

HUMAN LAB RATS IN JAMES DASHNER'S *THE MAZE RUNNER* SERIES (2009 – 2011): HISTORICAL REFERENCES, PRESENT ALLUSIONS, AND DYSTOPIAN FUTURE

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to shed the light on allusions to real lab rats in Dashner's trilogy: *The Maze Runner* (2009), *The Scorch Trials* (2010), and *The Death Cure* (2011). It also aims to trace the historical documents and chronicles essential to reveal the justifications behind the vague political and scientific crimes.

Methodology: The researchers have used the literary analytical approach to study and analyze selected prominent aspects from each novel; such as the concept of lab rats and genocide crimes in *The Maze Runner*; references to weather experiments, the climate change conspiracy, gas chambers, and the Holocaust in *The Scorch Trials*; and finally, the man-made diseases and biological weapons in *The Death Cure*.

Results: The outcomes confirm the necessity of knowing history whether bright or dark as a keyword to understand the present and predict the future. Also, Dashner has based *The Maze Runners* series on historical references as well as present-day vital scientific issues to predict a catastrophic future if a decision is not made. Young adult is chosen to lead the revolution against human abusing crimes and make a change.

Applications: To develop a high understanding of young adult fiction, the researchers recommend those who are interested in literature with the necessity to apply this study to other post-apocalyptic, survival, adventure, science and dystopian series fictions, movies adaptations of related books, and related video games series that addressing young adults' mind in order to diagnose any dilemma .

Novelty/Originality: Hence, this study makes a difference in the sense of exposing the genocide crimes committed by the name of science embedded in Dashner's *The Maze Runners* series by tracing the historical, social, political, and scientific justifications regarding the concept of human lab rats as one of the worst human abusing experiences still used by tyrant regimes till now in ethnic and sectarian purification.

Keywords: Allusions, Eugenics, Genocide, Holocaust, Human lab rat, *The Maze Runners*.

INTRODUCTION

The Maze Runner's series is a rich index of historical scientific experiments performed on humans as well as allusions to present time experiments forming a base for pessimistic apocalyptic dystopian future where humans are reduced to mere rats unwillingly and unknowingly participating in scientific experiments without clear results. Lab rat is a noun that stands for rats, humans or animals that are used as subjects for experiments ([Wehmeier, 2019](#)).

The *Maze Runner* series consists of three novels; *The Maze Runner* (2009), *The Scorch Trials* (2010), and *The Death Cure* (2011). In *the Maze Runner* trilogy, the characters are portrayed as fictional lab rats in a dystopian post-apocalyptic future yet the irony lies in the resemblance of these human lab rats to real-life human lab rats throughout history. All experiments are actually conducted on real humans in the near past especially during the Second World War. In this research, most experiments conducted in the trilogy will be traced to its original historical experiment. There are many types of experiments conducted for different reasons on different types of subjects under different circumstances thus the researchers will analyze the vital point of a lab rat in each novel; the institutionalized subjects including prisoners and orphans in *The Maze Runner*, war weapons experiments in reference to the psychological and weather experimentations as well as medical abuse in *The Scorch Trials* and biological war weapons with references to biological experiments and man-made diseases in *The Death Cure*.

The researchers are highly motivated by the aspects of similarity between the subject matters of human abusing crimes exposed in the selected novels and the all types of crimes happened and still happening in Iraq since the Desert Storm in 1990 and the American occupation in 2003 and all that followed in the name of liberation.

Every book of the trilogy tells the story of the experimentations, humiliation, and abuses that our country and people went and still go through.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Book1: *The Maze Runner* (2009):

Institutionalized experiment subjects

a. Prisoners as lab rats with historical references to the Nazi's crimes of genocide

In the first novel, more than fifty orphan boys are introduced one by one to a controlled environment called the Glades where they are studied closely by a group of scientists. The boys have no personal memories except their names which, later on, turned out to be not their own real names but of famous scientists. In the Glades, they are forced to form a society governed by strict rules because they are surrounded by a huge maze filled with bloodthirsty robotic monsters; the Grievers. The boys try to live a normal life yet at the same time they try to escape the maze. After many trials and deaths, the boys manage to solve the maze and pass the first trails as subjects for experiments run by a company named W.I.C.K.I.D. whose aim is to find a cure for a man-made disease called the flare that affects the Kill zone part of the brain; the part responsible for decision making.

The first novel of the trilogy introduces the subjects, the lab rats, whose origin and nature remain unclear till the near end. We are introduced to this laboratory as one of the subjects along with the protagonist, Thomas.

In the beginning, Thomas thinks he is a prisoner locked up in a prison because of the great walls that lock them inside the Glades and the Maze Grievers who kill them once they get out of the Glades. "It was all too much – where was he? What was this place? Was it some kind of prison? If so why had he been sent here, and for how long?" ([Dashner, *The Maze Runner*, 2009](#)). The children have no idea if they are criminals, serial killers, or murderers simply because they have no memory at all.

The setting is set as a prison at first where Thomas has been moved from the Black Box to the Glades, a square large field, inhabited by the Gladers, a group of fifty boys all children and adolescents. The Glades is surrounded by giant doors that open to a gigantic Maze. Everywhere the children go; there are Beetle Blades and robotic lizards that spy on them. The Maze is filled with the Grievers; monster – like machines that protect the Maze from the children. The Grievers are equipped with injection – like arms that they use against children. The child, when injected, will go through a process called the Changing in which he painfully changes into full memory. The Whole place is controlled by the Creators, whom the reader will learn are scientists from WICKED Company. The creators provide the injected child, through the black box, with the Grief Serum, an antidote that although cures from the Changing, it enables the creators to perform mind control on that child. In the dark forest part of the Glades, there is a graveyard filled with all the children who died either from the Grievers' injections or punished trying to escape the Maze.

History is rich with experiments on prison inmates and prisoners of war. The most recorded experiment performed on prisoners was by Herophilus (335 – 280 BC), a Greek physician who conducted surgeries on almost 600 living prisoners stating that his vivisections are not as cruel as people think instead "remedies of innocent people of all times should be sought in the sacrifices of people guilty of crimes," ([Lutz, 2002](#)). Many doctors followed this belief of sacrificing prisoners for medical discoveries like in 1906 professor Richard Strong injected 24 prisoners with Cholera and all of them ended up with plague ([Salinger, 2005](#)). Dr. Leo Stanley was a chief surgeon in San Quentin's Prison who from 1913 to 1951 conducted many experiments on prison inmates mostly to solve manhood problems like sterilization and reproduction ([Blue, 2009](#)). He believed criminal men should be sterilized as well as those who were unfit. On the other hand, aged men should be able to rejuvenate thus he started a series of experiments implanting male organs from executed prisoners and goats into other inmates ([Blue, 2009](#)). In the 1940s a Malaria Study was conducted for twenty-nine years on the Statesville Penitentiary prisoners ([Masterson, 2014](#)). In 1950 Dr. Joseph Strokes intentionally infected 200 female prisoners with Hepatitis ([Ferreres, 2019](#)), Chester M. Southam 1952 injected cancer cells in Ohio State Penitentiary prisoners ([David Irwin, Norman J. Lass, 2020](#)), from 1951 – 1974 Dr. Albert M. Kligman conducted dermatological research on prisoners from Holesburg Prison ([W. Michael Byrd, Linda A. Clayton, 2002](#)), and many more. Yet, the most famous medical experimentations on humans represented by the Nazi's crime of genocideⁱ against prisoners, patients, and children of Jews, half-Jews or non-Aryans in concentration camps and 'Holocaust'ⁱⁱ ([Bergen, 2016](#)) during the Second World War ([Weindling, 2004](#)). The Nazi doctors performed a series of criminal experiments including not limited to, bone, muscle and nerve transplants, blood coagulation, poison, high altitude, Malaria, sterilization, and fertility, etc., ([Spitz, 2005](#)). In *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Gypsies, and Others in Germany, 1933-1945*, Benno Müller-Hill put in the readers' hands reports and documents on the German crimes against those who were identified as different, feeble, or unfit. One of these reports by Prof. Hallervorden, Department Head at the KWI of Brain Research on 8 December 1942 affirmed the dissection and examination of 500 brains of mental patients. In another report, Prof. C. Schneider requested the mercy killing for epileptics in order to operate on their brains after their euthanasia to be anatomically studied. Earlier in 1941, the Race-Policy Bureau of the Nazi Party headed by Dr. Gross ordered to sterilize Jews; 1000 women were planned to sterilize a day ([Müller-Hill, 1998](#)). Other experiments namely Gas chambers, epidemics, and immunizations will be analyzed with more details in the second and third parts of the research.

b. Orphans as lab rats with historical references to the Canadian Holocaust

WICKED (World in Catastrophe Killzone Experiment Department) scientists, just like all the above-mentioned doctors, experimented on those children under a motto "serve and preserve humanity, no matter the cost. We are, indeed, "good" ([Dashner, *The Maze Runner*, 2009, p. 374](#)). But of course, they decide whom to serve and how to preserve as well as who will be the cost.

After Thomas Intentionally got himself injected by a Griever, he remembered that they are all orphans taken from their families as subjects for scientific experimentation. They all have above average intelligence thus they were placed in a special school, given special learning and each one is named after a famous scientist. This fact hurt the children very much so Frypan asked: “we’re freaking orphans raised by scientists?” ([Dashner, *The Maze Runner*, 2009](#)) A question that made all the children sad, they started contemplating on the rights that they should have had.

The boy should be at school, in a home, playing with neighborhood kids. He deserved to go home at night to a family who loved him, worried about him. A mum who made him take a shower every day, and a dad who helped him with his homework. ([Dashner, *The Maze Runner*, 2009, pp. 194 -195](#))

Unfortunately, history is also full of orphans medically abused and some of the most infamous experiments were the Monster Study conducted in 1939 by Mary Tudor on twenty- two orphans ([Manning, 2010](#)) and Willow Brook’s School Study conducted in 1950 on 700 mentally handicapped orphans who were intentionally infected with Hepatitis ([Skolnik, 2008](#)). Duplessis Orphans, nicknamed the Canadian Holocaust, from 1930 – 1965 about 20.000 orphans were medically abused to cause mental disabilities in order to receive federal funding ([Dundjerovich, 2003](#)). During Maurice Duplessis time in order to get federal funding for institutionalized children, the orphans should either be mentally disabled or psychiatric patients so they were deliberately subjected to forced feeding, straitjackets, chemical restrains, ice bathed, placed in solitary confinements, electrocuted, neglected, physically and sexually abused to fit these classifications([K., 2014](#)). Many children died during this period that a special graveyard was built in front of the institution ([Paulin, 2005](#)) very similar to the graveyard in the Glades.

In the *Maze Runner*, the children are subjected to many hardships, injected with different types of chemicals, and forced into terrifying situations to study their decision making while reacting to variables. Many deaths resulted from these experiments and even some deaths and murders were planned and applied through mind control like Ben who was mind-controlled to kill Thomas in the graveyard. Alby was mind-controlled in an attempt to prevent him from speaking and warning the others, and finally, mind-controlling Chalk and forcing him to stand in front of Thomas and Galley in the lab causing Chalk’s death.

Although there are many mind-control experiments yet project MK- ULTRA (1953 – 1973) stands out as the most famous experiment conducted on children. MK – ULTRA is a code name for a secret United States’ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) program consisting of a series of experiments conducted on children to study mind control. This program started in 1952 to discover drugs that could “irresistibly bring out deep confessions or wipe a subject’s mind clean and program him or her as “a robot agent” ([Rappoport, 2018](#)). Without their consent, children were given Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) for brainwashing and were interrogated in special rooms with bright lights with doctors sitting in the back observing and taking notes. The children were threatened using torture, rape, verbal abuse, sensory deprivation, chemicals, and electrical shock to confess secrets ([Marcello, 2015](#)). Many children died during these experiments while others are subjected to amnesia to prevent them from remembering their horrible sessions. The program was ended after ten years in 1962. This project very much mimicked the experiments performed by WICKED for both projects were run by the government to study children’s brains, their memories were erased; they were injected with truth serums and were brainwashed. They were both tortured in a similar manner except there is no rape or any form of sexual abuse may be because the trilogy addresses young adult readers. Ironically, the term “WICKED is good” is used repeatedly in the *Maze runner*, and it is engraved all over the place.

In other words, the fact that an individual is a prisoner in a correctional facility does not save him/her from being a lab rat; on the contrary, it makes him a vulnerable subject. Institutionalized children were also subjects to medical abuse and was very common in the 1920s to “use vulnerable institutionalized children for exploratory procedures, investigative treatments, and the experimental preventive” ([Allen M Hornblum, Judith L. Newman, Gregory J. Dober, 2013](#)), and [Cynthia Comacchio et al., \(2008\)](#) in their book *Healing the World’s Children* provide a reason for selecting such subjects from institutions whether prison, orphanage or hospital stating that all subjects are in a controlled environment, available, and unwatched. ([Cynthia Comacchio, Janet Golden, George Weisz, 2008](#))

At the end of the first novel, the orphans were rescued after their rescuers brutally murdered all the scientists, or so they thought. They were all taken in the middle of the dark night into a “living rainbow” ([Dashner, *The Maze Runner*, 2009, p. 368](#)) opposite to the greyish Maze and were afforded clothes, bathrooms, dinner a matter that made Thomas worried because he was “so used to looks of despair, it was almost unsettling to see happy faces” ([Dashner, *The Maze Runner*, 2009, p. 369](#)).

Book 2: The Scorch Trails (2010)

War weapons experiments

a. Psychological and weather experimentations with historical references to conspiracy theory

In this novel, the concept of lab rats and experimentation has developed into a new level. We have been informed that there were two test groups. One all-boys group with one female, Teresa; and another all-girls group with only one male, Aries.ⁱⁱⁱThe rescuers’ murder of all the scientists in the lab was an act to shock the boys’ senses and a major variable to

study the subjects' reactions. The boys were taken into a heaven-like dormitory yet they woke up to find themselves in another experiment. They were locked in, all the windows were barred and from those windows Cranks, people who have the flare disease were screaming at the boys asking them to kill them. The main hallway was filled with the bodies of all the people who rescued them from the scientists hanging from the ceiling. All the boys were tattooed at night "property of WICKED," they were all numbered, given certain roles like Minho labeled as a leader, Newt as the Glue, and Thomas "to be killed by Group B." An alarm bell rang then all of a sudden all hanging bodies disappeared, the cranks also disappeared, and they were left to starve for three days till phase two of the trails began. A doctor, ironically nicknamed Rat Man by the subjects, informed them that they were all subjects placed in difficult situations, variables, to study their responses and that they were all intentionally infected with the virus of the Flare to motivate them to be better subjected, to respond well to variables and by attempting to save themselves they will end up saving the world from this disease. They were asked to travel for two weeks going through all types of variables, in other words, difficulties, losses, injuries, pain, hunger, fear, betrayal, death, etc., till they reached the Haven, the place where they will get their cure. Another group, all girls, was given the same task and has been to an identical maze just like the boys and went through the same variables till they managed to escape it. The book ended with the two groups reaching the Haven and picked up by the scientists in a berg. In this novel, the reader will experience two main types of experiments; psychological experimentation and weather experimentation as part of a well-planned "conspiracy theory"^{iv} of selection and elimination ([Prooijen, 2018](#)).

The creators, WICKED scientists, took controlling lab rats into a higher level in this novel. In the *Maze Runner*, the boys lived in a controlled make-believe environment, the weather was always the same, not hot or cold, and it never rained. Only when the scientists removed the artificial sun, the boys realized the sky, the sun, and the weather were all fake. In *The Scorch Trails* in spite of the boiling heat of Earth because of the Solar Flare, the scientist tried to play the role of god by using the weather to test their subjects. From the beginning of history, the weather was and is still associated with god in all religions even pagan religions. God used weather to reward the good, punish the bad, test his followers and miracles to his prophets. Pagan gods like Ba'al, Horus and Zeus were weather gods and consequently were war gods at the same time ([Petriello, 2018](#)). History provided great examples of battles that were won because of the weather; Solar eclipse frightened the Macedonian army in 168 BC leading to their great defeat against the Romans, heavy rain turned the battlefield into mud causing Henry V to defeat his enemies in 1415, strong wind and disease wrecked the Spanish armada, and in 1775 snow prevented America from capturing Quebec to name a few ([Petriello, 2018](#)). Therefore, many governments started to study weather, engineer it and manipulate it as a weapon against their enemies; it is called Weather Warfare. The most famous use of Weather Warfare was by the Americans against Vietnam. The US army used weather modification technology to increase rainfall rates by seeding clouds a matter that lead to heavy showers of rain, turning enemy communication lines and supply routes into muddy ground impossible to use. ([Durschmied, 2000](#)) This operation, operation Popeye, started from 1967 and continued till 1972 yet it was stopped due to public outrage followed by the Environmental Warfare treaty in 1978 that banned the use of weather modification to harm another country ([Durschmied, 2000](#)). Again experimentation and weather manipulation did not stop but became secret. In 1993, the US Air Force and the US Navy joined the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to establish and fund HAARP; High-Frequency Active Aurora Research Program. HAARP started to study the ionosphere to "affect our military and civilian communication and navigation system" ([Gulyas, 2016](#)). Then they started injecting energy into the ionosphere in an attempt to control it a fact that made conspiracy theorists hold HAARP responsible for climate change and the creation of extreme weather like droughts and superstorms not only for war but also economic profit ([Gulyas, 2016](#)).

The lab rats were asked to walk through scorch desert for two weeks till they reached the Haven. All boys were forced to go through the trails otherwise they "Will be executed immediately in the most...unpleasant manner" ([Dashner, The Scorch Trails, 2010](#)). Ironically, the subjects from the very first moment they agreed to participate in the trails their execution started. The scientists started by using technical weapons like a slice ball that screams at them before slicing their heads off. After much causality, they reached a staircase made of fire they had to ascend to reach the scorch yet while ascending; monster balls were thrown at them that melted their heads off. Again after many causalities, they finally reached the scorch, a desert with a broiling sun that they had to cover themselves with sheets in order to walk under it; James Dashner portrayed it as a "nuclear holocaust" ([Dashner, The Scorch Trails, 2010, p. 96](#)), in accordance to its archetypal reference ([Lemkin, 2005](#)).^v After the mechanical weapons, the weather came as another weapon. The broiling sun was not the only variable the creators or the scientists used against the subjects. They inflicted a storm on them portrayed as "hurricane – strength gales of terror" ([Dashner, The Scorch Trails, 2010, p. 131](#)) followed by "lightning slamming into the ground and throwing up massive amounts of scorched earth" ([Dashner, The Scorch Trails, 2010, p. 133](#)) then came the rain like "nails in his [Thomas] eardrums" ([Dashner, The Scorch Trails, 2010, p. 134](#)) "Wind. Explosions of light. Wind. Choking dust. Wind. Ringing in his ears, pain. Wind" ([Dashner, The Scorch Trails, 2010, p. 135](#)) then a massive rain followed as if the storm wept in shame after what it had done to them. Then again, he kept describing the rain "The rain fell in torrents like God had sucked up the ocean and spit it out over their heads in fury. ([Dashner, The Scorch Trails, 2010, p. 139](#)) They hated this new world they believed that it must be a "messed up world that could create a storm like that," dying seemed to be the easy way out. Unfortunately, seven of them died in this storm. At the end of the novel, when the remaining subjects reached the Haven they were tortured with another storm, lightning, thunder, rain then Grievors till the time came they were taken by a berg to WICKED headquarters.

b. Medical abuse with historical references to the Holocaust

After making the boys completely believe in their control, WICKED scientists moved to another type of experiment making the lab rats relive a very vital point in the history of medical abuse; in reference to the gas chamber and crematoria in the extermination camps known as the Holocaust.

Teresa and her all-girls group took Thomas captive. Then Teresa and Aries joined together and acted like lovers making Thomas feel a complete sense of betrayed consequently forcing him into the gas chamber. The gas chamber was a cave with rectangular green light, had glowing and dangerously white mist. The moment he was locked in, fog and poisonous gas fired at him from all holes along with the painful sense of hopelessness and betrayal. After a while, the door was opened and Teresa and Aries apologized to Thomas for what they have done saying they were forced by WICKED to do this because they needed him to feel total betrayal. Thomas remembered that Teresa's door in the dormitory was labeled the Betrayer. During the Second World War, the German Nazi performed a serious of human experimentations all deemed as war crimes and crimes against humanity. Their lab rats or "human guinea pigs," according to Dr. Sigmund Rascher a Captain in the Medical Service of the Luftwaffe, were of all types yet the Jews had the greatest share based on human material data ([Cornwell, 2013](#)).

The Nazis executed millions of Jews after gathering them, physically inspecting them, and classifying them into women, men, children, and elderly ([Darlene, 2011, p. 42](#)). Those who were healthy became either slaves or subjects for experimentations. Those who were not, they were executed either by shooting them by firing squads in ditches or taken to Death camps ([Darlene, 2011](#)). These camps were also called murder factories where the Jews were held prisoners not for experimentation or labor but for burning ([Darlene, 2011](#)). They were taken in isolation and the guards made them believe they were going to take a shower so they take their clothes and jewelry then guided them to underground chambers. In those chambers, they were burned till they became charcoal and two million Jews died in this manner ([Darlene, 2011](#)). In *Hitler's Scientists: Science, War, and the Devil's Pact*, the geneticist Cornwell described the death camp of Auschwitz and death trains saying that about 10,000 prisoners arrived every day by trains as slave laborers then killed in sealed gas chambers using Zyklon b, the hydrogen cyanide poison ([Cornwell, 2013](#)). A total sense of betrayal and hopelessness filled both lab rats whether fictional or real. Although real-life lab rats perished without making a voice, all these torturous and traitorous experiments made Scorch trail lab rats revolt against their scientists stating "we're not going to sit back and let you treat us like rats anymore. We're done" ([Dashner, The Scorch Trails, 2010, p. 348](#)) yet once they were back to WICKED headquarters they were bathed, dressed, fed, and retired to sleep only to wake up in other trails again as lab rats.

Book 3: *The Death Cure* (2011)

Biological war weapons

a. Biological experimentations with historical references to chemical and germ weapons

In the last novel, *The Death Cure* (2011), all the subjects are in WICKED headquarters each one is isolated from the other and is tested differently. Thomas is deprived of taking a bath and locked in a white room for twenty-six days. He is told by Rat Man; Dr. Janson that some of the subjects are immune to the flare while others are consumed by it, he is immune but his best friend Newt is going to turn Crank by the flare unless he saves him. The scientists believe if the subjects regain their memories they will cooperate better, yet Thomas refuses to remember because he knows he and Teresa are responsible for these experiments and in fact they are the ones who helped the creators; the doctors who make the maze. Thus, Thomas and some of his friends run away from the WICKED headquarters to seek a place far away from the cranks and to find a cure for their friends. After obstacles, many of the subjects die saving all immunes and delivering them to the Rocky Mountains where they all live without the threat of being rats in the hands of scientists ever again.

From the beginning of the trilogy, the reader is led to believe that the Flare virus is released accidentally by the government and it is man-made. A fact that makes the reader ask, why does the government have this virus in the first place? In reality, one can easily find the answer, biological weapons. Biological weapons are weapons that use biological agents namely bacteria, viruses and fungi or toxins to cause "death, temporary incapacitation, or permanent harm in humans or to kill or damage animals or plants for military objectives" ([Guillemin, 2005](#)). The term weapons include any device used for spreading this biological agent or toxins like munitions, bombs, air spray tanks, etc., ([Guillemin, 2005](#)). In ancient history, enemies' wells were infected with dead animal carcasses ([Guillemin, 2005, p. 3](#)). The oldest recorded use of biological weapons in history was used by Hittite (1500 – 1200 BC). Hittites were ancient people who wanted to build an empire from Turkey to Syria so they infected the cities they wanted to conquer with plague using infected donkeys and rams ironically the Hittites caught the plague too ([Brayn, 2013, p. 37](#)). In the siege of Kaffa 1346, the Tartar army caught the plague so they started throwing plague-infected corpses over the walls to defeat their enemies ironically again the people of Kaffa fled the city taking with them Black Death to Europe "spreading like wildfire and wiping out a full third of its population" ([Brayn, 2013](#)). In 1763 the British army used smallpox infected blankets to start a smallpox epidemic in the American army causing a smallpox outbreak in 1963 and 1964 ([Guillemin, 2005, p. 3](#)). The rise of chemical weapons slowed the use of biological weapons except for Japan and Germany. Japan started a biological warfare program from 1934 – 1945 by using fleas infected with plague to contaminate food and water of China causing great epidemics in Chinese civilians ([Guillemin, 2005, p. 4](#)). Germany, during the First World War, developed germ weapons and tried to

infect plants and animals with anthrax and ganders ([Guillemin, 2005, p. 5](#)). However, the United States of America in the 1950s developed brucellosis disease bombs. With each biological weapon, thousands of protective masks, vaccines, and drugs were prepared ([Guillemin, 2005, p. 8](#)).

Although the use of biological weapons is banned and is considered a war crime, countries and nations are allowed to prepare them for defense and counterattack ([Guillemin, 2005, p. 5](#)). Some countries refrained from using them because of their unpredictable and uncontrolled consequences while other countries continued to weaponize biological agents in secret. In 1979, a sudden outbreak of anthrax occurred in the former Soviet Union killing over 70 people which later on it was revealed that they were weaponizing anthrax ([Jeffrey Ryan, Jan Glarum, 2008, p. 13](#)).

Biological agents have been used recently as a means for terrorism thus the term Bioterrorism emerged. Bioterrorism is the “intentional use of microorganisms or toxins derived from living organisms to cause death or disease in humans or animals or planets on which we depend” ([Jeffrey Ryan, Jan Glarum, 2008, p. 5](#)). The first recorded bioterrorist attack was on the United States of America by Rajneeshes who, to win the elections, infected Oregon county food with salmonella causing 751 to suffer from food poisoning and in 2001 envelopes with anthrax spores were sent to many media and political figures in the United States five of whom died ([Jeffrey Ryan, Jan Glarum, 2008, p. 15](#)). Consequently Georg W. Bush in 2002 stated that “bioterrorism is a threat to our country.....it’s important to confront these real threats to our country and prepare for future emergencies ([Jeffrey Ryan, Jan Glarum, 2008, p. 16](#)). With this fact in mind, it is no wonder why The United States of America has biological weapons in their science fiction.

b. Man-made diseases with historical references to Eugenics

Solar Flare is a sudden release of matter from the sun causing plasma and practical to be ejected from the sun into outer space ("[solar flare](#)", 2005). In 2012 a massive solar storm headed towards earth and barely missed it. According to NASA, another solar flame is predicted to hit earth in 2022. From a pure scientific fact, a fictional scientific disease is made by James Dashner. He portrays the Flare as a lethal airborne, highly contagious man-made virus that settles in the brain, the decision making part called the Killzone by WICKED scientists. Its symptoms include progressive degenerative illness in the brain, uncontrolled movements, emotional disturbances, mental deterioration, dementia, paranoia, severe aggression, cannibalism, and the list goes on. Those who have the virus are called Cranks, the poor underprivileged who catch the virus are first thrown into a crank palace, and the privileged ones can afford to buy the Bliss. Noteworthy, Bliss is a very expensive drug that slows the function of the brain and lengthens the time before the individual goes completely crazy. Cognitive stimulation leads to cognitive destruction. Ironically the same scientists who are responsible for spreading the virus are the same ones who benefit from selling the Bliss. It is a very fruitful business; when the number of the infected became very high, the government becomes “desperate they kill people as soon as they catch the virus,” ([Dashner, The Death Cure, 2011, p. 173](#)).

In the last pages of the novel, the reader learns that the Flare virus is not only man-made but also people are infected deliberately as a means for population control. Shocking and fictional as it may seem, yet the truth is even more shocking when one learns about Eugenics. Eugenics is “a set of beliefs and practices” that evaluates human life either as valuable; those worth living or invaluable; thus worth dying ([Alison Bashford, 2010](#)). Throughout history, many eugenics movements have emerged influenced by theories of heredity and aimed at “preventing life, bring about fitter life, generate more life and end life,” ([Alison Bashford, 2010](#)). This movement has started in the 1880s yet peaked during the 1920s when Darwin introduced his theory of natural selection, in other words, nature naturally selects the fittest. Scientists aim at manipulating this natural selection ([Alison Bashford, 2010, p. 5](#)). Although the most well-known documented Eugenics program is the German Nazi program that aims at creating superior Aryan race while decreasing other unworthy races, the United States of America along with the other fourteen nations is the birthplace of eugenics ([Bowling, 2011](#)). In the United States, many methods have been used including and not limited to, sterilizing mental patients, man-made diseases, chemical warfare, wars, and starvation. Collins Robert Bowling, in his book *A New Order of The Ages: A Metaphysical Blueprint of Reality and an Expose on Powerful Reptilian/Aryan Bloodlines*, believes that eugenics in spite of being repressed after the Second World War, “continues right up to today under different guises” ([Bowling, 2011, p. 200](#)). He believes that new disorders namely autism, Bipolar disorder, ADHD, anxiety disorder are created for this reason along with man-made diseases like H1N1 and Gulf War syndrome ([Bowling, 2011, p. 201](#)).

There are many references to Human population control throughout the trilogy that can be easily overlooked. From the first novel, *The Maze*, the reader is left to wonder why there are two groups one all females and the other with all males introducing the opposite sex as a trigger to end and force the subjects to escape the Maze. Many died from each group thus Aries tells Thomas he thinks that scientists are selecting the fittest to breed them in *The Scorch Trials*. Later after taking all immunes to the Rocky Mountains, Thomas tells Brenda that “There are over two hundred of us and we’re all immunes. It’ll be a good start.” ([Dashner, The Death Cure, 2011](#)) An idea that is thoroughly planned by Chancellor Ava Paige in her final memorandum, in *The Death Cure*, which she states that although many might think that their experiments have failed, she has succeeded because Thomas, unconsciously, follows her exact plan. At the beginning of this novel, Thomas starts a rebellion realizing what they are going through is medical abuse. Thus, he clearly tells Dr. Janson that he wants to end the tests “living through this kind of abuse is a lot different than planning it. It’s just not right,” ([Dashner, The Death Cure, 2011, p. 9](#)). Then he says again “I don’t care if the whole shuck human race ends. Even if that was the only thing that had

to happen to find the cure, I'd still be against it," ([Dashner, The Death Cure, 2011, p. 97](#)). Newt shouts at the doctors telling them "Don't call us subjects. We're not mice trying to find the cheese," ([Dashner, The Death Cure, 2011, p. 48](#)). All lab rats escape and try to rescue all subjects and kill all scientists yet they end up fulfilling the Chancellor's ultimate plan as she explains "And if all has gone according to plan, we have sent the brightest, the strongest, the toughest of our subjects to a safe place, where they can begin civilization anew while the rest of the world is driven to extinction," ([Dashner, The Death Cure, 2011, p. 323](#)).

Two wrongs do not make a right, they spread the virus to control the population which is an act committed against humanity, they could not control it so they killed all cranks, isolated immunes, and done horrible unspeakable experiments on them to find the cure when they failed they breed them. They still believe they preserved the human race and that WICKED, is good.

CONCLUSION

The Maze Runner Trilogy is more than a world of post-apocalyptic science dystopian fiction; as the study has proved. It is actually a reference to major historical events and vital scientific issues that warn against catastrophic future for Earth as we know it. Nothing in the novels is fiction; the lab rats whether prisoners or orphans, the secret government labs and the inhumane experiments are all historically documented and have true foundations in reality.

Dashner has criticized the scientists and their evil designs against humanity by the name of science. He depicts them as Nazi-like scientists behave like gods and call themselves creators aim to create a pure healthy race of youth yet they only create diseases and destruction.

He also refers to the climate change conspiracy exposing the wicked institutional schemes in manipulating the environment for their own benefit and profit in the name of science and humanity's interests. Climate changes, modern diseases, sedative drugs, biological warfare, environmental emergencies and genocide crimes against humanity are all real prominent issues used to control the future of the world and drive humans to their extinction.

Based on historical facts, Dashner's books expose the danger of the modern Nazi ideology of selection and elimination as well as present-day vital issues that predict a catastrophic future if a decision is not made. He tries to awaken the target readers to recognize the fake reality made up by the authorities in our present world. He encourages the addressee of young adult to escape the trap of illusion, metaphorically referred to as the maze, the misleading issues of politics, drugs, sex, science, media, religion, ethics, and races; refuse being lab rats; and trust nothing but their instincts, their mind's reality; and revolt against manipulation in all its shapes.

Immunity is the cure; this is what Dashner suggests for the new generation of a young adult at the end of the novel. However, he could not escape the sense of pessimistic toward the ultimate designs of the WICKED institutions in controlling humans' life and fate under the shadow of the New World Order as long as they have the authority to embrace the fittest and exterminate the unfit.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

There are a lot of historical references that have been skipped because of the time and size limitations of the study. According to the unsettled circumstances in our country, we suffer from many limitations such as electricity blackout and internet cut off that prevent us from fulfilling the requirements in the given deadlines

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ⁱThe term "genocide" coined by Lemkin. It means the extermination of a people. Lemkin describes the elimination policy of Jews and non-Germanic people during the Second World War as a crime of genocides that specifically aimed at the destruction not of individuals only but of a whole civilization.

Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, (New Jersey: The Law book Exchange, Ltd., 2005), p.37.

ⁱⁱ The Holocaust can be defined as the largest genocide in the twentieth century happened during the World War II associated with Hitler's ideology of hygiene race and creating healthy society of Aryan blood only by rooting out all those who are different, Jews, half-Jew, non-Aryan, homosexual and even patient Aryan from Nazi Germany.

See Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust (Critical Issues in World and International History)*, 3rd ed., (UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

ⁱⁱⁱIn 1944, anthropological studies have been conducted on racial groups in the concentration camp in Auschwitz by Dr. Mengele with the approval of Hitler to study specific protein in their blood. See Benno Müller-Hill, *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Gypsies, and Others in Germany, 1933-1945*, Trans. George R. Fraser, (USA: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 1998), P.20.

^{iv}Any conspiracy theory must have five critical ingredients including patterns, agency, coalitions, hostility, and continued secrecy and they are all available in Dashner's trilogy. See Jan-Willem van Prooijen, *The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories*, Dashner's books give good evidence including, (New York: Routledge, 2018).

^vThe Holocaust becomes "an archetype to the millions of martyred Jews." Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, (New Jersey: The Law book Exchange, Ltd., 2005), p. 99.