



Pearson
Edexcel

GCSE (9–1) Drama

Prescribed Text Guide

1984, George Orwell
(adapted by Robert Icke
and Duncan Macmillan)

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update





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Prescribed edition for Component 3

1984, George Orwell (adapted by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan) ISBN: 9781783190614 (Oberon Books).

Summary

The foreword in the recommended edition explains how the playwrights have incorporated the appendix from the novel into the play.

The play does not have defined acts or scenes, so page numbers are used in the detailed summary that follows.

The action follows Winston Smith who lives in an alternative state called Oceania. He is beginning to question the way his life is controlled and dictated by The Party. His actions are discussed periodically by a group of characters who form a kind of chorus and are talking from a time in the future, specifically after 2050.

Scenes often jump to different times and places very suddenly, with the sound of a klaxon or a blackout. Winston is caught between what is real and what is not, and therefore the staging and the lucid nature of the scenes invite the audience to empathise with his confusion.

Page 13

We open on Winston Smith about to start writing a diary. He knows this is a crime, for which he will inevitably be caught. He is resigned to this fact even before he starts writing, convinced that the Thought Police will discover he has committed the Thoughtcrime eventually.

Page 14

After a blackout, we jump into what appears to be the present day, with the company assembled listen to the voice we have heard narrating, The Host. These people may be the imagined readers that Winston was writing for in the future, or he may be the imagined writer they are reading. As ambiguous as this may sound, this theme of *'what is real'* leaves room for much interpretation, and though decisions should be made moment to moment, the questions do not have to be fully answered for the audience.

Page 17

There is a blurring of the tenses, as Winston hears the memory of *'Oranges and Lemons'* from his past, but the tune blurs into a ringtone version from the future.

Page 20

The audience enters the story of 1984, with Winston's first encounter with Julia, who at this point is simply called Waitress. She is wearing a scarlet sash, representing the Anti-Sex League. She looks at Winston, who is immediately terrified, assuming her to be Thought Police.



Page 21

The ringtone goes off again, and another overlapping of the worlds, as Winston mouths along with Martin; *'Every age sees itself reflected'*. This is an important reference to the timeless nature of the major themes in the play.

Page 22

Next, the audience hears O'Brien's voice. He can communicate with Winston through the telescreens. He tells Winston that they *'will meet in the place where there is no darkness'*. Suddenly, Mrs Parsons' child appears, accusing Winston of being a Thought Criminal. Mrs Parsons enters. She fears her own child.

Page 24

The Host becomes Charrington, an antique shop owner, who persuades Winston to buy the diary. Here is a solid example that we are not operating on a linear timeline, as we have already seen Winston writing in the diary at the opening of the play.

Page 26

Again, Winston is plunged into darkness and the action snaps back to the future. The 'chorus' reposition Winston in his chair and try to help him.

Page 27

There is a Klaxon and the hears an announcement from the telescreen about the Brotherhood, and that they are planning a major attack. The klaxon sounds again and the voice of a female fitness instructor takes over. She orders Winston to stand showing that the telescreens work both ways. This is a world with no privacy.

Page 28

The audience meets Syme, who lectures Winston on the beauty of Newspeak. They are then joined by Parsons, who tells how proud he is of his daughter for shopping a foreigner

Page 31

Another announcement through the telescreen about a victory, and an increase in the chocolate rations. Winston hears O'Brien's voice and remembers that every day the chocolate rations are raised, but always to the same amount. The audience sees O'Brien for the first time. They agree to meet, in the place where there is no darkness.

Page 33

An abrupt lighting change and Winston is at work, deleting someone from history, showing what happens to the history of those who are caught rebelling against the party.

Page 34

Another klaxon showing what the Party does to these thought criminals after they are erased from history; in the *Two Minute Hate* the audience witnesses the confession and execution of a Thought Criminal.

**Page 37**

Julia collides with someone and falls over. Winston goes to help her up, and she slips him a note that reads, to his surprise, '*I Love You*'.

Page 38

The next moment is a near repeat of the conversation with Syme and Parsons, but this time when Julia is sitting at the table, Winston nudges his tray onto the floor. As they are both on the floor picking it up, they hastily arrange to meet by a specific tree in the countryside on Sunday.

Page 39

In a second the action moves to this time/ place and they talk openly than as they are so far away from the telescreens it seems. They have sex, in a defiant act of political disobedience. They discuss what is real and what is a dream. Before they part, Julia tells him '*We are the dead*'.

Page 44

The action is back in the antique shop. This time Charrington offers Winston a storage room to rent, with no telescreen. It all seems too good to be true.

Page 45

Time and place are becoming more fluid now, as Winston looks up from the bed and sees Julia, smiling. She has lots of contraband treats. She teases him about rats, revealing his total phobia of rats to the audience. '*Anything but rats*' he pleads.

Page 46

She sings some of *Oranges and Lemons* to him. He discovers her grandad taught it to her. This is an example of the theme of history being passed on through story and truth.

Page 48

At Julia's command, Winston goes out into the yard to see the Mother singing. Julia tells him that here they can be real. Winston explains that he deletes people, and that he once deleted evidence that would have proved that the party lie.

He is shocked at Julia's disregard of this revelation, showing a stark difference in their attitudes towards the Party.

Page 51

The next moment is another near repeat of the scene in the canteen, only this time Syme's chair is empty, indicating that he has been un-personed. O'Brien enters and invites Winston to come and look at a new dictionary at his apartment.

Page 53

The action is back in the antique shop back room, and Winston remembers an old memory which he relates to Julia about stealing chocolate from his sister. Winston thinks O'Brien is part of the Brotherhood, and they agree to meet at his apartment.



Page 56

The action moves to O'Brien's apartment. As he sees Winston, he turns off the telescreen. This is the first real moment of silence we have had in the play. This demonstrates O'Brien's power. Winston boldly explains that he and Julia are Thought Criminals and that they believe in the Brotherhood.

Martin is there with them, and they drink a toast to Goldstein, the rebels' leader. O'Brien tests what Winston would be willing to do for the cause. He will do anything except never see Julia again. O'Brien then explains that the Brotherhood does not exist in the ordinary sense, and that he will give him a copy of Goldstein's book, which will help him '*understand the true reality of things*'.

Page 62

Winston is in a street and is handed a briefcase containing the book. He returns to the antique shop room and tells Julia he has the book. He reads extracts to her, though she seems disinterested, eventually falling asleep. Winston is elated.

Page 65

Winston wakes with a scream from a nightmare. Julia comforts him, while the mother sings outside again. They agree to never betray each other. Winston marvels at the billions of people across the world that are like the mother. People are all the same. His ideas come from Goldstein's book which he has not finished; he says he doesn't need to; he has a new-found hope. They both repeat '*we are the dead*'.

Page 69

A voice is heard: '*YOU ARE THE DEAD*'. Julia and Winston are taken away. It is revealed that Charrington is a much younger man than he appeared, and he has clearly betrayed them. He finally gives Winston the last line to the song *Oranges and Lemons* he has been trying to remember; '*here comes a chopper to chop off your head*'.

Page 70

Winston is in the Ministry of Love. He is unclear of how long he has been here, and it may be that he has been here before in the context of the play, when hearing O'Brien's voice for example.

Parsons is also there, who has been ironically shopped by his own daughter.

Page 73

Suddenly, Winston wakes next to Julia again and feels it has been a dream. This is a scene we have also seen before. Winston '*comes to*' and is back with O'Brien. There is now no real definition between what is real and what is a dream.

Page 74

O'Brien begins to interrogate Winston with the help of torturers. He goes about expunging his memories and beliefs through torture.



Page 80

In a bold break of the established theatrical convention, the house lights are brought up and O'Brien asks Winston to talk to the unborn he was addressing in his diary. In this case, the audience represent the future and he can talk to them.

Page 81

Winston declares himself to be '*morally superior*' to the party, to which O'Brien plays him his own voice from earlier saying that he would '*throw sulphuric acid in a child's face*' for the cause.

Page 84

O'Brien tells Winston that he doesn't exist. Winston defiantly proclaims that he has not betrayed Julia but is informed that he is in room 101. He knows what is coming. A contraption is attached to him that encourages rats to bore through his face. Winston pleads with the audience to help him. As soon as the threat of the final gate being opened happens, he betrays Julia and asks that they do it to her instead. They have broken him.

Page 89

Winston is back sitting in the café. Julia is there, though her name in the play text has returned to Waitress. They each admit betraying the other, without feeling or emotion, as if it is a false memory.

Page 90

The audience hears the voice from the start, and the ending bookends the play with the company representing the future. The host tells them that Winston never existed. The play ends with Winston thanking O'Brien.



Characters

Winston

The protagonist. He is staunchly against the party and will fight for the truth no matter what it takes. He struggles with reality throughout and is even unsure whether he himself is real by the end.

Julia

Winston's lover. Though she is a rebel, she is a hedonist and is only interested in the immediacy of rebellion. She does not have the drive to change society that Winston has.

O'Brien

A member of the inner party. He represents the party. He initially appears to be on Winston's side, but eventually indoctrinates him into the ways of the party.

Charrington

The owner of an antique shop and a secret member of the Thought Police.

Martin

A mysterious character who seems able to exist in the past and the future. It is open to interpretation how and why this is possible. He does begin reading the book and says 'you're seeing yourself in it'.

Syme

Works with Winston in the Ministry of Truth. He is eventually deleted.

Parsons

Winston's neighbour. He is betrayed to the Ministry of Love by his own daughter. The protagonist. He is staunchly against the party and will fight for the truth no matter what it takes. He struggles with reality throughout and is even unsure whether he himself is real by the end.

Julia

Winston's lover. Though she is a rebel, she is a hedonist and is only interested in the immediacy of rebellion. She does not have the drive to change society that Winston has.

O'Brien

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Parsons

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Context to *1984*

The original performance took place at the Nottingham Playhouse in September 2013.

Students are required to refer to the context **in which the text was created and first performed** as part of their response to sub-question (b)(i). This could be the social, political, context and/or the context to the **first performance**, which for this text **took place in 2013**. Contextual information relating to this may also be covered in sub-question b(ii) and (c). The following contextual information may be of support to students when preparing for these questions.

George Orwell famously wrote the novel on which the play version of *1984* was based, but the text on the Component 3 paper is the most recent adaptation of the novel, the play was created by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan, in 2013 working with the Headlong Theatre company.

The play explores the concept of Utopia and Dystopia in a society where everything is controlled by the all-powerful Party and where even thoughts can condemn an individual to punishment. The playwrights were also influenced by the idea of oppressive regimes and the way that society can be controlled through propaganda.

There is a strong political element linked to concerns about online privacy and the abuse of this by wealthy companies and government bodies. For example, in June 2013 when the play was in rehearsal, the US's National Security Agency (NSA) was revealed to have access to the servers of major companies by paying to bypass encryption and other privacy controls, accessing supposedly secure user information. In everyday life, increasingly, advertisers and online companies match advertising to consumers' shopping history. This focus on being watched and spied on perhaps combines aspects of the setting with the time when the play was first performed and created.

The original production made use of multi-role, with the chorus doubling as characters such as Syme, Parsons, Mother/Mrs Parsons and Charrington. The production also made use of naturalistic costume, a fixed set which doubled as a number of locations and was physically dismantled in full view of the audience to create Room 101 for the final section of the play. There was also extensive use of AV/ projection and video throughout the production.

The prescribed edition has a foreword that explains the playwrights' interpretation of the appendix in the book. It is highly recommended that this is not overlooked, as it sets out the most significant differences between the play and the novel.



Themes in *1984*

One significant theme is dreams vs reality. Winston is constantly looking to find what is reality. We, the audience, are also doing the same throughout, as we pick our way through the jumpy and misleading narrative to find what is real and what is dream.

Another key theme is Truth. The party look to delete and alter the truth of the past to suit their needs. Winston becomes committed to revealing the truth.

Past, present and future are explored in a fascinating way, as the action jumps through time, with the audience and Winston never quite sure exactly where we are.

Love is another theme, as ultimately it is love that causes Winston and Julia to be discovered.

Totalitarian government is a significant theme. It is the injustice at the lack of individual freedom of thought that drives Winston to rebel against the party.



Resources for *1984*

There are a wealth of resources available on the Pearson Edexcel website and these are being added to and updated regularly. These resources, including the [Sample Assessment Materials](#), and [specimen paper and mark scheme](#), are free to download.

Further reading

1984 by George Orwell (This is highly recommended, as the play has striking differences from the book, which may prove difficult to understand without prior knowledge)

Online resources

[Headlong website](#) including rehearsal diary, images from the production and contextual information.

[Headlong's resource pack for the play](#)

Reviews

[The Telegraph – Nottingham Playhouse](#)

[The Guardian – Almeida](#)

[The Observer – Almeida](#)

Useful soundtracks to use in the classroom

- 'Oranges and Lemons'
- '1984' by Rick Wakeman
- '1984' by David Bowie
- 'Sexcrime (Nineteen Eighty-Four)' and 'Julia' by Eurythmics

Other Resources

Google Images – hundreds of images associated with *1984*.

Film versions of the novel including the version produced in *1984* starring John Hurt as Winston Smith and Richard Burton as O'Brien. There are striking differences between the film and the play which are worth discussing.

YouTube is a useful source of extracts from cinema versions of the novel, some full length, others are extracts and these can be used to stimulate ideas and discussion around the tone of a production as well as the ways in which the characters can be portrayed.

At the time of writing, for example, there are trailers available that give a flavour of what Orwell's intentions were, brought to the cinema screen.



Practical activities to help prepare for Component 3

The following suggested exercises may help students practically explore some of the key characters, themes and ideas that are central to *1984*, and to have some practical experience of bringing the text to life.

students must respond to the text as performers, directors and designers, so practical experience of all of these roles will be useful. However, the questions are grouped into two areas:

- activities for performers and for directors of performers
- activities for designers and for directors of production elements.

1. Performers and Directors of Performers: Qs (a)(i), (a)(ii) and (b)(ii)

There are a number of performance elements which will come up across these three questions:

- vocal skills/voice
- physical skills/movement
- non-verbal communication
- stage space and stage directions.

Best practice would therefore be to ensure that all students have an understanding of each performance element and how it could be used to enhance the play in performance, as well as a grasp of how to use these elements as a performer and as a director.

Off-text improvisation is a useful explorative technique to consider the 'before and after' life of the play. Students might explore moments from the play that the audience does not explicitly see.

For example:

- Winston as a child hearing *Oranges and Lemons* for the first time
- O'Brien and inner party members discussing how they are going to trick Winston
- Julia being tortured.

As there is the constant threat from the Thought Police, a director might play a game of wink murder with the performers. Performers sit in a circle on the floor, and you choose a detective – or in this case a member of the Thought Police. They go outside whilst you choose the murderer. When the murderer winks at you, you must play dead.

The detective then must try and catch the murderer. Although this game appears – and is – simplistic, it may lead into more developed activities around waiting for the knock on the door, for example, or a structured version of Chinese Whispers during which, inevitably, the truth becomes distorted.

This kind of activity might be particularly useful as students are first exploring the play.



Hot-seating is a valuable and exciting method to develop characterisation and to explore motive/ objective. It would also help students to consider the journey of the character in the context of the complete text. This would work well to develop understanding of improvisation work early on in the process, but would also be an excellent practical revision technique for students

Exploring voice and vocal skills such as volume, pitch, tone, pace, pause, emphasis, accent and dialect can also help performers and directors of performers to consider character choices. How might vocal choices help the audience understand where characters come from? How might they show an understanding of the character at that moment within the play?

Still image and mime are often highly effective in exploring the use of physical skills and non-verbal communication and the use of space. Students could be given the opportunity to look at relationships and emotions within a given moment from the text by creating either a short sequence of mime or a series of still images. Using facial expression, movement, gesture, posture and their proxemics (or position within the performance space) will enhance their understanding of how these characters might be feeling at this moment, or what they might want to achieve.

Following practical activities, evaluating the ways in which performance skills have been used and asking students to offer reasons for their performance choices verbally after sharing work, will also help students become more confident with the relevant vocabulary.

Staging and rehearsing a key scene with a particular focus is also a helpful activity for students. This focus might be the kind of statement to be found in Q (b)(ii) for example '*Julia is frightened*'. Assigning the role of director to one student within each the group and asking the director to verbally justify or give reasons for the choices made when staging the scene, similarly, will help all students to grasp the role of the director and to feel more confident about responding on paper to question (b)(ii).

Once students are more confident in working as a director, or with a student director, further explorative activities might be useful.

For example, exploring the use of proxemics and stage space with the director. The director assigns roles and gives each character a double who feeds lines to the performer, allowing the performers to move around the space without needing to hold a script. The director gives clear suggestions for the use of space and movement to the performers. This could also be applied to vocal and/ or physical skills.

Similarly, the performers might explore status in conjunction with the director. The director calls out numbers from 1 to 20 for the performers in the space. 1 is the lowest status and 20 is the highest status. This might help us see how members of the outer party in the canteen, such as Winston, behave when O'Brien is around.



2. Directors/ Designers of Production Elements: Q(b)(i) and (c)

There are six production/design elements which will come up across these two questions:

- staging
- set
- props and stage furniture
- costume
- lighting
- sound.

Three of these will be possible options on each question with all six appearing on the paper each year. Best practice would therefore be to ensure that all students have an understanding of each production/design element and how it could be used to enhance the play in performance. A grasp of how the differences in approaching these elements as a director and as a designer will also be valuable.

It might be useful to set up a production meeting and pitch for your students. In this model, for example, a small group of five could consist of a director, set, costume, sound and lighting designers. The director then asks important questions to each member of the production team in order to develop a creative concept for a production of the play and then sells a potential 'theatrical' pitch to the teacher (producer or 'dragon' in order to secure funding).

The teacher should support students by ensuring that the students all have a good understanding of the text and of appropriate performance styles for this text. Each member of each production team must justify their ideas by referring to key moments from the play. This is a useful discussion exercise that also lends itself to research, images and presentations. It would also make an excellent 'active' revision session in time for the written examination.

The play is set in an alternative reality to our historical 1984 and a future period after 2050; although students may adapt the setting, any such choice must be justified clearly. Students may well choose a time period and approach, which is in line with the first performance. Designers/ directors will also need to think about how their chosen performance style will be supported through design and about how design elements will be used to time passing and the increase in tension throughout the play.

Creating a model box or stage plan of a potential set design is a useful exercise and can be as simple or as elaborate as required. It is often useful for students to see how each scene or episode will be played in a potential space, and to choose a specific stage. By creating this visually they will be able to refer more easily to their ideas when writing about set, stage furniture or staging in particular. 1984 was originally staged with a fixed set including movable pieces of stage furniture but students may choose to create a very different style of set, perhaps more minimalistic relying on use levels, and/ or simple stage furniture such as blocks or rostra, in conjunction with the projection of images and/ or scene titles to make the changes in time period clearer for the audience.



Exploring different music and sound effects for key moments is another effective way of considering how sound design can play an important role in the development of a key idea of theme. There are a number of sound cues within the text already and these could be created live or using recorded sound. Similarly, there are opportunities for music and sound to be used to create atmosphere and/ or location, for example, when Winston and Julia escape to the country or are alone together in Charrington's backroom.

It is worth considering how lighting might be used to create atmosphere and the different locations within the play. There are a number of lighting changes and blackouts within the play text, and these could be created using colour, intensity and specific lighting effects such as gobos. Different kinds of lamp could also be used to create shadows and suspense, for example when Winston is writing his diary or is being tortured in Room 101. If you don't have access to lighting, you might want to consider the effect of torches. Students could also have a look at previous productions and lighting designs to see how other theatre makers have used lighting to create impact.

Another useful exercise that helps to build the world of the play and develop ideas for performance is designing potential costumes and props. Research is key and will help students who are initially daunted about the thought of 'designing'. They don't have to be great artists to create great designs. Students could be asked to link their intentions verbally with the initial production, as they will need to do in question (b)(i), either because they are adopting a similar approach or because they are developing different ideas.

Students may choose to make the time periods in the costume designers will also need to think about how the physical style of the play will be supported through the style of the costume for each character. The use of multi-role arguably helps to blur the lines between what is real and what is not for Winston and the audience, but students may decide to work with a larger cast rather than multi-rolling; this could also have an impact on costume design.

While the majority of these activities will result in informal sharing within the class, using the set text as the basis for more formal performance work is also worth considering. *1984* is a prohibited text for Component 2. However, students might complete a mock text in performance in year 10 using extracts from their prescribed text. This will not only support performance and design skills; it will also help students to become confident with staging extracts from the play for an audience.