

## OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 10 ENGLISH/HANDOUT 11

### OPTION A:

#### INTRODUCING GEORGE ORWELL'S 1984

Write a formal letter/email to a fictional or imagined dictator or ruler of a totalitarian regime as an INGSOC official. Give advice on how to run a society. Mention dystopian elements from the first four chapters of *1984*. There should be at least three elements, one from one chapter.

Examples of fictional dictators:

- **President Coriolanus Snow** was the ruthless and tyrannical president of Panem. He is the main antagonist of *The Hunger Games* trilogy. He is a native of the Capitol and is the tyrannical and ruthless President of Panem. Although carrying the title of President, it is unknown if he was elected to the position democratically. Snow possesses total power in Panem's government and has proven to be a cruel and manipulative dictator, ruling over the Capitol and its contained districts. He also works on the annual Hunger Games and heads the military responsible for oppressing the districts. He has no qualms about using intimidation in pursuit of his agenda, such as when he threatened to kill Katniss Everdeen, Gale Hawthorne, Peeta Mellark, and their families. ([http://thehungergames.wikia.com/wiki/Coriolanus\\_Snow](http://thehungergames.wikia.com/wiki/Coriolanus_Snow))
- **Our Leader, Comrade Napoleon, Father of All Animals, Terror of Mankind, Protector of the Sheep-fold, Ducklings' Friend** is a fictional character and the main antagonist in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. While he is at first a common farm pig, he gets rid of Snowball, another pig who is his rival for power. He then takes advantage of the animals' uprising against their masters to eventually become the tyrannical "President" of Animal Farm, which he turns into a dictatorship. Napoleon's greatest crime, however, is his complete transformation into Jones- although Napoleon is a much more harsh and stern master than Mr. Jones is made out to be. (Wikipedia entry on Napoleon in *Animal Farm*)
- **Palpatine**, also known as **Darth Sidious**, was a Force-sensitive Human male who served as the last Supreme Chancellor of the Galactic Republic and the first Emperor of the Galactic Empire. A Dark Lord of the Sith in the Order of the Sith Lords, recorded by history as the most powerful who had ever lived, his entire life was the culmination of a thousand-year plan to overthrow the Republic and the Jedi Order from within. (Wookieepedia, The Star Wars Wiki)
- In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, set 1000 years after the events of *The Magician's Nephew*, **Jadis the White Witch** has usurped power over Narnia, having magically forced the land into an "endless winter" during her reign, which as the book opens had lasted for a hundred years. Though it is always winter, she prevents Christmas from ever coming. (The Disney Wiki)
- The main antagonist of the series, **Lord Voldemort** is an evil wizard who takes over the government of Great Britain's Wizarding Community, using one of his followers as a figurehead. (Wikipedia "List of Fictional Dictators")
- The **Committee of Elders** in *The Giver* are responsible for making all of the decisions in their society. They watch children as they are growing up and decide what assignments to give. Not only do they assign jobs, but they make almost every choice in each person's life: who to marry, where to live, which child to have, even what name a person will have. Whenever the Committee of Elders have difficulty making such a decision, they consult the Giver, who holds all of the memories for all of the people and can inform them of past decisions. (enotes.com)
- In the graphic novel *V for Vendetta*, **Adam James Susan** is the founder and Leader of The Party. His division within the government is sometimes known as the Head, going along with the theme

of naming divisions of the government after body parts. He is named "Adam Sutler" in the film and has the title of High Chancellor. He has a love interest with the Fate supercomputer. He is very cruel and is ready to do anything to keep his government under control. He is an extreme nationalist and a firm adherent of pure fascism. He values order above all else and sees civil liberties as unneeded luxuries which are ultimately threats to a secure society. He states early in the novel that he believes in "the destiny of the Nordic race", and subsequently despises anyone who is not white, Christian, and heterosexual. Despite the latter, he disdains all sexual contact as "brutish coupling", and has subsequently remained a virgin his entire life.

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### SUCCESS CRITERIA

- There should be three dystopian elements, one from one chapter.
- Formal tone is observed throughout the email/letter.
- There should be four paragraphs. The first paragraph is a brief introduction that contains one or two sentences. The next two are body paragraphs, each containing about five sentences. The last paragraph is a brief conclusion that contains one or two sentences.
- The introduction briefly explains your intentions (i.e. to give advice on how to run a society).
- The first body paragraph briefly describes three social control mechanisms. It should read like a menu that describes the mechanisms in enticing ways.
- The second body paragraph focuses on one particular mechanism of social control mentioned earlier (i.e., in the first body paragraph). It should discuss how it works and why it's your (i.e. the INGSOC official's) favourite mechanism.
- The conclusion may be a one-liner that formally ends the letter.
- As there will be a gallery walk, you should not use language that would be offensive to the school's community.
- The writing should be legible and large enough for a gallery walk.

### OPTION B:

**Watch the following short film, which we will compare and contrast with George Orwell's *1984*. You may use the excerpt included in this package.**

<https://www.shortoftheweek.com/2012/10/08/plurality/>

*(Note for teachers/instructors: crude language towards the end of the film)*

#### Film review from Short of the Week:

Ever since George Orwell coined the term 'Big Brother' in his seminal novel *1984*, storytellers have become fixated with the notion of a totalitarian state where surveillance reaches total control. Written by Ryan Condal and directed by Dennis Liu, *Plurality* is the latest science-fiction film to focus on these Orwellian notions, as their 14-minute short explores where hi-tech policing allows for instant surveillance. Feeling like a cross between *The Terminator* and *Minority Report*, the plot of *Plurality* centres around a futuristic New York, where everything you do is traced through 'the Grid'.

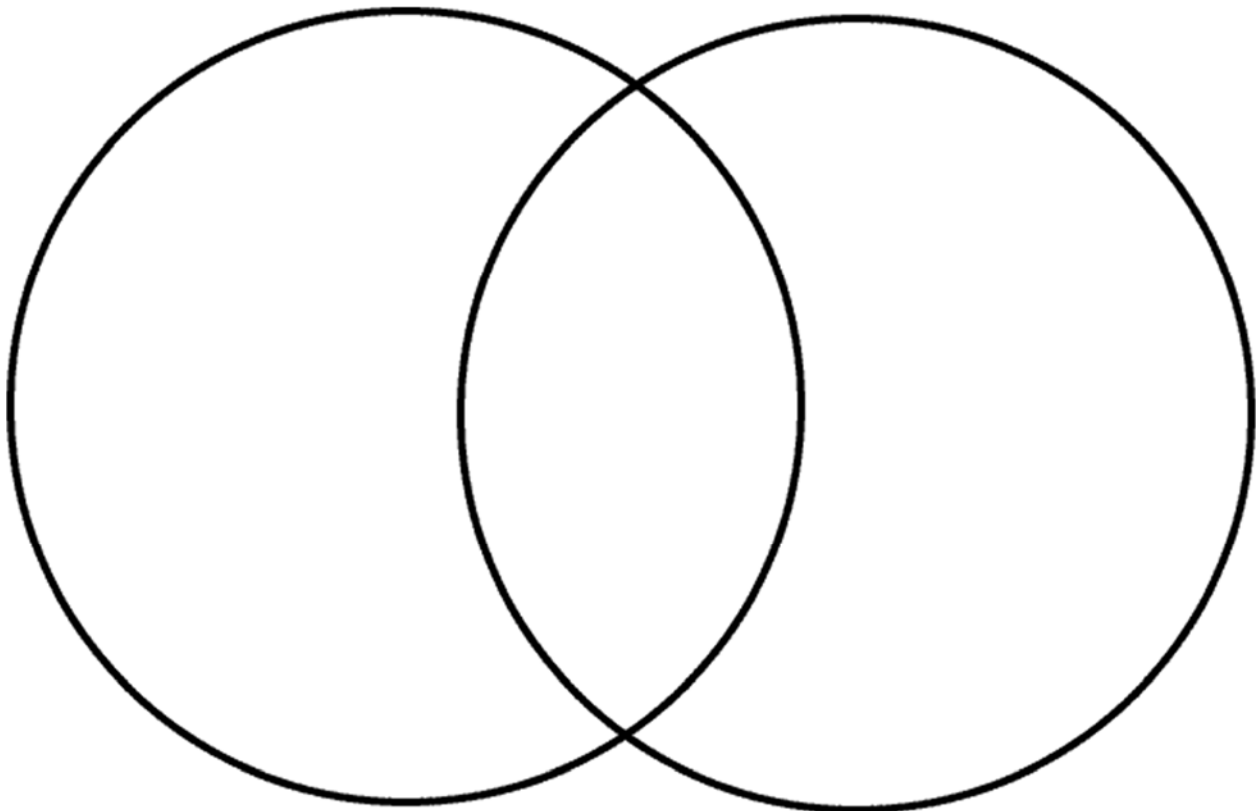
*"The Grid takes all those things unique to you, your social security number, your passport, your debit and credit accounts and links them to one thing...your DNA. With*

*just a touch, the Grid collects a tiny sample of your genetic material, ID-ing you instantly. Then a purchase can be deducted directly from your personal accounts, or you can unlock and start your car and it all works within a margin error of 0.001% ....the ultimate social network!"*

Revolving around notions of personal privacy in a digital age, the themes, ideas and even some of the technology that exist in the futuristic world of *Plurality* are not ones that seem implausible. With fingerprint recognition already in use with some automobiles, concerns about computer and phone privacy already spreading due to hacking and social media, hacking, some may even predict aspects of Condal and Liu's premonition of society as inevitable.

### *Discussion*

*Why is the Grid called the "Bentham Grid"? Why is the man working for the intelligence agency named Foucault? Consider the filmmaker's nomenclature.*



## Chapter 5 of Orwell's 1984

Syme had vanished. A morning came, and he was missing from work: a few thoughtless people commented on his absence. On the next day nobody mentioned him. On the third day Winston went into the vestibule of the Records Department to look at the notice-board. One of the notices carried a printed list of the members of the Chess Committee, of whom Syme had been one. It looked almost exactly as it had looked before--nothing had been crossed out--but it was one name shorter. It was enough. Syme had ceased to exist: he had never existed.

The weather was baking hot. In the labyrinthine Ministry the windowless, air-conditioned rooms kept their normal temperature, but outside the pavements scorched one's feet and the stench of the Tubes at the rush hours was a horror. The preparations for Hate Week were in full swing, and the staffs of all the Ministries were working overtime. Processions, meetings, military parades, lectures, waxworks, displays, film shows, telescreen programmes all had to be organized; stands had to be erected, effigies built, slogans coined, songs written, rumours circulated, photographs faked. Julia's unit in the Fiction Department had been taken off the production of novels and was rushing out a series of atrocity pamphlets. Winston, in addition to his regular work, spent long periods every day in going through back files of 'The Times' and altering and embellishing news items which were to be quoted in speeches. Late at night, when crowds of rowdy proles roamed the streets, the town had a curiously febrile air. The rocket bombs crashed oftener than ever, and sometimes in the far distance there were enormous explosions which no one could explain and about which there were wild rumours.

The new tune which was to be the theme-song of Hate Week (the Hate Song, it was called) had already been composed and was being endlessly plugged on the telescreens. It had a savage, barking rhythm which could not exactly be called music, but resembled the beating of a drum. Roared out by hundreds of voices to the tramp of marching feet, it was terrifying. The proles had taken a fancy to it, and in the midnight streets it competed with the still-popular 'It was only a hopeless fancy'. The Parsons children played it at all hours of the night and day, unbearably, on a comb and a piece of toilet paper. Winston's evenings were fuller than ever. Squads of volunteers, organized by Parsons, were preparing the street for Hate Week, stitching banners, painting posters, erecting flagstaffs on the roofs, and perilously slinging wires across the street for the reception of streamers. Parsons boasted that Victory Mansions alone would display four hundred metres of bunting. He was in his native element and as happy as a lark. The heat and the manual work had even given him a pretext for reverting to shorts and an open shirt in the evenings. He was everywhere at once, pushing, pulling, sawing, hammering, improvising, jollyng everyone along with comradely exhortations and giving out from every fold of his body what seemed an inexhaustible supply of acrid-smelling sweat.

A new poster had suddenly appeared all over London. It had no caption, and represented simply the monstrous figure of a Eurasian soldier, three or four metres high, striding forward with expressionless Mongolian face and enormous boots, a submachine gun pointed from his hip. From whatever angle you looked at the poster, the muzzle of the gun, magnified by the foreshortening, seemed to be pointed straight at you. The thing had been plastered on every blank space on every wall, even outnumbering the portraits of Big Brother. The proles, normally apathetic about the war, were being lashed into one of their periodical frenzies of patriotism. As though to harmonize with the general mood, the rocket bombs had been killing larger numbers of people than usual. One fell on a crowded film theatre in Stepney, burying several hundred victims among the ruins. The

whole population of the neighbourhood turned out for a long, trailing funeral which went on for hours and was in effect an indignation meeting. Another bomb fell on a piece of waste ground which was used as a playground and several dozen children were blown to pieces. There were further angry demonstrations, Goldstein was burned in effigy, hundreds of copies of the poster of the Eurasian soldier were torn down and added to the flames, and a number of shops were looted in the turmoil; then a rumour flew round that spies were directing the rocket bombs by means of wireless waves, and an old couple who were suspected of being of foreign extraction had their house set on fire and perished of suffocation.

In the room over Mr Charrington's shop, when they could get there, Julia and Winston lay side by side on a stripped bed under the open window, naked for the sake of coolness. The rat had never come back, but the bugs had multiplied hideously in the heat. It did not seem to matter. Dirty or clean, the room was paradise. As soon as they arrived they would sprinkle everything with pepper bought on the black market, tear off their clothes, and make love with sweating bodies, then fall asleep and wake to find that the bugs had rallied and were massing for the counter-attack.

Four, five, six--seven times they met during the month of June. Winston had dropped his habit of drinking gin at all hours. He seemed to have lost the need for it. He had grown fatter, his varicose ulcer had subsided, leaving only a brown stain on the skin above his ankle, his fits of coughing in the early morning had stopped. The process of life had ceased to be intolerable, he had no longer any impulse to make faces at the telescreen or shout curses at the top of his voice. Now that they had a secure hiding-place, almost a home, it did not even seem a hardship that they could only meet infrequently and for a couple of hours at a time. What mattered was that the room over the junk-shop should exist. To know that it was there, inviolate, was almost the same as being in it. The room was a world, a pocket of the past where extinct animals could walk. Mr Charrington, thought Winston, was another extinct animal. He usually stopped to talk with Mr Charrington for a few minutes on his way upstairs. The old man seemed seldom or never to go out of doors, and on the other hand to have almost no customers. He led a ghostlike existence between the tiny, dark shop, and an even tinier back kitchen where he prepared his meals and which contained, among other things, an unbelievably ancient gramophone with an enormous horn. He seemed glad of the opportunity to talk. Wandering about among his worthless stock, with his long nose and thick spectacles and his bowed shoulders in the velvet jacket, he had always vaguely the air of being a collector rather than a tradesman. With a sort of faded enthusiasm he would finger this scrap of rubbish or that--a china bottle-stopper, the painted lid of a broken snuffbox, a pinchbeck locket containing a strand of some long-dead baby's hair--never asking that Winston should buy it, merely that he should admire it. To talk to him was like listening to the tinkling of a worn-out musical-box. He had dragged out from the corners of his memory some more fragments of forgotten rhymes. There was one about four and twenty blackbirds, and another about a cow with a crumpled horn, and another about the death of poor Cock Robin. 'It just occurred to me you might be interested,' he would say with a deprecating little laugh whenever he produced a new fragment. But he could never recall more than a few lines of any one rhyme.

Both of them knew--in a way, it was never out of their minds that what was now happening could not last long. There were times when the fact of impending death seemed as palpable as the bed they lay on, and they would cling together with a sort of despairing sensuality, like a damned soul grasping at his last morsel of pleasure when the clock is within five minutes of striking. But there were also times when they had the illusion not only of safety but of permanence. So long as they were actually in

this room, they both felt, no harm could come to them. Getting there was difficult and dangerous, but the room itself was sanctuary. It was as when Winston had gazed into the heart of the paperweight, with the feeling that it would be possible to get inside that glassy world, and that once inside it time could be arrested. Often they gave themselves up to daydreams of escape. Their luck would hold indefinitely, and they would carry on their intrigue, just like this, for the remainder of their natural lives. Or Katharine would die, and by subtle manoeuvrings Winston and Julia would succeed in getting married. Or they would commit suicide together. Or they would disappear, alter themselves out of recognition, learn to speak with proletarian accents, get jobs in a factory and live out their lives undetected in a back-street. It was all nonsense, as they both knew. In reality there was no escape. Even the one plan that was practicable, suicide, they had no intention of carrying out. To hang on from day to day and from week to week, spinning out a present that had no future, seemed an unconquerable instinct, just as one's lungs will always draw the next breath so long as there is air available.

Sometimes, too, they talked of engaging in active rebellion against the Party, but with no notion of how to take the first step. Even if the fabulous Brotherhood was a reality, there still remained the difficulty of finding one's way into it. He told her of the strange intimacy that existed, or seemed to exist, between himself and O'Brien, and of the impulse he sometimes felt, simply to walk into O'Brien's presence, announce that he was the enemy of the Party, and demand his help. Curiously enough, this did not strike her as an impossibly rash thing to do. She was used to judging people by their faces, and it seemed natural to her that Winston should believe O'Brien to be trustworthy on the strength of a single flash of the eyes. Moreover she took it for granted that everyone, or nearly everyone, secretly hated the Party and would break the rules if he thought it safe to do so. But she refused to believe that widespread, organized opposition existed or could exist. The tales about Goldstein and his underground army, she said, were simply a lot of rubbish which the Party had invented for its own purposes and which you had to pretend to believe in. Times beyond number, at Party rallies and spontaneous demonstrations, she had shouted at the top of her voice for the execution of people whose names she had never heard and in whose supposed crimes she had not the faintest belief. When public trials were happening she had taken her place in the detachments from the Youth League who surrounded the courts from morning to night, chanting at intervals 'Death to the traitors!' During the Two Minutes Hate she always excelled all others in shouting insults at Goldstein. Yet she had only the dimmest idea of who Goldstein was and what doctrines he was supposed to represent. She had grown up since the Revolution and was too young to remember the ideological battles of the fifties and sixties. Such a thing as an independent political movement was outside her imagination: and in any case the Party was invincible. It would always exist, and it would always be the same. You could only rebel against it by secret disobedience or, at most, by isolated acts of violence such as killing somebody or blowing something up.

In some ways she was far more acute than Winston, and far less susceptible to Party propaganda. Once when he happened in some connexion to mention the war against Eurasia, she startled him by saying casually that in her opinion the war was not happening. The rocket bombs which fell daily on London were probably fired by the Government of Oceania itself, 'just to keep people frightened'. This was an idea that had literally never occurred to him. She also stirred a sort of envy in him by telling him that during the Two Minutes Hate her great difficulty was to avoid bursting out laughing. But she only questioned the teachings of the Party when they in some way touched upon her own life. Often she was ready to accept the official mythology, simply because the difference between truth and falsehood did not seem important to her. She believed, for instance, having

learnt it at school, that the Party had invented aeroplanes. (In his own schooldays, Winston remembered, in the late fifties, it was only the helicopter that the Party claimed to have invented; a dozen years later, when Julia was at school, it was already claiming the aeroplane; one generation more, and it would be claiming the steam engine.) And when he told her that aeroplanes had been in existence before he was born and long before the Revolution, the fact struck her as totally uninteresting. After all, what did it matter who had invented aeroplanes? It was rather more of a shock to him when he discovered from some chance remark that she did not remember that Oceania, four years ago, had been at war with Eastasia and at peace with Eurasia. It was true that she regarded the whole war as a sham: but apparently she had not even noticed that the name of the enemy had changed. 'I thought we'd always been at war with Eurasia,' she said vaguely. It frightened him a little. The invention of aeroplanes dated from long before her birth, but the switchover in the war had happened only four years ago, well after she was grown up. He argued with her about it for perhaps a quarter of an hour. In the end he succeeded in forcing her memory back until she did dimly recall that at one time Eastasia and not Eurasia had been the enemy. But the issue still struck her as unimportant. 'Who cares?' she said impatiently. 'It's always one bloody war after another, and one knows the news is all lies anyway.'

Sometimes he talked to her of the Records Department and the impudent forgeries that he committed there. Such things did not appear to horrify her. She did not feel the abyss opening beneath her feet at the thought of lies becoming truths. He told her the story of Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford and the momentous slip of paper which he had once held between his fingers. It did not make much impression on her. At first, indeed, she failed to grasp the point of the story.

'Were they friends of yours?' she said.

'No, I never knew them. They were Inner Party members. Besides, they were far older men than I was. They belonged to the old days, before the Revolution. I barely knew them by sight.'

'Then what was there to worry about? People are being killed off all the time, aren't they?'

He tried to make her understand. 'This was an exceptional case. It wasn't just a question of somebody being killed. Do you realize that the past, starting from yesterday, has been actually abolished? If it survives anywhere, it's in a few solid objects with no words attached to them, like that lump of glass there. Already we know almost literally nothing about the Revolution and the years before the Revolution. Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right. I know, of course, that the past is falsified, but it would never be possible for me to prove it, even when I did the falsification myself. After the thing is done, no evidence ever remains. The only evidence is inside my own mind, and I don't know with any certainty that any other human being shares my memories. Just in that one instance, in my whole life, I did possess actual concrete evidence after the event--years after it.'

'And what good was that?'

'It was no good, because I threw it away a few minutes later. But if the same thing happened today, I should keep it.'

'Well, I wouldn't!' said Julia. 'I'm quite ready to take risks, but only for something worth while, not for bits of old newspaper. What could you have done with it even if you had kept it?'

'Not much, perhaps. But it was evidence. It might have planted a few doubts here and there, supposing that I'd dared to show it to anybody. I don't imagine that we can alter anything in our own lifetime. But one can imagine little knots of resistance springing up here and there--small groups of people banding themselves together, and gradually growing, and even leaving a few records behind, so that the next generations can carry on where we leave off.'

'I'm not interested in the next generation, dear. I'm interested in US.'

'You're only a rebel from the waist downwards,' he told her.

She thought this brilliantly witty and flung her arms round him in delight.

In the ramifications of party doctrine she had not the faintest interest. Whenever he began to talk of the principles of Ingsoc, doublethink, the mutability of the past, and the denial of objective reality, and to use Newspeak words, she became bored and confused and said that she never paid any attention to that kind of thing. One knew that it was all rubbish, so why let oneself be worried by it? She knew when to cheer and when to boo, and that was all one needed. If he persisted in talking of such subjects, she had a disconcerting habit of falling asleep. She was one of those people who can go to sleep at any hour and in any position. Talking to her, he realized how easy it was to present an appearance of orthodoxy while having no grasp whatever of what orthodoxy meant. In a way, the world-view of the Party imposed itself most successfully on people incapable of understanding it. They could be made to accept the most flagrant violations of reality, because they never fully grasped the enormity of what was demanded of them, and were not sufficiently interested in public events to notice what was happening. By lack of understanding they remained sane. They simply swallowed everything, and what they swallowed did them no harm, because it left no residue behind, just as a grain of corn will pass undigested through the body of a bird.