

Non-Exhaustive, Very Western-Slanted Utopia Reading List

Fictional Societies:

The *Republic* by Plato (c. 380 BCE): ancient Greek Socratic dialogue in which the speakers debate the nature of just city-state.

Utopia by Thomas More (1516): seminal text describing a traveler's adventures in an idealized society, comprising elements as diverse as slaves chained with gold, legal euthanasia, easy divorce, and adultery punished by enslavement.

Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift (1726): Part IV ("A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms") is a satirical utopia, highlighting the idiocy of Swift's contemporary society by comparison to a society of noble horses.

Les Misérables by Victor Hugo (1862): A work on revolutionary strivings to end poverty in France, it outlines values and hopes for a humane, egalitarian, peaceful nation and world.

Erewhon by Samuel Butler (1872): A satirical utopia exposing assumptions of Victorian England by painting a fictional society that turns them on their head.

News from Nowhere by William Morris (1890): Non-state communist utopia (close to anarchy) in futuristic rural England with an emphasis on quality craftsmanship, access to nature, meaningful work, and life-work balance.

A Modern Utopia by H. G. Wells (1905): Complex discussion of a utopian society that includes values such as socialist economics, personal responsibility, education, science, and rationalism. (See also *Anticipations* [1901], *Men Like Gods* [1923]).

Herland by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1915): a kinder, gentler society comprised entirely of women.

Back to Methuselah by George Bernard Shaw (1922): Fanciful exploration of the intellectual and physical potential of human evolution into the far distant future.

We by Yevgeny Zamyatin (1924): a negative utopia focusing on a happy, harmonious world maintained by a totalitarian state. Often cited as an influence on *Brave New World*.

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley (1932): a negative utopia outlining a stable system for maintaining a happy populace at the cost human creativity, nobility, etc.

Out of the Silent Planet by C. S. Lewis (1938): Book 1 of Lewis's *Space Trilogy* recounts an encounter with a race of unfallen beings, beings untainted by original sin/a tendency toward evil, and delineates their values and society.

Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand (1957): A *dystopian* novel about an overly controlling welfare state, the book contrasts this dystopia with a theory for a libertarian utopia based on rational self-interest.

The Dispossessed: by Ursula K. Le Guin (1974): an “ambiguous utopia” exploring the benefits and drawbacks of a community-oriented, egalitarian, anarchic society. See also various novels discussing Le Guin’s Ekumen (ex. *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *Four Ways to Forgiveness*, *Rocannon’s World*).

Ecotopia by Ernest Callanbach (1975): a hippie, ecological utopia set in San Francisco, a seminal utopian work on ecological sustainability.

The Female Man by Joanna Russ (1975): Four interlocking parallel universes, one of which is a futuristic utopia comprised of no-nonsense women.

Trouble on Triton (1976) by Samuel Delaney: An “ambiguous heterotopia” based on personal freedom in gender, sexual, and lifestyle expression.

Always Coming Home by Ursula K. Le Guin (1985): Exploration of a future in which Northern California is populated by people of Native American cultural roots.

The “Culture” books by Iain M. Banks (1980s-present): Examination of a supremely technologically advanced human(oid) culture and how they maintain a flourishing society, on the whole. (Ex. *Consider Phlebas*, *The Player of Games*, *Use of Weapons*)

Mushishi (manga) by Yuki Urushibara (1999-2002): A fictional, rural pre-modern Japan in which experts on spirits called *mushi* and on ecology help maintain healthy relationships between humans and other life. (Also an anime.)

Non-Fiction Texts:

The Analects of Confucius (c. 475 BCE-220 CE): The teachings of Confucius (Kongzi/K’ung Fu-tzu) and his students on how the cultivation of personal virtue is the foundation of a better state/society.

The Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848): Seminal text outlining the theory of utopian socialism as a more humane successor to capitalism.

Herbert Spencer (late 19th century, various writings): Philosopher who popularized the theory of Social Darwinism, the idea that human and cultural evolution is best promoted in a *laissez-faire* system where competition selects for the best outcomes (people, products, ideas).

“Useful Work versus Useless Toil” by William Morris (1884): Essay advocating a system that promotes work that is personally and socially meaningful and fulfilling.

Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution by Peter Kropotkin (1902): Argues that mutual aid is an important factor in biological evolution, just as competition is. Kropotkin uses this premise to advocate for social structures that favor cooperation and argue against Social Darwinism.

Sociobiology by E. O. Wilson (1975): seminal work on the idea that human social behaviors are shaped by biological evolution (with implications for social planning).

Envisioning Real Utopias (2010) by Erik Wright: Exploration of different socioeconomic options for moving away from the global economic domination of capitalism.