



In a 1939 essay about Charles Dickens, George Orwell wrote,

“The central problem—how to prevent power from being abused—remains unsolved.” He concluded: “[The assertion that] ‘if men would behave decently the world would be decent’ is not such a platitude as it sounds.”

Well before he wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), Orwell seemed concerned with how this indecency happens and how it can inhibit the ordinary man’s individuality. This idea will be one of the ones we trace as we work through *1984* together as our first novel of the year. You’ll read before the first day of class the first 3 chapters only, taking notes on how the novel creates its dystopia or on its characters or on anything, really, that strikes you.

On the second day of class there will be a reading quiz, and then we’ll begin to work through the remainder of the novel on a nightly basis.

Your tasks over the summer:

- (1) Begin by watching [this video from the School of Life on George Orwell’s life and work](#). It provides a manageable introduction to his worldview.
- (2) Consider these essential questions, in general terms, before reading:
 - How is power gained?*
 - In what ways is power different from leadership?*
 - What constitutes an abuse of power?*
 - Can individuals change a society?*
 - What responsibility does an individual have to society?*
 - How can a society avoid repeating mistakes made in the past?*
 - How has technology changed our understanding of privacy?*
- (3) Then turn to the novel itself, reading and annotating the first three chapters by day one. Please remember that true interaction with the text requires more than underlining: write notes or summary in the margins, ask questions, draw arrows to connected information, circle or star important developments. What do you make of the novel’s characters? How are they described? How do you characterize Orwell’s style? Observations on any of these indicates active reading.

Start Class

You are to use this mass-market paperback edition ONLY. Use the ISBN when purchasing: 978-0451524935. Have it in class on day one.



In the graphic organizer below, make note of dystopian elements, characters: their traits and development, and striking or significant quotes. **Be sure to cite text evidence, including the page number!** If you need more space, please use a separate sheet of paper.

| Dystopian elements | Character traits & development | Striking & significant quotes |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |