Utopia

A utopia is a community or society possessing highly desirable or perfect qualities. The word was coined in Greek by Sir Thomas More for his 1516 book *Utopia*, describing a fictional island society in the Atlantic Ocean. Chronologically, the first recorded utopian proposal is Plato's *Republic*. It proposes a categorization of citizens into a rigid class structure of "golden," "silver," "bronze" and "iron" socioeconomic classes.

In the early 19th century, several "utopian socialist" ideas arose, in response to the belief that social disruption was created by the development of commercialism and capitalism. These ideas shared certain characteristics: an egalitarian distribution of goods, frequently with the total abolition of money, and citizens only doing work which they enjoy and which is for the common good, leaving them with ample time for the cultivation of the arts and sciences. One classic example of such a utopia was Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. Another socialist utopia is William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, written partially in response to the top-down (bureaucratic) nature of Bellamy's utopia, which Morris criticized. However, as the socialist movement developed it moved away from utopianism; Karl Marx in particular became a harsh critic of earlier socialism he described as utopian.

Utopias have also been imagined by the opposite side of the political spectrum. For example, Robert A. Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* portrays an individualistic and libertarian utopia. Capitalist utopias of this sort are generally based on free market economies, in which the presupposition is that private enterprise and personal initiative without an institution of coercion, government, provides the greatest opportunity for achievement and progress of both the individual and society as a whole.

Answer questions 1 to 5 by choosing the correct letter A to F .

Which of the writers in the box below...

1. imagined a utopia based on individual freedom?

2. first used the word 'utopia'?

3. wrote about a bureaucratic socialist utopia?

4. first described a utopian society?

5. distanced himself from utopian socialism?

A) Sir Thomas More

B) Plato

C) Edward Bellamy

D) William Morris

E) Karl Marx

F) Robert A. Heinlein