

Worksheet 5 – Key Themes

Review: Lecture 4: The Form of 1984: Literary Influences

How many parts are there in *1984*? What do we call this?

Recall: Lecture 5: Key Themes

Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. Which of these is NOT a theme discussed in 'The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism'?
 - a) Warfare
 - b) Manipulation of language
 - c) Religion
 - d) Heirarchy
2. Why doesn't Winston finish reading Goldstein's book?
 - a) He falls asleep
 - b) O'Brien steals it
 - c) The Thought Police find him
 - d) Julia tells him to stop reading
3. Which of these is NOT a theme Dr Waddell discusses in the lecture?
 - a) The suppression of sexuality
 - b) The mutability of the past
 - c) The internalisation of surveillance culture
 - d) The control of information

Analysis

4. Below is an extract from Orwell's essay 'Politics and the English Language.'
 - a) In your own words, try and summarise Orwell's argument.
 - b) How are some of these arguments explored in *1984*? Where do you see some of the ideas in the essay manifested in the novel?

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population* or *rectification of frontiers*. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called *elimination of unreliable elements*. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them. The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish spurting out ink. In our age there is no such thing as 'keeping out of politics'. All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia. When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer. I should expect to find – this is a guess which I have not sufficient knowledge to verify – that the German, Russian and Italian languages have all deteriorated in the last ten or fifteen years, as a result of dictatorship.

But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought

Evaluation

5. Read the extract below from Chapter 1 of 1984, describing the Two Minutes Hate.
 - a) What themes can you spot in this extract? Make a list.
 - b) Is there any evidence in this extract to support Dr Waddell's interpretation that, in 1984, politics is like a religion?
 - c) How does Orwell use language and structural techniques here to depict the hysteria of the crowd? Write a PEE / PEA paragraph as your answer.

In its second minute the Hate rose to a frenzy. People were leaping up and down in their places and shouting at the tops of their voices in an effort to drown the maddening bleating voice that came from the screen. The little sandy-haired woman had turned bright pink, and her mouth was opening and shutting like that of a landed fish. Even O'Brien's heavy face was flushed. He was sitting very straight in his chair, his powerful chest swelling and quivering as though he were standing up to the assault of a wave. The dark-haired girl behind Winston had begun crying out 'Swine! Swine! Swine!' and suddenly she picked up a heavy Newspeak dictionary and flung it at the screen. It struck Goldstein's nose and bounced off; the voice continued inexorably. In a lucid moment Winston found that he was shouting with the others and kicking his heel violently against the rung of his chair. The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but, on the contrary, that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within thirty seconds any pretence was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge-hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic. And yet the rage that one felt was an abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to another like the flame of a blowlamp. Thus, at one moment Winston's hatred was not turned against Goldstein at all, but, on the contrary, against Big Brother, the Party, and the Thought Police; and at such moments his heart went out to the lonely, derided heretic on the screen, sole guardian of truth and sanity in a world of lies. And yet the very next instant he was at one with the people about him, and all that was said of Goldstein seemed to him to be true. At those moments his secret loathing of Big Brother changed into adoration, and Big Brother seemed to tower up, an invincible, fearless protector, standing like a rock against the hordes of Asia, and Goldstein, in spite of his isolation, his helplessness, and the doubt that hung about his very existence, seemed like some sinister enchanter, capable by the mere power of his voice of

Glossary

- **Perversion** – A distortion or corruption of the original state or meaning of something.
e.g. The ruling was seen as a scandalous perversion of the law.
- **Complacency** – Self-satisfaction; a feeling of smugness, often accompanied by an unawareness that there is some potential danger.
e.g. Because no one saw the war coming, they could only blame their complacency.

- **Democratic** – Supporting democracy (ie the freedom of people to vote for their political leaders).
e.g. He held onto his democratic beliefs until the bitter end.
- **Compendium** – A collection of concise but detailed information about a particular subject.
e.g. The museum's pamphlet was a useful compendium.
- **Pertinent** – A synonym for relevant.
e.g. The student asked a lot of pertinent questions.
- **Catechism** – A summary of the principles of Christian religion in the form of questions and answers, often used for religious instruction.
e.g. The priest gave the child a book of catechisms to read over the holidays.