

"1984" in comparison to "the giver" essay sample

[Life](#), [Love](#)



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War, torture, and constant fear, all of these are key elements in the distopia George Orwell creates in the novel, 1984. In this book, Orwell creates a society which is based solely on hate and controlled by those who seek only power. Orwell, however, is not the only author to ponder the possibility of an extreme, futuristic society. In particular, *The Giver*, by Louis Lowry relates a great deal to the themes found in 1984. Unlike 1984, Lowry's novel focuses on the idea of a utopia as opposed to Orwell's distopia. What is the most interesting is how though the fundamental idea of the novels are opposites, the methods by which each society is maintained are surprisingly similar. When one analyses *The Giver* versus 1984, it becomes clear that while the societies are meant to be opposites, one perfect and one flawed, the Party and Community are in practice more similar than not, due to the methods used to keep the societies functioning.

The key difference between the 1984 society and *The Giver* society is that one is meant to represent a utopia and the other a distopia. What draws a distinction between the two are the principles guiding the restrictions that must be put into place in order for each society to operate. In *The Giver*, the aim of the strict controls is to protect citizens. The authority of the Community created restraints to reach an ideal society, void of all negativity. For example, memories are kept from the citizens as a protective measure so no one has to ever experience any type suffering. As said by Jonas concerning citizens of the Community, “ They have never known pain.”(110). Similarly, love must also be kept from the average person to prevent any

type of emotional distress. The Party of 1984, however, has very different motives. They do not restrict Party members for the greater good but in the words of O'Brien, " The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others...Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness; only power, pure power."(217).

This demonstrates how the restrictions put into place by the Party exist simply to make certain the government is never resisted. Memories are not ousted because they cause pain but because they would give the citizens background on which to form opinions that oppose the Party's objective. Love also is abolished, not for the citizen's good but because the emotion would provide a non-Party source to which citizens could direct their energy. Through turning family on family, ending male-female relationships, and suppressing the sex instinct, the Party is assuring its citizens complete devotion. The Party is even able to twist sex into an unpleasurable act referred to as " duty to the Party" which makes sex for procreation an act that further demonstrates Party loyalty. In short, the differing morals that inspire the actions of each government are meant to make the distinction between whether each is a positively or negatively oriented society. In reality, however, the comparable methods that are put into place to keep each society running make the 1984 and The Giver societies quite similar.

The 1984 Party is a pain and hatred based society, which results in a distopia. To prevent a revolt that throws such a government from power, a set of strict constraints are mandatory. Love is one of the key concepts that must be controlled. This is accomplished in two primary ways: weakening

family bonds and preventing prosperous relationships between men and women. First, the Party government in 1984 weakens family love by teaching children at young age to be more loyal to the Party than their parent through the Junior Spy League. The organization teaches children to be on constant watch for disloyalty among their parents. In the following quote, Winston explains the effect such a system has on the family unit, " Most children nowadays were horrible...they were turned into ungovernable little savages...It was almost normal for people over thirty to be frightened of their own children."(24).

This demonstrates how the Junior Spy League turns children against parents and replaces family love with fear. The party also controls love between men and women. For example, the party must give approval for marriages and never lets a compatible couple wed. Similarly, the Party highly discourages sex through the Junior Anti-Sex League and permitting sex for procreation only, never pleasure. This is well described when Winston recalls his relationship with Katherine, " As soon as he touched her she seemed to wince and stiffen... She would lie there with shut eyes, neither resisting nor cooperating, but submitting."(58). This shows how the party successfully morphed the act of sex into dirty and painful, there by taking control of yet another aspect of love.

The other key way in which the Party maintains the society is through control of the past. The Party holds the slogan " Who control the past control the future; who controls the present controls the past."(204), which means that if the citizens of the Party have no previous events to base feelings on,

they will never oppose the Party because they have never known anything else. The Party even keeps members in the dark about recent events by teaching people to hold two contradictory ideas simultaneously as truth. Such an idea is named doublethink. An example of the concept put into action, is the Party vaporizing enemies and convincing citizens that the person who they had just had recent contact with never really existed. This is exactly what happened to Withers as described by Winston, " Occasionally some persons whom you had believed dead long since would make a ghostly reappearance... Withers, however, was already an unperson. he did not exist; he had never existed."(41). Here is just one example of the Party using the principle of doublethink to get across the idea that what is always has been and nothing different has ever existed.

The novel, *The Giver*, is quite different from *1984* in the way that it is meant to be a utopia rather than a dystopia. However, one finds that similarly to *1984*, strict controls are mandatory for the " perfect" community created in *The Giver* to function. These restrictions are eerily similar to those found in the society of *1984*. Comparable to Orwell's novel, the Community in *The Giver* attempts to abolish the emotion of love. This is done quite effectively through the use of pills to control hormones. These pills are given to every citizen once they reach puberty or have " stirrings" and so the emotion is prevented and the word, love, has lost all its meaning. Take for example Jonas's parents response to his question of whether or not they love him, " Jonas, precision of language please! You used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it's become almost obsolete."(127).

This conversation demonstrates how successfully the Community is able to wipe out its citizens' ability to love. Also similar to 1984, sex is discouraged. This is easier to accomplish in the Community than in the Party society because of the pill, but there still exists the need for procreation. This is solved by giving a few women the job of Birthmother, which is, giving birth to three children. This job is looked upon as one of the lower class jobs as is made evident when Jonas's mother responds to Lily's expression of interest in becoming a Birthmother, " Lily... don't say that. There's very little honor in that assignment."(21). Through the pill and assignment of Birthmother to just a few females, the Community is able to completely abolish sex.

In addition to the similarities when it comes to controlling love, the Community has similar restrictions to the society in 1984 in the way that it restricts history and controls memories. The people in the Community do not know anything of the time before the Community. As Jonas states, " It's always been this way. Before me, before you, before the ones who came before you. Back and back and back."(54) Here, Jonah is expressing the views of the Community citizens. Like the Party members, they have never known anything but the Community so they cannot imagine life being any different. Also, the Community restricts memories, but differently from the way memory restriction is done in 1984. The Party of Orwell's novel focuses on destroying memories of the individual that is, convincing people that what they thought were memories are false.

In *The Giver*, however, collected memories of history are held by one individual only and continually passed on to another person when necessary.

These memories include events such as war and other, more common, experiences that have been abolished in the society such as weather. For example, one of the first memories transmitted to Jonas is described in the following passage, " As he lay basking in the warmth, he felt the passage of time...his skin began to sting."(86). This demonstrates how the amount of control on the Community citizens is so extreme that even experiences considered common today, such as sunlight, are restricted. The memories held by the Giver are the Community's only record of history as well as strong emotion including pain and fear as well as love and happiness.

In conclusion, after reading the novels 1984 and The Giver, it is impossible not to draw similarities between the two. At first, the books appear to be opposites considering that one describes utopia and one a dystopia.

However, one later becomes aware that the two novels are very much related through the ways in which the governments restrain citizens to keep each society intact. Both the 1984 and The Giver societies abolish love and control historical knowledge. The difference lies in the principles governing such restraints; the former society puts the controls in place for purely selfish reasons while the latter does the same for the greater good. The societies presented in the two novels are philosophically opposites, but because of their similar policies, are in reality nearly identical.

The Giver is in principle a utopia, but because of the need to retain control over its citizens is in practice similar to the world of dehumanization and ignorance created by the Party. This demonstrates how methods of maintaining two opposing extreme societies overlap, which raises the idea

that no true distopia or utopia can ever really exist. In the utopia of The Giver there are still horrific aspects of society, not being able to ever feel love for example. Similarly, in the distopia of 1984 there are still positive aspects such as the loss of true despair and sadness as a result of the abolition of strong emotion and instinct. By comparing the two novels, one sees that there is a positive and negative side to every way of life and for that reason, there can never truly exist an extreme society made up of solely positive or negative aspects.