

Focusing Responses to *1984*

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George Orwell's *1984* generally evokes strong responses in readers. After students read the book and discuss some of the more disturbing images and issues conjured up by Orwell's prose, the following writing activities can help students focus their thoughts and responses. To allow for individual differences and the varying levels of difficulty of the assignments, students might be asked to choose one or two assignments to respond to in detail.

1. Read the following quotation from the novel.

Winston found that he was shouting with the others and kicking his heels violently against the rung of his chair. The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining in.

Write about a time when you have been unwillingly caught up in the emotions of a large group.

2. Read the following quotation from the novel.

The paperweight was the room he was in, and the coral was Julia's life and his own, fixed in a sort of eternity at the heart of the crystal.

Write a sentence that encapsulates part of your life just as this one encapsulates Winston's and Julia's lives.

3. Read the following quotation from the novel.

"The proles are human beings," Winston said aloud. "We are not human." "Why not?" said Julia.

Write a direct reply to Julia's question.

4. Emmanuel Goldstein describes the class structure of people in the world following the revolution. Describe the class structure within your world as you see it. Consider your group of friends, school, community, and country.

5. Read the following quotation from the novel.

"You asked me once," said O'Brien, "what was in room 101. I told you that you knew the answer already. Everyone knows it. The thing that is in room 101 is the worst thing in the world."

What would the Thought Police place in room 101 for you? Why?

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