

Reading Response to George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" and "On Workshops"

In responding to Orwell's essay, you may address the questions below. You're also welcome to write a response that doesn't directly address these questions. Be sure to include a few specific quotes from Orwell's essay.

- 1. If you've ever read anything else Orwell wrote (in particular, *Animal Farm* or *1984*), does it make sense to you that Orwell would have written this little treatise about language and politics? How come? What do you think of how he sees the relationship between politics and our use of language? Can you think of contemporary examples of political euphemisms that cover up reality?
- 2. Does Orwell's critique mainly apply to his own time and place (1946, England) or do you think it applies to contemporary American culture as well? (If you're more familiar with another culture, you might ask the same question about that one.) To get some ideas, check out Ben Kauffman's "What We Have Here is a Failure to Communicate," *Boston Globe*, 1/4/2004
- 3. If you were in a debate and had to take a position on Orwell's attempt to provide a guide for good writing, pick a side and try defending it. Either something like: "Any universal guidelines for good writing, including Orwell's, are necessarily too restrictive." Or, "Orwell's guidelines for good writing make good common sense and can be applied to pretty much any writing project."

****Extra credit: Bring us an example of something that you've written (college apps?) or that you've recently read that would make Orwell cringe.

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