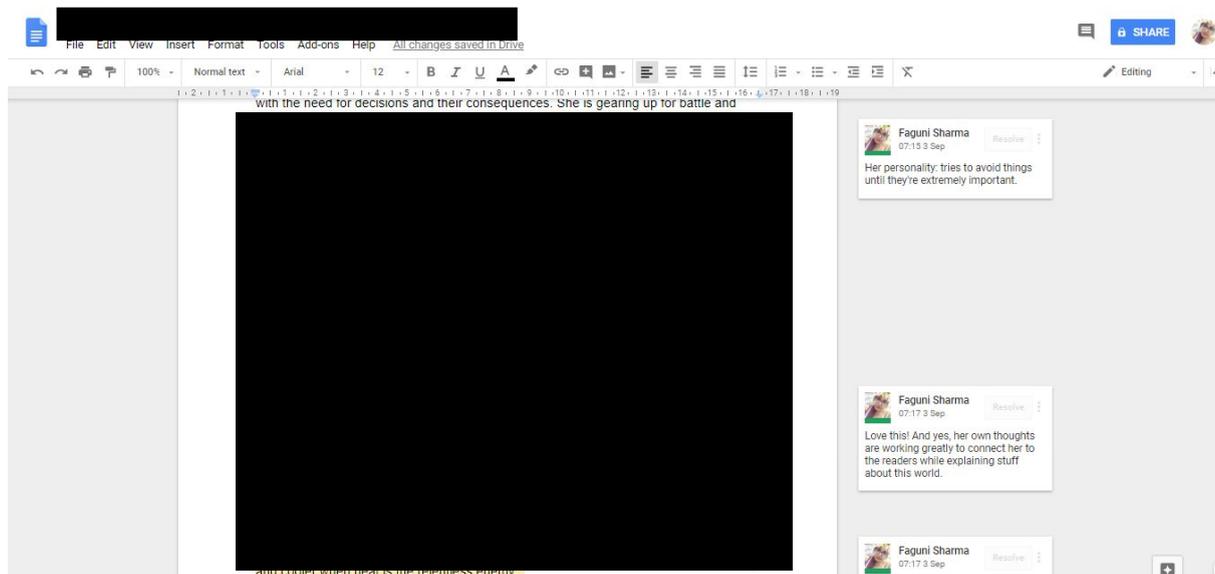


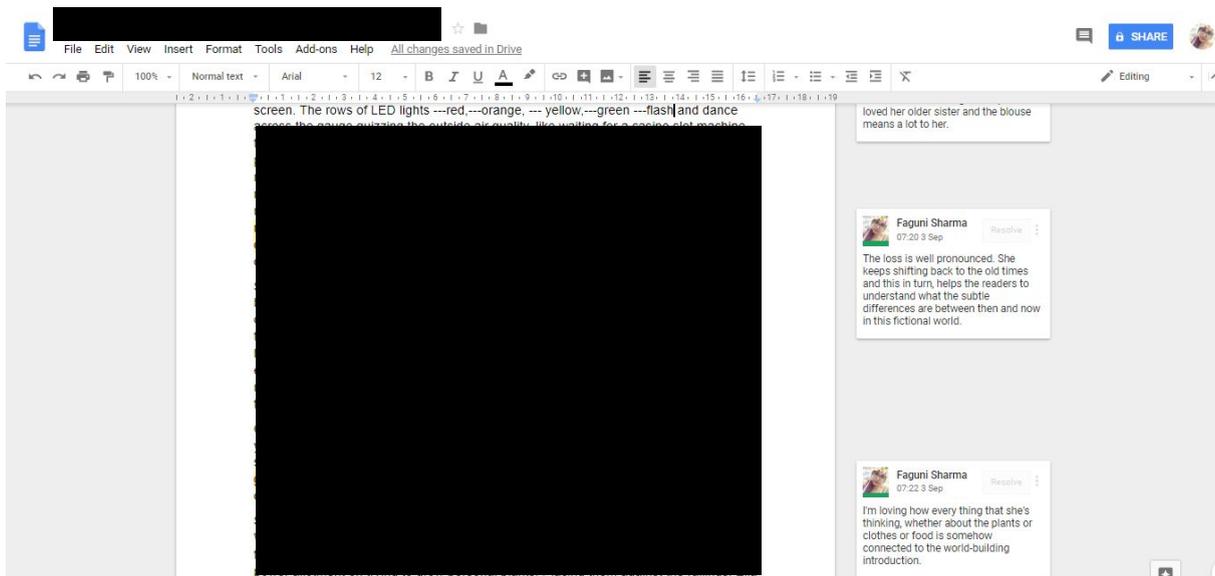
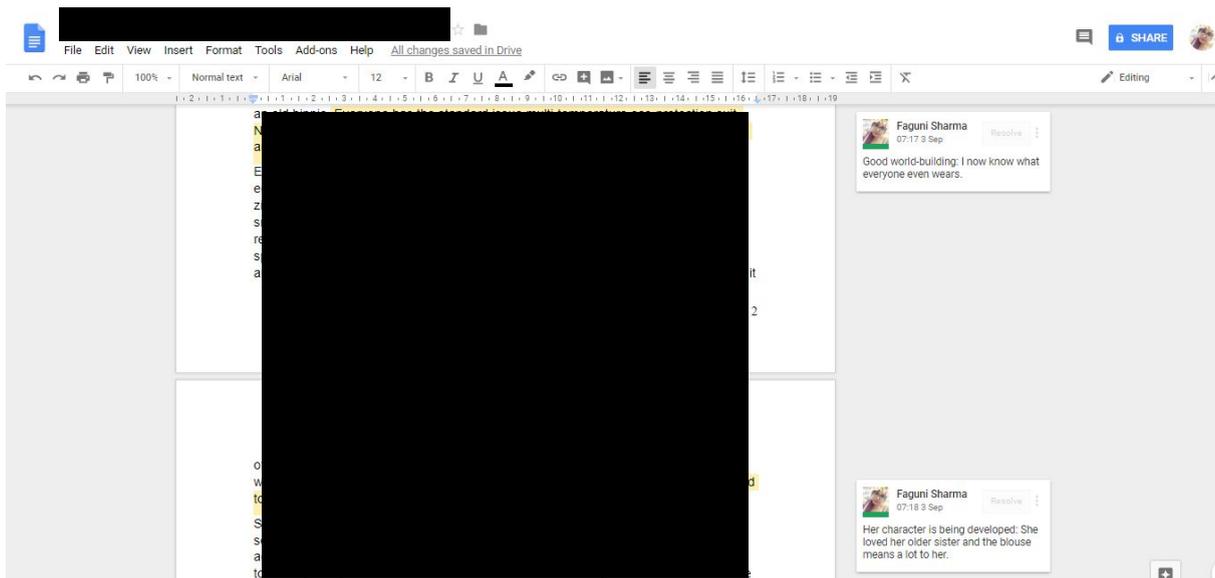
Answers to specific questions

1. **My primary struggle has been that I am bridging speculative fiction with my literary view of the importance of character arc and theme and world building. I have been told the first chapter does not have the initial action hook that regular sci fi has. DO YOU THINK THAT IS A FATAL FLAW?**

Honestly, I could get the hint of what you were aiming for while reading the first chapter. Yes, I did add a little comment in the first scene when [REDACTED] was making the soup, saying *“Honestly, I love the writing and details being provided here but at the same time, it's just her making lunch so it doesn't work as the best opening scene nor does it give any sort of valuable information to the reader.”* So it's no surprise that you've received similar responses to the first scene. However, marking the *entire* first chapter as a flaw is not something I agree upon with the other feedback-givers.

For me, as a reader, world building and character development hold so much more importance than the overall plot of the story. The chapter smartly lays out [REDACTED] personality while also using her as the eyes through which the readers can view and understand this dystopian world--the prime requisite of writing a dystopian story. For instance, I left these comments in the first chapter:





Needless to say, I really enjoyed the chapter. There was an excellent mix of character layout and world building. And while I'm at it, I want to mention a little something that caught my attention as a nutritionist-in-making: Bland diet/nutrition is actually canned, cooked, frozen vegetables and other low-fat dairy products. If you're literally using the word 'bland', maybe try using 'tasteless' instead. Because bland diet doesn't allow chunky, heavy pieces like that of soybeans. Also, I'm referring to Page 1, Para 2.

Now that that's aside, I'll tell you what *doesn't* work. If I'm considering readers like me who love some foreplay before the story actually hits, your first chapter is doing really well. But in case of readers who want the action right off the bat (and trust me, majority belong to this type), then there might be some problem. Worse would be readers not moving past the first chapter because you haven't given them anything to look forward to. So if you ask me as someone who belongs to the latter group, I would say: **Always start at the action.**

I can suggest you a few ways to do this.

- **Have a prologue.** You can add a prologue with a scene where the action is taking place; this would get the readers excited but also allow you to use your first chapter as a source of character development and world building. The prologue can be a scene from the middle when the stakes are super high. All you would need to do is cut the best bits and piece them together. However, it's easier said than done and making a prologue likeable is a lot harder. Plus, I don't personally like this. But if you can pull it off well, go ahead!
- **Have [REDACTED] think about the last action-y scene.** What I mean is, you can have the character think about the last time there was civil unrest or the last time she was stuck somewhere because of that unrest. Basically, link her to the main problem that's binding the entire story and make that particular scene filled with action. Then make her *look back* on that scene and viola! You now have an action-filled opening without stepping out of the character's mind.
- **Add another character.** Most of the time, readers feel *bored* not because the opening isn't action filled but because they are bored of reading just one single character thinking and doing chores. They want more characters/situations to fill up the space so it seems more action-y. I would suggest adding another character with whom [REDACTED] can converse and talk about the same things she's already thinking. This would allow the readers to view the scene in a more peripheral way and thus, seem more interesting. But if there's no way you can add another character (and I think you can't since there are already different chapters for different characters), you can stick to the second option.

As for what my final verdict on the first chapter would be: I don't think it's a "fatal flaw" to start a story in an unconventional manner but yes, if you're looking at it from a commercial point of view, you want to impress majority of the readers so majority is with which you should be going.