

1. What is the purpose of the telescreen? Can you make any connections to our lives today?
2. How would you characterize Winston Smith based on what you know so far? Does he fit the conventional image of a heroic figure?
3. Why do some people feel compelled to keep diaries? Why do you think Winston Smith decides to start a diary despite the risks?
4. The first reading makes clear that Winston Smith has a problem with women. To what can we attribute his misogyny (hatred of women)?

5. Winston Smith dreams some vivid dreams. What has he dreamt about so far? Do you place any special importance on the meaning of your dreams? Explain.
6. The Party states that “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past” (34). Do you agree? Can you control the past?
7. How does an understanding of the Ministry of Truth illuminate the meaning of the Party slogan “IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH”?
8. What would be the worst aspect of life in 1984 for you personally?

EXCERPT ANALYSIS: What makes the excerpt important or interesting? You might analyze imagery, theme, symbol, word choice, characterization, plot / conflict, or point of view.

A. ... For the first time the magnitude of what he had undertaken came home to him. How could you communicate with the future? It was of its nature impossible. Either the future would resemble the present, in which case it would not listen to him: or it would be different from it, and his predicament would be meaningless. (7)

Think about it: How does the character Winston Smith writing a message to “the unborn” in the story relate to George Orwell in 1949 writing for future readers (us)?

B. ... The thing that now suddenly struck Winston was that his mother's death, nearly thirty years ago, had been tragic and sorrowful in a way that was no longer possible. Tragedy, he perceived, belonged to the ancient time, to a time when there was still privacy, love, and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another without needing to know the reason. His mother's memory tore at his heart because she had died loving him, when he was too young and selfish to love her in return, and because somehow, he did not remember how, she had sacrificed herself to a conception of loyalty that was private and unalterable. Such things, he saw, could not happen today. (30)