

## A Helpful Handout for Annotating *1984* and *Brave New World*

Annotating means interacting with the text! You can ask questions and analyze what particular figurative language devices mean. Be sure you have a highlighter, pencil and post-it while reading **ALWAYS!** Ultimately, I want you to understand what is happening and to write down your attitude towards the text as you read. These reflections can be led by the devices highlighted below. As always feel free to email me with questions. Good Luck!

**BACKGROUND:** *1984* was written in the middle of the Cold War era, after World War II, when Americans were especially fearful of communism and totalitarian government. The book is set in the “future” and focuses on the physical, emotional and psychological journey that a man in this type of society endures. It is important that he works for the government agency whose function is to change historical facts to fit the ideas and scenarios the Party wants to propagate. Be sure to pay attention to:

1. The names of the Ministries. What they mean. Do the Ministries’ names reflect their function? How? Why or why not?
2. How does Orwell depict relationships between parents and children, spouses, bosses and employees, new lovers, members of different social and economic classes
3. The use of oxymorons, paradox and irony

Ex: “War is peace, slavery is freedom, ignorance is strength,” (Orwell 4)

**So What:** This a rich paradoxical quote, how can slavery=freedom and war=peace? Orwell is showing how contradictory the Party’s motives are. Scary that people believe this.

4. Allusions to Saints, political leaders (Hitler, Stalin, etc...), writers, artists, Capitalism and its leaders such as in the Gilded Age (1890s-1920s)
5. Imagery (sensory details regarding character and setting descriptions)

Ex: “it was curious how that beetlelike type proliferated in the Ministries...” (60)

**SO WHAT:** Orwell is comparing the government employees to beetles since they blindly do what they are told. Beetles are also easily squished, these employees easily allow the Party to use and step on them

6. Colors: white, brown, black, red/crimson, blue, green, yellow, Similes and Metaphors
7. Big Brother and how he is portrayed. Think of today’s level of surveillance and how much information people can learn about each other just through a Google search!
8. Diction or words used such as “Newspeak” “Doublethink” and what they mean.
9. CONTROL- who exercises it? How do they do it? Are they successful? Think of basic human rights and the Bill of Rights. If and how are they violated?
10. Winston’s feelings towards people around him. Who does he trust/distrust?
11. Hyperboles (over exaggeration) to make a point: “it was with that same magnificent gesture by which a whole civilization seemed to be annihilated,” (125).

**SW:** Might refer to Helen of Troy who allegedly caused the Trojan War. In a way Julia represents this society’s views of women and why they are obsessed with female chastity.

*Brave New World (1932)*

BACKGROUND-“The book “combin[ed] his skill for satire with his fascination with science to create a dystopian world in which a totalitarian government controlled society by the use of science and technology. Through its exploration of the pitfalls of linking science, technology, and politics, [the book focuses on the] argument that such a link will likely reduce human individuality,” (Sparknotes). In this book you will need to do ONE annotation per chapter, but doing more is certainly encouraged. Be sure to pay attention to:

1. The use of technology and how it has changed human relationships
2. Who is in charge? Whom does this society revere (worship almost) the most?
3. Who is John? How does he function in the story?
4. How are the Gamma, Delta, Alpha, Beta, Epsilons different? How does society let them know their status and differences? Does it make a less prejudicial society? Why or why not?
5. Metaphors, similes, onomatopoeia (Whizz, zip), personification (“the air was drowsy” Huxley 30)
6. Hyperboles- “the drums stopped beating, life seemed to have come to an end,” (114).
7. Allusions and quotes from famous pieces of literature and poetry
8. The Archetypes- Man versus nature, Man versus Society, civilized versus uncivilized. Ask yourself- what does it mean to be considered civilized?
9. How are the Indian tribes or life on the reservation different than the “civilized society”
10. The role of drugs such as Soma and the use of medicine or the medical field throughout this book
11. Relationships-how are they portrayed? Any stand out as better or more dysfunctional?
12. Irony: “I’ll teach you; I’ll make you be free whether you want to or not,” (213).  
**SW:** it defeats the purpose if you are forcing someone to be free. By definition, this right cannot be forced upon the individual.

Questions to Consider-

1. Which society would you prefer to live in and why?
2. Which character, Winston or John, do you find more heroic or are both protagonists morally ambiguous? What are their good and bad qualities?
3. How are these societies similar and how are they different?
4. What do these authors think about people? About the future of mankind?
5. Were they correct? Think of modern day examples of any of the things that were conveyed in each book.