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The Pearson English VCE Comparing guides have been written to the new Victorian Certificate of Education English and English as an Additional Language Study Design for 2016–2020 and cover Units 2–4 Area of Study 1 Reading and comparing texts.

The Comparing guides are divided into four sections:
1: Knowing: Nineteen Eighty-Four
2: Knowing: Stasiland
3: Comparing: Nineteen Eighty-Four and Stasiland
4: Writing the essay

Knowing the texts
These sections provide a deep insight into the texts, covering context and author, structural elements, textual elements and ideas, issues and themes. At the end of each section is a set of learning activities.

Comparing texts
This section outlines how to compare and contrast the two texts. The two texts are compared and contrasted in regards to themes, cultural context and genre. This section also provides practical tips and ideas on how to compare texts as well as practice topics.
Writing the essay

This section provides a step-by-step guide on how to plan and write a comparing essay. Four different essay styles have been included as well as an essay sample with annotations.

**Writing the essay**

There are many ways to write a comparative essay, and this section outlines different models or frameworks you can use to compare themes. Choose your method, selecting a model can be difficult, and each of the various models have their merit. However, the more complex models do give you more scope to demonstrate your analytical skills and to present your ideas effectively, so that you are working towards to achieve a sophisticated analysis.

**SHAPING INFORMATION AND PLANNING**

Once you have read or viewed your texts, deconstructed for meaning and prepared your notes, it is time to start to write essays. This section will model how to:

- work through a topic
- brainstorm a topic
- develop a contention
- create an essay plan
- write different types of essays.

**High-scoring responses**

High-scoring responses should include the following:

- consistent engagement with the topic throughout
- a well-structured contention, supported by strong arguments and evidence
- clear and well-organised sentences that use correct grammar and punctuation
- formal language of critical analysis used effectively
- accurate and judicious use of evidence
- complex links that recognise similarities and differences but also go further to establish subtle distinctions.

**Before you start**

**Brainstorming the topic**

Begin by brainstorming the topic. Consider any sub-questions that are raised by the topic, and think about what evidence you have from each text to support these ideas.

**Creating the essay plan**

After you have brainstormed on the topic and created a list of useful quotations as evidence, you should begin planning for your essay. Your essay plan can be developed using a simple table tool, and it is a valuable way to consider the most important points that will make up your body paragraphs. A detailed analysis of an essay question should include at least three main arguments or body paragraphs.

**Developing the contention**

Once you have brainstormed and made a plan, you can then develop your contention. Your contention is your overall argument, sometimes called a thesis statement. So if the question asks about characters and their journeys of courage, you will need to suggest which characters, if any, undertake a journey of courage and explain how you think they do this. You might say that Winston and Julia and Miriam, Julia and Frau Paul all undertake journeys of courage in the way that they stand up to oppressive government authorities.

However, you might also want to look at characters who are courageous in unlikely ways, such as Hagen Koch who steals a workplace memento, Herr Bohnsack who shows courage by publicly outing himself as a Stasi or Klaus who records the meeting with the Ministry that ‘cancels’ his band. Before doing so, it is important that, in your introduction, you carefully define what you mean by ‘courage’ and ‘journeys of courage’ as this is integral to the way the rest of your essay is formed.

**The topic**

Over the years, students have been asked to write about a variety of topics, including the following:

- How do Orwell and Funder write about journeys of courage?

**Writer’s toolBox**

Make sure you are developing an argument and not falling into the habit of storytelling. If you find yourself writing about what happens for the majority of your paragraph, then you are probably storytelling. Try asking why and how in each paragraph.

**Sample pages**

Ebook and online resources

Online resources support the comparing of texts and include:

- essay templates
- graphic organiser templates
- worksheets.
Knowing: Nineteen Eighty-Four

George Orwell

George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four follows Winston Smith’s life in the dystopian world of Oceania. The ruling Party uses powerful psychology, rhetorical propaganda and manipulated language as measures in their totalitarian control. Winston Smith’s work at the Ministry of Truth helps to reveal his internal struggle against repressive bureaucracy and ubiquitous government surveillance.
CONTEXT AND AUTHOR

Historical context: Post World War II

Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* just after the end of World War II, in 1949. Living in Europe through the first half of the twentieth century, much of Orwell’s writing was in reaction to what he saw and experienced. From World War I, World War II, the Great Depression, and the Spanish Civil War to the Russian Revolution, Orwell lived through many of the most turbulent and violent years in European history. It was in response to this turbulence and dissatisfaction with control, corruption and human rights abuses that Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The atrocities in Soviet Russia shaped Orwell’s world-view most profoundly. Out of this context, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was constructed, exploring the notion of what might happen to society if democracy did not triumph.

In many ways, Orwell’s novel is a critique of Stalinism, with Big Brother modelled on Stalin himself and Emmanuel Goldstein modelled on Trotsky. Indeed, the world created in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* mirrors the world of 1930s Soviet Russia, including its secret police, labour camps, rewriting of history, torturous confessions, political trials and devotion towards a political leader.

Author: George Orwell

George Orwell was an English novelist, essayist and critic. He was born Eric Arthur Blair, the son of a British colonial civil servant, in Bengal, India, in 1903. He was educated in England, winning a scholarship to Eton, a prestigious boys’ school. After a short time in Burma in the Indian Imperial Police, Orwell became a writer, moving to Paris in 1928, where he published his first book *Down and Out in London and Paris* (1933).

In 1936, Orwell fought in Spain for the Republicans against Francisco Franco’s Nationalists. Following this, he worked on propaganda for the BBC, and in 1945 his famous political fable *Animal Farm* was published. Four years later, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell’s exploration of the inherent dangers of a totalitarian state, was published to wide success. The word ‘Orwellian’ is now readily used to describe the structures of total control that are created by Orwell’s sinister and powerful world.

Writer’s toolbox

Joseph Stalin was the leader of the Soviet Union from 1929 until his death in 1953. During his time as leader, it is estimated that tens of millions of people died — from executions, deaths in the Gulags (labour camps/prisons with extremely harsh and cruel conditions) and due to forced resettlements. Millions more died due to his policies that resulted in famines.

Leon Trotsky, along with Stalin and Lenin, was one of the first members of the Soviet Politburo. Trotsky was also the founding leader of the Soviet Red Army. During the 1920s, he struggled against the increasing power of Stalin. In 1927, he was removed from power and exiled. Trotsky was assassinated in 1940 in Mexico — on Stalin’s orders.
ORWELL’S POLITICAL VIEWS
A social democrat and member of Britain’s Independent Labour Party, Orwell’s left-wing political views heavily influenced his writing. Through many of his novels and essays, Orwell criticised capitalism, political dishonesty, power, totalitarianism, nationalism and imperialism.

Many right-wing political critics hold the view that Orwell wrote Nineteen Eighty-Four to expose the horrors of socialism and reveal what would happen under a model of extreme communism. This interpretation, however, fails to recognise that Orwell wrote about state capitalism represented as socialism. Nineteen Eighty-Four, a satiric novel, is a forbidding warning about the type of socialism that democratic socialists would want to avoid – one based on terror, oppression, surveillance, authoritarian bureaucracy, a lack of human rights and democracy, and with a seemingly monotonous, mundane existence, without freedom or commodity comforts.

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS
Genre

DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE
Nineteen Eighty-Four works as a dystopian novel, a genre of literature that critiques social, historical and political systems. Dystopian societies are characterised by oppression and often maintain the illusion of flawlessness through totalitarian control. Nineteen Eighty-Four constructs a dystopian society in which propaganda from Big Brother is used to control the characters, freedom and independent ideas are restricted by the Thought Police, and individuals are monitored by invasive telescreens. The people of Oceania worship Big Brother as a figurehead and conform to a dreary life, where individuality and expression are considered insubordinate and disagreeable.

SCIENCE FICTION
Nineteen Eighty-Four also works within the genre of science fiction. Science fiction occurs in an imaginary world, exploring the impact of science and technology on daily existence. The futuristic, technological aspects of Oceania, such as the strange food, the telescreens, the speakwrite and the Thought Police, all contribute to the feeling of a futuristic society that works to satirise or parody the totalitarian state.

George Orwell, English novelist and social democrat

Writer’s toolbox
Satire is a way of making fun of people, systems and ways of government through humour, irony or exaggeration. Satirical writing often makes these people, systems and governments look ridiculous, thereby acting as a critical tool to instigate change. Nineteen Eighty-Four is satirical because it warns of a future where people are controlled and have no liberties.
Plot
In former London, England, a revolution has taken place and three superpowers dominate the world: Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia. In Airstrip One, where the story is set, society is divided into three classes: the ruling class of the Inner Party, the subservient Outer Party and the uneducated working-class poor, the proles. The Inner Party and Big Brother control everything in Oceania – jobs, supplies, food, language, and increasingly, thought. Information and propaganda, based on the philosophical principals of Ingsoc, are conveyed through telescreens that invade an individual’s privacy. Newspeak, a new language, is being created in order to eradicate political rebellion by eliminating all words related to it. Thinking rebellious thoughts is a thought crime, the worst of all crimes.

The novel begins with our protagonist, Winston Smith, writing in a diary illegally purchased from an antique store. Winston feels entrapped by the tight control of the Party and expresses his agitation and listlessness for life, unhappy at the way the society of Oceania functions.

Winston’s job is at the Ministry of Truth, where he is employed to alter historical records to suit the needs of the Party. He typically alters newspaper records to ensure that the events of the current day are not contradicted by the past. Dissatisfied with life, Winston begins a forbidden relationship with Julia, a mechanic who works on the fiction-writing machines. They meet covertly, renting a room above the antique store where Winston bought his diary.

Their growing dissatisfaction with the regime leads Julia and Winston to contact O’Brien, a powerful Party member whom Winston believes is a secret member of the Brotherhood. Based on the ideas of Emmanuel Goldstein, the Brotherhood is a hidden group that supposedly works to overthrow the party. After contacting O’Brien, Winston and Julia are apprehended by the Thought Police and taken to the Ministry of Love, where criminals and opponents of the Party are taken to be tortured, interrogated and reintegrated or executed.

O’Brien tortures Winston, reforming and reshaping his brain to be subservient to the Party. Finally, Winston is sent to Room 101, a place where people confront their deepest fears. Faced with the prospect of enormous, starving rats tearing into his body, Winston eventually saves himself by betraying Julia. Winston is released back into Airstrip One, back to the monotonous life of an outer Party member. Living in an alcoholic stupor, Winston has relented and meekly acknowledged that he loves and worships Big Brother. From him at least, there is no further resistance to the Party.

Voice
Nineteen Eight-Four is written in third-person narrative voice. As the perception is filtered through one particular character, we call this a third-person limited narrative. Through Winston Smith’s perspective, readers are able to see how an individual worker copes with the all-pervasive government surveillance that characterises Oceania.

Third-person limited narration raises questions about trust and reliability. A reader tends to trust Winston and to accept his views; however, we learn that he can be disastrously mistaken, particularly when judging other people’s characters. In Chapter 5, Winston scans the room and thinks to himself that he knows who will be vaporised and who will remain living. While some of his observations are veracious,
Comparing: Nineteen Eighty-Four and Stasiland

There are different kinds of comparative questions and different ways to approach them. This section will help you to develop an understanding of how to use a range of strategies when planning your essays about Nineteen Eighty-Four and Stasiland. Graphic organisers, such as Venn diagrams, scales and data charts are especially useful tools in assisting you to explore the similarities and differences between the texts.

Types of Questions

There are three types of questions:

- the themes, issues and ideas
- the cultural context
- the genre and style.

Common words used in essay questions include:

- Discuss: Debate the arguments for and against the topic, backing up these ideas with selected evidence from the text. Provide a conclusion.
- To what extent: Assess the evidence in your text that would support an argument. Also look at alternative explanations.
- Do you agree?: An opinion is being sought as to the extent to which the statement or quote is accurate. Evidence should be provided to support or contend the point of view.
- Quotations: Essay questions that use quotations are a way to delve into the issues embedded in a text. You should make reference to the quotation and the ideas that it raises.

Theme questions

This kind of question asks you to explore one or more of the themes raised in both texts. Themes are prominent, recurring ideas that pervade a literary work. Nineteen Eighty-Four and Stasiland share similar themes, including:

- the impact of oppressive political authority
- the use of invasive technology and surveillance
- the role of memory and the rewriting of history
- truth, deception and reality

Closed-circuit television cameras reflect the invasive surveillance of Airstrip One and East Berlin.
• the communication of ideas and misinformation
• justice, rights and freedom
• heroes and victims.

Theme questions may explore how characters suffer under controlling administrations and might ask: How do authorities control individuals and information in the societies of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Stasiland*?

This could be answered by considering and explaining the different governments of the Inner Party and the GDR, comparing how they spy on, regulate and dictate the characters that inhabit their worlds. A theme question about justice might ask: Defiance becomes a duty in the face of injustice. Explore the ways in which the authors of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Stasiland* have attempted to make us accept or challenge this view.

This question asks you to consider how repressed characters have a responsibility to stand up for what they believe in. You might compare the characters of Winston and Julia and of Miriam and Frau Paul, all of whom make attempts to defy unjust authorities.

**Cultural context questions**

This kind of question asks you to explore the social, historical and cultural aspects of the texts. This means considering the cultural context in which the text is set, the events in history that shape the text and the social worlds that both texts reflect. Cultural questions might ask you to consider the author’s sociocultural background; for example, Funder gives her own unique Australian perspective on a faraway land, while Orwell reflects his social-democratic views and anti-Stalin sentiment. Cultural aspects that both texts contain, include:

• the idea of a communist state
• the impact of a totalitarian regime
• the use of language as propaganda
• how women are portrayed in society
• how class impacts upon individuals.

Cultural questions could investigate the role of propaganda, and a cultural topic might ask:

How do both Orwell and Funder explore the use of language and propaganda?

Such a topic lends itself to a discussion of Newspeak, doublethink and the paradoxical slogans of Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In *Stasiland*, propaganda emanates from the Black Channel, from the language of the Stasi and the anti-West sentiment. Both texts reveal how women in society are dominated by a patriarchal society – the Mannerklub of the GDR and the all-male inner Party of Oceania. Women tend to have more subservient roles, although both texts show evidence of women rising up against the establishment; for example, Miriam attempts to scale the Wall and escape, while Julia and her family threaten to write to Erich Meilke and expose her mistreatment under the interrogation of Major N. Likewise, Julia stands up to the Party through her illegal affairs and secret meetings with lovers.
Genre questions

This kind of question relates to the style of the texts and the way in which they are written. They ask you to think about the literary conventions of the particular genre and consider how and why the authors wrote in certain ways. Stylistic conventions differ for each genre – writers of poetry use different literary conventions from those writing prose.

Questions about genre may ask you to explore features such as an author’s use of:

- characterisation
- symbols and motifs
- figurative language (metaphors, similes, personification, etc.)
- imagery
- setting
- structure
- narrative perspective.

Genre topic questions may ask you to compare characters in each text, such as:

How are heroes and victims portrayed against the powerful and privileged in Nineteen Eighty-Four and Stasiland?

This kind of response could compare Miriam and Julia of Stasiland and Winston and Julia of Nineteen Eighty-Four, and how they struggle and fight against an authoritarian regime. Big Brother and O’Brien and Erich Meilke and Von Schnitzler could be compared in terms of the way they manipulate, interrogate and intimidate their citizens. Questions about genre might also ask: What is the impact of the physical places and settings in Nineteen Eighty-Four and Stasiland?

For this question, you could compare the way Funder writes of the dull and bleak Berlin to Orwell’s bleak descriptions of London, also focusing on the colour imagery of greys, browns and greens that are mentioned.

THE COMPARISON

How to compare

The following section shows you a number of ways to compare the two texts. A variety of methods have been used, such as tables that allow you to chart and track data and graphic organisers that let you quickly see the links and variations.

In a comparison essay, you must critically analyse any two texts, pointing out their similarities and/or differences. It could also be called a compare and contrast essay. Your tasks could be comparative only (looking only at similarities), contrasting only (pointing out the differences) or both comparative and contrasting.
Theme

Theme questions relate to the key issues and ideas raised by the texts and are the most common type of question. Themes are ideas that pervade literary works and are often not explicitly stated or told; rather, they are revealed and exposed by the characters and events.

![Mind map: Theme]

Integral to both texts is the theme of authoritarian control and how surveillance can be oppressive and overpowering. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Oceania is a totalitarian society whose administrative sections control every part of life from labour, to culture, to thought, language and sexuality. The Inner Party, the Thought Police and the telescreens maintain this sense of total control.

Similarly, in *Stasiland*, Funder reveals the ruthless control of the Stasi over the East German citizens. Ordinary people are spied upon, followed and watched by the pervasive Stasi, such as Herr Christian in border control and Herr Bock whose job was to recruit informers. The GDR keeps careful documentation about people, tracking them and stopping them from working or studying.

There are many tools that you can use to help you in the planning and thinking stage of your essay. Graphic organisers are particularly useful tools in helping you to arrange your ideas. Scales are a simple type of graphic organiser that can be used to weigh up ideas in two texts. The set of scales below weighs up how individuals and information are controlled in the two different worlds of Orwell and Funder.

How do authorities control individuals and information in the societies of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Stasiland*?
Writing the essay

There are many ways to write a comparative essay, and this section outlines different models or frameworks you can use to compare Nineteen Eighty-Four and Stasiland. Selecting a model can be difficult, and each of the various models have their merit. However, the more complex models do give you more scope to demonstrate your analytical skills and therefore should ultimately be what you are working towards to achieve a sophisticated analysis.

SHAPING INFORMATION AND PLANNING

Once you have read or viewed your texts, deconstructed for meaning and prepared your notes, it is time to start to write essays.

This section will model how to:

• work through a topic
• brainstorm a topic
• develop a contention
• create an essay plan
• write different types of essays.

High-scoring responses

High-scoring responses should include the following:

• consistent engagement with the topic throughout
• a well-sustained contention, supported by strong arguments and excellent use of evidence
• complex but well-controlled sentences that use punctuation accurately and purposefully
• formal language of critical analysis used effectively
• accurate and specific details supported by judiciously used quotations and examples
• complex links that recognise similarities and differences but also go further to establish subtle distinctions.

Before you start

■ BRAINSTORMING THE TOPIC

Begin by brainstorming the topic. Consider any sub-questions that are raised by the topic, and think about what evidence you have from each text to support these ideas.
What is a journey?

What is courage?

What is a journey of courage?

Which characters lack courage?

Which characters are obviously courageous?

Is the courage revealed through events or thoughts and feelings?

Which characters show courage in unlikely ways?

**CREATING THE ESSAY PLAN**

After you have brainstormed on the topic and created a list of useful quotations as evidence, you should begin planning for your essay. Your essay plan can be developed using a simple table tool, and it is a valuable way to consider the most important points that will make up your body paragraphs. A detailed analysis of an essay question should include at least three main arguments or body paragraphs.

**DEVELOPING THE CONTENTION**

Once you have brainstormed and made a plan, you can then develop your contention. Your contention is your overall argument, sometimes called a thesis statement. So if the question asks about characters and their journeys of courage, you will need to suggest which characters, if any, undertake a journey of courage and explain how you think they do this. You might say that Winston and Julia and Miriam, Julia and Frau Paul all undertake journeys of courage in the way that they stand up to oppressive government authorities.

However, you might also want to look at characters who are courageous in unlikely ways, such as Hagen Koch who steals a workplace memento, Herr Bohnsack who shows courage by publically outing himself as a Stasi or Klaus who records the meeting with the Ministry that ‘cancels’ his band. Before doing so, it is important that, in your introduction, you carefully define what you mean by ‘courage’ and ‘journeys of courage’ as this is integral to the way the rest of your essay is formed.