

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**READ CLOSELY AND SHOW EVIDENCE OF THINKING BY ANNOTATING. Remember that annotations are about the words you write, not the underlines/highlights!**

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### **We're all thinking it: dystopian Wonder Woman.**

We know next to nothing about the upcoming Wonder Woman movie. It's set to release in November 2019. Gal Gadot is obviously still our heroine. They are filming quite a bit in Washington D.C. As of yesterday, we learned that Chris Pine will return as Steve Trevor despite dying in 1917 in the first installation. The announcement of Pine's role came with a confirmed title: ***Wonder Woman 1984***. Returning writer/director Patty Jenkins tweeted out a photo of a 1980s-adorned Trevor, sanctioning our presumptions that the title is a literal reference to the setting of the movie. But, surely it's a literary reference, too, right?

Besides carrying serious metaphysical implications stemming from the presence of a character that, as far as we know, should be near 100 years old in the 80s and is—I repeat—*dead*, the title is a clear reference to the seminal dystopian novel penned by George Orwell in 1949: *1984*. For those who aren't familiar, the novel is set in a dystopian future ruled with an iron fist by an unseen entity called "Big Brother," which is atop the governing force called the "Party."

In the ever-strengthening age of #MeToo and the ever-infuriating era of you-know-who, naming your forward-thinking, female-directed/-written/-led blockbuster after one of the most stinging social commentaries on totalitarian government in literary history is revealing, to say the least. If D.C. had chosen 1987 or 1983 I wouldn't be writing this article, but 1984 is as significant a year as 2001 as far as pop culture is concerned. This doesn't merely open the door to speculation. It obliterates the door in one fell swoop only to unveil a flood of

implications akin to a Pandora's Box jailbreak. Let the contemporary socio-political parallels flow.

I would need as many lives as Steve Trevor to successfully count all of the journalists, politicians, cultural commentators, and even average folks that have connected the political regime of Big Brother to the administration of the current United States' "president." Likewise, I am not the first to connect the dots between the strike of governmental corruption and the influx of pointed political art in pop culture (see: every movie that targeted its thematic crosshairs on the Bush administration in the early- to mid-aughts).

It's also worth noting that society-at-large is reaching an uncanny (but encouraging) zero tolerance, no bull level of frustration with America's political situation. Robert De Niro is dropping F-bombs in front of national audiences, the *Purge* series has wittily redirected the fictional blame of their origin myth, and social media outlets grow exponentially blunter every day. If *Wonder Woman 1984* is a blatant reference to the book and unabashed attack on the current administration, it would fit right into the fold of trending social commentary. Though the current administration is nowhere near the autocratic dominance of Big Brother in the book, it's certainly aiming high. At times the two seem like mirror images of each other.

In the book, Big Brother sets up a lawful system of constant surveillance through two-way "telescreens" that must be watched and constantly watch their viewers. Citizens are legislatively forced to watch government-programmed propaganda (*A Clockwork Orange* anyone?) on the telescreens and to leave the screens on even when they aren't watching. Turning a screen off or expressing a dissenting/rebellious opinion results in arrest and concomitant torture by the "Thought Police," a force that would probably already exist if it weren't for some preventative checks and balances holding their ground.

These connections introduce the significance of the second *Wonder Woman 1984* released yesterday (posted on Instagram by Queen Gal Gadot, herself). In the shot, Gadot stands in front of twelve technicolor screens in a dark room

that emulates a security surveillance room. It could be a new Wonder Woman bat-cave-like lair, or it could be a telescreen-like surveillance room with dystopian programming, or maybe it is something else entirely. But with what we're given, it's hard to divorce the prominence of the screens in the shot from the significance of the telescreens in the novel. Not to mention, surveillance has been kind of a hot topic lately if you haven't heard.

Alongside the topic of surveillance, the explicit theme of government-censored media hits a little too close to home these days. The buffoon in the Oval Office has been on a tyrannical media censorship tear since his inauguration attendance numbers revealed a piss-poor level of support and Kellyanne Conway defended Sean Spicer's objectively false numbers report on the event as "alternative facts." The term alone sends shivers down the spine of anyone who knows Orwell's novel well. In the book, Big Brother has implemented a mandatory language developed by the Party known as "Newspeak." Words like "bad" are replaced by "ungood" (a word I'm almost certain the "president" uses and thinks is real, but that I don't want to waste my time enduring humiliating interviews to confirm) and the most common superlative is "doubleplusgood."

The redirection of false statements to alternative facts combined with the deeming of unfavorable articles as "fake news" is enough on their own to draw the parallel between the book and the present world Wonder Woman might soon heavily critique. But the banning of particular words harkens a specific reference to news that broke last summer in which it was revealed that the administration had banned the Center for Disease Control from using words like "science-based," "fetus," and "evidence-based" in any official reports—a move that finally brought some far-righters to a point of contention with the orange one.

Until now, the only legitimate dystopian superhero blockbuster that exists is *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014). Unless you count that Ridley Scott directed 1984 Apple commercial where Anya Major (a Wonder Woman in her own right) hurls a sledgehammer into Big Brother's face on screen and

theoretically saves the world. I know I do. It's exciting to imagine how *Wonder Woman 1984* might bring something new to the table with an Orwellian social critique of the current administration. But it shouldn't go without noting that *Wonder Woman 1984* would fit neatly into the ranks of the many female-driven dystopian stories that have built up over the past seven years. *The Hunger Games* series, *Divergent* series, *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), and others have powerfully presented the woman as the dystopian savior, and I, for one, have my dystopian-narrative-loving fingers crossed that Patty Jenkins has plans to usher *Wonder Woman* in as the newest in the bunch.

Beyond satisfying our tastes, it is imperative that blockbusters as far-reaching, well-funded, and presumably influential as *Wonder Woman 1984* should challenge the absurd, manipulative, and desirably oppressive nature of current political affairs in the United States. In this post-truth, Orwellian-leaning world we live in, the reference to dystopian classic in the title offers a necessary glimmer of hope that the movie will do just that. Unfortunately, we have to wait seventeen months to find out.

#### **WRITE A REFLECTION**

**One paragraph that reflects on what the writer said**

- **Here's where you summarize the main points of the article**

**One paragraph that reflects on the writer's style**

- **Think about the techniques the writer used, his/her word choice, the way the text was organized, the quality of the evidence (if applicable), tone**

**One paragraph that reflects the reader's thoughts on the content of the article**