***1984* by George Orwell**

**Background:**

*1984* is one of the best known novels about the misuse of leadership and power ever

written. Nearly every day we can find references to, “Big Brother is watching.”

“doublethink,” “newspeak,” and the “thought police.” George Orwell wrote *1984*

as his warning to readers that unless we change the course of history, we will lose

the freedoms we take for granted, and we will lose the quality of **being human**.

His message was that we need a different kind of leader – the kind Robert F.

Kennedy referred to when he said, “The problem of power is how to achieve its

responsible use rather than its irresponsible and indulgent use – of how to get men

of power to live for the public rather than off the public.”

Orwell wrote *1984* as a piece of satire – *the use of ridicule, irony, and/or sarcasm*

*(humor) to expose and attack evil and human vices*. The institutions and practices

in the dystopian world that Orwell creates have counterparts in our own time.

Orwell was displeased not only with Stalinism and the situation in the

Soviet Union, but also with the events and trends in Western Europe and the

United States including increased technological warfare and support of

dictatorships. *1984* is not only an attack on Stalinism, but also a statement of

dissatisfaction with political trends in ‘democratic’ Western Europe. To better

understand *1984*, you might want to review background information on

Totalitarianism, Socialism, Communism and Stalinism.

**Satire**

***Definition:***

“the use of ridicule or scorn, often in a humorous way, to expose vices and

follies” (from Harris, et al. The Literacy Dictionary, IRA, 1995)

Satire “….uses irony, wit and sometimes sarcasm to expose humanities

vices and foibles, giving impetus to change or reform through ridicule.”

(Murfin and Ray, The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms,

Bedford, 2003)

***Purpose:***

To engage, entertain and evoke emotion

To cause the reader to reflect on society’s vices

To incite social action through humor

***Forms of Satire:***

**Irony** is a figure of speech in which the actual intent is expressed in words

which carry the opposite meaning. For example, in Julius Ceasar, Antony

insists that, “Brutus is an honorable man.”

**Parody –** a composition humorously imitating another, usually serious,

piece of work. Parody in literature is like caricature in art.

**Sarcasm** is verbal irony that pretends to praise, but intends to show bitter

and personal disapproval. Sarcasm is personal, jeering and intended to

hurt.

**Innuendo** is an insinuation or indirect suggestion with a harmful or

sinister connotation.

**Invective** is harsh or abusive language directed against a person or cause.

**Burlesque** is a form of comic art characterized by ridiculous exaggeration.

***1984* Reading Guide (Part One) – Coincides with Chart - Time-Frame: 11/15 – 11/21**

**Part One: I, (pp. 1-20).**

What kind of a mood does Orwell create at the beginning of *1984*?

What do we learn about the main character, Winston Smith and about the setting of the novel? To what problems or conflicts are we introduced?

**Part One, Chapter II, (pp. 20-29).**

Why do you think Orwell includes the Parson family and the

plumbing scene in this chapter?

**Chapters III and IV, (pp. 29-48).**

What do we learn about Winston’s early life?

What do we learn about his job?

**Part One, Chapter V, (pp. 48-63).**

What do we learn from the conversation with Syme about Newspeak?

What is the goal of Newspeak?

What do we learn from the announcement from the Ministry of Plenty?

Why does Winston react to this?

What similarities can you see between Newspeak and the abbreviations used in text messaging?

**Chapters VI and VII, (pp. 63-81).**

What do we learn about the proles?

What did Winston mean when he said, “Freedom is the freedom to say two

plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.”?

**Part One, Chapter VIII, (pp. 81-104).**

Why does Winston try to talk to the old man in the bar?

Winston returns to the shop again. What does he buy and what does he discover?