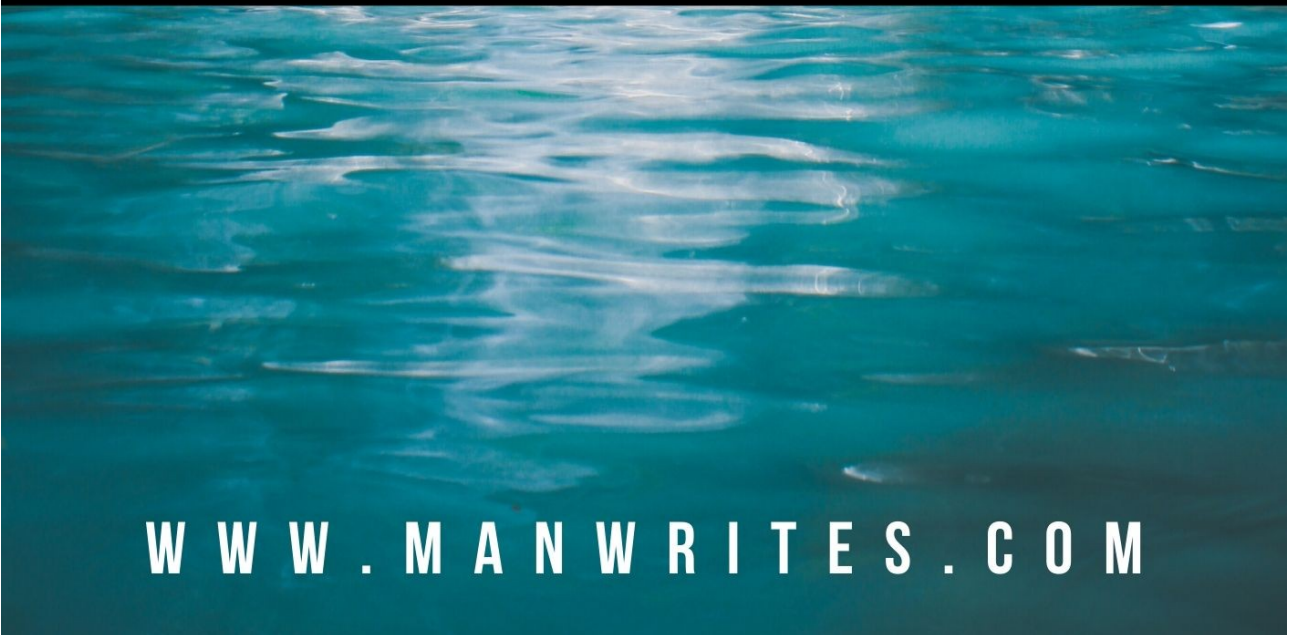




AUTOPIAN SOCIETY



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Introduction

What is a utopian society?

Is a utopian society possible?

Is your society utopian? Why/why not?

Reading

Many people are giving up on the modern world and wanting to go 'off-grid'.

What does this mean?

“Allow me to explain,” says Dr Gustav Obermann. “As people, we need to be part of a society where we know all the other people in our group and where we feel safe. The modern world can no longer provide these needs for us. We have all the modern technology we think we need, and we live in these huge impersonal cities where we know no one. It is no way for any person to live.”

Dr Obermann is the mastermind behind A New World. This is a place where people give up living in the city and their jobs, they cancel all their social media memberships and throw away their smartphones and computers. Then they live on the farm that Dr Obermann began twenty years ago.

“We have in our community many people with invaluable skills,” he says. “Such as farmers, engineers, people who understand how to generate energy from the sun’s rays or the wind. We have a place here where we are totally self-sufficient.

And the people — they are happy.”

One look around the farm and it is obvious that the residents are living a contented life. Everyone is smiling, everyone seems to know each other and no one seems to be in a hurry to do anything.

“That is the problem with the modern world,” says Dr Obermann. “We live in huge overpriced cities, we have jobs that just create much stress in our lives and we are never able to completely rest. We are always at work. Even when we go home, we are expected to be on call 24-hours a day.”

The farm that Dr Obermann started has fields around it. They are full of produce and there are people in the fields tending to the crops and ensuring that everything is looked after.

And there are no animals on the farm. There are some dogs and cats, one man has a parrot. But these are considered pets and part of the community.

“We are not meat-eaters here,” said Dr Obermann. “This has nothing to do with animal rights — although many of us feel strongly about that — but more to do with pure economics. It costs a lot of resources to feed cattle or pigs. And for what? The meat they produce only lasts a short time. But growing

vegetables and other crops take much less consideration. It is far better to eat like this from an economic point of view.”

There are many children on the farm and they are educated by some of the adults.

“The children do not attend normal school,” says Dr Obermann. “What would they learn anyway? How to live in a world that would only make them unhappy. No, we don’t allow that. We teach the children basic skills like reading and writing and of course maths. Then when they are older they learn useful skills like farming and cooking, repairing things using your hands.”

And no computer skills for the children?

“No,” says Dr Obermann. “All computers are banned here. And we have no internet.”

Reading Comprehension

How does Dr Obermann explain society at the beginning of the article?

What does the modern world lack according to Dr Obermann?

What organisation does Dr Obermann run?

What do the people do in this place?

How long has it been in operation?

What is Dr Obermann's impression of modern cities?

Try to describe the farm.

What is Dr Obermann's reasons for not eating meat?

Who teaches the children?

What do the children learn?

Are there any computers on the farm?

Essential Vocabulary

off-grid	society
modern technology	huge
impersonal	mastermind
social media	memberships
community	invaluable
skills	generate
energy	sun's rays
self-sufficient	obvious
residents	contented
overpriced	stress
on call	produce
tending	crops
ensuring	parrot
meat-eaters	animal rights
pure economics	resources
cattle	consideration
economic	banned

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to

each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Notebook—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”

So Much To Do!!

As one class brainstorm all the things that need to be done on Dr Obermann's farm A New World.

Get one student to write all the things on the board.

Don't stop until you are sure you have covered all the tasks that need to be done.

Discussion

What do you think of Dr Obermann's A New World?

Is this kind of place sustainable?

Do you think a utopian society is possible in the modern world?

Would you like to live off-grid? Why/why not?

What kind of people choose to do this? What are their reasons for doing this?

Are the skills that people teach the children enough?

What is missing in A New World?

Are computers absolutely necessary in our lives today? What about smartphones?

Is this kind of farm legal in your country? Why/why not?

Is Dr Obermann very intelligent? Or completely insane? Or both? Explain your reasons.

What kind of people lives like this in the world today? Think of very traditional people. Are they happy do you think?

What is wrong with modern society? How can we improve it?

Writing

You have joined Dr Obermann's A New World.

You are very happy there and you want to write a letter to your family to tell them all about it.

Write a letter and explain all the great things about living on the farm. Write about what you do in the day and how you spend your evenings.

Try to convince your family to join you.

Credits

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