1984 Synthesis Essay Exam

Directions: The following question is based on the novel and the accompanying six sources.

This question requires you to synthesize a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. When you synthesize sources you refer to them to develop your thesis and cite them accurately. Your position should be central; the sources should support this position. Avoid merely summarizing sources.

Remember to give credit to both direct and indirect citations and quotations.

Introduction

George Orwell's novel, 1984, presents a dystopian vision of the political and social landscape. The Party uses technology, language, and propaganda to exercise relentless control of its citizens. As the setting of the book is a not-too-distant future, Orwell surely meant his work to be a warning for our modern era. What specifically is Orwell warning us against, and how does he achieve this?

Assignment

Review the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. Then write an essay in which you examine Orwell’s political cautionary tale. In addition to the novel, synthesize at least three of the sources for support.

Refer to the sources by their titles (Source A, Source B, etc.) or by the information provided in the parentheses. Titles are included for your convenience.

Source A (Vendetta)
Source B (“Force”)
Source C (“Politics”)
Source D (“Street Fighting Man”)
Source E (“The Future”)
Source F (“Third Wave”)

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE ON THE TEST.
USE SCRATCH PAPER TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY NOTES.
The following passages are excerpted lines of dialogue from the film.

**Lewis Prothero:** Did you like that? USA... Ulcered Sphincter of Ass-terica, I mean what else can you say? Here was a country that had everything, absolutely everything. And now, 20 years later, is what? The world's biggest leper colony. Why? Godlessness. Let me say that again... Godlessness. It wasn't the war they started. It wasn't the plague they created. It was Judgment. No one escapes their past. No one escapes Judgment. You think he's not up there? You think he's not watching over this country? How else can you explain it? He tested us, but we came through. We did what we had to do. Islington. Enfield. I was there, I saw it all. Immigrants, Muslims, homosexuals, terrorists. Disease-ridden degenerates. They had to go. Strength through unity. Unity through faith. I'm a God-fearing Englishman and I'm goddamn proud of it!

**V:** The truth is, there is something terribly wrong with this country, isn't there? Cruelty and injustice, intolerance and oppression. And where once you had the freedom to object, to think and speak as you saw fit, you now have censors and systems of surveillance coercing your conformity and soliciting your submission. How did this happen? Who's to blame? Well certainly there are those more responsible than others, and they will be held accountable, but again truth be told, if you're looking for the guilty, you need only look into a mirror. I know why you did it. I know you were afraid. Who wouldn't be? War, terror, disease. There were a myriad of problems which conspired to corrupt your reason and rob you of your common sense. Fear got the best of you.

**V:** A building is a symbol, as is the act of destroying it. Symbols are given power by people. A symbol, in and of itself is powerless, but with enough people behind it, blowing up a building can change the world.

**Valerie:** Every inch of me shall perish. Every inch, but one. An inch. It is small and it is fragile and it is the only thing in the world worth having. We must never lose it or give it away. We must NEVER let them take it from us.

**Creedy:** Die! Die! Why won't you die? Why won't you die?
**V:** Beneath this mask there is more than flesh. Beneath this mask there is an idea, Mr. Creedy, and ideas are bulletproof.
The following passage is excerpted from a longer essay about the use of political language.

Take the opposition between force and violence. This difference first caught my attention back at the time of the Rodney King riots in 1992, when I was listening to the statement that President George H. W. Bush made when he sent 4500 troops to Los Angeles: "Let me assure you, I will use whatever force is necessary to restore order. I guarantee you, this violence will end." The statement makes one aspect of the distinction very clear: force is the prerogative of official power; violence is the desperate expedient of the powerless. It isn't just a question of justification or legitimacy. People use force even when power is abused. Saddam Hussein tried to take Kuwait by force. Police who beat up a suspect are charged with "excessive use of force." But it is violence when rioters pulled a driver from his truck and beat him, or when insurgents set off a car bomb in Karachi.

That distinction has a curious grammatical reflex. We very often see violence used as the subject of a sentence: "Political violence flared anew in Haiti"; "A wave of violence has swept over the country," "As violence rocked Pakistan this week..." Violence breaks out, flares, erupts, explodes, escalates, ebbs. We talk about it as if it were a thing with a life of its own, a kind of eczema on the social order; the human actors are anonymous or irrelevant, like the passive hosts of a disease that is made visible only in its eruptions. Whereas force doesn't do anything by itself. Force is almost always the object of the verb: somebody uses force, deploys force, exercises force. Again, you can see the difference in Bush's statement: "I will use whatever force is necessary...I assure you, this violence will end."
The following passage is excerpted from a longer essay about the use of political language.

In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing. Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a "party line." Orthodoxy, of whatever color, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style. The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles, manifestoes, White papers and the speeches of undersecretaries do, of course, vary from party to party, but they are all alike in that one almost never finds in them a fresh, vivid, homemade turn of speech. When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases -- bestial atrocities, iron heel, bloodstained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand shoulder to shoulder -- one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them.

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of the political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism., question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenseless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called transfer of population or rectification of frontiers. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called elimination of unreliable elements. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them.

One need not swallow such absurdities as this, but one ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end. If you simplify your English, you are freed from the worst follies of orthodoxy. You cannot speak any of the necessary dialects, and when you make a stupid remark its stupidity will be obvious, even to yourself. Political language--and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists--is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.
Ev'rywhere I hear the sound of marching, charging feet, boy
'Cause summer's here and the time is right for fighting in the street, boy
But what can a poor boy do
Except to sing for a rock 'n' roll band
'Cause in sleepy London town
There's just no place for a street fighting man
No

Hey! Think the time is right for a palace revolution
'Cause where I live the game to play is compromise solution
Well, then what can a poor boy do
Except to sing for a rock 'n' roll band
'Cause in sleepy London town
There's just no place for a street fighting man
No

Hey! Said my name is called disturbance
I'll shout and scream, I'll kill the king, I'll rail at all his servants
Well, what can a poor boy do
Except to sing for a rock 'n' roll band
'Cause in sleepy London town
There's just no place for a street fighting man
No
The following passage is excerpted from the full song.

Give me back my broken night
my mirrored room, my secret life
it's lonely here,
there's no one left to torture
Give me absolute control
over every living soul
And lie beside me, baby,
that's an order!

Give me crack and anal sex
Take the only tree that's left
and stuff it up the hole
in your culture
Give me back the Berlin wall
give me Stalin and St. Paul
I've seen the future, brother:
it is murder.

You don't know me from the wind
you never will, you never did
I'm the little jew
who wrote the Bible
I've seen the nations rise and fall
I've heard their stories, heard them all
but love's the only engine of survival

Your servant here, he has been told
to say it clear, to say it cold:
It's over, it ain't going
any further

And now the wheels of heaven stop
you feel the devil's riding crop
Get ready for the future:
it is murder.

There'll be the breaking of the ancient
western code
Your private life will suddenly explode
There'll be phantoms
There'll be fires on the road
and the white man dancing
You'll see a woman
hanging upside down
her features covered by her fallen gown
and all the lousy little poets
coming round
tryin' to sound like Charlie Manson
and the white man dancing

Give me back the Berlin wall
Give me Stalin and St Paul
Give me Christ
or give me Hiroshima
Destroy another fetus now
We don't like children anyhow
I've seen the future, baby:
it is murder.
The following passage is excerpted from a longer essay about theories of the future.

The tyranny of the factory inspired a bleak futurism in which Big Brother ruled the planet through centralized information control. But something happened that prevented the nightmares of George Orwell’s *1984* and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* from coming to pass. Technology took a sharp turn away from standardization and toward individuation and diversity. In a not-always-pleasant way, the *third wave* began decentralizing the machine heart. Today is a time of transition, in which we witness the curious spectacle of massive second-wave-type enterprises adapting to the third wave appetite for differentiation.

Take the coffee example. In the 1920s, each town had its distinct coffee flavor. In the 1970s it was Maxwell House and McDonald's scalding coffee, from sea to shining sea. By the 1990s, an explosion of mom-and-pop coffeehouses took place across the country. Today you stop at a coffee shop in Talladega, Alabama, and order a double latte of decaffeinated Kenyan with a finger of amaretto hazelnut syrup.

Or you can have the best of all worlds, second wave McDonalds' standardization combined with third wave product choice, by walking into any of the 2,000 Starbucks coffee shops nationwide. In retail, we have witnessed the second wave juggernaut Wal-Mart break upon cities small and large, with the third wave possibility of a single store selling 100,000 different items.

Again, the Tofflers have coined a term for a third-wave predicament, familiar to anyone who has surfed the Internet, shopped at a warehouse grocery store, or installed satellite download television: overchoice.

In a simple system, a single individual could provide the wisdom and authority to guide a large enterprise. No one believes that anymore. The emphasis, since the 1970s at least, has been on decentralization, on delegation of authority and empowerment, on self-managing teams, on the leader-as-facilitator as opposed to the leader-as-god.

Running a large enterprise from a hub on the basis of a single person's competence, Toffler said, is like a doctor making morning rounds and prescribing Valium for everybody. You can't doctor an entire economy, or even an entire organization, with one medicine anymore. In the demassified organization of today, one-size-fits-all doesn't cut it anymore.