOLTZ. Well, then—

BERNARD. And I'm *still* miserable.

HELMHOLTZ. But why?

BERNARD. Because she's perfectly content to run off with that imbecile, Henry Foster. Because she finds me peculiar for not wanting to talk about our most private affairs in public.

HELMHOLTZ. Bernard, you're going to have to pull yourself together. All this fuss about being with a woman. I must say, I don't understand.

(He walks off.)

Scene 3

BERNARD. I'm not sure I understood either, as, after a night or two with Lenina, I still felt empty and alone. There was a great divide between us that I could not bridge. But I had promised to take her to New Mexico and so I set out with the necessary paperwork.

(The DIRECTOR has entered carrying a chair with a small table on it while BERNARD speaks. He sets down the chair, sets up the table and takes a seat. BERNARD exits. We are now in the DIRECTOR's office, and he is at work.)

RECEPTIONIST'S VOICE (V.O.). Bernard Marx to see you, Thomas.

DIRECTOR. Thank you, Miss Engels. Oh, and Miss Engels?

RECEPTIONIST'S VOICE (V.O.). Yes?

DIRECTOR. *Director.*

RECEPTIONIST'S VOICE (V.O.). Director. Sorry.

DIRECTOR. Send him in.

(BERNARD enters.)

BERNARD. It's just a permit for you to initial, sir. A mere formality. *(He hands it to the DIRECTOR.)* The Controller has already signed it.

DIRECTOR. Yes, I can see that. *(He studies it.)* For the reservation at Malpais?