

I Need You So Much Closer: *1984/Never Let Me Go* SDAIE Essay Prompt

As we reach the midway point of your final semester, we've covered two books (George Orwell's *1984* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*) that use very different situations and characters to grapple with questions regarding the nature of humanity – namely, which qualities make us **who we are**. Both Ishiguro and Orwell take pains to examine compassion, love, loyalty, hatred, fear, power, sacrifice, justice/morality, strength, even memory, in an effort to help readers better understand what it means to be human, and what defines one in an uncertain world.

After choosing one of these common themes (or one of your own, which I encourage), please write an essay examining the same question these authors have. In other words, I want you to make a statement about what makes a human being a *human being*. (Are the Oceanians or Hailsham students really human?)

I suggest phrasing your thesis in your rough draft the same way I would phrase a philosophical baseline prompt. Write something that can be both criticized and defended. Once you've done that, go out and defend it. Your justification of that statement will require you to make observations about humanity, just as Ishiguro and Orwell did in their works. Don't make unfounded observations! Draw heavily on both texts for support regarding your argument, even if you're using the authors' words to provide counter-arguments to your own.

The essay must:

- be written by you and you alone
- be at least three (3) double-spaced pages long, written in **Times New Roman 12-point font**, and be at least five (5) paragraphs long, with at least one quote per body paragraph; evidence is key to any literary analysis essay, and you'll need lots of it. (I am an extremely skeptical reader – even when you're proving a point you know I agree with – so prove yourself.)
- be formatted according to MLA guidelines (available on Purdue's OWL); all book titles should be *italicized*, and your header should copy the one atop this page
- be structured logically, with a unique thesis serving as the final sentence of the introductory paragraph
- be written clearly and interestingly (i.e., in your voice – not in terms of slang, but in terms of diction, structure, etc.), with a creative, *italicized* title (“*1984* Essay” gets boring quickly)
- advance at least one major assertion; **this is not a summary essay/book report**. (While I'm an extremely skeptical reader who needs to be persuaded via evidence, you can also assume I'm a knowledgeable reader who has no need for plot summary.)

Due Dates and Late Policy

Your final draft is due by 11:59pm on Friday, May 9th to turnitin.com. Late papers may still be submitted to turnitin.com; they will automatically lose a letter grade for each day (including weekends) that passes beyond the deadline, but some credit is better than none. Papers that are turned in after 11:59pm on the due date will be counted as a day late, and the late-submission period ends **Monday, May 12th**.

Helpful Tips

Some general comments that will help you avoid many of the pitfalls that befall senior writers:

- Before you write anything, decide what you want to teach your reader. I have read these books. Teach me something about them.
- A three-page paper is **short**. Focus on an argument and flesh it out appropriately; don't make a list of five topics and try to address all of them.
- If you do want to discuss related – but separate – topics, your thesis is about whatever connects them (your “big idea”), not about either or both of them. Do not write “listing” theses, as these are dry and usually fail to propel a reader forward; a thesis should also exist as its own sentence, and not simply as an element to be checked off.
- After writing your thesis, read it aloud to someone else and ask them to say what they think your main message will be in their own words. This will help you check whether your thesis says what you want it to say.
- After writing your thesis, write down at least three distinct reasons you believe this thesis is true. (Each of those reasons forms the idea behind a body ¶.)
- After outlining your ideas, gather quotes that support each one – at least two. Type them up in a separate Word document, and figure out how to structure your essay around your evidence – since your essay can't exist without it, you might as well make it useful.
- Now that you have structured your essay around your ideas and supporting evidence, it's time to write! Make sure that your writing is clear and skillful, with effective sentence variety and proper attention to conventions.
- Your sentences should lead in and out of one another. If a sentence's placement doesn't make sense, don't put it there – or don't use it at all.
- Good writers establish voices, even in formal works, through their diction. (This is why the “diction” category is weighted more heavily than others.) Choose words that sound like you could feel comfortable saying them. If you're not comfortable reading the sentences you write aloud, you usually need to edit them.
- Never waste words; remember the techniques we've used while writing the Senior Project essay, particularly those regarding “direct writing.” Don't use “to be” verbs!
- When you're using quotes, make sure they flow in the context of your paper; your evidence should be evidence, not a distraction. Don't use quotes you can't embed within sentences or passages.
- Remember: The requirements are just that: requirements, or minimum expectations I have for every paper. Essays that merely aim to meet the minimum levels of those requirements earn Cs; you earn Bs and As by exceeding those expectations. Good luck to each of you!