

1984 - bleak essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

" The bleak setting of ' 1984' reflects the bleak lives of the characters. "

Discuss. There is no doubt that the setting of ' 1984' is bleak — it just simply cannot get any more miserable and dreary. The entire concept of ' Big Brother', the reeking smell of " boiled cabbage and old rag mats" and the totalitarianism of the Party, almost forces the whole of Oceania into bleakness. In fact, the only characters who seem to be unaffected are the proles and Julia. Julia's youthful personality and apathetic attitude allows her to see the world differently compared to other characters that fall under victims of ' Big Brother'. However, when Julia initiates her love affair with Winston, their relationship becomes a significant exception to the depression of the scenes around them. Constantly throughout the novel, there is a vigorous battle between the Party and the ones whom dare to rebel against living a colourless life. As the main narration is based upon Winston's thoughts of his surroundings, it is inevitable readers to disregard all the bleak concepts in his life. The opening chapter, Orwell's immediately launches into descriptions of gloom, giving the readers the understanding of how horrible it is living under these revolutionists. Winston's residential building, ' Victory Mansions', is shabby and decayed with "...electric currents...cut during the daylight hours..."; if these conditions are considered as ' victorious', there cannot be another more perfect reflection of bleakness than the life in Oceania . The deprivation of privacy described in ' 1984' is also a significant factor. The peoples' lives revolve literally around interrogating telescreens and posters of the " face...with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome feature". With all these Party concepts dominating people's lives, there is absolutely no chance to escape from the harsh bleakness. For Julia, she is an exception for being affected by the

motions and controls of the Party because of her deprivation of the pre-revolution knowledge. She, unlike Winston, carries out her life without a 'frame of reference'. Winston knows exactly the freedom and rights that he is missing out on, and is also able to feel disheartened by the Party's treatment because he clearly liked the world prior to 'Big Brother'. At the beginning of part two, Julia was the one who courageously initiated the love affair although she knew perfectly well that she was putting herself at risk of being 'vaporized'. By creating this relationship that she desired so much, she is able to let glimpses of light flow into her life and not get caught up in the bleak settings. Julia's living, however, is not completely Party-free as she does need to camouflage and ensure that she would not be seen as a potential suspect of 'Thoughtcrime'. In order to successfully rebel, her suggested "if you kept the small rules you could break the big ones...", which indicates that she would ultimately endure through the sufferings of swaying towards the bareness. Julia feels the obligation to join in with the crowd during the chaotic 'Two Minute Hate' and dedicate herself to the 'Juniors Anti-Sex League' where she wears an 'odious scarlet sash' that clearly displays support of the Party that is against her belief. For Julia to pursue happiness, the obligation of protecting herself from vapourization prevents her from completely escaping into another world. As Winston's affair with Julia develops deeper, he begins to find the pathways in shutting himself out from the outer reality of the '1984' environment. Although the totalitarianism of Big Brother has not altered in the slightest, Winston's relationship with Julia allows him to create his own 'bliss of hope' instead of being dragged into melancholy. The first sign of Winston's positive change was when "...the desire to stay alive had welled up...". Also, Winston's idea

of the paperweight containing the mystical world of a potential future indicated that he had a dimmed light inside his heart which can still dare to hold onto any hope. With some influence from Julia, Winston gradually grew into taking more drastic risks to pursue joy and having the ability to shield himself from misery. In '1984', the Party does not seem to feel any kind of threat from the proles and as a consequence, Winston suggests "if there is hope...it lies in the proles". The proles are characters who are the least affected by the Party's powers. It is clear that the Party discourages love between families and friends and only permits for Big Brother to be the only family member or friend that one can have. It is the encouragement of neglecting loved ones that creates the unwelcoming mist in Oceania, yet the proles still have this aspect of humanity and congregate as a family in peace. For an extreme contrast, Orwell uses the Parsons family to show how families under the control of the Party are absolutely disconnected. The two Parsons children, in the book, are completely dedicated to Big Brother and participate in the Kids Spies. Mr. and Mrs. Parsons live every minute of their life in apprehension and fear that their 'brainwashed' children would denounce them to the 'Thought Police' for committing a 'Thoughtcrime'. Although they are considered as "...just above animals...", there is no doubt that the proles possess more humanity than other characters suffer from the '1984' conceptual surroundings. George Orwell's '1984' is like a black piece of paper with the occasional spots of sparkling colour — a world full of darkness and with just few glimpses of enjoyment. The lives of people in Oceania greatly show the misery they bear through Ingsoc, Big Brother and the Party, but those who dare to rebel against the bleak setting do not reflect

bleak existences as much. It is believed that until life grants " the freedom to say that two plus two make four" the world will always have bleakness.