

# Historical Documents

By Terry Yang

Teacher: Mr. Golding



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## Joint Collaboration: Minitrue & Miniluv

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# PROJECT [REDACTED]

DATE: MONDAY [REDACTED]

PRINCIPAL AUTHORS: [REDACTED]

CHIEF RECTIFIER: [REDACTED]

## PROGRESS REPORT I

### AIM

TO DETERMINE THE EFFECT OF [REDACTED] ON [REDACTED].

### EXPERIMENTAL CONDITIONS

ROOM 102 WAS USED – TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS AS PER APPENDIX A. DIM LIGHTS WERE KEPT ON THROUGHOUT THE EXPERIMENT. TELESBREEN SETTING [REDACTED] WAS USED. [REDACTED] WAS PLACED ATOP A TABLE, WITH HANDLING MEASURES COMPLIANT WITH THE *RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR* [REDACTED].

### INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF SUBJECT

NAME: [REDACTED]. FIRST NAME UNKNOWN.

GENDER: MALE

AGE: [REDACTED]

OCCUPATION: FORMER MEMBER OF THE [REDACTED] PARTY

SUBJECT WAS INITIALLY ASSESSED TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH, WITH NO PRE-EXISTING COMORBIDITIES. MILD MYOPIA REMEDIED WITH SPECTACLES. NO PRIOR EXPOSURE TO [REDACTED], INCLUDING EXPERIMENTAL AGENT [REDACTED], LEADING TO NO DEVELOPED IMMUNITY.

### OBSERVATIONS

13:00: SUBJECT SITS IN CORNER OF ROOM, KNEES BENT AND IN FOETAL POSITION. [REDACTED] REMAINS ON TABLE, APPARENTLY UNNOTICED BY SUBJECT.

13:30: SUBJECT HAS NOT MOVED. RECITES PARTY [REDACTED] INTERMITTENTLY.

19:00: FOOD BROUGHT TO SUBJECT IN ACCORDANCE WITH GUIDELINES BY MINIPLenty CRIMIDEP. PLACED ON TABLE NEXT TO [REDACTED]. SUBJECT DOES NOT REACT.

23:24: FIRST IRREGULAR MOVEMENT. SUBJECT STANDS UP. LOOKS AT FOOD AND [REDACTED]. SITS DOWN AGAIN.

23:58: SUBJECT WALKS TO TABLE AND QUICKLY GRABS FOOD, AVERTING HIS EYES FROM [REDACTED]. RETURNS HURRIEDLY TO CORNER OF ROOM AND SITS DOWN. MUTTERS [REDACTED] SLOGAN.



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## Joint Collaboration: Minitrue & Miniluv

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# PROJECT [REDACTED]

DATE: TUESDAY [REDACTED]

PRINCIPAL AUTHORS: [REDACTED]

CHIEF RECTIFIER: [REDACTED]

## PROGRESS REPORT XVII

### PROVISIONAL FINDINGS

SUBJECT HAS BEGUN TO INITIATE REGULAR EXPOSURE TO [REDACTED]. IT CAN BE ASSUMED [REDACTED] HAS CAUSED [REDACTED]. RESTING BLOOD PRESSURE AND HEARTRATE HAS INCREASED. SUBJECT SHOWS SIGNS OF INCREASED AGITATION AND AGGRESSION AFTER INCIDENTS OF EXPOSURE. IT IS POSITED THAT [REDACTED] HAS NEUROLOGICALLY ALTERED SUBJECT'S BRAIN, CAUSING PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGES. CONTINUED EXPOSURE MAY LEAD TO FURTHER DETERIORATION.

THESE FINDINGS PRESENT A RISK TO [REDACTED] THE CITIZENS OF OCEANIA. IF UNCONTAINED, EXPERIMENTAL AGENT [REDACTED] COULD LEAD TO WIDESPREAD [REDACTED] AMONG THE PROLES, COMPROMISING THE WAR EFFORT AGAINST EASTASIA. IT IS RECOMMENDED THE PARTY CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT CONTAINMENT MEASURES SUCH AS [REDACTED] TO PROTECT THE POPULATION. ALTERNATIVELY, CONTROLLED TRANSMISSION TO A CONTAINED PROLE POPULATION MAY YIELD FURTHER RESEARCH TO DEVELOP ADDITIONAL CONTAINMENT STRATEGIES.

### OBSERVATIONS

18:50: SUBJECT IS UNUSUALLY STILL. HEARTBEAT HAS INCREASED. IT IS LIKELY HE IS EXPERIENCING [REDACTED].

19:00: FOOD WAS BROUGHT TO SUBJECT. VIOLENT ALTERCATION OCCURRED. SUBJECT ASSAULTED THINKPOL OFFICER [REDACTED] AS SHE ENTERED ROOM. OFFICERS [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] INTERVENED. OFFICERS EVACUATED ROOM. SUBJECT WAS HEARD SHOUTING "DOWN WITH [REDACTED]!"

19:10: OFFICER [REDACTED] WAS EVALUATED BY MINILUV MEDIDEP. FACIAL CONTUSION AND MINOR LACERATION TO THE LEFT POSTERIOR FOREARM TREATED AS PER PROTOCOL [REDACTED].

19:15: MINILUV ENHANCED RE-EDUCATION PROTOCOL [REDACTED] IMPLEMENTED.

19:30: OFFICERS DEBRIEFED.

20:15: SUBJECT EVALUATED POST-RE-EDUCATION. RIGHT OLECRANON FRACTURE, SUBDURAL HEMATOMA AND INTERNAL HAEMORRHAGE IDENTIFIED. SUBJECT REMAINS PRONE ON FLOOR. MONITORING PROTOCOLS [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] INITIATED TO ENSURE NON-FATALITY.

## Miniluv Patient Unaccepts Care, Flees Treatment Centre

A patient afflicted with ██████████ at Miniluv Treatment Centre has crimeleaved. Party duckspeaker Winston ██████████ broadcasted over telescreen: “Big Brother is gravely concerned with this incident. The Brotherhood and Emmanuel Goldstein continue to sabotage the Party and must be stopped.” The crimeleaver has been described by Miniluv Crimidep as a plusbig, burly man with a unthin neck and a coarseful, laughful, bruteful face. Any goodthinker who sights him must report doubleplusspeedwise to Thinkpol.



The crimeleaver was last see-ed in the Prole slums, having been exposed to ██████████. Incidences of ██████████ have already been detected among unstrengthful goodthinkers, leading to unpeace. The Party has instituted concreteful quarantine measures to uncause transmission to Outer Party members and the Junior Spies have been telled.

### Goodest Victory Against Eurasia

A newsflash has arrived from Minipax proclaiming that our forces in North Africa have won a...  
Page 4

### Chocolate Rations Increased

Miniplenty has announced that the chocolate ration will be increased from 20 to 30 grammes...  
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### Two Minutes Hate at 11:00

Today's Two Minutes Hate will be held at 11:00 and be directed towards Emmanuel Goldstein...  
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Thursday [REDACTED]

# Big Brother v O'Brien

## Miniluv Superior Court of Justice

Prosecution: Please state your full name for the record.

Defendant: O'Brien.

Prosecution: Your full name, please.

Defendant: O'Brien.

The Court: The defendant will answer the question.

Defendant: O'Brien.

Prosecution: Let the record show the defendant has refused to comply with the Court's instruction. If the prosecution may continue, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of February, is it not true you confessed to thoughtcrime after interrogation by Miniluv officials?

Defendant: I did. Or so they tell me.

Prosecution: And during the ensuing reintegration process, did you consent to experimental testing of [REDACTED]?

Defendant: Apparently so.

Prosecution: After exposure to [REDACTED], did you or did you not knowingly endanger the Proles by fleeing to their district?

Defendant: I wouldn't say endanger.

Prosecution: The prosecution rests its case.

Defence: The defence has but one question. What is two plus two?

[a pause]

The Court: The defendant will answer the question.

Defendant: Five.

Defence: The defendant clearly remains loyal to the Party. The defence rests its—

Defendant: Four

Defence: What?

Defendant: Two plus two is four.

Friday 32<sup>nd</sup>

*If there is hope, it lies in us. That's what O'Brien sayed anyway. Sayed it was from a book. Nineteen Eighty-Four he called it. Sayed Inner Party members from Ficdep writed it so Miniluv could study the effect of 'literature' on goodthinkers. I think that's how he spelled it. He teached us how to write as well. And read. Sayed we should practice by writing letters to ourselves. Or by reading Nineteen Eighty-Four. That's right. He stealed the book from Miniluv. Taked it when he crimeleaved. Sayed the guards must've been on a break or something. They unremembered to lock the door too. So he crimeleaved with the book to show us. Sayed we could 'overthrow' Big Brother if only we became 'conscious'. I wonder what 'overthrow' means. He talked to a few people before he disappeared. Sayed we should teach others about Nineteen Eighty-Four. It's been a pluslengthful time now. I hope he comes back speedwise. There are some words in the book I ununderstand. But I've still been trying to read. And it's strange. I don't think I love Big Brother anymore. I don't think I do.*

# Rationale

The appendix of George Orwell's *1984* (1949) is written in standard English and refers to Ingsoc, the Party, and Newspeak in the past tense. Critics, therefore, from Margaret Atwood (2003) to Thomas Pynchon (2003), have argued that Orwell offers hope in his otherwise bleak novel, connoting that its totalitarian regime will eventually collapse. *Historical Documents* appropriates Orwell's world, providing a potential explanation for how this future may have come to be while hinting at that same optimism from its very first word – the diction of “*Historical*” in its title. Through the use of obligatory intertextuality, my narrative subverts the themes of *1984*, suggesting that although language can restrict thought, it also has the power to free one's mind.

The most prominent example of intertextuality in *Historical Documents* is the discovery that the “experimental agent” being studied by Miniluv is the novel *1984* itself. After “beg[inning] to initiate regular exposure to [redacted]”, which is implied to be *1984*, O'Brien “shows signs of increased agitation and aggression” before “crimeleav[ing]” and encouraging the Proles to “‘overthrow’ Big Brother”. In this way, it is shown that language can combat indoctrination, even in a society as heavily indoctrinated as that of *1984*'s, where the Party “control[s] the mind” (p. 334) and “tear[s] human minds to pieces and put[s] them together again in new shapes of [their] own choosing” (p. 336); where consonance and assonance (‘sh’, ‘s’, ‘a’ in “shows signs of increased agitation and aggression”) are the only poetic techniques conceivable to the population; where “overthrow” is an unfamiliar word. The specific metafictional use of *1984* as the “literature” being studied leverages the “powerful, effective and frightening” (The Guardian 2016) nature of the novel, reminding readers that they too, like the Proles of *Historical Documents*, have been influenced by language – indeed, by the same book. Moreover, the appropriation of O'Brien as the protagonist of my narrative – a revelation foreshadowed through the modified quote of “plusbig, burly man with a unthin neck and a coarseful, laughful, bruteful face” (cf. p. 14) – accentuates these ideas, given that he had “kicked and flogged and insulted” (p. 344) Winston in *1984* to make him believe that “two plus two make[s] ... five” (p. 315). When O'Brien states that “[t]wo plus two is four” in *Historical Documents*, therefore, the power of language to undo the indoctrination of even those in power is demonstrated.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of my narrative which explores a similar idea is the use of redactions and Newspeak, made realistic through *Historical Documents*' epistolary form. This stylistic choice draws inspiration from *1984*'s epistolary element of “The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism” (p. 233) and demonstrates the scarcity of literature in *1984*; knowledge can solely be accessed through the Party's version of reality. Only in the Prole's letter does a character obtain a voice after being “t[ought] ... how to write”, again conveying the capacity of language to expand one's worldview. In contrast, the censorship and Newspeak are a manifestation of the Party's “narrow[ing of] thought” (p. 67), thereby narrowing the reader's thought as well. This facilitates suspense but also affirms the liberating power of language – even in such a smothering linguistic environment – given the optimistic ending of my narrative.

Yet, my narrative can be interpreted in an alternate way when the fact that “Inner Party members from Ficdep wr[ote]” Nineteen Eighty-Four – notably spelt out, as opposed to numericized – is considered. Furthermore, the authors of “Project [redacted]” claim that “controlled transmission to a contained Prole population may yield further research to develop additional containment strategies” and O’Brien tells the Proles “the guards must’ve been on a break or something[, having forgotten] to lock the door too”. Thus, the escape of O’Brien is suspect, and *Historical Documents* parallels the ambiguity of *1984* in, for example, the existence of the Brotherhood, Big Brother, or the war. Even the title’s optimism and objective diction is called in to question given “the mutability of the past and the denial of objective reality” (p. 196) in *1984*. By harnessing this ambiguous language, my narrative warns readers to remain vigilant against the suppression of language. *Historical Documents* has a tentatively happy ending, but one qualified by uncertainty. It reminds readers that freedom of thought is never assured.

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