

1984 and the Issue of Privacy

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 9-12

Curriculum Focus: Literature

Lesson Duration: Four to five class periods

Student Objectives

- Discuss modern privacy issues and the justifications and arguments behind privacy violations.
- Research the issues behind modern privacy violations.
- Create and perform skits illustrating these violations and issues.
- Write paragraphs expressing their understanding of these violations and issues.

Materials

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Great Books: 1984*
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- Introducing Winston Smith, INGSOC, Oceania, Eurasia, and East Asia
- Big Brother, Goldstein, and Organized Hatred in the Second Half of the 20th Century
- Loss of Privacy: The Prophecy of "1984"
- *1984*, by George Orwell
- Computers with Internet access
- Pens and paper

Procedures

1. Ask students whether they ever feel that their privacy is threatened by the government, corporations, the media, or other entities. Have they ever had any experiences in which they felt that their rights to privacy were violated? Has anyone ever been in a situation that is reminiscent of a situation that occurs in *1984*?
2. Write the word "privacy" at the top of the board and then draw a two-column chart with the headings "*1984*" and "Today." Have students copy the chart onto their own papers. Ask students to contribute examples of privacy restrictions in the novel and in modern society and write their ideas in the appropriate columns. A sample chart follows.

1984	Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telescreens are everywhere, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FBI surveillance

<p>except where the Proles live and work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workplace monitoring – Winston can't look at a note on his desk or dwell too long on a single document.• Thought Police interpret people's actions and ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corporations collect data, Internet privacy issues• Drug testing at the workplace or school• Employers monitoring employees' e-mails, phone calls, or facial expressions and voice intonations• Spies
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Students will probably mention the issue of being monitored by teachers and parents, being prohibited from visiting certain Web sites, having their lockers or bedrooms inspected, and so forth. Explain that these issues differ from privacy issues in our society because parents are generally accorded the right to monitor their children's behaviors, and the courts have determined that schools are places in which students relinquish some of their constitutional rights. The focus of the lesson should stay on privacy issues in society rather than in the specialized societies of home and school.

3. Divide the class into groups of about four students. Ask each group to choose one, or assign each group a specific privacy issue. Instruct groups to conduct Internet and print research for current privacy-related issues and debates. Students should be able to answer the following questions:
 - What privacy issue are you researching?
 - In what ways is privacy allegedly being violated?
 - What are the justifications for this violation of privacy?
 - Who is implementing the privacy-invading measures: the government, corporations, or both?
 - How does this issue affect our society?
 - What individuals, groups, or organizations are involved in this issue?
4. Have groups prepare five-minute skits that should include a variety of viewpoints and a reference to *1984*. Group members should portray characters discussing and debating the group's specific privacy-related issue. Each scene should be no more than five minutes long.

Here's a sample scenario: An employee of a large company has been fired. The reason is that she arrived late too often. But she recently discovered that her boss had read some of her e-mail messages in which she mentioned him in an unflattering manner. The characters include the fired employee, the employee's lawyer, the boss, and the manager who wrote the company's e-mail policy. Either the employee or her lawyer would make a statement comparing the scenario to something that might have happened in *1984*. Or

the boss or manager could explain how the company's policy differs from those described in 1984.

5. Have students perform their skits. Have the class briefly summarize the issues raised in the skit.
6. After all groups have performed, instruct students to write paragraphs that answer the following questions:
 - What do you think is the most important privacy-related issue in today's society?
 - How does this issue affect you?
 - Are the privacy-related themes in 1984 still relevant today? Provide examples from the novel and from your experiences in and knowledge of today's society.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students displayed exemplary effort in class discussions and note taking, group work, creation of skit, participation in performance and written assignment.
- **2 points:** Students displayed average effort in class discussions and note taking, group work, creation of skit, participation in performance and written assignment.
- **1 point:** Students displayed minimal effort in class discussions and note taking, group work, creation of skit, participation in performance and written assignment.

Vocabulary

cookie

Definition: Small data files placed on a computer's hard drive after a computer user visits certain Web sites

Context: Concerned that some companies might figure out the Web sites she visited, Annabelle disabled her Web browser's ability to accept cookies.

racial profiling

Definition: The act of defining members of a particular racial group as being more likely than average to engage in illegal activities

Context: The police department's practice of racial profiling angers many residents, particularly those who feel they are being singled out.

search and seizure

Definition: The act of looking for, locating, and removing material, usually illegal possessions or potential evidence of a crime; generally used to describe the power of the police or other government officials to locate and remove evidence from a person's body or property

Context: The police conducted an illegal search and seizure when they searched Paul's house without a warrant and took certain items as evidence.

Stalinism

Definition: The bureaucratic, authoritarian exercise of state power and mechanistic application of Marxist-Leninist principles associated with Josef Stalin

Context: Many people who denounce communism are thinking of Stalinism, a rigid and brutal totalitarian government.

surveillance

Definition: A close watch kept over someone or something

Context: The convenience store manager has just purchased a new surveillance system to capture all customers' activities on video.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit link:

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
- Arts – Theater: Demonstrates competence in writing scripts, Uses acting skills

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association have developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching the English language arts. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>

This lesson plan addresses the following NCTE standards:

- Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world.... Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.



- Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
 - Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>

