Analysis of Chapters 1-3
Chapter 1 Characters

1984

- **Winston Smith**: main character, employee at the Ministry of Truth
- **Big Brother**: leader/dictator of the Party
- **O’Brian**: official of the Inner Party, Winston’s co-worker at the Ministry of Truth
- **Emmanuel Goldstein**: Enemy of the People
- **Julia**: 26-year-old employee at the Ministry of Truth, worker for the Junior Anti-Sex League
Chapter 1 Analysis

1984

- **The setting**: Orwell’s choice of “cold” and “vile” as well as phrases such as “swirl of gritty dust” to describe the April afternoon establish the atmosphere for the “coldness” of the plot to follow.
  - The clock is striking “thirteen:” suggests an abnormality in the setting… foreshadowing!
- **London setting**: The city has been virtually destroyed with “bombed sites where plaster dust swirled in the air.”
  - Bombs have cleared paths where there have “sprung up sordid colonies of wooden dwellings like chicken houses.”
  - In contrast, the dominating Ministry of Truth is an enormous pyramid of “glittering white concrete” that stands out, as do the three other ministries which “dwarf the surrounding architecture.”
- **Protagonist’s description**: suggests that he is an isolated, lonely figure, is the last believer in the values of the past, described in the book as pre-Revolutionary time.
  - Name is common; adds to the image of him as a “representative” of England
- **Life is dominated by the four ministries**: Truth, Peace, Love, and Plenty, which are “led” by the dictator Big Brother (Stalin-esque)
  - **Central conflict**: restrictions of the totalitarian state under which Winston lives versus his growing restlessness with the rigidity of his life and his concern that the past as a shaper of history will be erased or forgotten.
Chapter 1 Analysis

1984

Winston’s intelligence is his downfall...

• “Thus, at one moment Winston’s hatred was not turned against Goldstein at all, but, on the contrary, against Big Brother, the Party, and the Thought Police; and at such moments his heart went out to the lonely, derided heretic on the screen, sole guardian of truth and sanity in a world of lies. And yet the very next instant he was at one with the people about him, and all that was said of Goldstein seemed to him to be true. At those moments his secret loathing of Big Brother changed into adoration. . . .”

Independent thoughts are dangerous...

• “Winston succeeded in transferring his hatred from the face on the screen to the dark-haired girl behind him. Vivid, beautiful hallucinations flashed through his mind. . . . He would ravish her and cut her throat at the moment of climax. Better than before, moreover, he realized why it was that he hated her.”

Secret diary: The writing is therapeutic, although crude, and the diary allows him to express several forbidden thoughts including the death sentence

• “Down With Big Brother:” foreshadows the logical sequence of events to follow
Chapter 2 New Characters

1984

- **Mrs. Parsons**: Winston’s neighbor
Chapter 2 Analysis

1984

- **Life in Oceania (Parsons’ Apartment):**
  - Mrs. Parsons is only 30 years old, but she looks considerably older; her husband, occupied with Party business, is not home.
  - Orwell depicts Mr. Parsons with little intelligence but more than enough devotion to the Party.
  - We have not yet met Tom Parsons, the odor of his sweat permeates the home suggesting the hard work and drudgery that characterize his life.

- **Learning About the Party:**
  - The Parsons’ children are learning that disloyalty to the Party will not be tolerated—a number of children, or “child heroes,” have successfully denounced their parents to the Thought Police.
  - Violence seems to be an integral part of childhood (disappointment over missed executions).
  - The sight of so-called innocent children engaged in play with such violent overtones is alarming but enlightening—allegiance to the Party rather than love for one’s family is cultivated at a very early age.
Chapter 2 Analysis

Loneliness:

- Winston feels alone—Orwell tells us, “He felt as though he were wandering in the forests of the sea bottom, lost in a monstrous world where he himself was the monster.”
- This metaphor heightens the differences between Winston and his “comrades” by ironically emphasizing that it is not Winston who is monstrous.

Thoughts as Safe Haven?:

- Winston believes that there is one thing the Party cannot take: the thoughts inside one’s skull
- The struggle for Winston’s thoughts will become a dominant theme, even though Winston’s thoughts and his diary mean death.
Chapter 3 New Characters

1984

- Winston’s mother: appears only in Winston’s dreams, disappeared many years ago
Chapter 3 Analysis

1984

Dream Motif (Dream 1):

Winston’s dream about his mother’s and sister’s disappearance serves two purposes:

1: Its setting on a sinking ship forecasts the hopeless future for the society in which Winston grew up.

   By the time Winston reaches adulthood, very little of family life as he knew it remains.

2: The dream allows Winston to explore his feelings about his mother’s death, which he characterizes as tragic.

   Although she was sacrificed for her son, Winston’s mother died loving him—Orwell observes, “Such things, he saw, could not happen today. Today there were fear, hatred, and pain, but no dignity of emotion, or deep and complex sorrows.”
Chapter 3 Analysis

1984

Dream Motif (Dream 2):
- Winston’s second dream is important; surprisingly, it is not the girl’s nakedness that fascinates Winston, but instead the utter freedom with which she gestures to him
- This gesture is reminiscent of other times and individuals

Freethinking
- Orwell continues to develop the concept of his protagonist as an independent freethinker
- Morning exercises are consuming all of Winston’s physical energy, mentally he continues to dwell on the past
- The Party’s slogan, “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past,” alarms Winston—this policy is becoming reality.
- Eastasia war, four years prior
- The mutability of the past with control by the Party is a major theme
Chapter 4 New Characters

1984

- Tillotson: employee in the Records Department
- Syme: Winston’s friend, expert in Newspeak
- Tom Parsons: Winston’s neighbor and coworker, loyal to the Party
Chapter 4 Analysis

1984

Mutability of the Past:
- The Ministry of Truth controls versions of information given to the Party members of Oceania and to the proles
- Many literary critics believe that Orwell modeled the ministry after the BBC for which he worked during World War II—Orwell’s experiences at the BBC gave him insight into the dangers of government control of information
- Ironically, Winston’s job at the Ministry of Truth is to falsify records for the Party, leaving no trace of the alteration itself

Ethical Implications
- Winston ponders altering the past as he creates Comrade Ogilvy, a fictitious war hero
- Orwell writes, “It struck him as curious that you could create dead men but not living ones. Comrade Ogilvy, who had never existed in the present, now existed in the past, and when once the act of forgery was forgotten, he would exist just as authentically, and upon the same evidence, as Charlemagne or Julius Caesar.”
Chapter 4 Analysis

1984

Impact of Language:
Orwell explores the impact of language on society through the character of Syme who is systematically destroying the language.
- He tells Winston, “You don’t grasp the beauty of the destruction of words”— when the finer shades of meaning are destroyed, Syme calls it a “question of self-discipline, reality-control.”
- Orwell demonstrates his belief that there is a relationship between the destruction of language and the destruction of thought.
- Winston predicts the vaporization of Syme for his intelligence; we readers notice that same character trait in Winston.

Irony:
- The announcement from the Ministry of Plenty that the standard of living has risen 20 percent over the past year—Winston’s reality, like the reality of Orwell’s post-World War II audience, is that many goods are rationed.
- The government’s ability to disseminate propaganda and the public’s gullibility is shown here through the character of Parsons, whom Winston realizes has accepted the announcement “with the stupidity of an animal.”