

# How to Write a Band 6 Discursive Essay for HSC Module C

## Introduction

Today, we'll focus on how to write a Band 6 discursive essay for Module C, with particular reference to George Orwell's *1984*. Discursive writing is one of the most versatile and creative text types in the HSC, but its open-ended nature can also make it intimidating. This presentation will walk you through everything you need to know, from what discursive writing is to how to structure your essay, incorporate examples, and reflect on your process.

We'll also take a close look at *1984*, a rich and timeless text, and how its ideas can inform and inspire your discursive writing.

## Part 1: What Is Discursive Writing?

Discursive writing sits between persuasive and imaginative writing. It is reflective, exploratory, and personal. The purpose is not to argue or narrate but to engage with ideas in a thoughtful and balanced way.

### Definition

According to NESA:

Discursive texts are those whose primary focus is to explore an idea or variety of topics. These texts involve the discussion of an idea(s) or opinion(s) without the direct intention of persuading the reader.

### Key Features

1. **Exploration of Ideas:** Present multiple perspectives without pushing a single viewpoint.
2. **Flexible Structure:** Unlike persuasive or analytical essays, discursive writing can follow a more organic flow.
3. **Personal Voice:** Use anecdotes, reflections, and conversational tone to engage the reader.
4. **Imagery and Figurative Language:** Metaphors, similes, and vivid descriptions bring the writing to life.
5. **Open-Ended Conclusion:** Leave the audience with a lingering thought or question.

### Examples of Discursive Texts

- Opinion columns
- Personal essays

- Reflective nonfiction (e.g., George Orwell's essays, Joan Didion's *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*)

### How Does Discursive Differ From Other Text Types?

Discursive	Persuasive	Imaginative
Explores multiple perspectives.	Argues one viewpoint.	Tells a fictional story.
Conversational or reflective tone.	Formal and structured tone.	Creative and descriptive tone.
No strict structure.	Follows PEEL or TEEL.	Uses plot, characters, and setting.

## Part 2: Why Write a Discursive Essay?

Discursive writing is an excellent choice for prompts that require open-ended exploration or critical thinking. For example:

### Sample Prompt

*"Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past."*

A discursive essay responding to this could explore:

1. How governments manipulate historical narratives (1984).
2. The role of memory in shaping identity.
3. The impact of modern technologies, such as social media, on truth.

### Benefits of Writing Discursively

- **Flexibility:** You can explore ideas creatively and personally.
- **Engagement:** The conversational tone allows you to connect with your audience.
- **Authenticity:** Use anecdotes and reflections to make your writing relatable.

## Part 3: Brainstorming Ideas

Before you begin writing, spend time brainstorming ideas that resonate with you. Here's how:

## Step 1: Identify Key Themes

Look at the stimulus and pull out central themes. For example, with *1984*, consider:

- Truth and memory.
- Power and control.
- Surveillance and privacy.

## Step 2: Make Connections to Real Life

Think about how these themes apply today. For instance:

- How “fake news” alters public opinion.
- How social media creates echo chambers.
- The implications of government surveillance (e.g., Edward Snowden, China’s social credit system).

## Step 3: Choose a Focus

Select a theme that is broad enough to explore multiple perspectives but narrow enough to stay focused. Example:

- *“How does control over information shape power?”*

## Part 4: Structuring a Discursive Essay

Discursive writing doesn’t require a rigid structure, but the **diamond structure** is effective:

### 1. Personal Anecdote (Introduction)

Begin with a story, observation, or question to hook the reader.

**Example:**

“When I was 12, I misremembered winning a school race. Years later, I realized I had placed second, but my childhood self had rewritten history. That memory became a lesson in how fragile our sense of the past can be—an idea Orwell’s *1984* captures chillingly.”

### 2. Universal Reflection (Body)

Expand the discussion to include broader societal or philosophical ideas. Use examples from *1984* to deepen your analysis.

**Example:**

“In *1984*, Winston’s job at the Ministry of Truth reveals the terrifying consequences of manipulating the past. By controlling memory, the Party ensures its power over the present. This idea resonates today in a world where social media algorithms curate our realities and bury inconvenient truths.”

### 3. Reflective Conclusion

Tie back to the anecdote and leave the reader with a thought-provoking question or reflection.

**Example:**

“If memories are so easily rewritten, how can we ever trust the stories we tell about ourselves—or the world?”

## Part 5: Techniques for Band 6 Writing

To elevate your writing, use the following techniques:

### 1. Anecdotes

Personal stories make your writing relatable and engaging.

**Example from 1984:**

Winston’s memory of playing with his sister reflects the fragility of human connections under totalitarianism.

### 2. Figurative Language

Metaphors and imagery help convey complex ideas.

**Example:**

“Memory is like sand—it slips through our fingers the harder we try to hold onto it.”

### 3. Multiple Perspectives

Discuss different angles of a topic to show depth.

**Example:**

- 1984: The Party’s control over truth.
- Modern Day: The role of social media in spreading misinformation.
- Personal Reflection: Times you’ve misremembered events.

### 4. Conversational Tone

Write as though you’re speaking to an intelligent but approachable audience.

**Example:**

“Let’s be honest—how often do we blindly believe what we read online? Orwell’s world may seem extreme, but are we really so far removed?”

## Part 6: Writing a Reflection

A reflection is a crucial component of the task. It explains:

- How your ideas and techniques connect to the stimulus.
- How your prescribed text influenced your response.

## Structure of a Reflection

1. **Introduction:** Summarize your main idea and inspiration.
2. **Connection to 1984:** Explain how Orwell's themes shaped your essay.
3. **Techniques Used:** Highlight key devices, such as anecdotes or metaphors.
4. **Impact on the Reader:** Describe how your essay engages and provokes thought.

### Example Reflection:

"My discursive essay examines the manipulation of truth, inspired by Orwell's *1984*. I began with an anecdote about misremembering an event to connect personally with the theme of fragile memory. Drawing on Winston's work in the Ministry of Truth, I used the metaphor of memory as sand to illustrate how easily narratives are shaped. By blending personal reflection with Orwell's dystopian vision, I aimed to engage the reader in questioning how power operates in their own lives."

## Part 7: Examples of Strong Discursive Writing

Here are examples of discursive pieces inspired by *1984*:

### Example 1: Memory and Truth

"History is a story we tell ourselves, but like all stories, it can be edited. In *1984*, Orwell's Party rewrites the past to secure its grip on the present. Today, we face a subtler version of this: curated newsfeeds, altered photos, and the slow erosion of objective truth. Are we any better equipped than Winston to resist these forces?"

### Example 2: Surveillance and Identity

"Orwell's telescreens were fictional, but our phones, laptops, and smart devices watch us more closely than Big Brother ever could. We trade privacy for convenience, freedom for security. Like Winston, we live under constant observation—but the difference is, we chose this."

## Conclusion

Discursive writing is an opportunity to blend personal voice with critical thinking. By using *1984* as inspiration, you can craft essays that are thought-provoking, authentic, and reflective of the world we live in today. Remember to:

- Start with a strong anecdote.
- Explore multiple perspectives.
- Connect your ideas to Orwell's themes.
- End with a reflective, open-ended conclusion.

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## Deep Analysis of 1984: Key Themes and Contextual Connections

A deep analysis of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reveals enduring concerns about the conflict between individual autonomy and totalitarian control. Orwell critiques the manipulation of truth, language, and human relationships by an all-powerful regime, reflecting the broader anxieties of his postmodern, Cold War context. Below is an exploration of key themes in *1984* and how they can inform your discursive essay writing, with comparative insights from Lang's *Metropolis* to highlight Orwell's unique vision.

## 1. Totalitarianism and Individual Autonomy

Orwell's *1984* examines how totalitarian regimes suppress individuality through the manipulation of truth and reality. Reflective of Stalinist Russia, Orwell presents a dystopian vision of a society where the Party exerts absolute control over thoughts, actions, and even memories.

### Key Ideas:

- **Manipulation of Truth:**

The Party's slogan, "*Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past,*" epitomizes their ability to reshape history to serve their agenda. Orwell warns of the dangers of allowing centralized power to dictate truth.

- **Application in Discursive Writing:**

Consider exploring modern parallels such as "fake news," propaganda, or social media algorithms that distort reality. For example, you might write about how platforms curate information to reinforce biases, creating fragmented realities.

- **Solipsism and Reality:**

O'Brien's assertion that "*Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else*" reflects the Party's terrifying power to redefine reality itself. This dogma, captured in the infamous " $2 + 2 = 5$ ," demonstrates the fragility of truth under authoritarian control.

- **Application in Discursive Writing:**

Use Orwell's insights to explore how societal structures shape perception. You might discuss how corporate or governmental entities manipulate narratives to suppress dissent or influence collective consciousness.

## 2. The Role of Technology in Oppression

Orwell critiques technology as a tool for mass surveillance and control. The telescreens and surveillance mechanisms ensure that every action, thought, and word is monitored, depriving individuals of privacy and autonomy.

### Key Ideas:

- **Surveillance Culture:**

The slogan "*Big Brother is watching you*" highlights the omnipresence of surveillance in Oceania. Orwell captures the fear that technological advancements, intended to improve life, can instead be weaponised to suppress freedom.

- **Application in Discursive Writing:**

Explore parallels in contemporary society, such as government surveillance programs, data collection by tech giants, or the social credit system in China. A possible thesis could examine the trade-off between security and freedom in modern governance.

- **Dehumanisation Through Technology:**

The Party uses technology to enforce conformity and eliminate individuality. This is symbolised by the dehumanising use of telescreens for constant observation and propaganda.

- **Application in Discursive Writing:**

Reflect on how modern technologies, like smartphones and social media, create echo chambers and reinforce behavioural conformity. Discuss the double-edged nature of technological advancements: tools for progress versus instruments of control.

### 3. Language and Thought Control

Orwell underscores the role of language as a mechanism of control, most notably through the concept of Newspeak. By reducing the range of language, the Party limits the ability of individuals to think critically or rebel.

#### Key Ideas:

- **Newspeak and Thoughtcrime:**

The systematic reduction of vocabulary in *1984* serves to eliminate subversive thoughts. As Syme explains, “*The whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought. In the end, we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible.*” This manipulation highlights the link between language, freedom, and individuality.

- **Application in Discursive Writing:**

Use this as a springboard to explore how language shapes perception and ideology in modern society. For instance, discuss how political rhetoric or media framing influences public opinion and suppresses dissent.

- **Historical Revisionism:**

Orwell’s metaphor of history as a “*palimpsest*” conveys the Party’s ability to rewrite the past. By erasing historical records, they erase collective memory, ensuring that the populace cannot challenge their version of reality.

- **Application in Discursive Writing:**

Reflect on real-world examples of historical revisionism, such as denial of atrocities, political rebranding, or selective reporting in media. Discuss the ethical implications of controlling historical narratives.

### 4. Human Relationships and Rebellion

In *1984*, Orwell highlights the Party’s systematic destruction of personal relationships to maintain control. Love, trust, and intimacy are eradicated because they threaten loyalty to the state.

#### Key Ideas:

- **The Destruction of Love:**

Winston and Julia’s relationship is portrayed as an act of rebellion against the Party’s enforced celibacy. However, the Party ultimately destroys their bond, as Winston betrays Julia under torture.

- **Application in Discursive Writing:**

Explore the tension between personal connections and societal control. Discuss how authoritarian regimes disrupt communities to enforce compliance, or reflect on how modern systems—like capitalism or technology—alienate individuals from meaningful relationships.

- **The Golden Country as Hope:**

Winston's vision of "The Golden Country" represents a fleeting glimpse of freedom and natural beauty, a stark contrast to the mechanical, oppressive world of the Party.

- **Application in Discursive Writing:**

Use this idea to explore how hope and nature persist as forms of rebellion against systemic control. Reflect on how personal dreams or ideals offer resistance to dehumanization.

## **How This Informs Your Discursive Writing**

When writing your discursive essay, consider:

- Using Orwell's themes as a lens to explore modern issues like surveillance, propaganda, or the fragility of truth.
- Drawing on historical and contemporary examples to connect Orwell's ideas to today's world.
- Reflecting on personal experiences or societal observations to ground abstract ideas in reality.

This dual exploration of Orwell's and Lang's works allows for a nuanced discussion of enduring values like freedom, truth, and humanity.