



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2021 Volume III: Democracy and Inequality: Challenges and Possible Solutions

Orwell's Dystopian Inequality: Fact or Fiction?

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In his 1946 essay “The Lion and the Unicorn,” George Orwell writes: “An illusion can become a half-truth, a mask can alter the expression of a face...[the arguments that] democracy is ‘just the same as’ or ‘just as bad as’ totalitarianism never take account of this fact...concepts of justice, liberty and objective truth are still believed in. They may be illusions, but they are very powerful illusions” (page 12). Despite the fact that this essay explores his observations of his home country of England, Orwell presents concepts that confront our perception of how power is exerted over people by governmental systems. The novel *1984*, a fictional account of the future written by Orwell in 1948, challenges the reader to think about the concepts of democracy, totalitarianism, information control, and individual liberties, among many other themes. Students in my AP English Literature and Composition class will investigate the historical and biographical context surrounding Orwell’s writing and political viewpoints, apply those lenses to our class wide reading of *1984*, and make connections to these aforementioned themes as they see them presented in their own lives, their community, and the world around them.

(Developed for AP English Literature and Composition, grade 12; recommended for English and History, grades 10-12)

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