Analysis Of 1984 And Shawshank Redemption: Comparative Essay

“In Japan it is said that the words of the soul reside in the spirit called katadoma or the spirit of words and the act of speaking words has the power to change the world.” This powerful line from the Japanese scientist Masaru Emoto reminds us that no matter what form or mode a text is in, it has the ability to convey ideas through personal perspectives allowing room for the creators to be as multifaceted as they please. They invite us to ‘their’ world allowing us to have an insight into their experience. This causes us, class of English advanced 2020 to look at a particular part through a new pair of lenses, changing our view about people, of life and the world surrounding us. Storytelling often deeply influences individuals and the collective through human thoughts, emotions and memories. In George Orwell’s cautionary novel 1984, Orwell imagines a world where totalitarianism reigned, individualism was dead and the reality and history was simply a matter of opinion shown through the display of the systematic abuse of power experienced by Winston physically, mentally and emotionally. Likewise, Shawshank Redemption explores the lack of personal identity a person has when one is being held back in a jail. However, through tough oppressive governing, determination, dreams and new facets that are developed through experience, they outweigh the negativity and sometimes finds the better of people. Through these modes, it’s staggering to see the immense depths storytelling can bring. When stories are told well, it has the ability connect the reader and with 1984 and Shawshank redemption the movie. Today I will examine how when human beings are under surveillance contradictory behaviours are ignited and also how memories has the ability to give hope and inner strength of one’s humanness. Welcome, yr 12 Advanced English class of 2020 I will be exploring how story telling ignites new ideas about the multifaceted nature of human behaviour and how that impacts us, as the responder of these texts.

Throughout history, people of different religions and cultures celebrate by wearing masks. You might ask, what does the act of mask-wearing have to do with any of these texts? How do they fit in to this part of the puzzle humanity? Well let me tell you, in my mind, the act of wearing masks, hides the inner personality of a person which is clearly portrayed through the main characters in both of these texts. The means to survive when one is under tough or unberable conditions, humans can sometimes become contradictory in many ways.

In George Orwell’s 1984 we see that people of Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia live in a world that condemns them of their personal thoughts and behaviours. Throughout the character Winston, we see that it’s ironic as he works at the Ministry of Truth because despite his work, he’s always searching for the real truth and frequently questions the Party. He tell us that “If you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself.” Because he knows that any secret could be extracted by external forces, especially through the systematic abuse of power and the manipulation of the party. Orwell uses Winston's habit of introspection and self-analysis to explore the opposition between external and internal reality, and between individualism and collective identity. Convinced that he cannot escape punishment for his disloyalty, Winston nonetheless seeks to understand the motives behind the Party's oppressive policies, and takes considerable personal risks not only to experience forbidden feelings and relationships but to contact others who share his scepticism and desire to rebel against Ingsoc. O’Brien’s oxymoronic statement “the individual only has power in so far as he ceases to be an individual”

creates a paradox that exemplifies the suppression of individualism by the party, as it is impossible to gain individual power without giving up individuality. The capitalised oxymoronic slogans “WAR IS PEACE FREEDOM IS SLAVERY IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH” represents the prevalence of paradoxes that arise due to interference with human experience. It highlights the contradictory values of society, referred to as “doublethink”, which highlights the way words have lost their meaning and hence humans have lost their expression.

Likewise in Shawshank redemption, we see that Andy takes advantage of his educated self (“Perhaps we can find something more befitting a man of your education.” making the prison guards realise how useful he is to them by giving advice about money, taxes and investments. By gaining the trust of the guards it exemplifies how inconsistent human beings can be when they have a strong mindset of what is needed to do. By his actions, it demonstrates that through oppressive experiences, being in a jail, it reveals aspects of his character like the desire to help out young prisoners, the desire to escape and at the same time the desire to survive in prison and make life there bearable. At one point, Andy tells, “The funny thing is, on the outside, I was an honest man, straight as an arrow. I had to come to the prison to be a criminal”. Coming out of him, this idea was revealed as a facet of his behaviour. I don’t think that on the outside, Andy could of ever done anything deceitful or criminal and yet inside, the different experiences he has experienced has revealed an ability to be deceptive. Without the harsh conditions of prison life, he wouldn’t of known he had that capacity of will to live. This is the same with Winston, being oppressed as he is, he has brough out the facets of his nature that maybe he wouldn’t have known he had, the ability to be deceptive and the incredible desire to rebel.

Ok let go and have a look at film techniques. Andy plays music we see the prisoners, shown from a bird's eye view, displaying the prisoners as small and insignificant. The camera angles used by Darabont allow the audience to see the status of the characters. As the audience, we get an instant look into who is in control and who isn't. While Andy is inside Shawshank we do not see many variations of colour, mainly just shades of grey. these dull, lifeless colours highlight the prisoners lack of power and for most of the prisoners, their lack of hope.

Memories is the key to the experience and has the ability to drive the behaviour of a character. Bleak, simple sentences of “pushed the picture out of his mind… It was a false memory” are juxtaposed against the romantic imagery of Winston’s past, underscoring the harsh reality that accompanies a loss of individuality. This highlights the Party’s ability to manipulate the conscience of the individual’s behaviour as a way of exerting control, showcasing its significance to the human experience. Therefore, his bleak commentary on society, in which all citizens are stripped of their ability to think freely, evokes paradoxical and complex human emotions. Shown through Julia, memories for her are something of the past. Something she doesn’t have a grasp on. Succumbing to this great loss of identity, she depends on what the Party feed her all the truth that are made up with absolutely no fact backing it up. Having no memory of the past she belongs to the party making that the only world she ever knew.

However, sadly the same is found within Shawshank redemption. Brooks showcases the same experience when his lengthy sentence came to an end. Us, as the responders, seeing him come out to the real world made me foster the idea that he would be finally free, but on the other hand, for him, as an inmate at Shawshank state prison, being let out was almost displayed like punishment as he wasn’t ever going to be able to adapt to life in the real world after not being part of it for 50 years. As a result he hangs himself after, etching an inscription saying, “BROOKS WAS HERE” into the ceiling of his motel room. This symbolises as his legacy and

by doing this he displays his individuality, expressing that a human being was once on this planet by the name of Brooks Hatlen. Not an inmate, a human being, an individual. Likewise, when Winston enters what he calls ‘his dream’ the golden country, he senses that he is being constantly watched and under surveillance. Although as a glimpse of hope and freedom, Winston still doesn’t feel exactly comfortable. This exemplifies to us that even when we as the audience think he is given a chance of freedom, to him personally, it’s more of a test and that memory can sometimes bring out the worst of people as it. Winston’s feelings of legacy echo Brooks’ as he writes in his journal with the hopes that one day someone will find it, read it, and know that one day in time, someone by the name of Winston once lived. These definitions all point to the fact that memory is the key to experience. The experience is stored in memory and drawn upon when the circumstances are repeated or closely mimicked so we can deal with them

In conclusion, shown through both of these text, 1984 and Shawshank Redemption, they both have the ability to tell stories through the narrator. Both composers tell their story through a ‘third person’ perspective giving us a glimpse into the characters Winston and Julia as well as the totalitarian society in 1984 and Shawshank Redemption the experience they face along their journey. The oppressive experiences that both of these characters face whether in a totalitarian society or in prison, it brings out facets. And these facets are like the faces of a diamond they might not be totally opposite to each other but it reveals multiple of faces as we examine it with a greater level of understanding. The human experience is not black and white because it’s everything in between. In some cases, it might be the oppression and terror one experiences or sometimes the many joys we have in life. It’s not as simple as we may think as it takes time for a person to understand the position they are placed in but through both of these texts, 1984 and Shawshank Redemption, us as the responders clearly enumerates the multifaceted nature of human experience.