George Orwell’s

1984

STUDY GUIDE
OCTOBER 21 – NOVEMBER 15, 2015
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DIRECTED BY HALLIE GORDON

2015/16 SEASON steppenwolf for YOUNG ADULTS
DEAR TEACHERS:

THANK YOU FOR JOINING STEPPENWOLF FOR YOUNG ADULTS FOR OUR 2015/16 SEASON. FOLLOW US THROUGH ONE CLASSIC STORY AND ONE CUTTING EDGE EXPERIENCE INVESTIGATING THE QUESTION, HOW DOES YOUR PAST INFORM YOUR FUTURE?

In our production of 1984, we encounter a Winston haunted by images from his past: his father leaving the family when he was eight, presumably at the hand of Big Brother. As Winston rebels against the totalitarian world around him, he is forced to confront his past and future, examining how a constant threat of war shaped him as a young person and what he is willing to fight for.

We are calling our second show, The Compass (February 24-March 12) an experience rather than a play. Meet The Compass, a brand-new app aimed at young people that does the heavy lifting on your daily thinking. The Compass is a groundbreaking, live, interactive performance that explores the intersection of technology and decision-making. This experience will engage your students in new ways, never before tried with Steppenwolf for Young Adults. Please see page 22 for more information on The Compass.

Also, please join us in welcoming our new Education Assistant, Jared Bellot. Before coming to Steppenwolf last fall as our Education Fellow, Jared worked as a middle school teacher for a public school outside Boston. Jared brings to the position diverse experiences as a producer, arts education advocate, and mentor to young adults. We look forward to introducing him to you this year.

We look forward to having you at the theater!

Hallie, Megan and Jared

Hallie Gordon
Artistic and Educational Director
Megan Shuchman
Associate Education Director
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WHAT IF ONE THOUGHT COST YOU EVERYTHING?

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WHAT IF ONE THOUGHT COST YOU EVERYTHING?
Adult Winston staggers out of bed to join the state-mandated morning exercise routine. As Winston begins his day, the world of Oceania begins to unfold around him as ‘the Telescreen’ keeps citizens updated on the never-ending war and reminds them to watch out for Eurasian spies.

Midday, Winston’s joins others for the ‘Two Minutes Hate’ in which the Telescreen projects the enemy, Goldstein, speaking out against the Party. While citizens yell and scream ‘traitor’ and ‘rat’ at Goldstein’s image, we meet Julia, a seemingly loyal citizen who falls to her knees out of respect when Oceania’s national anthem plays. After work, Winston drinks Victory Gin at the Chestnut Tree Café, his neighborhood bar. While listening to news reports in the background of more air strikes and terrorist attacks, he almost forgets to toast Big Brother before downing his drink.

Young Winston is being carried in his father’s arm after describing his terrible fright over encountering a rat with horrible fur, a large tail and scary teeth.

Winston finds his way to Charrington’s shop, where he purchases a piece of antique glass and a diary. Together, Charrington and Winston remember olden days, when church bells used to ring out across the city; now, they only hear the sound of sirens and air raids.

Winston’s neighbor, Parsons, asks if Winston can accompany his son to a public execution. Little Tommy invites him to his house later that evening. Winston, now a loyal Party member, drinks his Victory Gin and follows instructions via the Telescreen hidden behind a painting.

O’Brien approaches Winston at work and invites him to his house later that evening. Hiding away together in Charrington’s shop, Winston and Julia’s love fuels their desire to become radicals against the Party. They commit to never betraying one another, no matter what outcome awaits them.

Young Winston seeks comfort in his father’s arms when he awakes from a nightmare filled with rats.

Winston is imprisoned with his former co-workers, Ampleforth and Parsons, both of whom are also accused of betraying the Party in one way or another. Winston quickly learns that O’Brien deceived him, setting him up to speak out against the Party and costing him his freedom. O’Brien uses physical and psychological torture to get Winston to confess and pledge allegiance to Big Brother once again. When Winston does not fully break—refusing to betray Julia—O’Brien plays on his biggest fear: he is taken to Room 101. Finally having reached his breaking point, Winston betrays Julia.

On the train to work the next day, Winston begins to start questioning the Party, wondering to himself, ‘Until [citizens] become conscious, they will never rebel!’ At another ‘Two Minutes of Hate’ gathering, Winston and Julia share a meaningful exchange and Julia slips Winston a note with the words, ‘I love you.’ They make plans to meet outside the city in the Prole District, where they are alone and away from the watchful eye of the Thought Police. As they begin to fall in love, Winston and Julia revel in the freedom to express themselves however they want.

O’Brien approaches Winston at work and invites him to his house later that evening. Hiding away together in Charrington’s shop, Winston and Julia’s love fuels their desire to become radicals against the Party. They commit to never betraying one another, no matter what outcome awaits them.
MEGAN SHUCHMAN: What initially drew you to 1984?

HALLIE GORDON: I was originally drawn to the question, ‘what if we lived in a world, in which we had no freedom of thought?’ And then, as I reread the book, I saw how memory played such an important part in how Winston becomes. There is something very interesting in how many times Winston goes back to his childhood to try and normalize a way of life that he slowly believes no longer exists and perhaps never existed. In my production, there will be an adult Winston and a Younger Winston. When Younger Winston appears, it’s a reminder of who Winston could have been.

MS: How is that role of memory shaping your production?

HG: At the center of 1984 is a man trying to hold on to his youth and the life that he had before he became a man. It made me question, ‘What is it like to grow up in a constant state of war? And how does that map out who you are, what your personality becomes, what you give up on, what you believe in, and how humane you are, given the circumstances around you?’

MS: Can you describe the world we will see on stage?

HG: In the book and in the play, the Party talks about wiping away your memories and throwing them away. They change and edit history, censoring what the record books show. I am interested in visually representing the idea of throwing away memories and facts. So I thought, ‘Where do we often keep memories and keepsakes?’ In a drawer.

MS: You’ve said this is Winston’s coming of age story. How so?

HG: Throughout the book, there is a backdrop of Winston being haunted by his childhood. In the forefront are the political aspects of the world surrounding him, but in the backdrop is Winston’s inner conflict between who he and his family members were before war and who they became afterwards. In my production, I want to put Winston’s emotional turmoil out front. Winston is struggling to believe in something better although there is no evidence it can happen.

MS: What can you tell us about Winston and Julia’s relationship?

HG: Winston and Julia really fall in love with one another. Julia’s affair with Winston is a political act for her. You’re not supposed to be a sexualized person in the world of 1984, the Party does not allow it. Julia is really bold and really brave and by falling in love with Winston, she gives him hope. Love is the hope. For Winston, finally life becomes worth living when he’s with Julia.

MS: What does it mean that Winston is unsuccessful?

HG: It means it’s going to be the hardest thing in the world to do. There’s nothing easy about standing up for what you believe in. Ever. It’s just not easy but don’t let that make you give up. You cannot create change if you are silent.

MS: Thank you!
George Orwell, who would’ve turned one hundred and twelve years old this year, continues to be one of the most celebrated dystopian authors of the twentieth century. A journalist-turned-writer, he spent his life advocating against the spread of totalitarianism during and after World War II. His talent for politically-relevant allegory was unparalleled, and it is no coincidence that his novels *Animal Farm* and *1984* are still among the most quoted works of modern literature.

Despite being published over sixty-six years ago, *1984* remains relevant today: technology announcements contain plenty of Orwellian references; newscasters nickname totalitarian leaders “Big Brother” and compare surveillance agencies to Thought Police; and although we don’t yet wake up to a murmur of telescreens, our smartphones might soon become them. Our world is living proof that Orwell’s cautionary tale has indeed survived the test of time.

Given its iconic status, you might think you know everything there is to know about *1984*, but don’t be so convinced! Take a look at these facts and make sure you are doubleplusready to explore the Steppenwolf for Young Adults’ production.

### 1. THE POWER OF THREE:

The three fictional states in the novel aren’t that fictional. Orwell modelled Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia after the UK and the US, Soviet Union and China, respectively.

> “THE SPLITTING UP OF THE WORLD INTO THREE GREAT SUPERSTATES WAS AN EVENT WHICH COULD BE AND INDEED WAS FORESEEN BEFORE THE MIDDLE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. THE FIGHTING, WHEN THERE IS ANY, TAKES PLACE ON THE VAGUE FRONTIERS WHOSE WHEREABOUTS THE AVERAGE MAN CAN ONLY GUESS AT. BUT IN ONE COMBINATION OR ANOTHER, WE ARE PERMANENTLY AT WAR.”
>  
>  
> – GOLDBERG, *1984*

### 2. WHAT’S IN A NAME?

The original title of the novel wasn’t at all as catchy and had no numbers. For a while, the manuscript was called *The Last Man in Europe*. The author decided to change it when his publisher suggested to pick something simpler and, therefore, easier to sell.

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**PLAYED BY ADAM POSS & MATTHEW ABRAHAM:**

**WINSTON**: our protagonist, Winston recognizes the dangers in the Party’s tactics and the lack of freedom Oceania’s citizens experience. Haunted by memories of his own father leaving under threat from the party, Winston is willing to risk a lot to fight for what he believes in.

**PLAYED BY MANNY BUCKLEY:**

**PARSONS**: also a very loyal citizen, Parsons believes so deeply in his government that he is grateful when he is arrested for thought crime, ‘before it is too late’.

**PLAYED BY TYRONE PHILLIPS:**

**AMPLEFORTH**: in love with language and poetry, Ampleforth mourns the loss of words as a result of the Newspeak dictionary being created.

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**PLAYED BY DANNY GRIMES:**

**CHARRINGTON**: shop-owner and keeper of antiques, Charrington has a love for history but also protects himself and his own interests in the end.

**TILLOTSON**: the first Minstru co-worker to be arrested during the play, Tillotson represents just how quickly the Party can turn on its own members.

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**PLAYED BY ATRA ASDOU:**

**JULIA**: brave and bold, Julia is not afraid to speak her mind and go after what she wants.

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**PLAYED BY LANCE BAKER:**

**O’BRIEN**: an Inner Party Member who has been watching Winston for many years.

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**PLAYED BY ELIZABETH BIRNKRANT:**

**SYME**: a very loyal citizen and strict follower of the rules, Syme believes in the cause of distilling down language and tries never to have a disloyal thought against her government.
Orwell started thinking about the novel way before actually sitting down to write it. On May 18th, 1944, five years before 1984 was published, he sent a letter to Noel Wilmett in which he included the famous phrase "two and two could become five if the [dictator] wished it."

Can the pen really be mightier than the sword? For Orwell, it came close. The author wrote most of the novel while terminally sick with tuberculosis. Editing, rewriting and typing made him weaker by the hour. The character of Winston, who is plagued by a choking cough and can barely finish his morning exercise, is in strikingly similar physical condition to Orwell's at the time of writing the novel.

"SMITH, 6079! ALL OCEANIA DEPENDS ON EACH OF US KEEPING FIT AND AT THE READY. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN TOMORROW'S MORNING EXERTHICS, I SHALL REPORT IT TO MINIHEALTH. IN THE MEANTIME, NO POINT IN RUINING IT FOR THE REST OF US."

- EXERCISE INSTRUCTOR, "1984"

In the world of the play, the characters are constantly being watched by the Big Brother through multiple telescreens inside their homes and workplaces. To find a modern equivalent of the telescreen, you don’t have to search too long – just tag a friend in a Facebook picture! Facebook uses a software called DeepFace which, according to ExtremeTech, recognizes faces with 97.25% accuracy – operating in a scarily familiar way to the Telescreen.

"THE N.S.A., SPECIFICALLY, TARGETS THE COMMUNICATIONS OF EVERYONE. IT INGESTS THEM BY DEFAULT."

- EDWARD SNOWDEN

"WE LIVE FROM BIRTH TO DEATH UNDER THE EYE OF THE THOUGHT POLICE. EVEN WHEN YOU ARE ALONE YOU CAN NEVER BE SURE YOU ARE ALONE."

- GOLDSTEIN, "1984"

Orwell spent several years working as a BBC reporter, and the workplace clearly left a lasting impression: the famous torture room in the novel – Room 101 – is inspired by a BBC Broadcasting room of the same number.

"THE THING IN ROOM 101 IS THE WORST THING IN THE WORLD. THAT VARIES FROM INDIVIDUAL TO INDIVIDUAL. IT MAY BE BURIAL ALIVE, OR DEATH BY FIRE, OR DROWNING, OR IMPALEMENT OR FIFTY OTHER DEATHS. THERE ARE CASES WHERE IT IS SOME QUITE TRIVIAL THING, NOT EVEN FATAL."

- O'BRIEN, "1984"

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"WHEN I TALK ABOUT THE FUTURE, IT IS NOT THE PARTY'S FUTURE, BUT YOURS. I AM TALKING ABOUT YOUR OWN DEATH."

- O'BRIEN, "1984"

"FREEDOM IS THE FREEDOM TO SAY THAT TWO PLUS TWO EQUALS FOUR."

- WINSTON, "1984"
The year is 1984. The world is not as it was. Three world superstates fight for control, a new language is being introduced, and the people of Oceania live in a total surveillance society. Four Ministries are in complete control, maintaining power and order by any means necessary.

Inspired by what he believed the world would reflect in the year 1984, George Orwell created a setting replete with dystopian undertones and a government called INGSOC that has too much power. Take a look at the map for a better understanding of the setting, terminology and structures that make up the world of 1984.

**THE MINISTRIES (ALL PYRAMID SHAPED):**

1. **MINISTRY OF PEACE**—this ministry is responsible for the defense of Oceania and governs its armed forces, specifically the army and navy. Contrary to its name, the Ministry of Peace is responsible for keeping Oceania perpetually in a state of war. Its slogan? “War is peace.”

2. **MINISTRY OF TRUTH (MINITRU)**—responsible for the alterations of historical events (propaganda) to fulfill the desires of the Party. Additionally, the Ministry of Truth, where Winston Smith works, is responsible for introducing Newspeak to the population.

3. **MINISTRY OF PLENTY (MINIPLENTY)**—responsible for controlling Oceania’s planned economy and rationing out goods, food, and supplies to its citizens. The Ministry of Plenty is essential in convincing the people of Oceania that they are in a state of perpetual poverty and scarcity, and to be grateful for what the government is providing.

4. **MINISTRY OF LOVE (MINILOVE)**—part of Oceania’s interior ministry system, the Ministry of Love upholds and re-enforces loyalty to Big Brother through a variety of unorthodox methods. The Thought Police are part of this ministry, and carry out the work of MinLove to ensure loyalty from all citizens.

**OTHER PROMINENT LOCATIONS:**

1. **VICTORY MANSIONS**—the apartment complex where Winston lives.

2. **CHESTNUT TREE CAFÉ**—a café frequented by Winston and his colleagues that serves only Victory Gin.

3. **MINISTRY OF TRUTH (MINITRU)**—a beautiful grassy field and a place Winston sees only in his dreams. Julia and Winston meet for their first private rendezvous in a place that reminds Winston of The Golden Country.

4. **ROOM 101**—located in the Ministry of Love, Room 101 is a tool used by the Party to torture prisoners with their worst nightmares and break down any resistance to the principles of Oceania.

**WORLD MAP:**

1. **OCEANIA**—one of three world superpowers and the setting of our play. Oceania controls the most land, including North and South America, Great Britain, Australia and the southern part of Africa. At the start of the play Oceania is at war with Eurasia.

2. **EURASIA**—a landmass that comprises northern Asia and all of Europe. At the start of the play Eurasia is at war with Oceania.

3. **EASTASIA**—a landmass that comprises all of China and the southern and eastern parts of Asia. At the start of the play Eastasia is an ally of Oceania during its war against Eurasia.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:**

1. **GOLDSTEIN**—a former high-ranking official, Goldstein is now believed to be the head of the resistance and leading a revolution against Oceania’s ruling Party.

2. **THOUGHT POLICE (THINKPOL)**—officers responsible for eliminating thoughtcrime by any means necessary (spies, helicopters, surveillance, etc).

3. **THOUGHTCRIME (CRIMETHINK)**—to have any idea that opposes the beliefs of Oceania’s ruling party, INGSOC.

4. **FACECRIME**—to allow a thoughtcrime to be visibly recognizable on your face.

5. **PROLES**—from the name Proletariat, the Proles represent Oceania’s largest and poorest class of people. Often referred to as ‘animals,’ the Proles are considered inferior and unimportant and thus their actions are mostly unsupervised by the Party.

6. **PROLE DISTRICT**—similar to public housing today, the Prole District is where the Proles live.

7. **TELESCREEN**—a two way screen that is inside every Party member’s house; this ensures that each Party member is under constant surveillance and monitoring.

8. **TWO MINUTES OF HATE**—daily televised moments of crimethink that show images of revolt and enemies of the Party, such as Goldstein; citizens are expected and encouraged to boo, scream, and hiss during these two minutes, which ensures citizens know who the enemy is and what happens to traitors of Oceania.

9. **NEWSPEAK**—official language of Oceania, which is being distilled down as much as possible.
UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE IN ORWELL’S 1984 DYSTOPIA
When we text and communicate using shortcuts (such as abbreviations or emoticons) things can get lost in translation. Write about a time you attempted to express yourself through texting and your message got muddied along the way: the receiver of your text or FB message or tweet misunderstood what you were attempting to say because of how you said it.

A word contains its opposite in itself. Take “good.” If you have a word like “good,” why do you need “bad?” “Ungood” will do just as well – better, because it’s an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of “good,” what sense is there having a whole string of useless words like “splendid” or “fantastic?” “Plusgood” covers the meaning, or “doubleplusgood” if you want something stronger still.

-SYME, WINSTON’S CO-WORKER AT THE MINISTRY OF TRUTH

In 1984 George Orwell makes many predictions about what the future holds: three superstates fighting for power and control, a constant state of war, overwhelming poverty and a language that has been distilled down to ensure citizens can no longer express dissent or opposition.

The distillation of a language to fewer and fewer words is a key strategy in the Oceania government’s control of its people. The implementation of Newspeak, the official language of Oceania, makes two things possible: first, all language becomes politically correct as freedom of speech is deliberately censored. Second, by intentionally limiting a person’s ability to express their feelings and ideas, it becomes impossible to express opposition to the ruling Party.

In a modern context—although created for purposes of easing communication rather than controlling citizens—texting often mimics Newspeak by, as the character Syme would say, cutting words “down to the bone.” Through the use of emojis, emoticons and text abbreviations (lol, omg, smh, etc.) a person can express oneself without ever having to say, or type, a single complete word.

Texting helps a person convey thought with rapid speed through the use of shortcuts, but is anything lost as a result? What is the cost when we distill down language? In the case of 1984, Winston betrays his true feelings for the first time by expressing his inner thoughts in a private journal. Free from having to use Newspeak, Winston taps into the thoughts closest to his heart. When we text today, what do we sacrifice for the sake of being efficient?

WRITING PROMPT: 25 MINUTES TOTAL

When we text and communicate using shortcuts (such as abbreviations or emoticons) things can get lost in translation. Write about a time you attempted to express yourself through texting and your message got muddied along the way: the receiver of your text or FB message or tweet misunderstood what you were attempting to say because of how you said it.

 DISCUSSION: After writing about this experience, answer the following questions:

1. A great deal of verbal communication relies on inflection, tonal quality, and delivery. How was your tone misrepresented by not verbally expressing yourself?
2. How was your word choice affected? Did you find yourself making different word choices than you might have if speaking to this person face-to-face?
3. Did communicating in this way allow you to express yourself more honestly? Why or why not?
4. If you were granted a ‘Do Over’ would you choose to rewrite the message or would you choose to communicate with the person verbally or in-person? What could make your message better understood?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In 1984, the character Syme states, “In the end, the whole notion of goodness and badness will be covered by only six words – in reality, only one word. Don’t you see the beauty of that?” What do you believe to be the pros and cons of distilling vocabulary to one word in the place of many?

2. In 2015, a person can express their current state of mind through an emoticon, such as a smiley face or its opposite, a frown face. How does this type of technology-driven communication affect the way people communicate verbally and in-person? How does this example align itself with Newspeak, and how does it differ?

3. A good citizen of Oceania is ‘pure in word and deed.’ According to the ruling Party, how might Newspeak help differentiate between good citizens and bad citizens?
Spies, and the war, of course.” Children of Hitler Youth were as invested in their organization. In his speech to the Stalin Society in February 2003, former Hitler Youth member Henry Mettlemann described his participation in it as something that used to make him proud. Unlike his poor family members who couldn’t afford to spend money on clothes, Hitler Youth provided him with two brand new shirts. The movement’s true mission didn’t preoccupy young Mettlemann: “I didn’t question it,” he said. “We were being prepared for fighting a war.”

Children of Oceania take their duty to the Party more seriously than adults do, willing to sever familial ties in order to capture the enemy. Parsons’s daughter doesn’t hesitate to turn in her own father in when she hears him utter a rebellious phrase in his sleep: “[She] listened at the keyhole,” he tells Winston in prison, “Snitched off to the patrols the very next day.” Regardless of the threat to his life, he still beams with pride: “Shows how sharp she is.” Such blind obedience to leaders continues to be present in modern warfare. Ishmael Beah, a child soldier in Sierra Leone, was recruited into the state army in 1993, when he was only 13. In an interview with CBS News, Beah shared that his and other children’s lives were at stake at the time of recruitment, and they had no choice but to join. Once a soldier, he was introduced to a life steeped in drugs and senseless violence: “Whoever the commander said [was the enemy], there were no questions asked,” Beah said.
Initially a voluntary organization, Hitler Youth became the single legal and most populous group with compulsory membership in 1934, taking over the rest of the youth groups in the country.

Children recruited into the army had no choice but to join: their membership often depended on siblings and family members whose lives the soldiers threatened to take if the kids disobeyed.

Hitler Youth aimed to recruit children at a young age for two primary reasons: their physical fitness for wartime activities and their susceptibility to psychological conditioning.

Both the rebel and the government armies saw children as a perfect target for recruitment. Not only were they easily coerced with the promise of shelter and support, but also were most prone to adopt their respective army’s political doctrine and belief system.

After the German army was forced to surrender in May 1945, members of the Hitler Youth continued fighting in small guerrilla groups known as “Werewolves.”

The Sierra Leone Army, whose official aim was subduing the rebels, engaged in indiscriminating violence and perpetual looting which made the Rebels and SLA close to indistinguishable.

The Young Adult Council is a unique program for passionate and motivated high school students who wish to learn the inner-workings of professional theater from the most celebrated artists in the city. In addition to face time with these leading professionals, Council members attend the best plays in Chicago, learn how to analyze and speak about these plays and lead events for their peers around Steppenwolf productions in hopes of inspiring a new generation of theatre enthusiasts and practitioners.

Applications are available on March 1, 2016.

Like the Steppenwolf Young Adult Council on Facebook! Or visit steppenwolf.org/youngadultcouncil for more information.

Foundation support is provided by The Siragusa Foundation.
THE MEMORY HOLE:
A POST FIELD TRIP ACTIVITY

Activity created by Jared Bellot

ACTIVITY TIME: 35 MINUTES

STEP ONE:
Have students reflect on their recent trip to see our Steppenwolf for Young Adults’ production of 1984. Ask students to choose one moment from the play that was most memorable for them and describe that element in as much detail as possible. What color lights do they remember? What emotions? What props?

EXAMPLE: Young Winston watched his father pack a suitcase to hurriedly leave the house, saying as he departed, ‘We shouldn’t have trusted them. I said so, didn’t I?’

I remember snowflakes swirling around Young Winston as he and his father were unsure when they would see one another again.

STEP TWO:
Based on the details from their free write, have students take a piece of paper or use the space below, and create a detailed visual representation of their memory. Encourage students to represent this memory in whatever way they choose – abstractly, literally, through the use of color, image, text, symbols, even collage, etc.

STEP THREE:
Spread out the completed visual images around the room. Allow students to walk around the room for a few minutes, taking in their classmates’ work. As students explore, guide them to think about what details they notice about the images, if they recognize any of their classmates’ memories and if seeing others’ images affects their own memories.

After a few moments, ask everyone to stop and stand in front of someone else’s art work. After students notice the art work in front of them for one minute, have them alter, add to or change this memory from the show based on their own memory of the production.

NOTE: The students may not know the intent of the original artist, and that’s okay!

STEP FOUR:
Ask students to return to their original image and reflect on their altered art work. Ask students the following questions as a silent or group reflection:

• What changes were made to your image?
• How did it feel to see your memory altered by someone else?
• Does it change the memory you had from the play to see how someone altered it? Does it add anything? Detract from what you created? Why or why not?
• What was it like to alter someone’s memory? Did you feel as if you were intruding?
• In our own society, where do we see memories being altered or rewritten?

In our production of 1984, the fallibility of memory plays a major role in the unfolding of events. In life, Winston is haunted by memories of his youth. At work, Winston is tasked with altering state sponsored memory. Ultimately, Winston’s own memories are re-remembered for him by the likes of Big Brother.

Who controls memory? How do our personal experiences and biases color our own remembering of the past? Are our memories, as Winston states in the play, “involuntary”? In this activity, designed for after your field trip to the show, students will have the opportunity to explore these questions and the role of memory in their own lives through an interactive art making experience.
For our second show of the season, Steppenwolf for Young Adults will be trying something we’ve never done before, and we need you to make it work. The Compass is a groundbreaking, live, interactive performance that puts students in the driver’s seat, and asks YOU, the audience, to join a jury of your peers in exploring the intersection of technology and decision-making. For this play, we’re asking you to step up and speak up like never before. You will be asked to think. You will be asked to persuade others of your opinion. You will be asked to determine the fate of the people standing on stage. How it ends all depends on you and your peers. This is not your typical SYA play. This is an SYA experience.

The play will be devised, which means the script doesn’t even exist yet – Michael Rohd (the director/devisor) and the cast are collaborating to create it, even as you read this! The show has been in development over the course of the past two seasons. “We’ve been interviewing experts, conducting cross-generational workshops, inviting other artists to respond to the theme with their own short works—all of this research has pushed and pulled at our core concept in key ways” says Rohd of the process. “The show has been truly impacted by these interactions and encounters, which I find exciting.” But the play won’t be complete until you add your voice the day of the show. So get ready to make some decisions.

Both 1984 and The Compass explore the theme of decision making in our lives. In 1984, we see a dystopian government that controls how its citizens think and choice is a thing of the past. In The Compass, we will explore the repercussions of what happens when we voluntarily give something else the power to think for us. Both of these plays ask you to examine your own moral compass in deciding what’s just, and what’s not.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT IN PREPARATION FOR THE COMPASS

1) What are the pros and cons of living in a world where every question was asked to and answered by your mobile device?


3) Is decision making a science? Can a machine make a better decision than a human? Can anyone make better choices for you than you can for yourself?
FILM RESOURCES

Released on December 14, 1984, eight months after Winston begins his diary in the novel, this film adaptation features actors John Hurt and Richard Burton as Winston and O’Brien respectively.

BBC FOUR: A LIFE IN PICTURES. BBC DOCUMENTARY. 2003.
This film focuses on George Orwell’s biography and writing career. Because no real footage or recording of the author exists, BBC created this feature, basing the script verbatim on Orwell’s letters, essays, novels and interviews. Available to stream on YouTube.

An in-depth exploration of the novel, this film offers a closer look at the world of 1984 in the context of the author’s writing process. Available to stream on YouTube.

ONLINE RESOURCE

WARCHILD PROJECT.
This charity is committed to providing education to children born and raised in conflict situations. The website for the organization features individual stories, background into the value of education in warzones and the project’s unique approach to providing support to children in need. warchild.org

WHAT GEORGE ORWELL GOT RIGHT IN ‘1984’
Short video from HuffPost Online featuring the many ways the novel continues to resonate with our current society. Huffingtonpost.com

COLLECTION OF LETTERS

ORWELL, GEORGE. A LIFE IN LETTERS, 2010.
This collection of George Orwell’s letters contains the one the author wrote to a Noel Wiimett in which he shared his views on post-World War II politics and revealed several plot points he later incorporated into 1984. Available on Amazon.
The Scene is a special opportunity for high school students to score an affordable ticket to a Steppenwolf production, meet Chicago’s most celebrated artists and connect with other teens who are passionate about theater. Each ticket includes dinner and post-show discussion with the actors.

TICKETS ARE $10 – $15 (CAN ONLY BE USED DURING THE TEEN EVENT SERIES)

1984
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7
AT 7:30PM (post-show)

THE COMPASS
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27
AT 7:30PM (post-show)

All performances take place at 1650 N Halsted Street
Must present student ID at door.
Purchase tickets at the door 30 minutes before the show, or in advance by calling Steppenwolf Audience Services at 312-335-1650. Use code 20753.

Questions? Please contact Steppenwolf for Young Adults Education Assistant Jared Bellot at 312-654-5643 or jbellot@steppenwolf.org.

Foundation support is provided by The Siragusa Foundation.
Devised and directed by Michael Rohd
February 24 – March 12, 2016

Do you constantly second guess yourself? Do you always procrastinate? How would you feel if you never had to make a decision again? Meet The Compass, a brand-new app aimed at young people that does the heavy lifting on your daily thinking. The Compass is a groundbreaking, live, interactive performance that explores the intersection of technology and decision-making. Join us as we (and you) navigate the question: When someone else, or something else, tells you what to do, what exactly are you responsible for? This is not a play. It is an experience.

For more information steppenwolf.org/sya | 312-335-1650

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