

How Not To Read a Book

America's greatest novelist and primary school dropout, Mark Twain, once stated, "Don't let schooling interfere with your education". What has modern English education done to the great authors and their literature? It bastardized masterpieces for young readers so they hate English and never connect the novel's message to society. It was purposeless to read *1984* if schooling turned you into Winston Smith--a government slave. Also, you wasted your time reading *The Chrysalids* if you decided to live in an echo chamber--a bigoted and prejudiced Waknukian. Unsurprisingly, Mark Twain is known as America's greatest author because school could not kill his passion.

Orwell did a great deed for humanity with his enlightened and glorious *1984*. Conveniently for governments, if English teachers completely botch teaching Orwell's ideas, then the government avoids criticism. These failures are easily seen in how Part 3, which English teachers reduce to being about government corruption. While true, students will leave the class under the impression that there is nothing to fear since our government is nothing like Ingsoc. Do people have to wait until their government begins persecuting people like Hitler did before they take Orwell seriously? The purpose of the chilling *1984* was to warn how hopeless life is in a totalitarian society, yet citizens accept their government subtly increasing its power. Moreover, Part 3 is full of critical allusions to education. To begin, in the middle of Winston's reeducation, he has already seen the worst of all possible worlds: starvation, beatings, and betrayal. Despite this, being taught by O'Brien is somehow worse. In the middle of O'Brien's pop-quiz about the war in which Oceania is involved, "Winston drew in his breath. He opened his mouth to speak and then did not speak. He could not take his eyes away from the dial" (311). Before beginning his answer, O'Brien inserts: "The truth, please, Winston. YOUR truth. Tell me what you think you remember" (311). This uncharacteristic and hesitant moment from Winston is due to the dial. It controls Winston's thoughts in the same way grades control student's works. Students fear English since they are limited by their teachers' beliefs. No one will risk marks in this society for their opinion. Here, Winston, the student, feared speaking his truth until O'Brien, the teacher, let him. Nevertheless, the student once again is not allowed to speak his own truth. Students will recognize this conflict but never make this connection because English teachers cherry-pick quotations for 'analysis'. Additionally, after Winston finally bowed down to his teacher, O'Brien, he metaphorically passed high school English. Afterwards,, he recalls the lessons he learnt from O'Brien. For the first time in ages, he cracks open a diary like before, but "[t]he pencil felt thick and awkward in his fingers. He began to write down the thoughts that came into his head. He wrote first in large clumsy capitals: FREEDOM IS SLAVERY. Then almost without a pause he wrote beneath it: TWO AND TWO MAKE FIVE" (349). Long ago, when Winston was innocent and free like an elementary schooler, he was free to write anything in his diary. After being indoctrinated by O'Brien, Winston only writes about these newly accepted lies. Diaries were meant to document individual ideas, free from outside sources, not to regurgitate ideas forced on to them. Why does Winston write like a high schooler that appeals to his overlord teachers? Of course, it should be obvious, the Ministry of Love is a cruel parody of modern education. O'Brien admitted himself that they only bring thought criminals here to cure them, which is exactly what our education does. English teachers do this especially with *1984*. They scratch the surface of government tyranny; redacted topics not covered in class and not to

be discussed in essays include Orwell's critical portrayal of education, government, and revolutionary movements. Every fact taught must be factual since teachers always claim facticity. Every government-approved source must be legitimate because it is government. Being a free writer requires a free thinker and it is that thinker that the government successfully eradicates as students commonly suppress their own ideas and write to please their teachers. Unsurprisingly, the younger generation will never oppose the government, even if it becomes a dictatorship. School has failed Orwell.

Intelligence is deemed good only if that intelligence aligns with society's views. Opposing thoughts are deleted and demonized as 'thoughts of the devil'. Teachers reduce the discrimination felt by the mutants to racism. If John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids* condemns racism, why is every character one colour? In reality, the author criticized society for valuing emotion above knowledge. For instance, after David met with Sophie, he tended to his splinter, and while struggling to tie a rag with one hand, he muttered that it would be easier if he had another hand. Offended and infuriated, Joseph Storm made a ridiculous strawman, scolding David, "Calling upon the Devil to give you another hand... Were you, or were you not, expressing dissatisfaction with the form of the body God gave you — the form in His own image?" (9) Joseph Storm's emotional connection to religion overpowered his logic and caused this outlandish leap of faith. If Wyndham's message was about racism, why did he not make Joseph a racist who belittled a Black man for being a deviation to a White man? The simple answer is that Joseph is actually a bigot. English teachers never question their assumption. They would also never ponder that the novel could be about McCarthy's war on free thinkers instead of racism. Joseph's intolerance for unorthodox ideas is the definition of McCarthyism. Another censored topic not taught in school is John Wyndham's message regarding religion. Because of his strong religious faith, Joseph's son David suffered extreme punishment. Why does Joseph Storm's character resemble an infamous Russian communist? Anyway, teachers will somehow twist this evidence of bigotry into evidence of racism. Instead of taking note of this connection to Stalin, students leave this section with an instinct to create strawman arguments.

If racism is central to *The Chrysalids*, why does the Sealand Woman emphasize cultural or intellectual differences rather than physical differences. The telepaths' new family is the Sealanders, people who think differently. Following Rosalind's shock, the Sealander woman explained, "[f]or ours is a superior variant, and we are only just beginning. We are able to think-together and understand one another as they never could...we do not mechanistically attempt to hammer ourselves into geometrical patterns of society, or policy" (80). Initially, the telepaths believed that the Fringes would welcome them until they realized the same discrimination exists there. It should be clear that telepathy symbolizes the power to produce clearer and better thoughts, which neither the Fringes nor Waknuk welcome. However, the Sealanders embrace this gift. In other words, there are legitimate debates and conversations can happen since different ideas are welcomed and considered. However, English teachers will wreck this work and claim that the Sealanders are racists who consider themselves "superior variants."

Apparently, freedom of thought is racist because the Sealanders wish to protect their race or people. Freedom of thought creates superior and freer societies. Nevertheless, students will only learn that freedom of speech is racist. Free discussion is now suppressed so people can live in their echo chambers by outing others as racists. Ironically, the proponents of anti-racism are

myopic since they only see colour, not character. What is even more ironic is that a novel about free thought is reduced in classrooms to a novel that agrees with society's views.