

To: Composition 12 Honors Students
Summer Reading Novel for 2009-2010 school year: *1984*
Summer Viewing: *Hamlet*

One major paper from your Composition 12 Honors class will be an examination of both rhetoric and propaganda and their respective effects on readers and listeners. This should undoubtedly be an interesting topic considering today's turbulent social and political climates throughout the world. Accordingly, I have selected George Orwell's novel that poignantly addresses these matters: *1984*.

You should enter class on the first day having read the novel and having noted the uses of rhetoric and propaganda throughout the text. Pay special attention to the terms *newspeak*, *doublethink*, and *thoughtcrime*, and the implications of the existence of such words. You should also note how language can be used to manipulate an individual's (and, indeed, a whole society's) psychology. The development of the central characters *Winston*, *Julia*, and *O'Brien* illustrate Orwell's ideas clearly while providing a warning for those of us in the future (Orwell wrote the novel in the mid 1940s) who are sufficiently intelligent to recognize it.

While using one's trusty highlighter and pen (for margin notes) while reading is a tried and true method of analysis, the purpose of your reading is not really to glean the classic literary elements that you have been trained to find over the past three years. Instead, I ask that you mark only what you need so that you can avidly participate in class discussion, and so that you can find elements from which to generate your thesis and eventually your entire first essay.

Finally, high level thinking and writing requires the distillation of one's *own opinion* with the topic at hand; many would simply call this idea "writing with 'voice' or 'purpose'." In order to accomplish this, please make certain to place post-its or margin notes when you find passages of the text particularly stirring or interesting to you. It is from these passages that you will eventually formulate your own "voice" about these particularly relevant topics.

If you have any questions, I will try to check my KUSD email intermittently throughout the summer, so feel free to drop me a line at dshimon@kUSD.edu. Have a great break!

Please, also watch the Franco Zeffereilli directed version *Hamlet*, starring Mel Gibson, as we will use it to do your first essay. If you prefer to read the script or watch another version, that is fine; I find the Zeffereilli and Gibson version the easiest to follow. Keep track of the characters' interactions (and names) and the series of decisions that Hamlet makes that ultimately lead to his downfall.

Sincerely,

Mr. Shimon