

Language, Irony, and Paradox

Part A.

Directions: Using your text, define the following terms.

1. Telescreen
2. Thought Police
3. Two Minutes Hate
4. Big Brother
5. The Brotherhood
6. Newspeak
7. Ingsoc
8. Inner Party
9. Outer Party
10. Proles
11. Doublethink
12. Vaporize
13. Airstrip One

Part B.

Directions: Answer each of the following questions using Part 1 of the novel as a reference.

1. What are the *four* ministries that govern Airstrip One?
2. In what way is each ministry ironic in its purpose and function?
3. What are the three "sacred principles" of Ingsoc?
4. Why is Newspeak so important? How is Newspeak ironic?
5. What are the three Party slogans?

1984

Lesson 6

Handout 10 (page 2)

Name _____

Date _____

6. A paradox states an apparent contradiction that also contains a kind of truth when seen in a certain way. For example, when a poet says that the beloved's coldness towards him only serves to make the fire of his love grow stronger, this is a paradox. Coldness does not create fire, but in the context of a relationship, the woman's coldness to the man may make him love her more deeply or become more determined to win her love as he desires the person who is not attainable.

In what ways can the Party slogans express paradoxes?

7. Describe the kinds of relationships that exist between the following pairs of people in Air-strip One. How are these relationships ironic when compared to similar relationships that exist today?

Parent/child—The Parson Family

Husband/wife—Winston and Katherine

Worker/worker—Winston and coworkers (Tillotson, Symes, O'Brien)

The World of Doublespeak

In Orwell's 1984, doublethink is a form of mind control where a person is able to believe contrary ideas or facts at the same time and to forget that one is consciously doing it. Whatever is deemed to be true by the Inner Party is automatically accepted as true by all Party members even if it contradicts what was said to be true previously. Today the sky is stated by the Party to be green, yesterday it was purple. By using doublethink, both statements are accepted by all as true. Truth is whatever the Party says is true at the moment. This is a satire on the conformity of thought urged and enforced in certain societies during Orwell's time (Germany, Russia, and Spain). Although this extreme form of mass mind control has not taken shape in our present societies, a lesser version has evolved. This version is called doublespeak.

What is doublespeak? According to William Lutz, a professor at Rutgers University who has written books on the subject, it is language that attempts to deceive, hides true meaning, and prevents clear thought.

Doublespeak is language which pretends to communicate but really doesn't. It is language which makes the bad seem good, the negative appear positive, the unpleasant appear attractive, or at least tolerable. It is language which avoids or shifts responsibility, language which is at variance with its real or purported meaning. It is language which conceals or prevents thought. Doublespeak is language which does not extend thought but limits it.¹

The National Council of Teachers of English has been tracking doublespeak since the early 1970s. A Committee on Public Doublespeak was formed to search out abuses of language by the government, industry, advertisers, military, health care, educators, and anyone who influences public policy in our country. This committee gives out annual awards to those who have most abused or misused the language. Below, a partial list of doublespeak expressions the committee has uncovered is printed.

Part A.

Directions: Match each doublespeak expression with its meaning. Write the letter of your answer on the line provided after the expression.

Term	Meaning	Choices
<i>Military</i>		
1. Front-leaning rest exercises	_____	a. Retreat
2. Preemptive counterattack	_____	b. Invasion
3. Air support	_____	c. Civilian casualties
4. Servicing the target	_____	d. Push-ups
5. Wood interdental stimulators	_____	e. Toothpicks
6. Collateral damage	_____	f. Bombing
7. Tactical redeployment	_____	g. Nuclear bomb
8. Large potentially disruptive reentry system	_____	h. Killing the enemy

¹William Lutz, "Fourteen Years of Doublespeak," *English Journal* (March 1988): 40.

Term	Meaning	Choices
<i>Business and Industry</i>		
9. Career scanning professional	_____	i. Greeting card
10. Social-expression product	_____	j. Fired from job
11. Non-performing assets	_____	k. Plane crash
12. Management turnovers	_____	l. Polluted
13. Excessed	_____	m. Dump
14. Controlled flight into terrain	_____	n. Cashier
15. Negative patient-care outcome	_____	o. Bad loans
16. Inhalation hazard	_____	p. Prison
17. Resource development park	_____	q. Death in a hospital
18. Adult correctional institution	_____	r. Poison gas
19. Environmentally destabilized	_____	s. Job layoffs
20. Energetic disassembly	_____	t. Toilet
21. Guest-relation facility	_____	u. Nuclear-power-plant explosion
<i>Government</i>		
22. Sub-standard housing	_____	v. Recession
23. Revenue enhancement	_____	w. Ghetto
24. Poorly buffered precipitation	_____	x. Taxes
25. Period of accelerated negative growth	_____	y. Acid rain

Part B.

Professor William Lutz writes that "doublespeak is not the product of careless language or sloppy thinking." Rather it is "the product of clear thinking and is language carefully designed . . . to mislead . . . to distort reality . . . to corrupt the mind."²

Directions: Select three doublespeak expressions from the list in part A and write them on a separate sheet of notebook paper. Beside each one explain why this doublespeak expression was created and how it misleads the reader.

Part C.

Finally, Professor William Lutz claims that doublespeak is very dangerous and can "ultimately destroy the function of language." As he writes,

The use of doublespeak can spread so that doublespeak becomes the language of public discourse, with speakers and listeners convinced that they really understand such language. After a while we may really believe that politicians don't lie but only "misspeak," that illegal acts are merely "inappropriate actions". . . . If we really believe that . . . such language communicates and promotes clear thought, then the world of Nineteen Eighty-four with its control of reality through language is not far away.³

Directions: Do you think that doublespeak is dangerous? Explain your opinion using reasons and examples. Write your answer in paragraph form on loose-leaf paper.