1984 by George Orwell:
A Thematic Study of Dystopia & Government Insurgency in Literature

EDC 448: Text Set
Grade Level 9
Due: 14 February 2013
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Essential Questions

1. What prompts us into action against something we believe is morally “wrong”?

2. How can we detect the difference between authoritative and authoritarian government control?

3. What role does language play in the construction of our values and freedom of expression?

4. What components constitute an ideal society?
Textbook: 1984

• **Quantitative Analysis:** Using the Flesch-Kincaid readability test, I found this textbook to have a grade level of 9.5 and a reading ease score of 59. As I am gearing this text set towards a high school freshman English class, this novel may be a bit challenging, but seems well suited for my group of learners.

• **Qualitative Analysis:** I chose *1984* to be the primary text the remainder of my text set is based around due to my personal appreciation of the novel and awareness of the benefits it offers to a range of students. The themes of the novel are applicable to a variety of different learning targets and connect to numerous subject matters, affording a teacher a great selection of related texts to design their curriculum with. The material is also a fascinating read, appealing to a multitude of interests. The style of the book is very descriptive and is enjoyable for most learners, but it may provide a challenge to some. I believe this novel is a great introductory text for high school freshmen to prepare them for the more complex texts they will be exposed to in the upcoming years.

1. Movie Trailer: The Hunger Games


• http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4S9a5V9ODuY

• **Qualitative Analysis:** I have chosen to show the trailer of The Hunger Games as part of my text set as it is a popular franchise the students are most likely familiar with and it shares the common theme of futuristic government control with 1984. The trailer is action-packed and masterfully presents a disturbing image of the corrupt, authoritarian Capitol within a 3 minute time span. This type of text is brief as to not waste class time yet will appropriately resonate topics from my primary text with the class as well as excite them about the material.
2. Song lyrics:

“Uprising” by Muse


- I have chosen this song for my second text as its content reflects themes pertinent to 1984, namely the resisting of a dystopian system of government. It is a cool, alternative rock song by a modern band that will appeal to a multitude of students. By attracting students who have a more musically-inclined set of intelligences, this song will help them make connections to the text and better comprehend the turmoil of the novel’s main characters. Lyrics also afford the opportunity for poetic device analysis, an additional component of literary study.
"Uprising" Lyrics

Paranoia is in bloom,
The PR transmissions will resume,
They'll try to push drugs that keep us all dumbed down,
And hope that we will never see the truth around
(So come on)
Another promise, another scene,
Another packaged lie to keep us trapped in greed,
And all the green belts wrapped around our minds,
And endless red tape to keep the truth confined
(So come on)

They will not force us,
They will stop degrading us,
They will not control us,
We will be victorious

Interchanging mind control,
Come let the revolution take it's toll,
If you could flick a switch and open your third eye,
You'd see that
We should never be afraid to die
(So come on)

Rise up and take the power back,
It's time the fat cats had a heart attack,
You know that their time's coming to an end,
We have to unify and watch our flag ascend

They will not force us,
They will stop degrading us,
They will not control us,
We will be victorious

Tuesday, February 12, 2013
3. Graphic Novel: 

V for Vendetta by Alan Moore


- V for Vendetta is a popular graphic novel about a masked revolutionary whose mission is to elaborately bring down his totalitarian government in the U.K. This medium is often overlooked in literary study as it is not deemed worthy of scholarly merit—however, I believe this work is intelligently written and presents a fascinating perspective on anarchy. The level of reading is appropriate for a 9th grade class and the content presents significant, academic motifs for analysis. This form of literature combines art and text in an intriguing way which may be more appealing to teenage students than a classic work. The graphic novel is not too long of a read and corresponds to several of Binet’s delineated intelligences. V for Vendetta serves as a great companion piece to 1984 as it conveys analogous themes and concepts in a manner that may be more approachable to some students.
4. Website: New Speak Dictionary


• This website provides an accessible glossary of the terms in 1984, both difficult vocabulary as well as the futuristic lexicon Orwell invents for the novel, “New Speak.” The list of terms provides a definition as well as quotes from the novel and facts about how the word pertains to the fictional history designed for the book. It is a useful resource to familiarize students with the invented terminology and help them better understand the text. Although it is a fan-made site, the information provided by this source is accurate and there are many useful and official resources linked to this page.
5. Film: Nineteen Eighty-Four


I chose to include the film adaptation of the primary text to afford the students the opportunity to compare and contrast the print edition to the movie interpretation. I believe it is beneficial to show film versions of course material as it reinforces the novel’s message and provides a fun and relaxing way to close the unit. I may choose to show clips of the film instead of present it in its entirety and pass out reflection worksheets to be completed as the students watch; in this way, the film serves a significant educational purpose that is still bearable for the students. I would also supply popcorn for the class because what’s a movie without popcorn?
6. News Article:
Internet Blackout/Protests in Egypt (2012)


• This article serves to connect the students with a recent and real instance of oppressive government control and public protest. This piece would allow them to link the primary text with a current event in the news, making the class aware that the themes of dystopia and repression extend beyond the pages of literature, existing in parts of our world today. This type of text also exposes them to a different medium, namely that of print journalism. Allowing the students access to the Internet would appeal to them as children of the technology age and the assignment would in turn instruct them on how to access news articles for future reference. Perhaps after teaching the class on how to read such articles, a follow-up assignment could be the writing of a mock-news article about the events in 1984, the students acting as reporters for Big Brother.
7. YA Novel:  
*The Maze Runner* by James Dashner


- *The Maze Runner* is a modern classic about a futuristic dystopian society as told through the perspective of a teenage male. This YA novel is ideal for grades 6-10 and is a compelling read. I might use this novel as an introductory text before divulging into *1984* to forefront ideas about what constitutes a dystopian society and corrupt governments. Since this book is more modern, students might respond to it more favorably, then be more excited to read a similar book from the canon following the close of this novel, namely, *1984*. Although *The Hunger Games* would also be a suitable choice for a YA companion piece, most students are already familiar with it and *The Maze Runner* would expose them to a new, equally interesting piece of literature.
8. Song Lyrics:

“Imagine” by John Lennon


“Imagine” by John Lennon is a classic song that deliberates over the notion of a dystopia as caused by the removal of common comforts and passions. Not only would this text expose the students to true good music, but it would serve to present a discourse on what constitutes a utopia, the opposite of Orwell’s corrupted vision. This concept is relevant to the primary text as well as literary study in general. I believe this song would once again appeal to a variety of learners and could be additionally used for a lesson on poetic devices and grammar conventions. The lyrics are approachable in their beautiful simplicity yet evoke a powerful message. This song is appropriate to the age of the class and the topics I wish to cover in this text set.
“Imagine” Lyrics

Imagine there’s no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace

You, you may say
I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one
9. Tv Episode:
“City of Walls and Secrets” from Avatar: The Last Airbender


- Avatar: The Last Airbender is an animated television program from the early 2000’s produced by Nickelodeon. Even though this show was designed for a young audience, it contains intense themes relevant to this text set. In particular, an episode called “City of Walls and Secrets” concerns a nation where the mentioning of war has been forbidden and is enforced by a secret police who work for a corrupt dictator. This animation is amusing and although it may be regarded as simplistic, it conveys important concepts in a comprehensive yet straightforward manner. I believe students would respond well to the showing of this 22 minute episode and it would serve to reinforce their understanding of dystopian societies.
En Fin.