Class 11 VCE comparing texts: Nineteen Eighty-Four – the film (1984).   
Director: Michael Radford

PART 3 of 3: Notes, Quotes and Questions **DUE: NEXT WEDNESDAY Sept 2nd** EMAIL TO ME!

Some notes from Part 2:

* **INTERPRETATION**: one interpretation of why Winston so blindly believed O’Brien earlier, and why he had visions/dreams of him mixed up with his childhood dreams, **is that unconsciously, Winston knows that O’Brien is evil** (hence his dream is a **warning** to him); yet he is so disconnected from his unconscious (due to the psychological conditioning of Doublethink, Newspeak and Thoughtcrime\*) that he is unable to ‘trust’ his unconscious; and also, it tells us in the book that Winston feels a ‘strange intimacy’ between he and Obrien…

**Obrien** then, in a Freudian sense, becomes an *ersatz* father figure for Winston, as he is calm, self-assured, and seems to have access to many of the answers that Winston thinks that he needs to know. O’Brien, naturally, is well aware of this, and so his early interactions with Winston are carefully psychologically orchestrated so that Winston feels a sense of trust in him, as he might a father, or even **a big brother…**

TASK # 1: The following video is 5 minutes long   
  
HOWEVER, you can only watch the first 90 or so seconds of it before they ask you to register (feel free to register if you want to watch the full thing)

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/doublethink-in-1984-definition-examples.html>

Questions from the 90 seconds:

1. What are some of Orwell’s **concerns?**
2. What is **doublethink?**
3. Who used it and why was it used (how does it work)?  
     
   Feel free to do extra research to answer these. Being able to reference Doublethink in an essay is very helpful.

**SCENE 38: Busted!**

**Note**: the way the voice from the speaker repeats everything they say, even though they’re not saying it loudly…

38.1 What might this be intended to symbolise? *Consider the point of the narrative – it is a major* ***turning point*** *– from here, any capacity they (thought they) had for* ***freedom*** *(in actions or in thoughts) is gradually and systematically eroded.*

Thinking question: any thoughts about the nursery rhyme “here comes a candle to light you to bed, here comes a chopper to chop off your head”?

**Symbol note:** the paperweight is smashed, beauty is smashed, the natural world is now at the mercy of the elements, and any hope symbolised by the paperweight, has now been smashed.

38.2 Describe & explain how the director creates a vivid change of mood here (one that is carried through, nearly to the end of the film). What happens, and how does the director accentuate and create a sense of ‘shock’?  
*Things to consider: Why do you think the director chooses to have Julia punched instead of Winston?  
What effect does this have on the audience? How are we encouraged to feel? Especially given the naked and vulnerable state (of both of them)? What is being conveyed by the director?*  
Do you think this is effective filmmaking? Or is it gratuitous?

Important thinking question: does the fact that Charrington orders the policeman to ‘pick that up’ in reference to the coral, suggest a spark of ‘hope’ in some way? Do you think Charrington has any sympathy, and that his natural humanity might make him sympathetic to Winston in some way (does he value the coral, like Winston? Is this why he owns/has chosen to operate out of an antiques store?)?  
*Not sure myself… But you could use this as a bit of evidence of ‘hope’ in a hopeless world, if you think there’s something there, and if it suits your chosen essay topic.*

**SCENE 39: In the Ministry of Love with Parsons** (sounds so peaceful...)

39.1 Write an analysis of Winston’s interaction with Parsons. Consider:

- Why is he there?

- Why does the text use Parsons here? *Consider that Parsons seemed to be the perfect Party member – gullible, blindly devotedly following with a smile on his face – how might using someone like Parsons increase the dramatic impact and the cruel and twisted abuse of power that is being carried out by BB under the name of ‘stability’? Does there seem to be any sense of fairness or rationality behind the methods of BB? Is the abuse of the rights of ordinary ‘good’ citizens just an unfortunate consequence in the great game of stabilising control, and power?*

- What does this foreshadow (in terms of what is going to happen to Winston)?   
  
- What else makes this interaction (Parson’s experience) particularly chilling (and therefore effective) ?

**Note:** O’Brien’s first introduction “You knew this would happen Winston… you’ve always known it” – the mind games begin… they are starting the (re)conditioning they will inflict upon Winston, to not only change what he says, but to change what he thinks and believes. This also connects to Winston’s earlier dream/vision of Door 101, and O’Brien… the past, the future, what is real – all are becoming uncertain for Winston, as well as the viewer. **This is to express the idea that: in the world of 1984: objective reality itself has been destroyed** (or is attempting to be…).

**SCENE 40: O’Brien!**

**Point**: Winston’s first thought upon seeing O’Brien is not “you bastard!” but “They got you too.”  
  
This shows how deeply deceived Winston has been – and how deep is his **human desire to trust someone!**

**O’Brien note**: “They got me a long time ago.” He seems wistful here, and that there is truth to what he is saying (it’s a great line, and really well delivered) – perhaps there is some sense of regret/reluctance in him, like we sense there is in Mustapha Mond… *perhaps?*

Thinking question:  
**O’Brien**: “The photos of you and the girl (making love) will be recycled for proletariat use” (proletariats = lowest/working class).

What might this mean? It sounds like Big Brother distributes pornography to the working classes to satisfy their sexual urges (rather than try to keep it pent-up indefinitely. And yet the banning of the orgasm is aimed at women and not men… there’s more to this, I’ll let you dwell on it).

**SCENE 41: The torture begins**

Note that our first shot of Winston looking dazed and bruised is intended to convey that the torture has already begun, and we know not how much Winston has already received, before we ‘join the fun’ so to speak (apologies for my morbid irony).

41.1 What is your interpretation of Winston appearing again to be looking out onto the meadow (with O’Brien with him for real, this time)? *Just do your best for this question…*   
Consider that the sky in this ‘vision/memory’ is darker than in the real event – perhaps this is **symbolically** suggesting that Winston’s memories are in the process of being altered by O’Brien (quite a clever little detail), with the darkness symbolising the coming darkness of Winston’s (lack of) conscious awareness (you could explain this in any number of ways).

**Note:** the way O’Brien’s arm is draped over him, like a father or big brother, talking to Winston in a calm and reassuring voice “to cure you”. **O’Brien positions himself to be both Winston’s tormentor and his saviour**. In this way, Winston will come to rely on O’Brien as the only voice of sanity (as he cannot trust his own), and so learn to obey him faithfully (a form of Stockholm Syndrome, but one carefully orchestrated by O’Brien).  
  
**Comparison:** in this sense, Winston *is* being ‘taught’ to “love his slavery” – just like in BNW! He is being so totally reconditioned/brainwashed that, as we see in the end, he does appear to really “love” Big Brother (one of the most chilling parts of the film).

41.2 Why does O’Brien torture Winston? Why spend so much time doing it? Wouldn’t it be easier to just kill Winston?   
Extension: Be specific – how is the torture designed to break Winston down and rebuild him in an image of the perfect Party member.

41.3 **How** does the director film the torture scene to maximise its impact (what choices has the director made in terms of film-techniques)?

41.4 How did you feel watching the torture scene?   
  
Do you think this kind of confronting filmmaking is good, or effective filmmaking? Why/why not?

Extension 42.1/thinking question: were there any key parts that stood out for you, or that were particularly challenging to watch?   
  
**Why do you think the director made this so confronting?**

Other notes and considerations**:**

* We also learn Syme has been ‘unpersoned’ when O’Brien shows his photo to Winston.
* Does there seem to be any sanity behind O’Brien’s actions? Who is more insane here, O’Brien or Winston?
* What message might the text be making about the nature of **power?** (more on this later)
* Quote O’Brien: “**Reality is in the human mind**… Not in the individual mind, which makes mistakes, and perishes; but in the mind of the Party, which is collective, and immortal.”

**SCENE 42: Room 101** (big scene)

As if the torture already isn’t enough, there’s more, and worse.

42.1 In your own words, what is Room 101, and what is its function?

42.2 What do we learn has happened to Julia?  
  
**Key Moment:** (at 1:27:03) **An extra close-up shot** (maybe extreme close-up?) reveals O’Brien’s face as he looks down dispassionately at Winston, telling him that they only plan to make him “perfect” in order to “blow [his] brains out”, and then become ‘unpersoned’ and wiped out of existence; be “turned into gas and poured into the stratosphere” – **there is a certain glint of madness in O’Brien’s eyes** (played so brilliantly byRichard Burton).   
  
**Key Idea:** WHY does the party go to such lengths? Is it actually necessary or helpful to recondition people before killing them (just so they can get a ‘true’ confession!?) – OR – is this Orwell & Radcliffe’s view about power**? – that eventually, power becomes its own master, and all that can feed power, is more power. There is a madness in power…**I believe this is what is being communicated (**the authors’ view/concern**).  
(*Whaddya reckon? Sounds pretty good to me! \*pats himself on the back.\* I could go on, but I feel this statement is enough to sit in your mindbrains and percolate.*

**Power Quotes:**O’Brien: “How does one man assert power over another?”  
Winston “By making him suffer.”

*Is this at the heart of all power?*

O’Brien: “Exactly. Obedience is not enough. Power is inflicting pain and humiliation… otherwise, you cannot be sure.”  
*You cannot have ‘half-power’ – you can only have* ***full*** *power – or you ‘cannot be sure’.*

O’Brien: “Power is tearing apart people’s minds and then putting them together again into new shapes of your choosing.”

*Madness.*

**Filmmaking note: the meadow:** When Winston is ‘broken’ to the point that he doesn’t remember who Oceania is at war with, the director has placed him back out in the meadow, looking healthy. Symbolically, this is meant to represent the state of detachment Winston has now reached; this symbolises that something has ‘changed’ in Winston; he really doesn’t know who Oceania is at war with – and with his ignorance, he has found a state of bliss – represented by the blue sky, bucolic scenery, and the smile on his face.

However, Winston is not fully broken yet.

**O’Brien reveals Big Brother’s Ultimate Goal** and reason to **Destroy History:**  
He explain that when a human being can be cut off from their own past, “then you can cut him off from his family, his children, other men…” then “There is no loyalty. **Only loyalty to the party**”.

**More wisdom from O’Brien:**

O’Brien: “There is no love but love for big brother.”

O’Brien: “If you want a vision of the future… imagine a boot stamping on a human face, forever.”

*Charming.*

**Comparison quote:** *O’Brien, whilst talking about his lack of power to live forever*: “The individual is only a cell, Winston, and the weariness of the cell is the vigour of the organism” in other words, the life and death of many sustains the social body…   
  
**A similar comparison to BNW** – except O’Brien seems to be talking about the inner elite, such as himself, rather than the masses, for whom any care and consideration has been lost in the lust for power. (do you agree?)  
  
Another O’Brien gem: “We control life at every level. We create human nature. Men are infinitely malleable.”   
**This view is contradicted to some extent by BNW, where certain fundamental human characteristics/nature, cannot be wholly deconditioned.  
  
Big Comparison Question:** Will the rulers of Oceania find the same thing? Is Orwell suggesting something different to Huxley? Or are there enough moments of hope, and of the indomitability of the human spirit (as epitomised by Winston) – enough to suggest Big Brother will never wholly vanquish the human spirit / what it means to be human?

42.3 **Personal response**:  
Winston says “Something will defeat you. Life will defeat you… Some spirit you will never overcome… the spirit of man.” Do you agree? Why/why not?

**Key quote:** O’Brien to Winston: “But you are the last man.” *Is he really (not literally, figuratively)? Is this why O’Brien goes to such lengths to rebuild Winston? In order to crush ‘the spirit of man’ as represented by Winston?*

**Style & Symbolism:** Each time Winston appears in the **meadow**, with O’Brien, it symbolises that he has been broken down another level. In this example, he tells O’Brien “I love you.” And then O’Brien turns into Julia, who is shot in the back of the head. Symbolically this also foreshadows that the next phase of reconditioning will involve destroying his love for Julia, so that it can be replaced with only love for Big Brother.

**Big Brother’s** giant face morphs seamlessly into O’Brien’s, suggesting that Big Brother is not any one person, but *is* the Party.

**Key Similarity:** the ruling systems in both BNW and 1984 realise that in order to have stability & control, people must learn to “love” their leaders/system (although there are key differences in how this is attained, and what is meant by ‘love’).

42.4 How/why is what happens in Room 101 enough to finally ‘break’ Winston? Explain this in as much detail & thematic complexity as you can. (*How does O’Brien know what Winston’s secret fear is??)*Consider: what is the final straw? What does Winston have to say/**believe** – in order to appease O’Brien? How does it involve Julia, etc.  
  
Quotes re Room 101:  
“It is the worst thing in the world.”  
“It goes beyond fear of pain.”  
“It varies from individual to individual.”  
Final line from Room 101, this one from Winston: “Do it to Julia. Not me.”   
  
42.5 Overall, how are we supposed to feel about Winston through this ordeal? Are we supposed to be critical, because ultimately he is beaten and betrays the woman he loves in order to save himself? Or, are we supposed to feel that Winston battled on admirably, not giving up his inner beliefs and convictions, until the final straw?  
  
How do you feel about Winston?

*Breathe out.*

**SCENE 43: walking to work.**

**Key Comparison Shot**: at 1:40:45 – Winston talks across what was probably once a park, anwhile there are still signs of grass, trees and nature, a giant, ugly big screen stands, with Big Brother’s face looking down at Winston.  
  
**Similar** to BNW – in how they have managed to tame and (to some extent) control nature.  
  
Is 1984 saying that they *have* tamed it, whereas in BNW they haven’t?

**SCENE 44: The finale: back in the Chestnut Tree Café**

**Note**: most of the windows seem to have the signs on the outside of the windows… perhaps takes away from my earlier interpretation.

**Jordan’s Interpretation**: Perhaps the Chestnut Tree Café is, symbolically and realistically, a place where people go before they die. Earlier in the film, we see Rutherford in the Café (who is soon killed, and who has some kind of vial of something poured into his coffee); and now, Winston and Julia both attend the café – and how long do we think they have left, now that they have been “made perfect”?  
  
Sounds pretty good to me!  
  
Extension 44.1: research the lyrics to the Nursery Rhyme / Jazz song “under the spreading chestnut tree” and see if the lyrics/words seem to support this interpretation, or perhaps a different interpretation?

**SAC NOTE: Writing about how the text uses nursery rhymes is an excellent way to discuss textual features.**

44.1: Write your own analysis of this final scene, which may consider:

* The interactions between Julia and Winston;
* Winston’s appearance;
* What is put into Winston’s drink, and why it is ‘on the house’;
* The announcement on the telescreen “of the gravest importance” and Winston’s reaction;
* Is Julia broken also? To the same extent? What might her ‘meeting’ be? (notice the man who gets up to follow her out…);
* Winston’s confession (does he seem sincere? Has he been successfully reconditioned?
* The significance of “2+2 = …” *Is this a sign of hope, or not?*
* What is the cruel tragic irony of Winston’s final three words?
* AND: **How the director uses film-techniques to help convey meaning throughout this scene?**

**Note:** we never do learn the ‘truth’ of the war; just like the citizens of Oceania, we are left in the dark. Why did they switch from fighting Eurasia to East Asia? Is the war even real?

**45: COMPARISON OF ENDINGS:**

45.1 Compare the endings of 1984 and BNW (you don’t need to repeat everything that happens), but what is the mood, tone or resolution of the endings, and how do the endings reinforce, or change, any meaning or messages from the film (VVCs). How are they **similar?** How are they **Different**?

**46: OTHER IDEAS FOR COMPARISON**

In dot-points, please list any other thoughts you have had (or may have now), of things that would be good to compare between 1984 and BNW. It could be characters, symbols, style (film-techniques and how they might be similar/different to Huxley’s language-techniques); settings, themes or ideas. You can also choose to do this as a diagram, mindmap or venn diagram if visual reasoning works for you.

**Finally**, I have an **optional** video for you to watch. It is a live-audience debate on the topic:   
*Are we living in Brave New World, or 1984?*

It is very entertaining and thought-provoking in how the debaters link the ideas from the texts to what is currently happening in our world. They also have actors re-enact key scenes from each text. You may even get some good comparison ideas for your SAC.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31CcclqEiZw&t=3717s>

Thanks guys! (I consider ‘guys’ a gender neutral term, btw!)

Next week I will set some more comparison tasks, things to read and watch, essay topics and advice on how to prepare.

If you want to get a head-start, reading through the **themes** and **characters** handouts and taking notes/annotations would be helpful. I will also upload some themes and other handouts for Brave New World (= good idea for a head-start!).