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Candidate session number

Candidate name

School name

Examination session (May or November)

May

Year

2015

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered:

English A

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay:

The Progression in the Role of Women  
through Dystopian Literature

### Candidate's declaration

*This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.*

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

12/22/14

## Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) \_\_\_\_\_

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

Struggled with organization of her ideas. She read the books and had wonderful ideas quickly, but so many things to say that she wasn't sure where to start. She decided a chronological order of SDTB would be best for her reader, and her argument. Her interest and analysis of literature is one of the highest I've encountered, which made the research/reading portion very easy for her. She had a passion for discussing her ideas already.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

As per the section entitled "Responsibilities of the Supervisor" in the EE guide, the recommended number of hours spent with candidates is between 3 and 5 hours. Schools will be contacted when the number of hours is left blank, or where 0 hours are stated and there lacks an explanation. Schools will also be contacted in the event that number of hours spent is significantly excessive compared to the recommendation.

I spent  hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 2/9/15

**Assessment form (for examiner use only)**

Candidate session number		
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**Achievement level**

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2	2		2	
B introduction	1	2		2	
C investigation	2	4		4	
D knowledge and understanding	3	4		4	
E reasoned argument	2	4		4	
F analysis and evaluation	2	4		4	
G use of subject language	2	4		4	
H conclusion	0	2		2	
I formal presentation	3	4		4	
J abstract	0	2		2	
K holistic judgment	2	4		4	
Total out of 36	19				

Name of examiner 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

IB Assessment Centre use only: B: \_\_\_\_\_

IB Assessment Centre use only: A: \_\_\_\_\_

**Title: The Progression in the Role of Women through Dystopian Literature**

**Word Count: 3656 ✓**

**Subject: English A: Language and Literature**

**Category: Category 1 - Studies of literary works originally written in English**

Abstract:

Through the vehicle of this essay, I will discuss the importance of the historical context of <sup>worded</sup> which the author's literary choices are made to convey an overall trend over time of the changing portrayal of women and their significance and purpose. This essay will display the different ways that authors from different time periods wrote their literature to predict just exactly what future society holds. Each piece of literature; *1984*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *The Hunger Games* is a negative premonition in itself of what might happen in a post disastrous event of their given time period, thus depicting a certain dystopia. Although through characterization, symbols, and the development of <sup>syntax</sup> certain themes that the authors are able to present the changing role of women, may it be a negative or positive change. By examining these pieces of literature I was able to analyze the author's choices that help develop a theme of feminism or anti-feminism, using my own literary criticism as well as secondary sources. Through the creation and research involved in my essay I have been able to understand the characters from these novels in the context in which they were written, referring to the author's literary choices, their backgrounds and gender. All which have casted light on the circumstances they were under that helped inspire them to write the novels discussed.

No conclusion offered  
Ideas rather 'opaque'

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Research Question:

How have author's choices in respect to the portrayal of women in dystopian literature, changed over time?

Introduction:

The nature of dystopian literature is an interesting enough topic by itself, yet when they are put through a feminist lens one could see the intent of the authors hidden through their text in regard to their opinion of what will become of women in future societies. Although a dystopia is defined as "an imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives" (Merriam-Webster), it is often associated with some sort of prognosis of societies based on the current issues surrounding said society. It is often said that people either live in the past or spend their lives worrying about the future, the genre of dystopian literature allows for an outlet to display both perspectives and to discuss how the present is affected by both. When thought about through a feminist perspective, dystopias are a way to understand how culture and history have influenced our chances for furthering the empowerment of women. The authors of said genre are able to present their predictions in an obscure manner that leaves room for interpretation and discussion. The sub-genre has become increasingly popular in young adult fiction, as youth has become more aware of the impact they have on the future. The benefits for analyzing dystopian literature such as the use of it as a historical reference are apparent when dissecting the literary content in respect to the author's choices given their background.

Thesis Statement:

The role of women in dystopian literature such as 1984, The Handmaid's Tale, and The Hunger Games, has changed over time through the characterization, repetitive symbolism of red clothing and diction used by the author to develop themes reflecting society's view on the purpose of women in their respective time.

*Rather 'wordy' again here...*

1984:

In the novel *1984*, George Orwell offers a unique view of what citizens had to imagine of what was to come of England decades after the First World War. Through the characters the author is able to show the nightmarish world that he envisions of the 1980s. The one most important to this investigation is Julia, a sensual and pragmatic insurgent who is not so concerned with the state of the world or revolutionizing it, but to rebel in a way to serve her own personal purpose without getting caught (Bloom 14). Unlike her lover, Winston, she is content with making the most of her life and using small scale rebellion to do so. This character displays this rebellion by defying the will of 'The Party'. The Party is the restrictive, totalitarian government system ruled by one fiercely feared leader named 'Big Brother'; that focuses on obtaining absolute power through manipulating the minds of Oceania's citizens by teaching them that sex's sole purpose was procreating to expand the will of the party. Any thought of enjoyment was not only looked down upon but is punishable as it was realized as "thoughtcrime"<sup>1</sup>. Along with Julia, the various prole<sup>2</sup> women discussed in the book are key to understanding the role of women governed under the rule of totalitarianism as well as the ones neglected by it. (*1984's* literary content transcends what the time period would allow in multiple ways such as the predictions made about authoritarian governments, although as history would declare false and presumptuous, but its connections to its own time period have shown to be relevant to the author's choices. Along with the lack of concrete language, the author is able to create a world where the character's interactions and emotions dictate the plot and themes of feminism along with it. )

sounds  
derivative

?

The culture of *1984* is a time in retrospect of the war, which changed the world into a constant state of war as the world is now divided into three countries altogether; Oceania, Eastasia and Eurasia.

<sup>1</sup> thinking of anything that the Thought Police and the Party deems is illegal

<sup>2</sup> Lower class of Oceania, left ungoverned and unwatched by the party



The portrayal of women is shown just as it is in the time period written, co-dependent on their male counterparts and extremely conservative. Although, the characterization of Julia is an exception to that theme as she is highly sexualized character even before she becomes the main protagonist as Winston's lover. The author purposefully showcases her as a prude member of the Junior Anti-Sex League, although later on she confesses she is in fact not a virgin like the sash she wears proclaims, "A narrow scarlet sash, emblem of the Junior Anti-Sex League, was wound several time around the waist of her overalls" (Orwell 10) but has been involved in more than a fair amount of affairs as a sign of defiance to the party. Her silent rebellion serves her purpose in committing a thoughtcrime, as even Winston scolds her for being, "...only a rebel from the waist downwards" (Orwell 156) Although the author does give this female character plenty of freedom, which is what traditional values try to prevent, every female character in the novel does not seem competent enough for having any revolutionary thoughts beyond having recreational sex. Julia is able to rebel in such a way that tricks party members into committing crimes by having an affair with her to prove their corruption, nevertheless she is not intelligent or thoughtful enough to care about actually overthrowing the party or disrupting it like her male counterpart wishes to. For example, when Winston receives and starts reading the book of the Brotherhood<sup>3</sup>, Julia seems disinterested compared to him, "I'm not interested in the next generation, dear. I'm interested in us." (Orwell 156) because she is comfortable disrupting the part in small secret ways that also involves enjoying herself, instead of joining the anti-government organization. This can also imply that the only desire women have is to be with men, instead of furthering themselves or society.

The author uses other female characters such as Mrs. Parsons, who represents the traditional view of middle class women who are solely used to procreate and take care of the men of the party. Others such as the red-armed prole woman, represents not only the raw fertility of women who could

<sup>3</sup> anti-government organization headed by Emmanuel Goldstein, the national traitor and criminal

Say more  
about this

awkward

potentially birth the next generation of proles who could challenge the party, but also a symbol of hope for society if they were to recognize their plight, as they are the ungoverned part of their country and a prospect for the part of Oceania who could possibly start a revolution to end the party and Big Brother, "If there is hope, [Winston wrote] it lies in the proles." (Orwell 69). Although the character Julia is actually a contradiction to this theory as she is the exception that has no interest in starting a revolution, despite having more opportunity to, in comparison to the prole women.

The author also uses Winston's thoughts experiences to show the treatment and role of women in the novel. With the use of diction and imagery, Orwell presents women either as extremely conservative or highly sensual. This is shown through the characters such as Winston's wife, Katherine, Mrs. Parsons, and what the party thinks of Julia versus the real Julia, and the old prole prostitute. Before Winston had any kind of reciprocated affectionate experience he only thought of women as tool for a pleasurable sexual experience, "She had become a physical necessity, something that he not only wanted but felt that he had a right to." (Orwell 139). This is also demonstrated by his experience with the prostitute, "When I saw her in the light she was quite an old woman, fifty years old at least. But I went ahead and did it just the same." (Orwell 69). Winston is also shown to have cruel and inhumane thoughts about women, only because he knows he can never have them. For example, when he first met Julia before the 'two minute hate'<sup>4</sup>,

"Vivid, beautiful hallucinations flashed through his mind. He would flog her to death with a rubber truncheon. He would tie her to a stake and shoot her full of arrows like Saint Sebastian. He would ravish her and cut her throat at the moment of climax...He hated her because she was young and pretty and sexless, because he wanted to go to bed with her and he would never do so." (Orwell 15)

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<sup>4</sup> Time of day that all citizens must express their hatred in front of the telescreens(TVs) for any of the national enemies

This use of anaphora by the author demonstrates his sexual frustration, and desire to commit another act of defiance other than writing his diary. This particular quote speaks volumes of the treatment of women in respect to the morality of men forcing themselves on women is shown as normative thought. This shockingly violent passage can also be interpreted to show the fear that men have of women, because they hold power through sex against them so it seems that violence is necessary to compensate for their loss of power or feelings of being threatened.

Despite the fact that the novel *1984* was created to serve the purpose of warning society of a fatalistic future our world may hold if tensions remained between countries such as in the 1940s (Bloom), it had held a different meaning as well for readers. The main storyline may not involve the maltreatment of women, the many symbols and themes relating to feminism help address an issue that the author may not have intended. (It has served a novel used for reflection on the role of women, even if it was not directed towards feminists, one could believe that all interpretation of art is valid. As everyone's point of view may be different, having an impact is the most important aspect. )

odd ideas - somewhat random comments

*The Handmaid's Tale:*

*The Handmaid's Tale* presents a world imagined by author, Margaret Atwood, which reflects the national fears of environmental degradation, the declination of birth rates, and an increase in nuclear power (Malak). The novel offers an alternative outcome of a future of the time the novel was written in, shortly after the beginning of the 1960s, where the increasing influence of women on society had suddenly flipped as quickly as it had evolved since the beginning of the century (Malak). The author may have used religion as an excuse for the dramatic reverse in the role of women of this utopia turned dystopia for feminists, The Republic of Gilead. Religious extremists are responsible for overturning the sexual revolution that had begun in the 1960s and 1970s, and turning this once evolving society back to the traditional role of women similar to a century before its time.

(This was an era of the returning of conservative views and power in office, who ferociously criticized the hyper-sexuality of the generation and the immediate start of anti-sex movement, all which has inspired this novel.) It was written in fear of a revival of these conservative views and the erasing of all feminist advancements made for equality of the sexes but also excited a hope for a continuation for change. In the 1940's the role of women was slowly becoming more subservient to men as the ~~First~~ World War had ended, contrary to the women just two decades before in the 1920s. However, the openness of sexuality and sexual identity of the 1980s, allowed for the author to write comfortably about a topic that would have been outrageous in earlier decades.

Offred is characterized as a clever, perceptive, optimistic and compassionate character with a dark sense of humor (Malak). Although the author displays her as uncomfortable to the idea of feminism due to her acceptance of her situation, it is not completely rejected by her exemplified by her failed attempt to escape Gilead. Her role in this society is a handmaid, a woman used for one purpose only, reproducing (Malak). The author brilliantly uses the themes of language, and the use of women's

don't flatter the writer

bodies as tools, while also using the symbol of red cloth.

Language and titles are a reoccurring theme throughout the novel, which is used to present the dehumanizing of women by giving them labels that change according to their role in society, while also giving those who are gifted with fertility a far worse fate. Handmaids are given a new name to live by when assigned to a family for others to recognize who she is in possession of, therefore each name start with "Of" and ends with the family's name that they are individually assigned to. By the hand of the author, there lies deeper meaning in the character's name itself. ('Offred' can be broken into two words- 'Off' and 'Red' which could imply the purity of Offred at heart, and the several sinful acts that stain her existence.)

again,  
sounds  
like a  
critic's  
opinion

Another theme displayed is the use of a women's body as a tool for society and its needs, the way everyone sees a handmaid is a hub of fertility, which is either desired or envied. They are seen as humanity's saving grace, however not treated as so. This implies that society believes that it is their duty, not necessarily choice, to bear the next generation of children regardless of what they experience under different circumstances "There was old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation, of something without shape or name." (Atwood 32). In this aspect the handmaids are often enviable as they might be younger or prettier than the wives, and it is expected of them to be inseminated by their husbands. Jealousy arises through the treatment of the handmaids in the Commander's household by his wife Serena Joy "I want to see you as little of you as possible... I expect you to feel the same way about me." (Atwood 15) This may be used to show the issues of competition between women for men.

note  
context  
would be  
helpful here

The color red is an apparent motif throughout the novel, through the vehicle of the main protagonist's name, the cloth that all handmaids bear, various items used and the sins or even fertility it represents. The red cloth is seen throughout the novel on the handmaids as a symbol for their fertility, femininity, and even Offred's numerous sexual sins and her recovery or repentance for them "The tulips are red, a darker crimson towards the stem, as if they had been cut and are beginning to heal there"

(Atwood 102). Their profession called for a uniform for all to know what they are needed for. However it may represent the apparent pain the adultery causes the wives of the men they are assigned, as they had to witness and be a part of the conception. ✓

*The Hunger Games:*

Suzanné Collin's *The Hunger Games* is a depiction of a post-apocalyptic world called Panem, where the country is divided into 12 districts. This universe is far into the future, as it was a prediction of yet another totalitarian governed outcome of our world. This novel has displayed an equal divide between genders as the main story line's conflict revolves around the reaping<sup>5</sup> and the games, which requires a male and female tribute for the annual Hunger Games<sup>6</sup>. The author characterizes the main protagonist as Katniss Everdeen, who is highly independent and is shown to even be capable of taking care of her family herself. Even throughout the game her abilities are showcased of being more capable than her fellow District 12 tribute, Peeta. She is clever, brave and innovative; near the end of the book she is not only recognized as an unlikely winner, but also intelligent enough to outsmart the Gamemaker<sup>7</sup> and Panem's President Snow. As she is able to question authority in a way that publicly shows defiance, she is looked up to by all citizens of Panem as a symbol of hope, and ultimately a leader for future revolutionary rebellion. The author allows through characterization of Katniss and the development of the plot, to display the changed role of women, which offers a more evolutionary view that time and history has allowed.

*The Hunger Games* is the most current novel to our era, thus it resonates more with the females of today, as history is far enough in the past to recognize and appreciate the significant changes in culture and the politics of women's rights. (The concept of a female archetypal heroine was foreign to most literature until the culture change that happened in the 1960s to 1980s) Collins never intended to make a statement when choosing the main protagonist of this dystopian to be a female,

“...it's having a female protagonist in a gladiator story, which traditionally features a male.

<sup>5</sup> Drawing of the names in each district of Panem, to determine the tributes of that year's games

<sup>6</sup> Annual event where 2 tributes from each district battle each other in an arena for survival and winnings

<sup>7</sup> The person who designs and controls the games, (Seneca Crane)

Not true

It's an unexpected choice. Or I don't know, maybe the futuristic, grim nature of the story is larger than that. I wouldn't care who was the lead in a good dystopian story." (qtd. in Hudson)

interesting opinion

However way the author uses characterization and the motifs of fire and defiance and the symbol of Katniss's dresses, demonstrates the empowerment of women even if it was written in a way to appeal to both sexes.

A see end of essay

Katniss Everdeen is characterized a strong independent, yet dependable young woman who is fiercely determined to survive and to take care of the ones she loves. This allegory reflecting the way society views reality television and its celebrities, "The Hunger Games is a reality television program. An extreme one, but that's what it is...watching people being humiliated or brought to tears or suffering physically. And that's what I find very disturbing." (qtd. in Hudson) supports the idea that the romanticized idea of a woman is what is expected due to the theme of the importance of appearances that occur throughout the novel. She is advised repeatedly to act demure and innocent to win the favor of sponsors<sup>8</sup> in the games, "Remember, heads high. Smiles. They're going to love you!" (Collins 69) However she refuses to oblige each time. She is expected to act kind and polite during all of her public appearances, as are her other female tributes in order to win over sponsors from the careers, the tributes from District 1 and 2 that train their entire lives in order to volunteer and are the usual winners and favorites of the games.

Ironically, according to her situation the author allows her to win over the citizens of the Capitol<sup>9</sup> by using her ferocity and wit, by using Peeta to win the sympathy of the Capital. She does this by faking a romance with him in a use of dramatic irony by the author, on Caesar Flickerman's talk show, to make the people of the Capitol feel pity for the 'star-crossed lovers'. Although she refuses to accept the scheme at first, because it had hurt her pride, because she believed

<sup>8</sup> Members of the Capitol who fund their favorite tributes by giving them "gifts" to help them while inside the games

<sup>9</sup> The capital of Panem that the nation's wealthiest live lavishly alongside President Snow, also recognized as the government of Panem



she could have won the favor of sponsors without him "Turning me into some kind of fool in front of the entire country? ...He made me look weak!" (Collins 135).

The most apparent change in the role of women is the open acceptance of a female leader of the resistance against the Capitol, the reason why Snow believes she needs to be watched as she is a sign of hope for a distribution of power change in the Districts.

This discussion of 'The Hunger Games' needs to be brought to some sort of conclusion / some summative overview...

### Conclusion:

Each novel discussed have a unique portrayal of the way the role of women may changes depending on the time period in which they were written. As cultural norms have changed, the thoughts of these authors of dystopian literature have changed and each needed to put women in a different light and it is reflected in their work (Booker). Each work has a lead female protagonist to fit the world thought up to serve as a warning of what might become of the role of women. I chose the specific literary texts as I did because they were written in between a similar interval of each other, as *1984* was written in 1949, *The Handmaid's Tale* in 1985, and *The Hunger Games* in 2008. After the synthesis of symbols and careful word choice of the authors, I have come to the realization of the importance of clothing in respect to the themes of feminism. From the red sash that Julia masks herself with in *1984*, the cleverly purposeful name of main protagonist and the red uniform Offred bears within *The Handmaid's Tale*, to the fiery red dress Katniss flaunts in front of the Capitol. (not mentioned in essay)

The importance of clothing to women is obvious in every time period discussed, and is used an instrument to represent and personalize every individual woman, may it be voluntary or against their will. The color of this very instrument is of equal importance, as red initiates thoughts of passion, femininity and defiance. The authors of all three novels have been able to let the reader reflect on the literary aspects such as themes, symbols and characterization of dystopian that help bring light to feminist issues that could happen in the near future. To look back upon history's faults, we are able to prevent any societal disasters, especially if they have already happened before. Even if it was not the author's intentions to represent women as they have, their literature has started discussion that not only stirs feminist culture but inspires it to advance.

The colour red is only a minor aspect of the texts ; the aspect of 'progress' in the role of women across the three novels is not altogether tenable.

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