

1984 — Words of Warning for Our  
Troubled Times

George Orwell's 1984, which was published in the late 1940s, has as much relevance today as when it was first written. The dystopia that it describes, in which Big Brother monitors every word and action and high-tech household devices listen to private discussions, should remind readers of certain aspects of our world today.

The novella follows the life of Winston Smith, a low-ranking member of "the Party," which rules the fictitious state of Oceania. Frustrated by the rule of Big Brother, Smith begins to keep a diary of his secret thoughts. In Oceania, this is considered an act of "thoughtcrime," the term used to describe holding rebellious beliefs. The party denies people their basic human rights, controlling what they read, think, say, and do. Smith's actions threaten to undermine this control, and put his life at risk.

In the novella, Orwell, a former policeman and journalist who knew something of the way the systems of state run, carefully constructs a society in which the state has complete control. Frighteningly, he outlines just how easy it is for human rights to be abused by an organized totalitarian state. For example, Smith's job in the records department of the Ministry of Truth illustrates the way that history can be rewritten to change what people can prove about the past. In revising the past, Smith makes troublemakers "disappear," destroying any evidence of people with opposing beliefs. This kind of action is accepted by the population of Oceania because they are constantly being told what to do by propaganda messages and are too distracted by popular culture to care about politics. As details of key historical events become confused, the Party demands that people trust in a leadership which will make Oceania great again — despite any evidence to the contrary.

After falling in love with a colleague, which is forbidden, Smith begins to work against the state, meeting people \_\_\_\_\_ share his views. Soon he is drawn into a dangerous game, and he doesn't know whom or what to trust. This makes 1984 not only an excellent example of a dystopian novel, but also an exciting political thriller. The characters are believable and emotionally complex, and the setting is very real. Furthermore, whichever way you look at it, the novella has a great deal to say about the importance of human rights. Smith's story shows why people **should** resist control and oppression wherever possible. It also asks us to reflect on how easily these can be lost if we lose our sense of focus. It's a great book — read it soon.

<https://acceleratetrc.oxfordonlinepractice.com>

I. Choose the correct answers.

1. What genre is the text?
  - a) a literary review
  - b) a literary essay
  - c) a bibliography
  - d) a book preface
  - e) a letter.
2. From the title, we can assume that the author feels...
  - a) the events in the book are dangerous.
  - b) the book is not worth reading.
  - c) the book could cause harmful behavior.
  - d) the events in the book are relevant today.
  - e) the events in the book are frightening.
3. What does the word "thoughtcrime" (paragraph 2) mean, according to the text?
  - a) thinking about committing a crime.
  - b) thinking about criminal activity.
  - c) thinking differently than the state.
  - d) thinking about the past.
  - e) not thinking about the state.
4. Why does the author mention Orwell's previous jobs?
  - a) to show that he became a writer late in life.
  - b) to show that he had witnessed crime.
  - c) to show that he understood how society worked.
  - d) to show that he had seen things which were shocking.
  - e) to show that he had knowledge of politics.
5. Why do the people in 1984 do what they are told?
  - a) They don't understand history.
  - b) They are happy with their situation.
  - c) They have experienced leaders.
  - d) They are allowed to ask questions.
  - e) They are carefully controlled.
6. Why does the author recommend reading the book?
  - a) It's a very popular novel.
  - b) It's a realistic novel.
  - c) It's an emotional story.
  - d) It's full of important lessons.
  - e) It's an enjoyable read.
7. The word "confused", underlined in the text is a/an:
  - a) noun
  - b) adjective
  - c) adverb
  - d) verb
  - e) conjunction
8. The relative pronouns that completes the sentence correctly is:
  - a) which
  - b) who

- c) whose
- d) where
- e) when

9. The modal “should”, in bold type, can be replaced by:

- a) must
- b) might
- c) may
- d) can
- e) ought to

10. The tag question of the sentence “It’s a great book” is?

- a) is it?
- b) has it?
- c) isn’t it?
- d) hasn’t it?
- e) is not it?

#### READ THE CARTOON



(Source: <<http://www.consumerfreedom.com/tag/cartoon/page/9/>>. Accessed on: 15 jul. 2013.)

11. According to what the man says, we can infer that he believes

- a) parents should join their kids in their activities.
- b) playing football daily prevents one from putting on weight.
- c) it is wise for parents to support their children’s sports practice.
- d) kids need to be engaged in intellectual activities as well as sports.

12. The editorial cartoon addresses a common issue parents deal with, which is

- a) children refuse to help with chores around the house when asked.
- b) kids nowadays are less obedient and cause their parents trouble.
- c) kids refuse to do their homework and as a consequence go bad at school.
- d) many kids are choosing electronic games over sports or outdoors activities.

13. The negative form of the sentence: “He plays football for four hours a day”, is:

- a) He not plays football for four hours a day.
- b) He does not plays football for four hours a day.
- c) He doesn’t play football for four hours a day.
- d) He is not play football for four hours a day.