

# 1984 by George Orwell (Published by Signet Classic)

Approved for use in Communication Arts II, Honors Communication Arts II

## Summary

Orwell's *1984* is a story of a future world that has been converted to strict totalitarianism. In this world, Big Brother watches over all. Winston Smith, a party member, continues to indulge in rebellious thoughts that go far outside the "acceptable norm." The result is Winston deals with his own internal conflict of what is right and wrong as he is "convinced" by the party to conform to their ideals.

## Connection to the Curriculum

In an examination of man's conscience vs. society, readers meet Winston Smith, a controlled Party member who disagrees with the laws mandated by "Big Brother." Orwell's criticism of powerful government is revealed in his bleak prediction of the future when/if man is not able to think for himself. The somber tone of this piece is critical to the understanding of Orwell's message of an anti-utopian society. The novel provides the student of literature the opportunity to closely examine diction (specifically contrasting the use of language to describe the Proles vs. the Party members) and its use in portraying a message. Recognizing satire and political messages in writing is age-appropriate for these 15- and 16-year-olds as they are a mere two years away from voting. The fine art of drawing the political inferences from Orwell's work in addition to examining the character types provides higher-level thinking activities for honors students.

## Standards

### Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

**Reading:** 1.2- The students read fluently. 1.3- The students expand vocabulary. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

**Literature:** 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text. 2.2- The students understand the significance of literature and its contributions to various cultures.

**Writing:** 3.9- The students use a variety of modes of writing for different purposes and audiences.

### Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

#### Reading:

1.2.1- The student adjusts reading rate to support comprehension when reading narrative texts.

1.3.1- The student determines meaning of words or phrases using context clues from sentences or paragraphs.

1.3.4- The student identifies, interprets, and analyzes the use of figurative language.

1.3.5- The student discriminates between connotative and denotative meanings and interprets the connotative power of words.

1.4.4- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions during and after reading the text.

1.4.10- The student identifies the topic, main idea(s), supporting details, and theme(s) in text across the content areas and from a variety of sources in appropriate-level text.

1.4.11- The student analyzes and evaluates how an author's style and use of literary devices work together to achieve his or her purpose for writing text.

#### Literature:

2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of characters.

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and its influence on characters and events in the story.

2.1.3- The student analyzes and evaluates how the author uses various plot elements.

2.1.4- The student analyzes themes, tone, and author's point of view.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices.

2.2.6- The student compares and contrasts works of literature that deal with similar topics and problems.

#### Writing:

3.9.3- The student writes pieces e.g., research, informational writing, summaries, and literary analyses.

**A Note on the Text:** (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

*Because it is a rather dark, bleak novel, readers should be aware that in this bleakness lies Orwell's real message about over-powerful governments. In this futuristic (at the time of publication) novel, there is a relationship between an unmarried man and woman (with limited sexual references) prior to their ultimate "capture" by Big Brother. Following this capture is a series of tortures (including rats, electric shock, and other abuses) that are violent in nature. All of these negative scenes work together to develop the heart of this political novel.*

## AP Connections

George Orwell, a highly reputable British author, has been noted on previous AP exams. This title is a modern classic that challenges students with thought-provoking ideas. Students encounter a host of social, political, scientific, technological, and linguistic developments which foster totalitarianism, and they must make higher-level inferences from their reading. Allusions from *1984* often appear in other writing, including modern newspaper and magazine articles.

## Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon:

To be completed during future curriculum development activities