



Exploring Senior Cycle Comparative Studies 1984 by George Orwell

1984 by George Orwell is a novel included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2027 and 2028. It may be used as part of the Comparative Study at Ordinary Level or Higher Level.

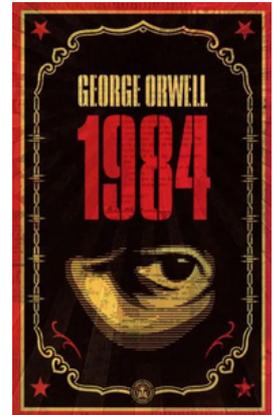


Image courtesy of Penguin books

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- Please note that *1984* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



[Scan the QR code or click here to access a Getting Started with Guide for this Text](#)

Before you read... (Teacher Guidance)

These activities help students connect with the social and political issues raised in the text.

1. Viewpoints

Allow students time to reflect on the statement '*surveillance keeps us safe*'. Ask them to consider the degree to which they agree and/or disagree with this statement? Encourage the students to share their opinions with a peer who holds the opposing views.

2. Quotation Prediction

'It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen'. Guide your students in considering the impact this unusual detail has on their envisaging of the world this text is taking place in?

3. Reflecting on Values

Allow your students to consider the order of importance of 'truth', 'freedom' and 'human connection'. Ask them to consider which they value most and why?



Extract

Background to the novel:

1984 is set in the fictional Oceania, one of three global superstates that are constantly at war. Oceania is ruled by the Party, led by its figurehead Big Brother, whose presence is everywhere through telescreens, posters and propaganda.

Winston Smith, a worker at the Ministry of Truth, is becoming increasingly disaffected by life under the rule of the Party.

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.

*The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. At one end of it a coloured poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall. It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a metre wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features. Winston made for the stairs. It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric current was cut off during daylight hours. It was part of the economy drive in preparation for Hate Week. The flat was seven flights up, and Winston, who was thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went slowly, resting several times on the way. On each landing, opposite the lift-shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. **BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU**, the caption beneath it ran.*

(George Orwell, 1984, 1948, p.1)

Activities Based on Extract

The following may be completed in written or oral format,
as individuals or as part of a group activity.

Considering General Vision of Society

Guide students in considering the challenges Winston faces as he enters and ascends the stairs, and how do these difficulties highlight the conditions of life in Victory Mansions?

Aesthetic Impact

Guide students in examining the visual impact of the poster that appears repeatedly in the hallway. Encourage them to consider how its design and caption contribute to a sense of surveillance or control within the building?

Exploring Writing Style

Encourage students to consider whether or not Orwell is successful in creating a mood of discomfort and oppression in the extract? Guide your students to examine aspects such as imagery, setting, symbolism etc.,

Read and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. Paired Discussion

In pairs, encourage your students to discuss their idea of a dystopian world or a utopian world. Based on their discussions, guide them on writing a description of this dystopia or utopia. You may wish to provide scaffolding by asking them to consider elements of society such as governance, technology, freedom etc.,

2. Radio Broadcast

Guide your students in writing and delivering a short radio script as a Party official announcing preparations for Hate Week. Encourage your students to outline some of the events that will take place and the role they expect the population to play in ensuring its success.

3. Personal Essay

Guide your students in producing a personal response in which they discuss the extent to which the information we consume from various sources, such as online, news reports etc., can be structured or presented in a manner that creates bias.

4. Audio Accompaniment

Encourage your students in choosing a suitable background sound to accompany the reading of this extract. Ask them to consider the impact do they think their chosen audio will have on the atmosphere and interpretation of this piece?



[Click to watch the trailer for the film version of this novel courtesy of Rotten Tomatoes](#)

5. Comparison

Guide students to the link to watch a film trailer for *1984*. Encourage them to compare the effectiveness of both the extract and the trailer while considering one of the options below.

- Creating a short storyboard showing how both the extract and trailer present the atmosphere of the world of 1984
- Writing a paragraph or record a short audio/video response comparing the imagery and tone in the trailer with the descriptive language of the extract
- Identifying one detail from the trailer and one from the extract that you believe strongly convey an oppressive mood. Explain your choices.