

BOOKS

Dystopian Novels for an Inquiry Unit on Creating a Sustainable Future

Ashfall and ***Ashen Winter*** (series) by Mike Mullin

When Yellowstone’s supervolcano erupts, Alex’s town is suddenly plunged into darkness. The ash that covers everything forces Alex to leave in search of his family, who was away when the disaster occurred. The second book in the series, *Ashen Winter*, follows Alex as he continues his journey for his family and his own survival.

Birthmarked (trilogy) by Caragh O’Brien

This series, beginning with the novel *Birthmarked*, explores genetic engineering, birth defects, and environmental issues such as water rights in the story of a teenage midwife who must deliver every 10th baby to a protected enclave for unknown reasons.

Divergent (Book 1) and ***Insurgent*** (Book 2) by Veronica Roth

In the dystopian world Roth has created, society is divided into working “factions,” and all 16-year-olds must select the faction where they will spend the rest of their lives. Civil war creates a bleak background for universal themes such as love, loyalty, and the inevitable corruption of politics in the second book.

The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer

Raised in a tiny country between the United States and the former nation of Mexico, Matteo, the main character of this novel, discovers that he is actually a clone of the country’s leader, El Patrón. Embedded in this fast-paced story are deft questions about human rights, science, and our environmental future.

Life as We Knew It (series) by Susan Beth Pfeffer

When an asteroid hits the moon, the world suffers unimaginable environmental catastrophes from tsunamis to earthquakes. The plot centers on a family in Pennsylvania whose members try to find a way to survive. The following two books in the series, *The Dead and the Gone* and *This World We Live In*, explore the courage and determination it takes to live when everything that was once normal is now gone.

The Maze Runner (series) by James Dashner

In a strange, enclosed world where 60 teen boys find themselves, they must learn to grow their own food and create their own supplies. In the two sequels that follow, *The Scorch Trials* and *The Death Cure*, the plot unfolds in a planet devastated by sun flares.

Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood

Not exactly a young adult novel, this story alternates between scenes of the final human to survive a deadly virus and the technology-driven world he lived in before the virus was released. Recommended for mature high school students.

Ship Breaker by Paolo Bacigalupi

Set in a futuristic world where oil is almost nonexistent, this novel provides one adventure after another as Nailer, a teenage boy, works as a scavenger on grounded oil tankers.

Son by Lois Lowry

In this final book in the series that begins with *The Giver*, readers enter a futuristic world where evil and good stage a terrifying battle.