

# V for vendetta and 1984 comparison essay sample



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George Washington once said, " Government is not reason; it is not eloquent; it is force. Like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master." George Orwell's satirical novel 1984 is based on the life of Party member Winston Smith, a free thinker, and his battle to restore humanity that has been snatched from the residents of Oceania since the totalitarian rule of Big Brother. V for Vendetta, a satirical film directed by James McTeigue, revolves around the actions of an antihero named V and his struggles to re-establish humanity in individuals by rebelling against the government's rule. In both satires, 1984 and V for Vendetta the concept of humanity is exaggerated in the Party's struggles for power and ridiculed in the influence of the proles, whilst the concept of the oppressive rule of the government is criticized in the relationships between the main characters.

The concept of humanity is greatly exaggerated in the power-hungry attitudes of the Party's and the mindlessness of the citizens in both V for Vendetta and 1984. In both satires, fear is used as an instrument of power; Big Brother spreads fear through war, and the High-Chancellor does the same by constantly reminding the citizens of the mayhem that used to occur when he did not have power. In 1984, the Party is not concerned about the well-being of its citizens or resources but just wants to exercise total power over their minds. O'Brien says " We are not interested in the good of others... only power, pure power, (78 Orwell)." The main goal of the Party is to snatch the individuality in citizens by making them powerless and mindless drones by having them accept whatever the Party preaches. It does this by forcing humanity into submission on a daily basis by having them live in a state of constant paranoia.

This is done by closely monitoring the actions of every citizen residing in Oceania by cameras on the street and telescreens in their homes; they make sure that every individual does not commit any crimes whether those are of thought or action. Failure to do so means that the Thought Police intervenes and vaporizes the individual committing the crime and erases them from their existence. Therefore the Party forces humanity to submit to them by using fear and paranoia. Thus, there is a very little chance that the individual thought which is a significant aspect of humanity can actually survive because every resident is expected to be fully committed to the Party's every word. The Party's exaggerated power hungry mindset is signified in the members of the Inner Party who religiously adhere to the ideologies of the government, which makes them lack humanity and make the Party's power everlasting. Too much power like this leads to corruption (greed), domination and a totalitarian style of government that steals the individualism of populations.

However, Norsefire's (the Party in V for Vendetta) rule in V for Vendetta is not as uniform as in 1984, as there is tension and disagreements within the circle which inadvertently represents a small portion of humanity within the leaders. Adam Sutler says "What we need right now is a clear message to the people of this country. This message must be read in every newspaper, heard on every radio, seen on every television... I want \*everyone\* to \*remember\*, why they \*need\* us!" He is trying to brainwash the citizens of London by sending out a false message through the media and wants to reaffirm the fact that he is still very much in charge despite the rebellion from V, which had caused the population to question Norsefire's rule. Since

the arrival of V the population of London has started to lose their faith in Norsefire, and to regain it Sutler sends lies through the media to ensure that everything is still running smooth and that he still very much in charge. This form of rule is an exaggeration of how the government takes advantage of society by capitalizing its the mindlessness by sending out false messages through the media and by not allowing them to have a voice in important decisions.

V becomes the 'voice of the voiceless' and picks up on the small portion of humanity that remains in London and manages to start a rebellion that overthrows the rule of Sutler, who has disregarded his people for far too long. Although these leaders may have been selfish in their acts, but V's rebellion would not have been possible if it were not for the hostile situation between Creedy and Sutler and the sense of individualism within Inspector Finch. Therefore, the presence of humanity in the shape of individualism within Norsefire eventually led to its downfall. Sutler's government is able to retain their own humanity and do not completely adhere to his ideologies. This presence of humanity and individualism in V for Vendetta allowed for the population to rise effectively and regain control whilst the exaggeration in the lack of humanity in 1984 made it impossible for Winston to successfully rebel and save Oceania. The exaggeration in the totalitarian government style is exactly what makes both the film and the novel a satire.

The humanity of the proletarian populations in 1984 and V for Vendetta is ridiculed to such an extent that it affects their potential to rebel against their tyrannical governments. In 1984, the proles are the only ones with any semblance of humanity in the sense of individualism left in them. Winston

sums up the impossibility of them rebelling by writing in his diary, " Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious, (Orwell 74)." This quote reaffirms the fact that the proles are the only ones with the potential to rebel due to their strength in numbers, unity as real individuals and because they are not as rigorously controlled as the other sects currently residing in Oceania. But they cannot because they are stuck in their own paradoxical situations (" Catch-22") and because they have still not realized the fact that the Party leaves them alone and lets them indulge in children, sex, food and access to the lottery in order to keep them busy and prevent them from revolting.

However, their humanity marks them as what they are: the lower class that is kept ignorant in order to prevent uprisings. The proles are loyal to each other in a way that the Party members can never be, but because they are not concerned with the ideologies that oppress them, they are not aware of how their power could affect the world that they inhabit. In 1984 the proles are only made fun of because although they have the strength to rebel they do not and are too busy indulging themselves in petty concerns, like a lack of cooking-pots (Orwell 73). They are even ridiculed by the arch-enemy Goldstein who dismisses them as divisions of low people who are destined to remain powerless. Big Brother does not concern himself with them and ridicules them as ordinary masses that do not have the intellect for an uprising despite their strength in numbers. Similarly, in V for Vendetta, the proles are dissatisfied with Norsefire, but they do little more than grumble at their lack of saucepans.

The proles turn to their oppressive leaders at a time when they needed security and order, and Sutler is desperate to remind his subjects of this when the Fifth of November nears. However, the proletarians in V for Vendetta do not become aware - V makes them aware that, " People should not be afraid of their governments. Governments should be afraid of their people." Before V burst onto the scene, the proles were very much ridiculed by the government as masses of mindless sheep that adhered to the governments every word and did not have the potential to rebel. After V became recognized, he introduced the concept that governments must be built around the power of the people which brought realization to the proles that they could overthrow the government and have a style of rule that benefited and they found helpful them. Although there is an undertone of conscious discontent among the proles in the movie, none of them openly rebel until V places the power back into their hands, allowing them to decide what to do with it.

Their desires for freedom and independence lead them to don their Guy Fawkes masks and march to see their new beginning born, therefore this significance lead to irony as the same government that ridiculed and underestimated the proles in the beginning of the movie was overthrown by them at the end. The proles in both 1984 and V for Vendetta are powerful and unchanged due to their humanity, giving them an advantage for a potential rebellion. The lower class in 1984 does not rebel, as their humanity alone does not make them aware that there is something for which to rebel. However, the proles in V for Vendetta are able to rise against their

government once they have been made aware. The irony and constant ridicule is what makes both V for Vendetta and 1984 great satires.

The government's oppressive rule is criticized in respected relationships among the characters in 1984 and V for Vendetta between Winston and Julia, and Evey and V. In 1984, the humanity of the relationship between Winston and Julia is a rebellion in itself. The Party does not tolerate loyalty to any other entity other than the Party itself. They vow not to betray each other, because that would essentially betray the humanity that they've recovered through the course of their relationship. Winston believes the objective is, "not to stay alive, but to stay human," (Orwell 174), as their humanity in the shape of freedom of thought is what makes their rebellion, a rebellion. They chose to think for themselves to pursue their relationship by ignoring the orders dictated by the government that love is wrong. Not only do they disregard these orders but they actively pursue them while being fully aware of the consequences of getting caught. Winston and Julia both wanted to exercise their ability of individual thought, and this for them was the ultimate rebellion.

The government is criticized when they are caught by the Thought Police, and tortured in order to rid them of their newfound humanity because Winston and Julia are "cured" according to Party standards and are forced to end their love and rebellion. Similarly, in V for Vendetta, the relationship between Evey Hammond and V has many ups and downs. V becomes an enemy of the Party after theatrically destroying the Old Bailey and Evey is seen with him, which prompts search for her by Norsefire. The relationship between Evey and V is more similar to that of a master and his student than <https://assignbuster.com/v-for-vendetta-and-1984-comparison-essay-sample/>

that of two lovers. Despite his kindness to her, Evey betrays V to the priest he is targeting, and threatens his carefully orchestrated rebellion due to her natural instinct of fear. V says, " You said you wanted to live without fear. I wish there'd been an easier way, but there wasn't". V tortures Evey to make her strong and to rid her of this fear. Her only solace and source of strength during the torture is her own humanity, and Valerie's story.

Her humanity is safeguarded by the connection with her prison-mate, and it is due to this retained humanity that Evey does not betray V even after she is told she will be shot. The dignity and integrity that she retains, despite the torture, enable her humanity to make one last stand against the villainy of her captors. This torture is a criticism of the government because it has created such a society that lives in constant fear and paranoia, and the only way to overcome such fear is to undergo severe torture like V puts Evey through. In contrast, 1984's Winston and Julia betray each other willingly and ardently. In V for Vendetta and 1984, the humanity of the relationships between the characters has different effects despite some similar circumstances such as torture and the opportunity for self-preservation. In 1984, the rebellion is ended when Winston and Julia's humanity is " cured", whereas Evey's humanity is preserved and strengthened, enabling her to pull the lever to set V's final act of rebellion into realization. This harshness of rule is criticized and exposed during the course of both the novel and the movie which makes both medias satires.

The longevity of power the Party's hold in the two works is dictated by the exaggeration in either presence or lack of humanity in the shape of individualism; the presence of humanity weakened Norsefire, and defeated it

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from within, but a lack of it made Big Brother's power everlasting. The proletarian classes are ridiculed because humanity in the shape of freedom is their strength, but a lack of awareness makes this freedom useless for them in 1984, whereas V gives the masses a sense of awareness that consequently strengthens their uprising. Finally the government is criticized for not allowing love to exist and for creating a society that lives in fear and the only way to rid such a fear is through severe torture until the individual feels no emotions whatsoever. Like George Washington said that, "Government is not reason; it is not eloquent; it is force. Like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master", and in 1984 it very much still remained a fearful master but in V for Vendetta it went from being a fearful master to a just a servant of the people. In both medias certain aspects are ridiculed and exaggerated through irony and criticism, which makes them great satires of their generations.