

GCSE English Literature for OCR
resource sheets

Nineteen Eighty-Four

George Orwell

Activities by D. C. Coleman

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The following pages consist of teacher's notes and classroom support sheets for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell. These resources are to help students who are studying *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as part of the OCR GCSE English Literature specification. These pages can be freely downloaded and printed out as required. This material may be freely copied for institutional use. However, this material is copyright and under no circumstances can copies be offered for sale. The publishers gratefully acknowledge permission to reproduce copyright material.

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Introduction

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is offered for examination in OCR's English Literature Examination 2442, Post-1914 Poetry and Prose, and 2448, the Examined Alternative to Coursework.

On Paper 2442, candidates must answer **one** question on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. There will be **three** questions to choose from. One will be extract-based, and the other two will be more general, focusing on the whole novel, or on one or two moments in the novel. The time available for the whole paper is 1 hour and 30 minutes, so candidates should allow 45 minutes for their Orwell answer.

On Paper 2448, candidates must answer **one** question on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. There will be **two** questions to choose from. The time available for the whole paper, involving all three genres, is 1 hour and 30 minutes, so candidates should allow 30 minutes for their Orwell answer.

Aim and content

The aim of these resources is to provide material that offers a way into the novel for GCSE students and helps to develop their understanding. The resources include a summary of the novel and materials aimed at developing central issues touched on in the summary; for example, the role of sex and love (in the rebellion against the Party) and the relationship between Winston and O'Brien. Other sheets emphasise the importance of the Party's development of Newspeak; the relevance of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to readers today and Orwell's warning of the dangers of totalitarianism in the dystopia he has created in this novel.

There are several suggested activities ranging from written tasks to speaking and listening ones. Page references in these resources refer to the Heinemann New Windmills edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as prescribed in the OCR GCSE English Literature specification, ISBN: 0435 123572.

Synopsis

Written in 1949, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a warning about what the world might become only thirty-five years later.

The story is set in London, chief city of Airstrip One, which is part of Oceania. Oceania is in a state of constant war, against either Eurasia or Eastasia, the other two great power blocks. The Head of Oceania is Big Brother. There are three classes in Oceania: the Inner Party, which effectively rules Oceania; the Outer Party, to which Winston Smith belongs; and the proles, who might be seen as the working class.

At the start of the novel, Winston is rebelling against Big Brother by buying a book that he uses as a diary and in which he writes “**DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER**”. He has come to believe that O’Brien, an Inner Party member, is also a secret rebel with whom he has a special sympathy. He suspects a dark-haired fellow-worker, whom he later discovers is called Julia, of being a member of the Thought Police and intending to find evidence for denouncing him.

As their paths continue to cross, Winston is stunned to receive a note from Julia saying “I love you”, which changes his vague intention of murdering her into falling in with her plan to meet him and make love to him. Their relationship is at first only physical. Winston rents a room over a shop run by an apparently harmless old man, Mr Charrington. The room becomes their regular meeting-place.

O’Brien contacts Winston, inviting him to his apartment and recruits him into the Brotherhood, an organisation headed by Emanuel Goldstein and aimed at overthrowing the Party and Big Brother. O’Brien gives Winston a book, supposedly written by Goldstein, explaining how the Party has been able to gain and keep power in Oceania. Shortly after, Winston and Julia are arrested by the Thought Police in the room over the shop; “Mr Charrington” is a member of the Thought Police who have been watching Winston and Julia through a concealed telescreen in the room.

Winston’s relationship with Julia has deepened into love, an emotion which the Party allows its members to feel only for Big Brother. Winston and Julia are taken to the Ministry of Love where they are tortured and betray each other, at least in words if not in their hearts. O’Brien, far from being a member of the Brotherhood becomes Winston’s main torturer, breaking him in body and spirit.

Winston, however, has not betrayed Julia in his heart. He does so only when O’Brien brings him face to face in Room 101 with what for him is “the worst thing in the world”, in his case, rats. Shouting frantically that Julia should take this punishment, not him, he betrays Julia, loses the emotions that make him human, and his rebellion against Big Brother and the Party is over. The Party has won. “He loved Big Brother.”

Character

Winston and Julia: The love story

Activity 1 – Suggested answers

Students are asked to chart the development of Winston and Julia's relationship.

Moment in Novel	Page	Winston's reaction
Winston's first sight of Julia	7	Dislike
At the first Two Minutes' Hate	11	Wishes to rape and kill her
In a dream	23–4	Admires her grace
In the canteen	47–8	Terror (is she Thought Police?)
In the street	77–8	Paralysed
In the corridor	81–2	Accepts "I love you" note
In the canteen	85–6	Tries to approach her; is called away
In the canteen	86–7	Arranges to meet in Victory Square
In Victory Square	87–90	Arranges to meet Julia in the country
In the country	90–7	Feels desire; they have sex
In the church tower	100–5	They talk; they have sex
In the street	107	Feels tenderness
In Charrington's room	108–13	Feels as if the room is a home; feels he and Julia's lives are together at the heart of the crystal paperweight
In Charrington's room	108–13	Feels the room is a sanctuary. Dreams of marriage to Julia
In Charrington's room	123–9	Julia says she loves Winston
In O'Brien's apartment	129–136	Refuses, as does Julia, to separate and never see one another again
In Charrington's room	168–173	Thought Police arrest Winston and Julia
In Ministry of Love	184	Would double his own pain to save Julia

Character (*continued*)**Activity 1 – Suggested answers** (*continued from page 6*)

In Ministry of Love	200	Hears from O'Brien that Julia betrayed him
In Ministry of Love	211	Tells O'Brien he has not betrayed Julia. Has not stopped loving her
In Ministry of Love	216	Calls for "Julia, my love!" Loves her more than he had ever done
In Ministry of Love	218	Is ordered to Room 101
In Room 101	221	Betrays Julia ("Do it to Julia! Not me!")
In the Park	224–6	Feels embarrassed by her dislike and contempt; last meeting in the novel

Additional writing activity

Ask students to explore the ways in which Orwell makes the relationship between Winston and Julia so important in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Character

O'Brien

Activity 2

Make notes on the following questions:

- 1 O'Brien **first** appears in the novel just before the Two Minutes' Hate (page 8). What are Winston's impressions of him?
- 2 What hints are there that O'Brien might be dangerous?
- 3 In the light of what you know about the end of the novel, why do you think he is there?
- 4 What are your thoughts about him as he leaves the Two Minutes Hate (page 13)?
- 5 On page 62 Winston believes he is writing his diary for O'Brien. Why does he think this?
- 6 On page 80 Winston remembers O'Brien saying to him, "We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness." What does Winston think this means? What does it actually mean?

O'Brien becomes a much more central figure in the novel, beginning with his "message" to Winston in Part Two, chapter VIII (page 124). In Chapter VI, O'Brien contacts Winston, touches his arm, hints at the unperson Syme, and gives Winston his address. After he leaves, Winston knows he will visit O'Brien at his flat and take the first step on his path to the Ministry of Love and finally his grave.

Activity 3

- 1 Read Chapter VIII (pages 129–138) where Winston visits O'Brien at his flat. **Make careful notes** on what happens, what O'Brien says and on Winston and Julia's replies to his questions.
- 2 O'Brien sees Winston again in the Ministry of Love in Part Three, Chapter I (page 184) and is responsible for what is done to Winston in the rest of the novel. **Make careful notes** on what he does to Winston (especially in Room 101), why he does such things and Winston's feelings towards him.

Activity 4

Extended writing activity

Although you are not required to write an empathy answer, this writing activity gives you the chance to practise the skills needed for a good empathic answer. Empathic answers may be asked on the Drama paper.

- 1 Using your notes, imagine that you are O'Brien, just after Winston has left your flat at the end of Part Two, Chapter VIII (page 138). Write your thoughts.
- 2 Using your notes, imagine you are O'Brien after Winston has cried out "Not me! Julia! Not me!" in Room 101 (page 221). Write your thoughts.

Character

O'Brien

Activity 2 – Suggested answers

- 1 Notes might include comments on his importance as a figure in the Inner Party; his burly appearance; the ambivalence of his face, suggestive of both coarseness, coupled with brutality and humour; this is confirmed by the blend of nobleman and prize-fighter; the attraction Winston feels for him; O'Brien's intelligence; Winston's sense that O'Brien is someone he can talk to.
- 2 The danger is suggested by references to the thickness of his neck, brutality, coarseness, and prize-fighter.
- 3 Responses should suggest that O'Brien is already watching Winston, and that the Thought Police are aware that he is guilty of Thoughtcrime; he has bought and written in his diary. On page 188, Winston hears a voice, presumably O'Brien's, "For seven years I have watched over you."
- 4 Responses here might see O'Brien as a potential future ally for Winston. Winston's belief, certainly accurate, that O'Brien *knew*, might be cause for future optimism; but the hints Orwell drops about O'Brien in this section and knowledge of O'Brien's treatment of Winston later in the novel, suggest that O'Brien is already set upon arresting and "curing" Winston.
- 5 Winston is convinced that O'Brien is on his side as an enemy of the Party.
- 6 He takes it to be the future, which he will never see but in which he will share; when the darkness of the Oceania world have disappeared. It is, in fact, the Ministry of Love (page 189).

Character

Winston

Activity 5

Circle the correct answers in the following questions.

1 Where does Winston work?

Ministry of Truth Ministry of Love Ministry of Plenty

2 Which apartment block does Winston live in?

Charrington Hall Victory Mansions Chestnut Tree Towers
The Golden Country Vistas

3 Who lives in the same apartment block as Winston?

Julia Syme Parsons O'Brien

4 What was the name of Winston's wife?

Julia Katharine

5 How old is Winston?

39 48 29 57

6 Which brands of gin and cigarettes does Winston use?

Marlboro Victory Big Brother Oceania

7 When does Winston first really notice Julia?

At a Two Minutes Hate Session In the Records Department
In a café In a corridor

8 What does Winston first buy at Charrington's shop?

A paperweight Razor-blades Chocolate A diary

9 Of which creatures is Winston most afraid?

Bats Spiders Rats Snakes

10 What is the name of the "hero" whose life Winston invents?

Jones Aaronson Ogilvy Rutherford

11 Where do Winston and Julia meet to arrange their meeting in the countryside?

The Ministry of Truth Victory Square The Chestnut Tree
Charrington's room

12 In which room does Winston betray Julia?

The room over Charrington's shop The Chestnut Tree
Room 101 Winston's apartment

13 Winston writes, "If there is hope it lies in ..."?

Love The proles The future Rebellion

14 What does Winston finally feel for Big Brother?

Hate Gratitude Willingness to obey Love

Character

Winston

Activity 5 – Answers

Students are asked to circle the correct answers.

- 1 Where does Winston work?
Ministry of Truth
- 2 Which apartment block does Winston live in?
Victory Mansions
- 3 Who lives in the same apartment block as Winston?
Parsons
- 4 What was the name of Winston's wife?
Katharine
- 5 How old is Winston?
39
- 6 Which brands of gin and cigarettes does Winston use?
Victory
- 7 When does Winston first really notice Julia?
At a Two Minutes Hate Session
- 8 What does Winston first buy at Charrington's shop?
A diary
- 9 Of which creatures is Winston most afraid?
Rats
- 10 What is the name of the "hero" whose life Winston invents?
Ogilvy
- 11 Where do Winston and Julia meet to arrange their meeting in the countryside?
Victory Square
- 12 In which room does Winston betray Julia?
Room 101
- 13 Winston writes, "If there is hope it lies in ..."?
The proles
- 14 What does Winston finally feel for Big Brother?
Love

Language

The Party and language: Newspeak

What the Party is doing to language is an important theme in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In most languages, new words are constantly added, but in Newspeak, the language of Oceania, words are being destroyed.

Syme is a specialist in Newspeak and is one of a team engaged in putting together the Eleventh Edition of the Newspeak Dictionary. He tells Winston in the canteen how the team is cutting “language down to the bone” (pages 39-41). He explains to Winston how words like “bad”, “excellent” and “splendid” will disappear, being replaced by variations on the word “good”; such as “ungood”, for “bad”, “plusgood” for “excellent” and “doubleplusgood” for “splendid”.

The Party is using Newspeak to limit the way people think, because, without words, there is no way to express thought. Without words, people in Oceania will not commit thoughtcrime and so cannot rebel against the Party. The Party will have complete control of people’s minds.

The Party will destroy the literature of the past in the form it was written, for example, Shakespeare’s plays, and re-write it in Newspeak so that it will carry whatever message the Party wants to give. This is a good example of the Party’s slogan: “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past” (page 26).

The Newspeak Principles

Orwell outlines **The Principles of Newspeak** in the **Appendix** (pages 231–41). This deals, at much greater length, with what Syme has told Winston in the canteen. Given the language of the Appendix, it is improbable that an extract-based question on it will ever be set in a GCSE examination, but students should try to understand how and why the Party wants to replace English with Newspeak.

There were three sets of vocabulary: the A vocabulary, the B vocabulary, and the C vocabulary.

The A vocabulary

The A vocabulary was used for “the business of everyday life”, such as getting dressed and going from place to place. **Nouns** and **verbs** were identical in form, so that “cut” disappeared, and “knife” became the one word meaning “knife” (the tool that cuts), and the act of cutting: so “The knives knife the cake”. **Adjectives** were formed by adding –ful to the noun-verb, so that “knifeful” took the place of “sharp”

Language (*continued*)

Adverbs were formed by adding *-wise* to the noun-verb, so that “knifewise” took the place of “sharply”. Words were made negative by adding *un* to the beginning of a word; for example, “uncold” replaced “warm”. They were made positive by adding *plus* or *doubleplus* to the beginning of a word, such as “good” to replace “very good”, “excellent” and “splendid”.

Verbs formed their past tense by adding *-ed*. So, “scraped” would remain the past tense of “scrape”, but the past tense of “think” became “thinked”, and “spoke” became “speaked”.

Plurals of nouns were made by adding *-s* or *-es*. For example, “Telescreens” remained “telescreens”, but “men” became “mans” and “women” “womans”.

The B vocabulary

The B vocabulary was made up of words which had political purposes intended to make people respond as the Party wanted them to. The B vocabulary contained two words joined together to make a “noun-verb”, for example, “prolefeed” meaning “rubbishy entertainment”; and “sexcrime” meaning any kind of sexual misbehaviour, including sex between people enjoying the act for its own sake (like Julia). Many words did not exist in Newspeak because the Party had removed the living conditions they described. So words like “free”, “justice”, “God” and “religion” had vanished. The names of the Ministries and Departments were shortened, so the Ministry of Truth was known as Minitrue, and the Fiction Department Ficdep. The purpose behind these shortenings was to remove any of the old associations a word like “truth” might have, truth in the old sense suggesting honesty, justice, and truths that the present American Constitution might consider self-evident.

The C vocabulary

The C vocabulary consisted only of scientific and technical terms almost never used in everyday speech.

Newspeak was a central way of controlling the minds of Party members and making Thoughtcrime (thinking thoughts against the Party) impossible. The Party’s aim, after all, was to keep power for ever.

Setting

The world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

According to Goldstein's book (page 143), the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is made up of three superstates: Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia.

In one combination or another, these superstates are always at war (page 144). They have enough atomic bombs to destroy each other, but a war directly against each other would also destroy themselves. There can be no winner of such a war. The war they are fighting is for a large mass of land between the borders of the three superstates (page 144). This land contains valuable minerals like rubber and also a huge population that can be used as cheap labour.

Living conditions in all three superstates are similar, and the political structures are the same.

London buildings

Activity 7

Answer the following questions:

- 1 Which are the four tallest buildings in London? (Page 3)

- 2 Which two forms of entertainment can Oceania citizens enjoy? (Pages 6 and 18)

- 3 Near to which former London Station is the prole area where Winston wanders in Part One, Chapter VIII? (Page 63)

- 4 What is on the print in Mr Charrington's room that is now a ruin outside the Palace of Justice? (Page 75)

- 5 What was St. Martin's-in-the-Fields once used for? What is it used for in Big Brother's London? (Page 76)

- 6 What was the old name for Victory Square? (Page 87)

- 7 For what distance did Oceania's citizens have to have their passports endorsed? (Page 90)

Setting

The world of Nineteen Eighty-Four

Activity 7 – Suggested answers

- 1 Which are the four tallest buildings in London? (Page 3)
**The Ministry of Truth, The Ministry of Peace, The Ministry of Love.
The Ministry of Plenty**
- 2 Which two forms of entertainment can Oceania citizens enjoy? (Pages 6 and 18)
“the flicks” (war films) and hangings
- 3 Near to which former London Station is the prole area where Winston wanders in Part One, Chapter VIII? (Page 63)
Saint Pancras Station
- 4 What is on the print in Mr Charrington’s room that is now a ruin outside the Palace of Justice? (Page 75)
A steel engraving of St Clement’s Dane Church
- 5 What was St. Martin’s-in-the-Fields once used for? What is it used for in Big Brother’s London? (Page 76)
**It was a church
It is a museum used for propaganda displays**
- 6 What was the old name for Victory Square? (Page 87)
Trafalgar Square
- 7 For what distance did Oceania’s citizens have to have their passports endorsed? (Page 90)
For distances further than 100km

Setting

Everyday life

Activity 8 – Possible answers

From their reading of Part One Chapter I students are asked to write down at least fifteen details that show how unpleasant life is in the Party's London. The first is done for them.

- 1 The smell of boiled cabbage and old rag mats
- 2 The lift not working
- 3 The picture of Big Brother
- 4 The telescreen that cannot be completely shut off
- 5 Coarse soap
- 6 Blunt razor blades
- 7 The state of the streets
- 8 Snooping police patrols
- 9 Telescreens that watch as well transmit
- 10 The rotting houses
- 11 Uncleared bomb sites
- 12 The frightening Ministry of Love
- 13 The need for, and the quality of, Victory gin
- 14 The packing of Victory cigarettes
- 15 Restrictions on going into ordinary shops
- 16 Shortages (of shoelaces, razor blades)
- 17 The war films
- 18 Fear of being spied on (Julia)
- 19 The Two Minutes' Hate
- 20 The inevitability of being caught by the Thought Police

Additional activity

Ask students to find out how and why (some of) these details might have been true for people living in England at the time Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Theme

Dystopia

Some writers have created Utopias, ideal worlds, that, because they are ideal, show the world around them to be pretty awful. Others have created worlds that are so awful that they are warnings against what we could find ourselves living in: these are called **dystopias**.

The world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a dystopia, a warning of what might happen if a Party or power bloc decided that the feelings of ordinary people did not matter, but that having power was all-important.

Activity 10

Make notes on the following question:

Is Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* describing a possible world in which the State governs everything we do, everything we feel, and everything we think and could such a State actually come about?

Activity 11

The following tasks are group or paired activities.

Nineteen Eighty-Four has suggested the titles of two recent popular television programmes: *Big Brother* (where, as in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, people can be watched all the time); and *Room 101*, where celebrities give their views on things they most dislike about modern life.

We are now surrounded by closed circuit cameras and speed cameras. Electronic tagging, curfews and ASBOs are used as control measures. Satellite surveillance is increasingly used by the military.

- 1 In groups explore:
 - a why we enjoy 'spying' on each other so much, for example via reality TV
 - b whether our world is becoming one in which we are being watched too much.
- 2 In groups, or pairs, discuss what you would be most afraid to find if you were taken to Room 101.

Quotations

The following are some of the key quotations that will help you explore the text.

Activity 12

Discuss in a pair/group, or write notes on, the importance of the following quotations.

1 “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” (Page 1)

Consider

- how this seems literally true
- what the Party means by this sentence
- how it is a threat
- how Winston and Julia are caught.

2 “Two Minutes Hate” (Pages 8–13)

Consider

- who Goldstein is supposed to be
- the Party’s purpose in having Two Minutes’ Hate.

3 “times 3.12.83 reporting bb dayorder doubleplusungood refs unpersons rewrite fullwise upsub antefiling”. (Page 29)

Consider

- “translating”/explaining what this actually means. Then check page 34.
- what Winston is being told to do
- what Newspeak is
- what the Party’s purpose in creating Newspeak is.

4 “If there is hope,” wrote Winston, “it lies in the proles.” (Pages 53 and 66)

Consider

- who the “proles” are
- when Winston meets/sees/hears them
- whether Orwell, by the end of the novel, suggests that hope does indeed lie with the proles.

5 “Under the spreading chestnut tree

I sold you and you sold me

There lie you and here lie we

Under the spreading chestnut tree.” (Page 59 and 227)

Consider

- the original words of the song (A dictionary of quotations would help here)
- the significance of the words “sold” and “lie”
- the theme of betrayal in the novel.

Quotations (*continued*)

6 “I understand HOW: I do not understand WHY.” (Pages 61 and 201)

Consider

- how the Party works
- why it does what it does.

7 “Oranges and lemons, say the bells of St. Clement’s
You owe me three farthings, say the bells of St Martin’s ...” (Pages 76–7 and 138)

Consider

- the apparent innocence of the nursery rhyme’s words
- the picture in Charrington’s room
- O’Brien’s awareness of the nursery rhyme
- how Orwell makes the nursery rhyme so sinister.

8 “I love you.” (Page 83)

Consider

- why Winston finds this message so surprising
- whether love and having sex are the same in the novel
- why the Party would want to eliminate the enjoyment of sex
- why the Party would find love particularly dangerous.

9 “They can’t get inside you. If you can *feel* that staying human is worth while, even when it can’t have any result whatever, you’ve beaten them.” (Page 128)

Consider

- why this statement seems so true to what we, as people, feel
- how the Party **gets inside** Julia and Winston
- why the Party’s victory seems so horrible.

10 “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” (Page 191)

Consider

- what this means
- how this is done in the novel
- why it is important to the Party to control past, present and future.