Sample Response Paper

George Orwell, *1984*

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AP Literature and Composition

27 May 2015

**The List Goes On and On**

When we first meet Winston Smith—George’s Orwell’s main character in his novel, *1984*—we quickly realized that Winston is a tired, overwhelmed, and stressed out man. He is miserable, and as an audience we want him to find some type of relief in this dystopia world. In fact, as readers, we also begin to feel the way he feels—we too become tired, overwhelmed, and stressed out. Why? Because George Orwell has a genius writing style. It is easy for most high schoolers to groan and say this is an awful book and “a boring read,” but Orwell wants it that way…*he writes like this on purpose*, so we feel as Winston feels, and so we are caught off guard by the disastrous turn of events by the book’s end.

Orwell does many clever things with his writing, and it often involves making lists—specifically really long, overwhelming lists. He does this brilliantly because with every long list, and long sentence of descriptions, you can’t help but feel irritated and exhausted. Just. Like. Winston! In Part Two, Chapter IX, Winston says that “he had worked more than ninety hours in five days” (Orwell, 179) and launches into a huge list of activities he had to participate in including, “the speeches, the shouting, the singing, the banners, the posters, the films…”(Orwell, 180). For 13 full lines, and almost a half a page, you have to read through so many things that it is easy to see why Winston, and why the entire population of Oceania, is so tired and broken by Big Brother. Orwell’s writing style mimics those experiences brilliantly and it might be easy to dismiss these long lists and sentences as boring writing, but in reality, Orwell is putting you into the actual mindset of his main character.

These long boorish sentences are nothing compared to the 30+ pages from Emmanuel Goldstein’s secret book, “The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism” (Orwell, 184-217). That chapter is so long and dry, readers feel just like Julia who falls “asleep” (Orwell, 217). Once again, it may seems like Orwell is a bad writer out to torture his readers, but when that chapter ends and Winston is caught by “a member of the Thought Police” (Orwell, 224), readers are shocked. It was a perfectly played out plot point…Orwell made you feel doze off, so when the thought police come crashing into the room, it is a great turning point to the story. You are just as shocked as Winston.

The turning of events in Part Two is huge because of how much you feel like Winston—you are caught off guard just as much as he is, but it is Part Three, chapter III that I found myself sympathizing with Winston the most. George Orwell’s key writing techniques of long sentences and longer chapters are perfectly blended in this chapter with the use of O’Brien’s dialogue. O’Brien is torturing Winston in many ways, and the worst way is the mental abuse Winston must suffer because O’Brien will not stop talking. For fifteen pages, Winston is forced to listen to O’Brien rambled on and on…and on…nonsense about the government. O’Brien says outrageous things such as “the earth is the center of the universe. Then sun and the stars go round it” (Orwell, 265). He launches into paragraph long speeches whenever and whenever Winston tries to challenge him, O’Brien gives a “swift answer [that] crushed him like a bludgeon” (Orwell, 266). Winston breaks down, and so did I. I found myself just as angry, frustrated, and confused as Winston was, and it was easier to shut down (and in my case, stop reading and walk away in a huff) and give up much like Winston does. Once again, Orwell is doing something brilliant here and it is important to realize that he is doing this for a greater purpose and a greater message.

George Orwell taught me that every writer writes a certain way to teach a certain message. In many ways, Orwell was trying to put you into the mind of his main character, and he did that very well. It is easy to dismiss his writing as long, overwhelming, and boring, but you need to think about the setting he created—this is a mundane world where people are limited by their government. This is a totalitarian society where misery and control are key, so his writing has to mirror that. Sadly, Winston doesn’t escape this world. Sadly, he ends up loving Big Brother, but at least readers have that message, and the whole reading experience—as painfully long as it was—of *1984* burned in their minds because of his powerful writing style.  
**Tips/Notes: This paper focused more on the author’s writing style, writing techniques, and story’s organization. Once again, I didn’t just summarize, rather I discuss WHY the book was written the way it was!**