

# Summer Reading 2010

## IB English 11

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READ THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BOOKS AND THE GUIDING QUESTIONS *BEFORE* YOU BEGIN READING EACH BOOK.

Keep the questions at hand as you read and take notes, in the books, if they are yours, or on paper.

**Answers to the questions SHOULD NOT be written out.** Guiding questions are just to help students with more effective comprehension.

**Assessment – first full day of classes:**

**You will be asked to answer objective style questions on all the books: the basic who, what, where, and why style with multiple choice, matching, short answer, and passage identification.**

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### *Brave New World* Aldous Huxley

Since its publication in 1932, *Brave New World* and its author have been the subject of much commentary and much criticism. Many people consider this Huxley's most important work: many others think it is his only work. This novel has been praised and condemned, vilified and glorified, a source of controversy, a subject for sermons, and required reading for many high school students and college undergraduates. This novel has had twenty-seven printings in the United States alone and will probably have twenty-seven more. A third generation is presently reading and discussing *Brave New World*. We might well ask, "What accounts for the continuing popularity of this novel?" Why does this work continue to attract attention and comment?" The answer lies in Huxley's skill as a writer - a writer of science fiction, a writer of social commentary, a writer with prophetic vision, a writer with a tremendous breadth and depth of interests and ideas, a writer of satire.

*Brave New World* is a masterpiece of science fiction. Huxley has imaginatively employed scientific facts and theories to produce a classic of its kind. This novel is in the tradition of Jules Verne, the French novelist who wrote *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and H. G. Wells, the English novelist who wrote *War of the Worlds*. Few writers of science fiction have equaled Huxley's ability to make the unbelievable seem believable and to make the improbable seem probable. His own interest in science, its use and misuse, its peril and its promise, contributed to the accuracy of his presentation and to the horror of his envisioned Utopia.

Huxley qualifies as a social commentator by reason of his diversified interest, his acquaintance with the great, the near-great, and the not-so-great. His comments are always perceptive, sometime biased, but never dull. He sees little chance of mankind saving itself; he sees mankind inexorably

moving toward self-destruction. He sees himself as a voice crying in the wilderness - but crying to no avail, for the deaf refuse to hear.

The prophetic elements in *Brave New World* contribute much to its continuing popularity because year by year we see more and more of Huxley's fantasy becoming reality. Huxley himself later commented that we are moving in the direction of this Utopia much more rapidly than anyone could have imagined. At the time the novel was written only a comparatively few research scientists were concerned with conditioning, the importance of heredity and environment, and the effect of chemical imbalance on physical and mental development. Today, governments, educational institutions, and industries are exploiting the results of research in these areas.

The breadth and depth of Huxley's interests and ideas prompted one critic to refer to him as one of the most prodigiously learned writers of all time. In addition to his ten novels, Huxley wrote poetry, drama, essays, biography, and history. His interests and capabilities embrace art, religion, philosophy, music, history, politics, psychology - and this novel expresses Huxley's concern with the importance of each of these areas.

Huxley's satire expresses his profound pessimism. In *Brave New World* the only choice is between insanity on the one hand and lunacy on the other. In an early essay "Revolutions," he expresses this same pessimistic idea: "Now that not only work, but also leisure has been completely mechanized; now that, with every fresh elaboration of the social organization, the individual finds himself yet further degraded from manhood towards the mere embodiment of a social function; now that ready-made, creation-saving amusements are spreading an ever intenser boredom through ever wider spheres - existence has become pointless and intolerable. Quite how pointless and intolerable the great masses of materially - civilized humanity have not yet consciously realized." In *Brave New World* Huxley helps humanity to this realization.

### **An Historical Perspective**

Some of the ideas and aspects of life in the World State of *Brave New World* are contained in several of Huxley's earlier works. In chapter five of *Crome Yellow*, which was published in 1922, Mr. Scogan speaks of a scientific Utopia: "... An impersonal generation will take the place of Nature's hideous system. In vast state incubators, rows upon rows of gravid bottles will supply the world with the population it requires. The family system will disappear. . . ." By the time Huxley started to write *Brave New World*, the tremendous political, economic, and philosophical changes taking place in Europe and America contributed to his disillusionment.

On the international political scene we have the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the dictatorship of Mussolini in Italy, and the Nazi Party movement in Germany. Huxley had always been concerned about threats to man's freedom and independence. He realized that communism and fascism place the state above the individual and demand total allegiance to a cause. Recognizing the danger, he demonstrated the end result of this tendency in his fantasy.

At the same time there were tremendous economic changes in and between individual countries - more and bigger factories, more manufactured goods, the advent of mass-produced automobiles. Big business used and misused the individual - man became important as a producer and a consumer. Industry exploited the individual by molding him according to its image and likeness. Huxley goes one step further in his novel - man's chief importance is his ability to produce and consume manufactured goods.

With more and more people moving to the cities we see a change in attitude and point of view. As "one of the crowd" the individual is not responsible for himself or for anybody else - having lost his individuality he has also lost his respect for individuality. Huxley carries this loss of individuality one step further in his projection of scores of identical twins performing identical tasks.

Huxley was concerned when he saw these things happening because he saw them as very real threats to man's freedom and independence. His bitter satire results from his conviction that although man is able to do something about these threats to his freedom and individuality, he is unwilling to make the effort "to turn the tide." In the latter part of *Brave New World* Huxley discusses this shift in emphasis from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness.

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How is Huxley's *Brave New World* a warning to all humankind- specifically in regards to scientific advancements?
2. The loss of individuality is also at the heart of Huxley's novel. How does the Government in *Brave New World* control the individual?
3. Why was society in the World State divided into castes?
4. In his novels Huxley often uses a spokesman for himself and his ideas. Who is his spokesman in this novel?
5. What is the significance of the World State's motto: "Community, Identity, Stability"?
6. Why does Huxley have John the Savage commit suicide?

## 1984

George Orwell [pseudonym of Eric Arthur Blair] (1903-1950), journalist, political author and novelist wrote *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949);

"It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. **BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU**, the caption beneath it ran."

Originally titled *Last Man in Europe* it was renamed *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for unknown reasons, possibly a mere reversal of the last two digits of the year it was written. It was first met with conflicting criticisms and acclaim; some reviewers disliked its dystopian satire of

totalitarian regimes, nationalism, the class system, bureaucracy, and world leaders' power struggles, while others panned it as nihilistic prophesy on the downfall of humankind. Some still see it as anti-Catholic with Big Brother replacing God and church. From it the term Orwellian has evolved, in reference to an idea or action that is hostile to a free society. Yet, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has proven to be a profoundly meaningful work and continues to be one of the world's most widely read and quoted novels into the twenty-first century. Inspired by Yevgeny Zamyatin's (1884-1937) *We*, Blair worked intensely, often writing ten hours a day and even when bedridden with tuberculosis in his last days continued to labour over it. From his essay "Why I Write";

**"First I spent five years in an unsuitable profession (the Indian Imperial Police, in Burma), and then I underwent poverty and the sense of failure. This increased my natural hatred of authority and made me for the first time fully aware of the existence of the working classes, and the job in Burma had given me some understanding of the nature of imperialism: but these experiences were not enough to give me an accurate political orientation. Then came Hitler, the Spanish Civil War, etc. By the end of 1935 I had still failed to reach a firm decision."**

He goes on to say;

**"The Spanish war and other events in 1936-37 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it."**

Plot

The plot has three main movements, corresponding to the division of the book in three parts. The first part, the first eight chapters, creates the world of 1984, a totalitarian world where the Party tries to control everything, even thought and emotion. In this part, Winston develops his first unorthodox thoughts. The second part of the novel deals with the development of his love to Julia, someone with whom he can share his private emotions. For a short time they create a small world of feeling for themselves. They are betrayed, however. O'Brien, whom Winston thought was a rebel like himself, is in reality a chief inquisitor of the Inner Party. The third part of the novel deals with Winston's punishment. Finally he comes to love Big Brother. Generally, the plot is very simple: a rebel, a love affair with a like-minded, capture, torture, and finally capitulation. Apart from Julia, O'Brien, and of course Winston, there are no important characters; there is no attempt to

create a range of social behaviour, and the complex personal interactions therein, all traditional concerns of the novel. Indeed, one of Orwell's points is that life in 1984 has become totally uniform. So the traditional novel would be unthinkable. In fact, Winston is the only character worth writing about; all the other characters are half-robots already. So one could say that the plot was built around Winston's mind and life. This gave Orwell the opportunity to focus on the reaction of the individual to totalitarianism, love, and cruelty.

### 1984 by George Orwell

#### Study Guide

Define or identify the following terms from 1984.

Orwellian

Newspeak

Minitrue

Minipax

Miniluv

Miniplenty

Two Minutes Hate

Big Brother

The Brotherhood

The Three Slogans of the Party

Bread and Circus

Doublethink

Thoughtcrime

Comrade

Revisionist history

Dystopia

Ingsoc

Pornosec

Unperson

Misogyny

Totalitarianism

Characters:

Winston Smith ---O'Brien ---Julia----Emmanuel Goldstein-----Mr. Charrington-----Syme

In the afterword, the commentator describes 1984 as "a warning." Indeed, throughout the text, Orwell plants both subtle and overt warnings to the reader. What do you think are some of the larger issues at hand here?