

## Grade 8 Literature Mini-Assessment

### Excerpt from *1984* by George Orwell

This grade 8 mini-assessment is based on an excerpt from *1984* by George Orwell as well as an excerpt from Michael Anderson’s film adaption of the novel. This text is considered to be worthy of students’ time to read and also meets the expectations for text complexity at grade 8. Assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will employ quality, complex texts such as this one.

Questions aligned to the CCSS should be worthy of students’ time to answer and therefore do not focus on minor points of the text. Questions also may address several standards within the same question because complex texts tend to yield rich assessment questions that call for deep analysis. In this mini-assessment there are seven selected-response questions and one paper/pencil equivalent of a technology enhanced item that address the Reading Standards listed below.

We encourage educators to give students the time that they need to read closely and write to the source. While we know that it is helpful to have students complete the mini-assessment in one class period, we encourage educators to allow additional time as necessary.

#### The questions align to the following standards:

<b>RL.8.1</b>	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
<b>RL.8.2</b>	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
<b>RL.8.3</b>	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
<b>RL.8.4</b>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
<b>RL.8.6</b>	Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
<b>RL.8.7</b>	Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

# Contents

Grade 8 Mini-Assessment – Excerpt from <i>1984</i> <u>Print for students</u> .....	3
Information for Teachers: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of the Text.....	8
Question Annotations: Correct Answers and Distractor Rationales.....	11
Additional Resources for Assessment and CCSS Implementation .....	14

The assessment questions in this document align with the CCSS and reflect the instructional shifts implied by the standards. To learn more about these topics, please go to the following link:  
[www.achievethecore.org](http://www.achievethecore.org)

## Grade 8 Mini-Assessment – Excerpt from *1984*

Today you will read an excerpt from *1984* by George Orwell and watch an excerpt of Michael Anderson’s film adaptation of the same title. You will then answer several questions based on the text. I will be happy to answer questions about the directions, but I will not help you with the answers to any questions. You will notice as you answer the questions that some of the questions have two parts. You should answer Part A of the question before you answer Part B, but you may revisit Part A after you answer Part B if you want to.

Take as long as you need to read and answer the questions. If you do not finish when class ends, come see me to discuss when you may have additional time.

Now read the passage and answer the questions. I encourage you to write notes in the margin as you read the passage.

Excerpt: from *1984*

by George Orwell

The first seven questions in this mini-assessment are based on an excerpt from George Orwell’s *1984*, published by Signet Classics, a division of Penguin Putman Publishing.<sup>1</sup> Teachers will need to provide the excerpted text.

The excerpt begins with the first sentence of the novel, “It was a bright, cold day in April, . . .” and ends at the conclusion of paragraph 5, with the words “every movement scrutinized.”

<sup>1</sup> The text is not included in this document due to permissions denial for web rights. The user is solely responsible for any permission that may be necessary to reproduce, distribute, or publicly display the text for purposes of the assessment.

### Excerpt: from the film *1984*

The last question on this mini-assessment is based on Michael Anderson’s film adaptation of the novel. When the class is ready, we will watch the video together. To signal that you are ready to watch the video, please turn your mini-assessment face down on your desk.

We will watch the video twice, as some of the questions later in this mini-assessment will be asking you to remember specific information from it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCZBnUt6rZ0&feature=youtu.be>

Begin viewing the film at minute 4:37 and end at 6:10.

**QUESTIONS:**

**1. In what two ways is the information about Winston in paragraph 3 important to the development of the central ideas in the excerpt?**

- A. It demonstrates that Winston yearns for a better life.
- B. It proves that Winston attempts to distinguish himself from other citizens.
- C. It hints at the extent of the effects that Big Brother has on Winston's life and appearance.
- D. It explains the reasoning behind Winston's opinions of Big Brother.
- E. It exhibits Winston's desire to receive Big Brother's approval.
- F. It creates a contrast between Winston's frailty and Big Brother's strength as described in the previous paragraph.

**2. What is the intended contrast between Winston's viewpoint and that of the reader?**

- A. Winston's viewpoint is apparent tolerance of the conditions of his life, but the reader sees the harshness of his situation.
- B. Winston's viewpoint is eager curiosity about the conditions of his life, but the reader sees that his situation is fairly typical.
- C. Winston's viewpoint is minor annoyance about the conditions of his life, but the reader sees that his situation is actually bearable.
- D. Winston's viewpoint is enthusiastic support for the conditions of his life, but the reader sees the hopelessness of his situation.

3. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

**Part A:** In paragraph 4, what does the word fitfully most nearly mean?

- A. restlessly
- B. faintly
- C. distantly
- D. raggedly

**Part B:** How does this word most strongly impact the meaning and tone of the excerpt?

- A. The word supports a fanciful tone by giving an inanimate object a sense of being.
- B. The word supports a respectful tone by focusing on the attention the Thought Police paid to small details.
- C. The word supports a judgmental tone by showing that the main character criticizes anything negative around him.
- D. The word supports an oppressive tone by showing that the even objects in the character's surroundings seem unsettled.

4. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

**Part A:** In which paragraph does the author most strongly develop the idea of totalitarianism, or complete government control over its citizens?

- A. paragraph 1
- B. paragraph 2
- C. paragraph 3
- D. paragraph 5

**Part B:** In the paragraph you chose for Part A, highlight the sentence that best shows how the knowledge of complete government control impacts those being monitored.

5. Reread the following sentences from the excerpt.

The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered.

According to details in the excerpt, what is the most logical reason that the patrols do not “matter” but the Thought Police do matter?

- A. People are already accustomed to helicopters flying near their windows, but the idea of Thought Police is recent and unfamiliar.
- B. People are pleased to have helicopter patrols keeping everyone safe, but they don't see how the Thought Police keep them safe.
- C. People can see when the patrols are snooping but cannot ever know exactly when the Thought Police are snooping.
- D. People know that the helicopters appear only in a few winter months but the Thought Police are active most of the year.

6. The following question contains two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

**Part A:** The author makes references such as “Hate Week” and “the Ninth Three-Year Plan,” which are not explained in this excerpt from the story. What is the most likely inference that can be made about the role of these references?

- A. They are elements of Big Brother's agenda that do not affect Winston's life.
- B. They are aspects of Big Brother's governance that Winston supports.
- C. They are methods by which Big Brother maintains control over the population.
- D. They are rewards that Big Brother offers in exchange for good behavior.

**Part B:** How do these references help propel the action in the excerpt?

- A. by establishing a stronger sense of Big Brother's authority
- B. by foreshadowing what will happen to Winston
- C. by easing the reader's concern that Winston will be harmed
- D. by highlighting the more promising aspects of Big Brother's reign

**7. The following question contains two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.**

**Part A: What is a central idea of this excerpt?**

- A. Despite his young age, Winston is in poor health which is a direct result of his living environment.
- B. Lacking personal privacy, Winston is cautious about his words and actions because Big Brother is constantly watching him.
- C. Although Big Brother's control can be stifling, Winston appreciates the sense of order that Big Brother's management provides.
- D. After a long and difficult winter, Winston looks forward to the changes that Big Brother will bring in the springtime.

**Part B: How does the setting support this central idea?**

- A. The widespread presence of the large, colorful Big Brother posters suggests Winston's feelings of admiration for his leader.
- B. The details about Winston's run-down building help to convey Winston's feelings of helplessness.
- C. The references to the changing seasons hint at Winston's feelings of hopefulness for the future.
- D. The descriptions of the chilly, bleak surroundings emphasize Winston's anger about having limited resources to survive the winter.

**8. In the scene of the film version of *1984*, which detail of the text is emphasized through the actions of the actor portraying Winston?**

- A. the compelling nature of Big Brother's speeches
- B. the absolute control that Big Brother had on the lives of the people
- C. the poverty that surrounds Winston
- D. the exhaustion that Winston feels on a daily basis

## Information for Teachers: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of the Text

Regular practice with complex texts is necessary to prepare students for college and career readiness, as outlined in Reading Standard 10. The excerpt for this mini-assessment has been placed at grade 8, and the process used to determine this grade level placement is described below. “Appendix A of the Common Core” and the “Supplement to Appendix A: New Research on Text Complexity” lay out a research-based process for selecting complex texts.

1. Place a text or excerpt within a **grade band** based on at least one<sup>1</sup> quantitative measure according to the research-based conversion table provided in the Supplement to Appendix A: New Research on Text Complexity ([www.corestandards.org/resources](http://www.corestandards.org/resources)).
2. Place a text or excerpt at a **grade level** based on a qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Analysis		
Excerpt from <i>1984</i>	Quantitative Measure #1	Quantitative Measure #2
	Lexile: 1050	RMM: 9.4

After gathering the quantitative measures, the next step is to place the quantitative scores in the Conversion Table found in the Supplement to Appendix A ([www.corestandards.org/resources](http://www.corestandards.org/resources)) and determine the **grade band** of the text.

Figure 1 reproduces the conversion table from the Supplement to Appendix A, showing how the initial results from the Lexile and the Reading Maturity measure were converted to grade bands.

**Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures<sup>7</sup>**

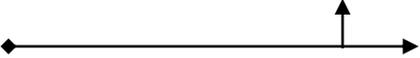
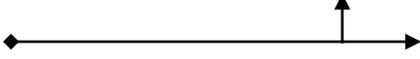
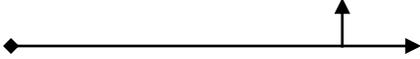
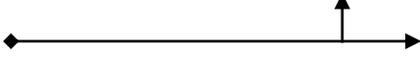
Common Core Band	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power <sup>®</sup>	Flesch-Kincaid <sup>‡</sup>	The Lexile Framework <sup>®</sup>	Reading Maturity	SourceRater
2 <sup>nd</sup> – 3 <sup>rd</sup>	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	1.98 – 5.34	420 – 820	3.53 – 6.13	0.05 – 2.48
4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	4.51 – 7.73	740 – 1010	5.42 – 7.92	0.84 – 5.75
6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup>	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	6.51 – 10.34	925 – 1185	7.04 – 9.57	4.11 – 10.66
9 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup>	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	8.32 – 12.12	1050 – 1335	8.41 – 10.81	9.02 – 13.93
11 <sup>th</sup> – CCR	11.20 – 14.10	67 – 74	10.34 – 14.2	1185 – 1385	9.57 – 12.00	12.30 – 14.50

The quantitative data show overlap between grade bands 6-8 and 9-10. Qualitative data will help narrow the text complexity to a specific grade level.

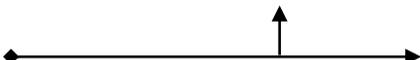
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<sup>1</sup> For higher-stakes tests, it is recommended that two corresponding text complexity measures be used to place a text in a grade band. When two measures are used, both placing the text in the same **band**, the results provide additional assurance that the text selected is appropriate for the band.

To find the **grade level** of the text within the designated grade band, engage in a systematic analysis of the characteristics of the text. The characteristics that should be analyzed during a qualitative analysis can be found in Appendix A of the CCSS. ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

Qualitative Analysis	Excerpt from <i>1984</i>	Where to place within the band?					
Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Too low for grade band	early to mid-6	mid 6 to early 7	mid 7 to early 8	mid to end 8	Too high for grade band
Structure (both story structure or form of piece)	The third-person narration is simple and conventional. The order of events is chronological, though the narrator does refer to past and future events.						
Language Clarity and Conventions	The excerpt includes many complex sentences with mostly explicit conventionality. There is some British vocabulary (lift, flat), so use of footnotes will be important. Additionally, British spelling (colour, metre) may be initially distracting, but should not hinder comprehension. Some complex vocabulary may be challenging to students (sanguine, simultaneous, scrutinized).						
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	The text explores multiple complex themes and describes experiences far removed from the average reader. There is no prior knowledge needed to gain access to the text; however, references to the Ninth Three-Year Plan will have greater impact on students familiar with Stalin's five-year plans in Communist Russia.						
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	There are multiple themes in this text, including: oppression cripples human beings; paranoia is a powerful tool for control; and technology can be used to monitor our private lives. Due to multiple themes, this text is considered complex.						
Overall placement: Grade 8	The multiple themes, challenging vocabulary, and complex sentence structure make this text most appropriate for grade 8, most likely end of year.						

To find the **grade level** of the text within the designated grade band, engage in a systematic analysis of the characteristics of the text. The characteristics that should be analyzed during a qualitative analysis can be found in Appendix A of the CCSS. ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

Qualitative Analysis	Excerpt from Michael Anderson's film <i>1984</i>	Where to place within the band?					
Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Too low for grade band	early to mid-6	mid 6 to early 7	mid 7 to early 8	mid to end 8	Too high for grade band
Structure (both story structure or form of piece)	The film excerpt begins with Winston running inside as a siren blares, and follows him as he completes the routine of entering his apartment. It is told in chronological order, and mirrors the text excerpt presented to students, though it does not match exactly.						
Language Clarity and Conventions	There is very little dialogue present in the film version; all that students hear is the announcement through the teleprompter. The language that is used is clear, and the vocabulary is not complex.						
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	The film explores multiple complex themes also present in the text. There is no prior knowledge needed to gain access to the film; however, students who have read the text excerpt will have an easier time accessing the themes than those who have not.						
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	The video, though not an exact match to the text, does represent many of the same themes, for example, paranoia is a powerful tool for control and technology can be used to monitor our private lives. The fact that the multiple themes are presented primarily through action as opposed to narration or dialogue adds complexity to the video.						
Overall placement: Grade 8	Though the structure of the text is straightforward and chronological, the visual representation of complex themes, and lack of dialogue make this text most appropriate for eighth grade students.						

## Question Annotations & Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	
1	C, F	RL.8.2, RL.8.1	<p>A. Although Winston dims the telescreen, he does so to decrease the volume of the voice rather than to better his life.</p> <p>B. Winston conforms to other citizens by wearing “the uniform of the Party,” rather than distinguishing himself.</p> <p>C. This is a correct response. The description of the voice’s omnipresence and Winston’s physical fragility indicate the oppression he suffers.</p> <p>D. Winston’s opinion that only the Thought Police mattered is not supported by paragraph 3.</p> <p>E. Winston seems resigned to Big Brother’s presence as opposed to seeking its approval.</p> <p>F. This is a correct response. The description of Winston’s physical appearance as frail and fair contrasts to Big Brother’s strong, dark appearance.</p>
2	A	RL.8.6, RL.8.1	<p>A. This is the correct response. Winston seems to not be aware of the harshness of his conditions or how they could be different, but the reader is made more aware of harshness by the details shared by the author.</p> <p>B. Big Brother, not Winston, is curious to the point of snooping, and most readers would view Big Brother’s far-reaching presence into citizens’ lives is far from typical.</p> <p>C. Winston conveys very little opinion about the conditions of his life, and to the reader the intense scrutiny of his life seems unbearable.</p> <p>D. The reader is given almost no insight into Winston’s views about the conditions of his life, nor is there enough information to determine if his situation can change.</p>
3 Part A	A	RL.8.4, RL.8.1	<p>A. This is the correct response. The poster’s flapping “alternately covering and uncovering” conveys a restless feeling.</p> <p>B. Although the scene is described as having “no colour in anything,” “fitfully” describes the movement of the poster, rather than the general environment.</p> <p>C. Although the poster is described as “down at street level,” “fitfully” describes its movement, rather than its distance from Winston.</p> <p>D. Although the poster is described as “torn,” “fitfully” describes its movement, rather than its appearance.</p>

3 Part B	D		<p>A. Although “fitfully” describes an inanimate object, the anxious connotation of “fitfully” does not support a fanciful tone in this excerpt.</p> <p>B. “Fitfully” does not convey a respectful tone, and the poster would be secured better in place if small details were important to the Thought Police.</p> <p>C. “Fitfully” does not convey a judgmental tone, and the main character offers little opinion about his surroundings.</p> <p>D. This is the correct response. “Fitfully” supports an oppressive tone by conveying tenseness and anxiety.</p>
4 Part A	D	RL.8.2, RL.8.1	<p>A. Paragraph 1 establishes the setting rather than the role of the government.</p> <p>B. Although Paragraph 2 introduces Big Brother, it also further develops the setting, rather than focusing on the wide reach of the government.</p> <p>C. Although Paragraph 3 explains one Big Brother oversight, it also describes Winston, rather than focusing on the wide reach of the government.</p> <p>D. This is the correct response. Paragraph 5 most strongly develops the concept of totalitarianism by explaining multiple ways the government controls its citizens.</p>
4 Part B	You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized.		This sentence shows how the citizens’ behaviors were influenced at all times by fear of the government’s far-reaching control. The citizens are essentially prisoners.
5	C	RL.8.2, RL.8.1	<p>A. There is no evidence to support the idea of the Thought Police being a recent and unfamiliar development.</p> <p>B. Winston describes the patrol as “snooping” rather than pleasing.</p> <p>C. This is the correct response. The Thought Police matter because their presence cannot be discerned, while the patrols are clearly visible.</p> <p>D. The excerpt states that winter had just ended and does not indicate that patrols ever stop.</p>
6 Part A	C	RL.8.3, RL.8.1	<p>A. Although these are parts of Big Brother’s agenda, they do impact Winston’s life, like when the lift was not working as a result of “the economy drive in preparation for Hate Week.”</p> <p>B. Although these are aspects of Big Brother’s governance, there is no evidence that Winston supports them instead of just tolerating them.</p> <p>C. This is the correct response. These programs are another way Big Brother oppresses the citizens.</p> <p>D. These things are not rewards, as the result of Hate Week preparation is no electricity.</p>

<b>6 Part B</b>	<b>A</b>		<p>A. This is the correct response. These programs affect the daily lives of citizens and convey Big Brother’s powerful presence.</p> <p>B. Although these programs affect Winston, they affect him in the present with no indication of how they will affect his future.</p> <p>C. The word “hate” increases, rather than decreases, the reader’s concern for Winston.</p> <p>D. No positive aspects of Big Brother’s reign are presented.</p>
<b>7 Part A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>RL.8.2, RL.8.1</b>	<p>A. Although this statement is partially true in that Winston is in poor health, there is no textual evidence that his condition is a direct result of his environment, nor is this a central idea of the text.</p> <p>B. This is the correct response. The constant oversight of Big Brother and the impact on citizens are developed throughout the excerpt.</p> <p>C. Winston does not appreciate Big Brother’s role in his life, describing the patrols as “snooping.”</p> <p>D. Although the excerpt is set at the end of winter, there is no evidence that Winston is optimistic about changes Big Brother will implement.</p>
<b>7 Part B</b>	<b>B</b>		<p>A. Although the banners are included throughout the excerpt, their presence serves to develop Big Brother’s omnipresence, not Winston’s admiration.</p> <p>B. This is the correct response. The dilapidated condition of Winston’s building mirrors his health and his outlook on Big Brother.</p> <p>C. Although spring symbolizes new beginnings, there is no evidence that there will be positive changes for Winston ahead.</p> <p>D. Winston’s attitude is resigned rather than angry, as indicated by the fact, for example, that Winston thinks there is “no use trying the lift.”</p>
<b>8</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>RL.8.7, RL.8.1</b>	<p>A. The film excerpt shows Wilson listening to the teleprompter, but the speaker is not Big Brother.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. In the film, Wilson’s extreme deference to the teleprompter is highlighted, revealing the control Big Brother has over him.</p> <p>C. Though the film, in fact, shows some sparse living conditions, they are not the emphasis of Winston’s actions.</p> <p>D. Though Wilson does not appear to be in good health, his actions are crisp, implying that he does have some vitality to him.</p>

## Additional Resources for Assessment and CCSS Implementation

**Shift 1 – Complexity:** *Regular practice with complex text and its academic language*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts:  
[http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix\\_B.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf)
- See the Text Complexity Collection on [www.achievethecore.org](http://www.achievethecore.org)

**Shift 2 – Evidence:** *Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational*

- See Close Reading Exemplars for ways to engage students in close reading on  
<http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/close-reading-exemplars>
- See the Basal Alignment Project for examples of text-dependent questions:  
<http://www.achievethecore.org/basal-alignment-project>

**Shift 3 – Knowledge:** *Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts:  
[http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix\\_B.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf)

This mini-assessment can be used as an independent activity or as part of a follow-up to the accompanying sample lesson found on the following link:

<http://www.achievethecore.org/page/24/1984-by-george-orwell>