YEAR 9 · DYSTOPIAN FICTION

Welcome to the bad place

How does Orwell make a place feel unpleasant?

- Explain what a dystopia is
- Spot and name the words that create a feeling
- Write one paragraph, using a sentence frame, about the setting of 1984

You will be told what to write at every step.

TODAY’S ROUTE

What we are doing, step by step

Step	What you do	Time
1	Starter: design a perfect place, then spoil it	5 min
2	Learn what a dystopia is and its conventions	10 min
3	Background to 1984 and key words	8 min
4	Read and annotate the extract with colours	10 min
5	Learn the four-part analysis recipe, with examples	12 min
6	Write your paragraph with sentence starters	12 min
7	Peer feedback and exit ticket	5 min

STARTER · 5 MINUTES

Design a perfect school or town

Step 1. Write three features of your perfect place (one minute).
Step 2. Twist each one into something sinister.

Example: Perfect town: *no crime at all.*
Twist: …because cameras record everything you do and you are punished for what you *might* do.

Stuck? Try: “Everyone is happy, but…”

WHAT IS A DYSTOPIA?

Utopia and dystopia

Utopia

An imagined **perfect** society.

Dystopia

An imagined society that may look orderly, but is **controlled, unfair or frightening** for most people in it.

Remember: the word comes from Greek, meaning “bad place”.

Complete in the chat: A dystopia is a *(adjective)* society where *(who has power?)* and people *(what can’t they do?)*.

CONVENTIONS · 1 OF 2

Things that appear in many dystopias

A controlling government

A small group holds all the power. **In 1984:** the Party and Big Brother.

Surveillance

People are watched and cannot act freely. **In 1984:** telescreens.

Propaganda

Truth and language are changed to shape what people believe. **In 1984:** Newspeak.

Loss of individuality

Everyone must obey and fit in. **In 1984:** Winston must hide his thoughts.

CONVENTIONS · 2 OF 2

…and more

Fear and punishment

People obey because they are afraid. **In 1984:** the Thought Police.

A bleak setting

The place feels grim, run-down or lifeless. **Today's focus.**

A character who questions

An ordinary person senses that something is wrong. **In 1984:** Winston Smith.

A warning

The writer exaggerates something real to warn readers.

Why "bleak setting" matters: the place itself shows us what life is like, before anyone speaks.

BACKGROUND

Where does 1984 come from?

When and why

George Orwell published it in **1949**, soon after the Second World War. Some countries were then ruled by governments with total power.

Where

A future **London**, in a country called Oceania, ruled by **the Party**. Its leader is **Big Brother**.

Who

Winston Smith is an ordinary worker. He secretly hates the Party and is afraid.

Orwell is not predicting the future. He is **exaggerating** what he saw to **warn** readers.

KEY WORDS BEFORE YOU READ

Glossary for the extract

Word	Meaning
Party	The government that controls everything in 1984
telescreen	A screen in every home that shows programmes and also watches you
Thought Police	Officers who punish people for what they think
Hate Week	A Party event that makes people hate its enemies
vile	disgusting, horrible
gritty	full of tiny, rough bits of dirt
rag mats	cheap, worn floor coverings

BEFORE YOU READ

The scene, and your first read

The scene: Winston is coming home to his flat in a building called **Victory Mansions** on a cold April day.

As you read, ask yourself:

- What can I **see**, **smell** and **hear**?
- Is anything **wrong**, **broken** or **threatening**?
- How would **I** feel living here?

Answer in one sentence: Winston is in ___. The building is ___. He might feel ___ because ___.

ANNOTATE · 1 OF 2

Colour key, with examples from the extract

Yellow · weather and building
“bright cold day” · “vile wind” · “gritty dust”

Green · smell, sight or sound
“smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats” · “fruity voice”

Pink · unpleasant or threatening words
“vile” · “snooping” · “barbed-wire entanglements”

Blue · being watched or controlled
“eyes follow you about” · “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU”

Aim for **at least two words** in every colour.

ANNOTATE · 2 OF 2

Where to look in the extract

Part of the extract	Look for
Opening sentence	The weather and the clocks
The hallway	Smell, the poster, the size of it
The stairs	The lift, the effort, the poster again
Inside the flat	The voice, the telescreen, the switch
Outside the window	Colour, dust, posters, helicopter
The Ministries	The buildings and the slogans

You do not need to annotate everything. Find the **strongest** words.

THE SKILL

The four-part analysis recipe

Quote	Choose a **short** quotation: one word or a phrase.	What exactly did Orwell write?
Method	Name what it is: adjective, verb, simile, sense…	What type of word is it?
Effect	What does it make you picture or feel? Use a **because**.	What does it suggest?
Link	Connect it to dystopia: surveillance, fear, bleak setting…	Why did Orwell choose it?

Every sentence you write will do one of these four jobs.

UNDERSTANDING WORDS

Connotations: what a word makes you think of

Word	What it means	What it makes you think of (connotations)
“vile”	disgusting	sickness, hatred, something you want to escape
“gritty”	full of rough dirt	dirt, discomfort, a place nobody cleans
“torn”	ripped	damage, neglect, things falling apart
“commanding”	in control	orders, power, someone above you

Ask yourself: **What else could Orwell have called it? Why this word?**

TECHNIQUE TOOLKIT · 1 OF 2

How to spot it, with examples

Technique	How to spot it	Example from the extract
Adjective	a word that describes a noun	“vile” wind; “gritty” dust
Verb choice	the action word is strong	“slipped” quickly through the doors (sneaking, afraid)
Sensory detail	you can smell, hear or touch it	“smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats”
Simile	“like” or “as” compares	“like a dulled mirror”; “like a bluebottle”

TECHNIQUE TOOLKIT · 2 OF 2

More to look for

Technique	How to spot it	Example from the extract
Contrast	two opposite ideas	“bright cold day”; “no colour in anything” except the posters
Capital letters	whole words are shouted	“BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU”
Repetition	the same idea appears again and again	the poster appears on every landing and across the street
Personification	an object does a human thing	the poster “gazed from the wall”

WORKED EXAMPLES

Watch how the thinking goes

Quote	“vile wind”
Method	adjective
Effect	“Vile” suggests disgusting, so even the weather seems hostile and the reader feels uncomfortable.
Link	A bleak setting: nature itself is unwelcoming, which sets up a harsh world.

Quote	“smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats”
Method	sensory detail (smell)
Effect	We almost smell it, so the building feels stale, poor and neglected.
Link	Even ordinary homes are neglected in a dystopia.

MODEL PARAGRAPH

Read it with the thinking on the right

Point	Orwell makes the setting feel unwelcoming through his sensory description of the hallway.	Start with a clear **answer to the question**.
Quote	He writes that it “smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats”.	Keep the quotation **short** and exact.
Method	The verb “smelt” appeals to the sense of smell, so the reader almost experiences the stale air.	**Name** the technique and say **what it does**.
Effect	The word “old” and the plain, poor items suggest that the building is shabby and that people there live in poverty.	Zoom in on **one word** and explain what it **suggests**.
Effect	This makes the reader feel uncomfortable and sorry for the people who live there.	Say how the **reader** feels.
Link	Orwell shows that in a dystopia even ordinary homes are neglected, which warns us about governments that care more about control than people.	Link to **dystopia** and Orwell’s **purpose**.

YOUR TURN · 8 MINUTES

Find four words

Look for	Word	Method	Effect: it suggests…
The weather	…	…	…
The building	…	…	…
The smell or the lift	…	…	…
Being watched	…	…	…

Stuck? Choose from: “vile wind” · “gritty dust” · “smelt of boiled cabbage” · “seldom working” · “gazed from the wall” · “no colour in anything” · “snooping”

SENTENCE STARTERS

Choose the level that helps you

Support	Core	Stretch
Orwell makes the place seem ___ by describing… He uses the word “___”. This is effective because it makes the reader feel…	Orwell uses [technique] to create a [bleak] atmosphere. The word “___” has connotations of… This creates an image of…	Orwell’s choice of “___” conveys… The contrast between ___ and ___ reflects the convention of… His purpose seems to be to…

Words that explain: suggests · implies · creates the impression · because · so · therefore · this could also mean

WRITE · 12 MINUTES

Your paragraph: build it one sentence at a time

Point	Orwell makes the place feel ___ through his description of ___.
Quote	He writes that ___ “…”.
Method	The [technique] “___” suggests ___, so the reader feels ___.
Effect	The word “___” implies ___, which creates an image of ___.
Link	This links to dystopia because ___. Orwell’s purpose is to ___.

AVOID THESE

Not this, try this

Instead of…	Try…
“It makes the reader want to read on.”	“It makes the reader feel uneasy because…”
“Orwell uses a good adjective.”	Name the word: “The adjective ‘vile’ suggests…”
Copying a whole sentence	Quote one word or a short phrase
Telling the story again	Say what the words **suggest**

Check: have I explained **why**, not just **what**?

PEER FEEDBACK

Two stars and a wish

- Highlight the **quotation** in one colour and the **explanation** in another.
- A clear point about the place
- A short, exact quotation
- A named technique
- The effect on the reader, with **because**
- Stretch: a link to a convention or Orwell’s purpose

Give **two stars** and **one wish** in the chat.

EXIT TICKET · HOMEWORK

Finish these three sentences

1. A dystopia is a society where…
2. One convention I spotted was…
3. One word that made the place feel unpleasant was “…” because…

Homework (20 min): write a second paragraph with a **different** quotation and technique.