

## In-Class Essay: *1984* and *The Calcutta Chromosome*

**On Tuesday, March 6, you will write an in-class comparative essay on *1984* and *The Calcutta Chromosome*.**

**The Task:** You will write an essay in response to a prompt/question, giving a comparative analysis of the two novels in relation to the question. (*This is a complex task!*)

**The Prompts:** You will have a choice of at least three prompts/questions. You will choose one prompt and write one essay in response to that prompt. These prompts will be based on prompts that IB has used in the past for English A: Literature exam paper #2.

**The IB Connection:** For IB candidates, this task will serve as practice for English A: Literature exam paper #2. However, for the IB exam, you will have 2 hours (as opposed to the 70 minutes you will have for this task), so you'll be able to write in much more detail. And for the IB exam, you can write about any 2 of the following novels: *1984*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Sula*, *Anil's Ghost*.

**The Non-IB Relevance:** Whether or not you are taking the IB Lit exam, this task will be your final assessment for *1984* and *The Calcutta Chromosome*. It will give you an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of those works and to practice writing a literary comparative essay.

### Procedure:

- Today and next class we will talk about approaches to the essay and do some review.
- You should do more review of the novels on your own.
- On the day of the essay, you will receive the prompts right at the beginning of class and will have the whole class period to write.
- This will be a hand-written essay. You need to write legibly in ink.
- **You may use two very specific types of notes** during the in-class essay: your own copies of the novel notes sheet that you will receive, and the chapter summaries for *The Calcutta Chromosome*.
- You may not use any other notes.
- **You may not use your books.** Direct quotations are not required.

### Organization:

- You may organize your essay in any way that makes sense, but you need to have the usual parts (introduction, body, conclusion).
  - The usual ways to organize the body of a comparative essay are point-by-point vs. block. We will talk more about these structures in class.
- Your introductory paragraph will be relatively short, since this is a timed essay, but it must include the complete titles, authors' first and last names (spelled correctly), and thesis. (Do not underline your thesis—I should be able to tell what it is without this clue!)
- Your conclusion may be very short if you are running out of time—but you should at least include a concluding sentence or two.

### Assessment:

- See rubric.
- Note that one of the categories is “appreciation of the literary conventions of the genre”—that’s kind of fancy terminology for talk about style elements of novels—character development, point of view, setting, plot structure, etc.

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### Tips

- Spend at least 10 minutes of your in-class essay time planning—writing a brief outline is worth the time it takes.
- Pace yourself. Decide how much time you can afford to spend on each paragraph. Cut yourself off and move on to the next paragraph when that time expires. (Leave some space so you can go back and add more if you have time at the end.)
- Your introductory paragraph will be relatively short, since this is a timed essay, but it **must** include the complete titles, authors' first and last names (spelled correctly), and thesis. (Do not underline your thesis—I should be able to tell what it is without this clue!)
- The first time you give book titles, write them out completely. If you wish to abbreviate after that, indicate your abbreviation in parentheses after the complete title, and then use the abbreviation throughout the rest of the essay. **Don't forget to underline titles of novels** (even abbreviated ones). *Example:* In The Calcutta Chromosome (Calcutta), Amitav Ghosh portrays...
- The first time you give the authors' names, write out the complete names (George Orwell; Amitav Ghosh). Thereafter, just use the authors' family names (Orwell; Ghosh).
- Study character names ahead of time.
- Don't waste your time with Wite-Out or correction tape. Just cross out errors. (**IB candidates: IB specifically forbids Wite-Out and correction tape**, so don't get in the habit of using them!)
- Use your best literary vocabulary and formal academic writing style, but don't obsess on honing your prose to the height of perfection—you don't have time.
- Don't forget topic sentences for supporting paragraphs! And use transitions that show similarities and differences between the works.
- Support your assertions with specific details—and quotations, if possible (but only if you remember relevant quotations—don't twist your argument to include quotations that are irrelevant)!
- Although the length of the essay doesn't matter as much as its content, you should be writing continuously and quickly for the entire period. I should think you would be able to write at least a four-page essay in one class period, but this depends on the size of your handwriting, the spacing of your paper, etc. (Please double-space if your handwriting is particularly atrocious, and don't write on the back of the sheets.)
- In the unlikely event that you finish early, use your time to re-read and edit your essay.

*Comparative Essay Scoring/*  
**IB Examination Paper 2: Essay Rubric (HL)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Criterion A: Knowledge and understanding</b> How much knowledge and understanding has the student shown of the part 3 works studied in relation to the question answered?	The work does not reach a standard for this criterion.	There is some knowledge but virtually no understanding of the part 3 works in relation to the question answered.	There is mostly adequate knowledge and some superficial understanding of the part 3 works in relation to the question answered.	There is adequate knowledge and understanding of the part 3 works in relation to the question answered.	There is good knowledge and understanding of the part 3 works in relation to the question answered.	There is perceptive knowledge and understanding of the part 3 works in relation to the question answered.
<b>Criterion B: Response to the question</b> How well has the student understood the specific demands of the question? To what extent has the student responded to these demands? How well have the works been compared and contrasted in relation to the demands of the question?	The work does not reach a standard for this criterion.	The student shows little awareness of the main implications of the question, and ideas are mainly irrelevant and/or insignificant. There is little meaningful comparison of the works used in relation to the question.	The student responds to some of the main implications of the question with some relevant ideas. There is a superficial attempt to compare the works used in relation to the question.	The student responds to most of the main implications of the question with consistently relevant ideas. There is adequate comparison of the works used in relation to the question.	The student responds to the main implications and some subtleties of the question, with relevant and carefully explored ideas. The comparison makes some evaluation of the works used in relation to the question.	The student responds to all the implications, as well as the subtleties of the question, with convincing and thoughtful ideas. The comparison includes an effective evaluation of the works in relation to the question.
<b>Criterion C: Appreciation of the literary conventions of the genre</b> To what extent does the student identify and appreciate the use of literary conventions in relation to the question and the works used?	The work does not reach a standard for this criterion.	Some literary conventions are identified but there is limited development relevant to the question and/or the works used.	Examples of literary conventions are sometimes correctly identified and developed, with some relevance to the question and the works used.	Examples of literary conventions are satisfactorily identified and developed, with relevance to the question and the works used.	Examples of literary conventions are clearly identified and effectively developed, with relevance to the question and the works used.	Examples of literary conventions are perceptively identified and persuasively developed, with clear relevance to the question and the works used.
<b>Criterion D: Organization and development</b> How well organized, coherent and developed is the presentation of ideas?	The work does not reach a standard for this criterion.	Ideas have little organization; there may be a superficial structure, but coherence and/or development are lacking.	Ideas have some organization, with a recognizable structure, but coherence and development are often lacking.	Ideas are adequately organized, with a suitable structure and attention paid to coherence and development.	Ideas are effectively organized, with a very good structure, coherence and development.	Ideas are persuasively organized, with excellent structure, coherence and development.
<b>Criterion E: Language</b> How clear, varied and accurate is the language? How appropriate is the choice of register, style and terminology? ("Register" refers, in this context, to the student's use of elements such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and terminology appropriate to the task.)	The work does not reach a standard for this criterion.	Language is rarely clear and appropriate; there are many errors in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction, and little sense of register and style.	Language is sometimes clear and carefully chosen; grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction are fairly accurate, although errors and inconsistencies are apparent; the register and style are to some extent appropriate to the task.	Language is clear and carefully chosen, with an adequate degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction despite some lapses; register and style are mostly appropriate to the task.	Language is clear and carefully chosen, with a good degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are consistently appropriate to the task.	Language is very clear, effective, carefully chosen and precise, with a high degree of accuracy in grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction; register and style are effective and appropriate to the task.

\_\_\_\_/75 total

## A Little Practice with Comparisons in Response to a Prompt

Choose one of the following prompts. Use a T chart, Venn diagram, or other structure for generating ideas about *1984* and *The Calcutta Chromosome*. Then try to generate a thesis statement for an essay that would respond to the prompt.

You will need to incorporate “appreciation of the literary conventions of the novel” into your comparative essay, so consider what literary elements you might be able to discuss in response to each of these prompts.

You might also start thinking about what kind of structure you would use for the essay—point-by-point comparison? blocking? (We will talk more about this next class, so if you aren’t quite ready for that now, that’s ok.)

Sample Prompts (these are prompts from old IB exams; they are *not* the prompts you will write about for the in-class essay, but they are in the same style):

1. How far and to what effect do at least two of the works you have studied make use of individual or multiple voices to articulate key ideas?
2. Authors use the portrayal of characters who are somehow trapped or imprisoned as a means to criticize society. Referring to at least two works you have studied, show to what extent and in what ways this statement is true.
3. Writers of literature rarely offer answers that resolve the issues they raise. To what extent and in what ways does this statement apply to at least two of the works you have studied?
4. Literature often deals with the themes of coincidence, chance, or accident. To what extent, and in what ways, have at least two works you have studied dealt with all or any of these ideas?