

# Primary Sources: "Utopia" by Thomas More

By Thomas More, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.31.17

Word Count **640**

Level **830L**



TOP: A painting of Thomas More by Hans Holbein the Younger. Wikimedia Commons. BOTTOM: The Island of Utopia, from a woodcut in More's "Utopia." Wikimedia Commons.

*Editor's Note: Below is a part of the book "Utopia." It was published by Thomas More in 1516. It starts as a work of fiction, telling a tale of a faraway island named Utopia. It presents More's blueprint of a perfect country. More's story concludes with a criticism of the inequalities of English society and asks for changes to be made in England. More argued for a society where private property, like homes or land, wouldn't exist and, therefore, neither would greed.*

## **"Cannot See The Slightest Trace Of Justice In Other Countries"**

To my mind, Utopia is the best country in the world. Elsewhere, all people care about is private property. In Utopia, there is no private property. This means that people take their duty to the public seriously. In Utopia, no one has any fear of going hungry as long as the public storehouses are full. Everyone gets a fair share, so there are never any poor men or beggars. Nobody owns anything, but everyone is rich. After all, what greater wealth can there be than cheerfulness, peace of mind, and freedom from worry?

I cannot see the slightest trace of justice in other countries. People like rich aristocrats do no work at all. People who lend money don't either. Or they do work that isn't necessary. They are rewarded for their laziness with a life of luxury. Laborers, carpenters and farmhands never stop working at important jobs. They get little to eat and have a wretched time.

### **"Getting Rid Of Money Would Fix Many Social Problems"**

Without these laborers, society couldn't exist. Still, it mistreats them. When they are old, society forgets their work and repays them by letting them die in misery. The man who contributes most to society gets the least in return.

Social systems in the modern world are full of rich people advancing their own interests. They think up all sorts of tricks to keep their money and to take advantage of the poor. Yet even these people would be happier in Utopia! Getting rid of money would fix many social problems. It would also lead to many crimes being eradicated. The moment money goes, you can also say goodbye to fear, tension, anxiety, overwork and poverty.

Think back to one of the years when the harvest was bad. Thousands of people died of starvation. However, I bet if you'd inspected every rich man's barn at the end of that period, you'd have found enough corn to have saved all the lives that were lost. Money was invented to make food more readily available. Instead, it's the only thing that makes it unobtainable.

### **"Provides The Happiest Basis For A Civilized Community"**

I have no doubt that the whole world would have adopted the Utopian system long ago if it weren't for one obstacle. That obstacle is pride, the root of all evils. Pride makes people measure success not by what they have. Instead, it makes them measure success by having what other people do not have. Pride requires there to be someone below you to make you feel better. Pride is always obstructing our progress toward a better way of life.

This fault is too deeply ingrained in human nature to be easily eradicated. I'm glad that at least one country has managed to develop a fair system. The Utopian way of life provides the happiest basis for a civilized community. It is also one which is most likely to last forever. They've eliminated the root causes of ambition, political conflict, and everything like that. And as long as there's unity and wise government in Utopia, no matter how jealous neighboring kings may feel, they'll never be able to shake the power of Utopia. They've tried to do so often enough in the past, but have always been beaten back.



## Quiz

- 1 Which sentence from the text shows which group More thinks is to blame for unfairness in society?
- (A) The man who contributes most to society gets the least in return.
  - (B) Social systems in the modern world are full of rich people advancing their own interests.
  - (C) I have no doubt that the whole world would have adopted the Utopian system long ago if it weren't for one obstacle.
  - (D) This fault is too deeply ingrained in human nature to be easily eradicated.
- 2 Based on the text, which of these statements is TRUE?
- (A) More had no problems with people keeping their property private.
  - (B) More had actually visited the country of Utopia that he was writing about.
  - (C) More believed those who give the most to society get the least in return.
  - (D) More believed that it would be easy to improve society very quickly.
- 3 Which two of the following are MAIN ideas of the text?
- 1. *Utopia would be the best place to live because everyone shares.*
  - 2. *People in Utopia are not afraid of going hungry.*
  - 3. *The world is not fair because people are jealous and proud.*
  - 4. *Money is the only thing that keeps the hungry from getting food.*
- (A) 1 and 3
  - (B) 2 and 3
  - (C) 1 and 4
  - (D) 2 and 4
- 4 Which sentence BEST supports the main idea of the section "Provides The Happiest Basis For A Civilized Community"?
- (A) Pride makes people measure success not by what they have.
  - (B) Pride is always obstructing our progress toward a better way of life.
  - (C) It is also one which is most likely to last forever.
  - (D) They've eliminated the root causes of ambition, political conflict, and everything like that.