Critical Context Essay analysis, presentations and application to the stories
Use these outlines to aid your understanding of the critical essays. Then add your notes and notes from other members of your group to create your overview for your class presentation.

Then have this sheet handy as you read each story in the *Utopias and Dystopias* section, looking for parts that apply.

“Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government” by Hannah Arendt

**Points of View and Perspectives**
- The banality of evil
- Totalitarianism vs. autocratic governmental systems—totalitarianism seeks to deconstruct human nature; uses terror to dehumanize both victims and executioners and destroy all capacity for individual action (851)

**Thesis**
Terror reigns when people are both isolated and lonely and therefore unable to act

**Supporting points**
- **Total Terror**
  - Totalitarian governments transform classes into masses, supplant the party system with mass movement, shift the center of power from the army to the police, establish a foreign policy openly directed toward world domination (851)
  - The people fear the government but the government does not fear the people because it has ultimate control over the people (852)
  - prepared to sacrifice everybody’s vital immediate interests to the execution of what it assumes to be the law of History or the law of Nature—pretends to have found a way to establish the rule of justice on earth (853) Totalitarian laws is for the law, not for the people
  - Totalitarian policy promises to release the fulfillment of law from all action and will of man; and it promises justice on earth because it claims to make mankind itself the embodiment of the law (854)
  - in the mid-19-800, Law changed its meaning from expressing the framework of stability within which human actions and motions can take place to an expression of movement Thus the law of nature eliminates everything that is harmful and unfit to live. (854)
  - The absence of crimes does not render laws superfluous but prove the perfection of those laws rule. Thus terror becomes total when it becomes independent of all opposition; it rules supreme when nobody any longer stands in its way. Terror is the essence of totalitarian domination
  - Terror is the realization of the law of movement since it seeks to stabilize men in order to liberate the forces of nature or history.
  - Terror’s ultimate goal is not the welfare of men or the interest of one man but the fabrication of mankind, eliminating individuals for the sake of the species, sacrificing the parts for the sake of the whole. (855)
  - Total terror substitute the boundaries and channels of communication between individuals with an iron band which holds individuals so tightly together that they become One Man. By so pressing men against each other, total terror destroys the space between them. (856)
  - Total Terror eliminates those not fit to live
  - It dispenses with human will to act—creating loss of self.(857)
• Ideologies
  o known for their scientific character: they combine the scientific approach with results of
  philosophical relevance and pretend to be scientific philosophy
  o An ideology id the logic of an idea
  o the ideology treats the course of events as though it followed the same “law” as the logical
  exposition of its “idea.” Ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical
  process—the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the pres3nt, the uncertainties of the
  future—because of the logic inherent in their resp3ctive ideas. (858)
  o Ideologies do not study the idea—they assume the idea and then apply it elsewhere and
  everywhere
  o The power which Marx thought was born when the idea seized the masses, was discovered
  to reside, not in the idea itself, but in its logical process which “like a mighty tentacle seizes
  you on all sides as in a vise and from whose grip you are powerless to tear yourself away;
  you must either surrender or make up your mind to utter defeat (Stalin) (859)
  o the self-compulsion of ideological thinking ruins all relationships with reality. People for
  whom the distinction between fact and fiction and the distinction between true and false no
  longer exist (860)
• The Questions
  o terror can rule absolutely only over men who are isolated against each other (860)
  o Isolation and impotence are fundamental to totalitarianism because then no one can act
  Isolation is that impasse into which men are driven when the political sphere of their lives,
  where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed
  o Totalitarian domination as a form of government is new in that it is not content with this
  isolation and destroy private life as well
  o Loneliness, the common ground for terror, the essence of totalitarian government, is closely
  connected with uprootedness and superfluousness—the curse of modern masses since the
  beginning of the industrial revolution (861)
• Loneliness is not solitude
  o What makes loneliness so unbearable is the loss of one’s own self which can be realized in
  solitude, but confirmed in its identity only by the trusting and trustworthy comp any of
  equals (862)
  o Loneliness, once a borderline experience usually suffered in certain marginal social
  conditions like old age, has become an everyday experience of the ever growing masses of
  our century (cf Facebook) (862)
  o Totalitarian domination, like tyranny, bears the germs of its own destruction. Just as fear
  and the impotence from which fear springs are anti-political principles and throw men into a
  situation contrary to political action, so loneliness and the logical-ideological deducing the
  worst that comes from it represent an antisocial situation and harbor a principle destructive
  for all human living-together (863)
  o But there remains also the truth that every end in history necessarily contains a new
  beginning—this beginning is guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man. (863)