



University of Sussex
Sussex Centre for Language Studies

Academic Writing Guide

Author Voice – Stage 3, Part 1

Compare and contrast what H G Wells’ ‘The Island of Dr Moreau’ and the Eugenics Society pamphlet from the early 1920s tell us about ideas on genetics and race in the early twentieth century.

Original paragraph	Revised paragraph
<p>As Endersby suggests¹, Francis Galton was strongly influenced by the works of Charles Darwin, taking inspiration from <i>On the Origin of Species</i> and developing his own theories on heredity and the improvement of the human race. This was also the case for Wells, although his attitude to the eugenics movement was more ambivalent than Galton, highlighting in his novel the moral debates surrounding the movement and the anxieties his contemporary society held about the “boundary between the animal and the human”³.</p>	<p>Although written in slightly different periods (the novel was published in 1896 and the E.E.S. pamphlet in the early 1920s), both texts appear to have been influenced by the same scientific advancements and debates. As Endersby¹ suggests, Francis Galton was strongly influenced by the works of Charles Darwin, taking inspiration from <i>On the Origin of Species</i> and developing his own theories on heredity and the improvement of the human race. This is evident in the language employed in the pamphlet, such as “betterment, mental and physical, of the human race”². Although the ‘Island of Dr Moreau’ also takes inspiration from Darwinian evolution, his attitude to the eugenics movement was more ambivalent than Galton. Unlike the E.E.S. pamphlet which focuses on the potential benefits of eugenics for society, Wells’ novel highlights the moral debates surrounding the movement and the anxieties his contemporary society held about the “boundary between the animal and the human”³. It can therefore be argued that although both texts explore the implications of scientific developments in the early 20th century, they show this from quite different perspectives: the E.E.S. pamphlet optimistically promotes the use of eugenics for the betterment of society while Wells’ novel promotes caution and highlights the ethical dimensions of such interventions.</p>

¹ Endersby, Jim. *A guinea pig's history of biology*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007. 70-73

² ‘Eugenic Education Society Pamphlet’, Papers of Professor R A Fisher, c. 1920s, Eugenics Society Archive, Wellcome Library, b16231958

³ Danahay, Martin. “Wells, Galton and Biopower: Breeding Human Animals.” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 17, 4 (2012) 473.

Original paragraph	Revised paragraph
<p>The arts and science have long been strongly linked¹ and although not a historical document, Wells’ novel evokes many of the concerns and attitudes held by its contemporary society. The language of race is incorporated into the novel, such as “negroid” which is used to liken the beast folk to primitive people with</p>	<p>The arts and science have long been strongly linked¹ and although not a historical document, Wells’ novel evokes many of the attitudes held by his contemporaries with regard to race and genetics. This can be seen in the way the language of race is incorporated into the novel, such as “negroid” which is</p>

<p>lower “moral and intellectual priority”². The categorisation of animal folk into “types” in Wells’ novel may also be a reference to the influential works of Edward Tylor (anthropologist) who used the term “type” to refer to the stages of human development from “primitive” to “civilized”³.</p>	<p>used to liken the beast folk to primitive people with lower “moral and intellectual priority”². By using this terminology, Wells draws a parallel between the treatment of the beast folk and the inhumane treatment of the slaves in the Atlantic slave trade. Moreover, the categorisation of animal folk into such “types” may be a reference to the influential works of Edward Tylor (anthropologist) who used the term “type” to refer to the stages of human development from “primitive” to “civilized”³. The use of the “Law” and the depiction of an organised animal society serve to blur the boundaries between humans and animals. The novel therefore raised questions about humanity and cast some doubt over the widespread belief at the time that some humans were inferior. Although the novel is still relevant in today’s society, it was particularly pertinent in the early 20th century when scientific advances and knowledge of genetics were posing challenges to the deeply-rooted and fundamental notions about what it means to be human.</p>
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¹ Wald, Priscilla, and Clayton, Jay. “Editors’ Preface: Genomics in Literature, Visual Arts, and Culture.” *Literature and Medicine* 26, 1 (2007) Vi-Xvi. ² Christensen, Timothy. “The “Bestial Mark” of Race in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*.” *Criticism* 46, 4 (2004) 586. ³ *Ibid.*, 577.