

Reading *The Machine Stops* by E.M. Forster

Under the general heading “Utopian and Dystopian Literature”, start a section on this story in your notebook. Vocabulary help for reading the first part of the story is provided below.

Assignments:

Read the first four pages of this story and consider the following questions:

1. Explain any evidence you can find that this is “science fiction” –that is literature that deals with the future implications of present and future technology. Make a list of several remarks.
2. Speculate about when you think this story was written and when the story is set and provide specific evidence.
3. Explain which technology or technologies this story predicts and how right or wrong you think Forster was.
4. Explain what Kuno is specifically referring to on page 2, in lines 20-27.
5. Write a characterization of Vashti, the main character. Consider her way of life in the context of her being a human female on the one hand and her adaptation to her environment on the other. Consider the role of friends and relatives.
6. Explain any evidence you can find of foreboding (*Unheilsverkündung*). How do you think the story will continue?

Vocabulary support

cell	Wabe
radiance	Ausstrahlung, Glanz
apertures	Lücken
to throb	pulsieren
to swaddle ¹	wickeln
fungus	Schimmel
switch	Taste, Schalter
importune	lästig
intercourse	Verkehr, Interaktion
knob	Schalter
to dawdle	trödeln
pneumatic	Druckluftbetrieben
wearisome	ermüdend, nervig
pay me	gestatten (nicht “zahlen”)
oblong	länglich
to fancy	meinen, glauben
imponderable	unwägbar
bloom	Blüte, Schönheit
grape	Traube

to stud	übersäen
to revive	wiederbeleben
to burst	platzen
this day month (Br.)	heute in einem Monat
press of engagements	Termindruck
to doubt	bezweifeln
to abandon	verlassen, im Stich lassen
primaeval	sehr alt
to don	tragen, anziehen
to feed ²	(sich) füttern
to summon	herrufen
reverently	ehrfurchtsvoll
to murmur	murmeln
delirium	Delirium, Wahn
acquiescence	Fügung, Einwilligung
to palpitate	unregelm. Herzklopfen
to seize	ergreifen
to shrink back	sich zurückziehen

¹ The word “swaddle” is strongly associated with diapers, *Windeln* – “to swaddle” can mean “*in Windeln packen*.” The only context in which Americans still hear the word is in Luke 2:7, where it says that Mary “laid Him in a manger and wrapped him in swaddling clothes.”

² to feed – used intransitively in the sense of to “eat” only for animals. Used transitively (with an object) for humans and animals.