

Joseph Luzzi
1984
Virtual Book Club • January 7, 2020 • Study Guide* • © Joseph Luzzi

Please note: the below are only intended to help you “get inside” the book—please do not feel compelled to answer them in full, unless you wish to, and if there are questions or elements in the book that you don’t understand, no worries, we will explain all when we meet for our Live Presentation on November 5th!

1. Why do you think George Orwell is often considered one of the truly great prose stylists in the English language? How would you describe his writing, and how does it compare to some of the earlier authors we’ve read?
2. Given that *1984* was written in the 1940s, how do you imagine that the historical context of the age influenced Orwell and shaped the way that he wrote his book? What real-life historical referents should one keep in mind when reading *1984*?
3. What makes *1984* so relevant to political and public life today? What warnings does the book hold, especially at a time when many in American society see our democratic institutions and traditions under threat?
4. What is the particular resonance and meaning of this celebrated quote from *1984*:

Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.

5. At one point in the novel we read:

The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power, pure power. What pure power means you will understand presently.

What does *1984* wish to communicate about the nature of political power?

6. What is the connection between the manipulation of language and the expression of political power in *1984*?
7. Orwell was the master of neologism, inventing words, as we see in *1984* in such now-famous terms as *doublethink* and *Newspeak*. What do you think compelled him to this linguistic inventiveness? What do you believe he is trying to do with his neologisms?
8. What, in your view, is the single most important word or image in *1984*, and why?
9. Is it necessary to read *1984* as a political allegory? Besides politics, what are its other sources of meaning and resonance?
10. If you are reading Orwell’s novel for the first time, what is its overall effect on you? If you are *rereading* it, how does the experience of returning to Orwell now feel different (or similar) to you?

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