



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

1984

BY GEORGE ORWELL



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Written by Eva Richardson

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Setting and History

Objective: Researching life in England during Orwell's time

Activity

George Orwell lived and wrote in Great Britain during the first half of the twentieth century. A thorough understanding of life in England during Orwell's lifetime provides insight into the subject matter of *1984* and enables readers to view and evaluate Orwell's ideas and vision within the context of the political, cultural, and social landscape of his time.

Using the library, the Internet, or both, research the history and find information to fill in the next chart, which deals with Great Britain between 1900 and 1955.

Use your research to complete the chart on the following page. We have supplied areas for you to investigate.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Theme

Objective: Creating individual visions of a futuristic society

Activity

In *1984*, which was written in 1949, George Orwell presents his vision of a futuristic society. He speculates on possibilities about Great Britain's future government, social structure, and political system. In his futuristic vision, he includes ideas on Great Britain's relationship with other countries as well as for the life quality of individual citizens. Technological innovations and changes in family relationships play a major role in Orwell's work.

Take a few moments to consider how you envision life in a futuristic society. Collect several ideas and details and create an outline or write a few paragraphs describing your thoughts on an imaginative society of the future.

Consider the following possibilities when writing or drawing an outline of your futuristic vision:

- Do you envision a society that is fifty, one hundred, five hundred, one thousand, two thousand, or more years in the future?
- Does your vision include plans for your country, for another country, or for the entire world?
- Do you include political, cultural, social, technological, or religious details?
- Do you envision changes in fashion, family structure, or lifestyle?

Collect as many ideas as possible and compare your vision of a futuristic society with other students in class.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part One: Chapters II – VIII

Diary Writing

Objectives: Relating literature to life
Identifying the major concerns and thematic ideas of the text

Activity

Put yourself in Winston's situation. Imagine you have just started your secret diary. After you have scribbled "DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER" numerous times, been accosted by the Parsons children, and been told the chocolate ration is reduced, you sit down in order to begin writing a meaningful entry into your diary.

When Winston first begins to write, he believes that he is writing for the future, for the people who will live after the reign of Big Brother, after the end of INGSOC.

Imagine what kind of information you, as Winston, want to preserve for the future. Which descriptions, facts, and events do you need to include in your diary to enable future generations to understand the way of life in 1984? What advice and what warnings do you want to write down in order to ensure that the age of Big Brother will never be repeated and that future generations can live in a state of peace and equality?

After the quotation from *1984* that follows, continue Smith's thoughts and write a few additional paragraphs.

We have begun a diary entry for you, but you can start yours any way you want.

It is the year 1984. My name is Winston Smith, and I am a member of the outer Party of INGSOC. I live in Oceania, and I work at the Ministry of Truth.

You see, 1984 is the age of Big Brother...

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part One: Chapter VII

Theme

Objectives: Recognizing thematic ideas
Relating literature to life and history

Activity

In *1984*, Orwell describes Winston's view on the Oceanian political system, INGSOC, and the possibility of rebellion:

If there was hope, *it must* lie with the proles, because only there, in those swarming disregarded masses, eighty-five percent of the population of Oceania, could the force to destroy the Party ever be generated. The Party could not be overthrown from within. Its enemies, if it had any enemies, had no way of coming together or even of identifying one another. Even if the legendary brotherhood existed, as just possibly it might, it was inconceivable that its members could ever assemble in larger numbers than twos and threes. Rebellion meant a look in the eyes, an inflection of the voice, an occasional whispered word. But the proles, if only they could somehow become conscious of their own strength, would have no need to conspire. They needed only to rise up and shake themselves like a horse shaking off flies. If they chose they could blow the party to pieces tomorrow morning. Surely sooner or later it must occur to them to do it.

The Party claimed, of course, to have liberated the proles from bondage. Before the revolution they had been hideously oppressed by the capitalists, they had been starved and flogged, women had been forced to work in coal mines (women still did work in the coal mines, as a matter of fact), children had been sold into the factories at the age of six. But simultaneously, true to the principles of doublethink, the Party taught that the proles were natural inferiors who must be kept in subjection, like animals, by the application of a few simple rules. In reality very little was known about the proles. It was not necessary to know much. So long as they continued to work and breed, their other activities were without importance.

Critics have argued that Orwell responded to some of the political issues of his time in *1984*. The novel was written in 1949. Use the library and/or Internet to research the terms socialism, communism, and totalitarianism in relation to Orwell's time. Collect your findings and list them in the following chart.

Part Two: Chapter III

Characterization and Inference

Objective: Evaluating characters based on descriptions and inferences

Activity

Factual information about a certain character enables readers to develop a general idea of that character's personality. However, within the context of the story, readers must learn to evaluate any piece of factual information with a critical attitude. That way, readers will learn to draw their own conclusions about a character's personality and behavior based not only on factual information presented in the text, but also on inferences developed through a process of critical analysis.

During his first few encounters with Julia, Winston learns a great deal about Julia's character, her history, and her actions. With the help of Winston's commentary, evaluate all information you can find on Julia and record your findings.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part Two: Chapter V

Theme

Objectives: Understanding major themes in the novel
Applying concepts of the novel to life and history

Activity

Hate Week “celebrates” Oceania’s ongoing war with Eastasia/Eurasia. All over the city, posters of Big Brother are being replaced by posters of the enemy.

In small groups, create a poster for Hate Week depicting any concept that would be suitable. Remember that the poster is a means of propaganda employed by the Inner Party to encourage conformity and create public support for the Party’s actions and principles. You can use magazine clippings and drawings for your poster, or anything else that is appropriate.

- soldiers at war
- ministries
- burning of enemy symbols
- death
- *war symbols*
- etc.

Share your Hate Week poster with the class.

Explain how you created the poster and which aspects of Hate Week are portrayed in your works.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part Two: Chapter IX

Theme

Objectives: Understanding and interpreting important themes in the text
Visualizing abstract concepts

Activity

Consider the three slogans of the Party:

- War is Peace
- Ignorance is Strength
- Freedom is Slavery

Review the text and explain the meaning of the slogans in detail. Remember that Winston receives most of his information about the meaning of the slogans from Emmanuel Goldstein's book *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* outlined in Part Two, Chapter IX. He also learns about the meaning behind the slogans when he is interrogated by O'Brien in the Ministry of Love.

Your group should prepare a short presentation on the selected slogan. Use visual aids to illustrate your findings. Create a collage out of newspaper and magazine clippings in order to illustrate what the slogans mean. Be sure to highlight the contradictions contained within the slogans in your collage and presentation.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part Three: Chapter V

Characterization and Theme

Objectives: Understanding character motivation
Relating literature to life

Activity

In the Ministry of Love, all prisoners fear Room 101. In Room 101, prisoners are forced to face their greatest fears. Party members require prisoners to enter Room 101 because most people will give up their secrets, their personal opinions, their rebellious attitudes, and their criticism of the Party if they see a chance to escape their greatest fears. In Room 101, all prisoners eventually surrender their minds to Big Brother.

Make a list of things or situations you are afraid of. Which item on your list would O'Brien probably use against you in Room 101? Explain to the class why you fear the thing or situation you have chosen. Give reasons for your fear and examples for situations in which you may have had to confront your worst fear. Finally, put yourself in Winston's shoes. Imagine why he eventually betrayed Julia. Weigh all his considerations. Would you betray a loved one if it could save you from the thing you fear the most? If it could save your life? Discuss and compare your answers in class.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part One – Three

Point of View

Objective: Understanding an author's use of point of view to create meaning in the story

Activity

1984 is written from a third-person limited point of view. All events and actions are viewed from Winston's perspective. The reader gains information about people, events, and situations by learning what is perceived, thought, experienced, and remembered by Winston.

For example, when Winston receives O'Brien's invitation to visit him at his house and pick up the dictionary, Winston concludes that he has finally found access into the secret rebellion, the Brotherhood:

Perhaps there would even be a message concealed somewhere in the dictionary. But at any rate, one thing was certain. The conspiracy that he had dreamed of did exist, and he had reached the outer edges of it.

When the book states that "one thing was certain. The conspiracy...did exist," it becomes clear that the narrator tells the story exclusively from Winston's point of view. The outcome of the story will prove that Winston's—and the narrator's—assertions are wrong.

Find passages in the text that demonstrate how the story is told through Winston's eyes only. Then, explain how this third-person limited point of view contributes to the reader's understanding of the text and its outcomes.