

## A study guide to the novel

### 1984 by George Orwell

**Nineteen Eighty-Four**, often published as 1984, is a dystopian novel by English author George Orwell published in 1949. The novel is set in Airstrip One (formerly known as Great Britain), a province of the super-state Oceania in a world of perpetual war, omnipresent government surveillance and public manipulation, dictated by a political system euphemistically named English Socialism (or Ingsoc in the government's invented language, Newspeak) under the control of a privileged Inner Party elite, that persecutes individualism and independent thinking as "thoughtcrime".

The tyranny is epitomised by Big Brother, the Party leader who enjoys an intense cult of personality but who may not even exist. The Party "seeks power entirely for its own sake. It is not interested in the good of others; it is interested solely in power."

The protagonist of the novel, Winston Smith, is a member of the Outer Party, who works for the Ministry of Truth (or Minitrue), which is responsible for propaganda and historical revisionism. His job is to rewrite past newspaper articles, so that the historical record always supports the party line. Smith is a diligent and skillful worker but he secretly hates the Party and dreams of rebellion against Big Brother.

As literary political fiction and dystopian science-fiction, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a classic novel in content, plot and style. Many of its terms and concepts, such as Big Brother, doublethink, thoughtcrime, Newspeak, Room 101, telescreen,  $2 + 2 = 5$  and memory hole, have entered into common use since its publication in 1949. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* popularised the adjective Orwellian, which describes official deception, secret surveillance and manipulation of recorded history by a totalitarian or authoritarian state. In 2005, the novel was chosen by *TIME* magazine as one of the 100 best English-language novels from 1923 to 2005. It was awarded a place on both lists of Modern Library 100 Best Novels, reaching number 13 on the editor's list, and 6 on the readers' list. In 2003, the novel was listed at number 8 on the BBC's survey *The Big Read*.

George Orwell "encapsulated the thesis at the heart of his unforgiving novel" in 1944, the implications of dividing the world up into Zones of influence that had been conjured by the Tehran Conference and three years later he wrote most of it on the Scottish island of Jura, from 1947 to 1948, despite being seriously ill with tuberculosis. On 4 December 1948, he sent the final manuscript to the publisher Secker and Warburg and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published on 8 June 1949. By 1989, it had been translated into sixty-five languages, more than any other novel in English at the time. The title of the novel, its themes, the Newspeak language and the author's surname are often invoked against control and intrusion by the state, while the adjective Orwellian describes a totalitarian dystopia, characterised by government control and subjugation of the people. Orwell's invented language, Newspeak satirises hypocrisy and evasion by the state: the Ministry of Love (Miniluv) oversees torture and brainwashing, the Ministry of Plenty (Miniplenty) oversees shortage and rationing, the Ministry of Peace (Minipax) oversees war and atrocity and the Ministry of Truth (Minitrue) oversees propaganda and historical revisionism.

*The Last Man in Europe* was an early title for the novel but in a letter dated 22 October 1948 to his publisher Fredric Warburg, eight months before publication, Orwell wrote about hesitating between

The Last Man in Europe and Nineteen Eighty-Four. Warburg suggested changing the main title to a more commercial one.

In the novel 1985 (1978), Anthony Burgess suggests that Orwell, disillusioned by the onset of the Cold War (1945–91), intended to call the book 1948. The introduction to the Penguin Books Modern Classics edition of Nineteen Eighty-Four, reports that Orwell originally set the novel in 1980 but he later shifted the date to 1982, then to 1984. The final title may also be a permutation of 1948, the year of composition. Throughout its publication history, Nineteen Eighty-Four has been either banned or legally challenged, as subversive or ideologically corrupting, like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), *We* (1924) by Yevgeny Zamyatin, *Kallocain* (1940) by Karin Boye and *Fahrenheit 451* (1951) by Ray Bradbury. In 2005, Time magazine included Nineteen Eighty-Four in its list of the one hundred best English-language novels since 1923. Literary scholars consider the Russian dystopian novel *We* by Zamyatin to have strongly influenced Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Nineteen Eighty-Four is set in Oceania, one of three inter-continental superstates that divided the world after a global war. Most of the plot takes place in London, the "chief city of Airstrip One", the Oceanic province that "had once been called England or Britain". Posters of the Party leader, Big Brother, bearing the caption "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU", dominate the city, while the ubiquitous telescreen (trans-receiving television set) monitors the private and public lives of the populace. The class hierarchy of Oceania has three levels:

(I) the upper-class Inner Party, the elite ruling minority, who make up 2% of the population.

(II) the middle-class Outer Party, who make up 13% of the population.

(III) the lower-class Proles (from proletariat), who make up 85% of the population and represent the uneducated working class.

As the government, the Party controls the population with four ministries:

the Ministry of Peace deals with war and defence.

the Ministry of Plenty deals with economic affairs (rationing and starvation).

the Ministry of Love deals with law and order (torture and brainwashing).

the Ministry of Truth deals with news, entertainment, education and art (propaganda).

The protagonist Winston Smith, a member of the Outer Party, works in the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth as an editor, revising historical records, to make the past conform to the ever-changing party line and deleting references to unpersons, people who have been "vaporised", i.e. not only killed by the state but denied existence even in history or memory.

The story of Winston Smith begins on 4 April 1984: "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen" yet he is uncertain of the true date, given the régime's continual rewriting and manipulation of history. Smith's memories and his reading of the proscribed book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* by Emmanuel Goldstein, reveal that after the Second World War, the United Kingdom fell to civil war and then was absorbed into Oceania, successor state to the United States and British Empire. Simultaneously, the USSR conquered mainland Europe and established the second superstate of Eurasia. The third superstate, Eastasia, comprises the regions of East Asia and South-east Asia. The three superstates wage perpetual war for the remaining unconquered lands of

the world, forming and breaking alliances as is convenient. From his childhood (1949–53), Winston remembers the Atomic Wars fought in Europe, western Russia and North America. It is unclear to him what occurred first: the Party's victory in the civil war, the US annexation of the British Empire or the war in which Colchester was bombed. Smith's strengthening memories and the story of his family's dissolution, suggest that the atomic bombings occurred first (the Smiths took refuge in a tube station), followed by civil war featuring "confused street fighting in London itself" and the societal postwar reorganisation, which the Party retrospectively calls "the Revolution".

Winston Smith lives in Airstrip One, the ruins of an England ravaged by war, civil conflict, and revolution. A member of the middle class Outer Party, Winston lives in a one-room London apartment on a diet of black bread, synthetic meals and "Victory"-branded gin. Telescreens in every building, along with hidden microphones and cameras, permit the Thought Police to identify anyone who might endanger the Party's régime. Children are indoctrinated to inform on suspected thought criminals, especially their parents.

Winston works at the Ministry of Truth, or "Minitrue", as an editor responsible for historical revisionism. He rewrites records and alters photographs to conform to the state's ever-changing version of the truth, rendering the deleted people "unpersons"; the original documents are incinerated in a "memory hole". Winston becomes fascinated by the true past and tries to learn more about it. In an alcove beside his flat's telescreen where he believes he cannot be seen, he begins writing a journal criticising the Party and its enigmatic leader, Big Brother, which, if discovered by the Thought Police, warrants certain death.

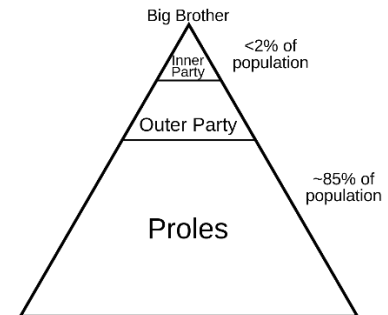
At the Ministry, Julia, a young woman who maintains the novel-writing machines and whom Winston loathes, surreptitiously hands Winston a note confessing her love. Winston realises she shares his loathing of the Party. Winston and Julia begin a love affair, at first meeting in the country, and eventually in a rented room atop an antiques shop in a proletarian neighbourhood of London where they believe they are safe, as the room has no telescreen.

Winston approaches the Inner Party member O'Brien, whom Winston believes is an agent of the Brotherhood, a secret organisation that intends to destroy the Party. After discussion, O'Brien gives Winston "The Book", *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* by Emmanuel Goldstein, the publicly reviled leader of the Brotherhood. The Book explains the concept of perpetual war, the true meanings of the slogans WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH, and how the régime of the Party can be overthrown by means of the political awareness of the proles.

The Thought Police capture Winston and Julia in their bedroom and deliver them to the Ministry of Love (Miniluv) for interrogation. Mr. Charrington, the shopkeeper who rented the room to them, reveals himself as an officer of the Thought Police. O'Brien is also a Thought Police agent, part of a sting operation used by the Thought Police to root out suspected thoughtcriminals. O'Brien tortures Winston with electroshock, showing him how, through controlled manipulation of perception, Winston can "cure" himself of his "insanity" – his manifest hatred for the Party. O'Brien explains the Inner Party's motivation: complete and absolute power, mocking Winston's assumption that it was somehow altruistic and "for the greater good". Winston confesses to crimes he did and did not commit, implicating anyone and everyone, including Julia; but O'Brien understands that Winston has not betrayed Julia as he had not stopped loving her. O'Brien sends him to Room 101 for the final stage of re-education, the most feared room in the Ministry of Love, which contains each prisoner's worst

fear. As a wire cage holding hungry rats is fitted onto his face, Winston shouts "Do it to Julia!" thus betraying her.

After being reintegrated into Oceania society, Winston encounters Julia in a park. She reveals that she was also tortured, and each admits betraying the other. Later, Winston, now an alcoholic, sits by himself in the Chestnut Tree Cafe, troubled by memories which he is convinced are false. A news bulletin announces Oceania's "decisive victory" over Eurasian armies in Africa. A raucous celebration begins outside, and Winston imagines himself a part of it. As he looks up in admiration at a portrait of Big Brother, Winston feels he has at least ended his "stubborn, self-willed exile" from the love of Big Brother – a love Winston happily returns.



*Fig.-Social classes in 1984*

### Principal characters

Winston Smith—the protagonist who is a phlegmatic everyman.

Julia—Winston's lover who is a covert "rebel from the waist downwards" who publicly espouses Party doctrine as a member of the fanatical Junior Anti-Sex League.

Big Brother—the dark-eyed, mustachioed embodiment of the Party who rules Oceania.

O'Brien—a member of the Inner Party who poses as a member of The Brotherhood, the counter-revolutionary resistance, in order to deceive, trap, and capture Winston and Julia.

Emmanuel Goldstein—ostensibly a former leader of the Party, counter-revolutionary leader of the Brotherhood, and author of *The Book, The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, Goldstein is the symbolic Enemy of the State—the national nemesis who ideologically unites the people of Oceania with the Party, especially during the Two Minutes Hate and other fearmongering. While Winston eventually learns that *The Book* is the product of an Inner Party committee that includes O'Brien, whether Goldstein or his Brotherhood are real or fabrications of Party propaganda is something that neither Winston nor the reader is permitted to know.

### Secondary characters:

Aaronson, Jones, and Rutherford—Former members of the Inner Party whom Winston vaguely remembers as among the original leaders of the Revolution, long before he had heard of Big Brother. They confessed to treasonable conspiracies with foreign powers and were then executed in the political purges of the 1960s. In between their confessions and executions, Winston saw them drinking in the Chestnut Tree Café — with broken noses, suggesting that their confessions had been obtained by torture. Later, in the course of his editorial work, Winston sees newspaper evidence

contradicting their confessions, but drops it into a memory hole. Eleven years later, he is confronted with the same photograph during his interrogation.

Ampleforth—Winston's one-time Records Department colleague who was imprisoned for leaving the word "God" in a Kipling poem; Winston encounters him at the Miniluv. Ampleforth is a dreamer and an intellectual who takes pleasure in his work, and respects poetry and language, traits and qualities which cause him disfavour with the Party.

Charrington—An officer of the Thought Police posing as a sympathetic antiques-shop keeper.

Katharine—The emotionally indifferent wife whom Winston "can't get rid of". Despite disliking sexual intercourse, Katharine continued with Winston because it was their "duty to the Party". Although she was a "goodthinkful" ideologue, they separated because she could not bear children.

Tom Parsons—Winston's naive neighbour, and an ideal member of the Outer Party: an uneducated, suggestible man who is utterly loyal to the Party, and fully believes in its perfect image. He is socially active and participates in the Party activities for his social class. Although friendly towards Smith, and despite his political conformity, he punishes his bully-boy son for firing a catapult at Winston. Later, as a prisoner, Winston sees Parsons is in the Ministry of Love, because his daughter had reported him to the Thought Police, claiming she overheard him speak against the Party whilst he slept.

Mrs. Parsons—Parsons's wife is a wan and hapless woman who is intimidated by her own children, who are members of the Party Youth League and represent the new generation of Oceanian citizens, without memory of life before Big Brother, and without family ties or emotional sentiment; the model society moulded by the Inner Party.

Syme—Winston's colleague at the Ministry of Truth, whom the Party "vaporised" because he remained a lucidly thinking intellectual. He was a lexicographer who helped develop the language and the dictionary of Newspeak, in the course of which he enjoyed destroying words, and wholeheartedly believed that Newspeak would replace Oldspeak (Standard English) by the year 2050. Although Syme's politically orthodox opinions aligned with Party doctrine, Winston notes that "He is too intelligent. He sees too clearly and speaks too plainly". After noting that Syme's name was erased from the members list of the Chess Club, Winston infers he became an unperson.

### **The world in 1984**

#### **Ingsoc (English Socialism)**

In the year 1984, Ingsoc (English Socialism), is the ruling ideology and pseudophilosophy of Oceania, and Newspeak is its official language, of official documents.

#### **Ministries of Oceania**

In London, the Airstrip One capital city, Oceania's four government ministries are in pyramids (300 metres high), the façades of which display the Party's three slogans. The ministries' names are antonymous doublethink to their true functions: "The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation". (Part II, Chapter IX — The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism)

### **Ministry of Peace**

The Ministry of Peace supports Oceania's perpetual war.

The primary aim of modern warfare (in accordance with the principles of doublethink, this aim is simultaneously recognized and not recognized by the directing brains of the Inner Party) is to use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living. Ever since the end of the nineteenth century, the problem of what to do with the surplus of consumption goods has been latent in industrial society. At present, when few human beings even have enough to eat, this problem is obviously not urgent, and it might not have become so, even if no artificial processes of destruction had been at work.

### **Ministry of Plenty**

The Ministry of Plenty rations and controls food, goods, and domestic production; every fiscal quarter, the Miniplenty publishes false claims of having raised the standard of living, when it has, in fact, reduced rations, availability, and production. The Minitrue substantiates the Miniplenty claims by revising historical records to report numbers supporting the current, "increased rations".

### **Ministry of Truth**

The Ministry of Truth controls information: news, entertainment, education, and the arts. Winston Smith works in the Minitrue RecDep (Records Department), "rectifying" historical records to concord with Big Brother's current pronouncements, thus everything the Party says is true.

### **Ministry of Love**

The Ministry of Love identifies, monitors, arrests, and converts real and imagined dissidents. In Winston's experience, the dissident is beaten and tortured, then, when near-broken, is sent to Room 101 to face "the worst thing in the world" — until love for Big Brother and the Party replaces dissension.

**Doublethink** is the act of ordinary people simultaneously accepting two mutually contradictory beliefs as correct, often in distinct social contexts. Doublethink is related to, but differs from, hypocrisy and neutrality. Somewhat related but almost the opposite is cognitive dissonance, where contradictory beliefs cause conflict in one's mind. Doublethink is notable due to a lack of cognitive dissonance — thus the person is completely unaware of any conflict or contradiction.

George Orwell created the word doublethink in his dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949); doublethink is part of newspeak. In the novel, its origin within the typical citizen is unclear; while it could be partly a product of Big Brother's formal brainwashing programmes, the novel explicitly shows people learning Doublethink and newspeak due to peer pressure and a desire to "fit in", or gain status within the Party — to be seen as a loyal Party Member. In the novel, for someone to even recognize – let alone mention – any contradiction within the context of the Party line was akin to blasphemy, and could subject that someone to possible disciplinary action and to the instant social disapproval of fellow Party Members.

### **Three perpetually warring totalitarian super-states control the world:**

Oceania (ideology: Ingsoc, i.e., English Socialism); its core territories are the Western Hemisphere, the British Isles, Australasia, and Southern Africa.

Eurasia (ideology: Neo-Bolshevism); its core territories are Continental Europe and Russia, including Siberia.

Eastasia (ideology: Obliteration of the Self, i.e., "Death worship", similar to the doctrine of Juche); its core territories are China, Japan, Korea, and Indochina.

The perpetual war is fought for control of the "disputed area" lying "between the frontiers of the super-states", it forms "a rough parallelogram with its corners at Tangier, Brazzaville, Darwin and Hong Kong", thus Northern Africa, the Middle East, India and Indonesia are where the super-states capture and utilise slave-labour. Fighting also takes place between Eurasia and Eastasia in Manchuria, Mongolia and Central Asia, and all three powers battle one another over various Atlantic and Pacific islands.

Goldstein's book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, explains that the superstates' ideologies are alike and that the public's ignorance of this fact is imperative so that they might continue believing in the detestability of the opposing ideologies. The only references to the exterior world for the Oceanian citizenry (the Outer Party and the Proles) are Minitrue maps and propaganda ensuring their belief in "the war".

### **The Revolution**

Winston Smith's memory and Emmanuel Goldstein's book communicate some of the history that precipitated the Revolution; Eurasia was established after World War II (1939–45), and obviously also after George Orwell's "present" of 1948-1949. It would seem that when US and Imperial soldiers withdrew from continental Europe, the USSR conquered Europe against slight opposition. Eurasia does not include the British Empire because the US annexed it, as well as Latin America, thus establishing Oceania and gaining control over a quarter of the planet. The annexation of Britain occurred about the same time as the Atomic Wars that provoked civil war, but just who was fighting whom in this war is left unclear. It may have been a brief, inconclusive nuclear confrontation between the Soviet Union and the US in connection with their aggressive expansion to form Oceania and Eurasia, respectively. Bombs fell on Britain, a nuclear attack on Colchester being referenced in the text.

According to the Party, it was not a revolution but a coup d'état that installed a ruling élite derived from the native intelligentsia. Eastasia, the last superstate established, emerged only after "a decade of confused fighting" (perhaps very roughly 1955-1965). It comprises the Asian lands conquered by China and Japan. Although Eastasia was prevented from matching Eurasia's size, its larger populace compensates for that handicap.

Precise chronology is unclear, but most of the global societal reorganisation occurred between 1945 and the 1960s. Winston and Julia once meet in the ruins of a church that was destroyed in a nuclear attack "thirty years" earlier, suggesting 1954 as the year of the atomic war that destabilized society and allowed the Party to seize power. It is stated in the novel that the "fourth quarter of 1983" was "also the sixth quarter of the Ninth Three-Year Plan", implying that the first quarter of the first three-year plan began in July 1958. By then the Party was apparently in control of Oceania.

### **The War**

In 1984, there is a perpetual war among Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, the superstates which emerged from the atomic global war. "The book", *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical*

Collectivism by Emmanuel Goldstein, explains that each state is so strong it cannot be defeated, even with the combined forces of two superstates—despite changing alliances. To hide such contradictions, history is re-written to explain that the (new) alliance always was so; the populace accustomed to doublethink accept it. The war is not fought in Oceanian, Eurasian or Eastasian territory but in the arctic wastes and a disputed zone comprising the sea and land from Tangiers (northern Africa) to Darwin (Australia). At the start, Oceania and Eastasia are allies combatting Eurasia in northern Africa and the Malabar Coast.

That alliance ends and Oceania, allied with Eurasia, fights Eastasia, a change which occurred during Hate Week, dedicated to creating patriotic fervour for the Party's perpetual war. The public are blind to the change; in mid-sentence an orator changes the name of the enemy from "Eurasia" to "Eastasia" without pause. When the public are enraged at noticing that the wrong flags and posters are displayed, they tear them down—thus the origin of the idiom "We've always been at war with Eastasia"; later the Party claims to have captured Africa.

"The book" explains that the purpose of the unwinnable, perpetual war is to consume human labour and commodities, hence the economy of a superstate cannot support economic equality (a high standard of life) for every citizen. By using up most of the produced objects like boots and rations, the "proles" are kept poor and uneducated so that they will not realize what the government is doing and they will not rebel. Goldstein also details an Oceanian strategy of attacking enemy cities with atomic rockets before invasion, yet dismisses it as unfeasible and contrary to the war's purpose; despite the atomic bombing of cities in the 1950s the superstates stopped such warfare lest it imbalance the powers. The military technology in 1984 differs little from that of World War II, yet strategic bomber aeroplanes were replaced with Rocket Bombs, helicopters were heavily used as weapons of war (while they did not figure in WW2 in any form but prototypes) and surface combat units have been all but replaced by immense and unsinkable Floating Fortresses, island-like contraptions concentrating the firepower of a whole naval task force in a single, semi-mobile platform (in the novel one is said to have been anchored between Iceland and the Faroe Islands, suggesting a preference for sea lane interdiction and denial).

### **Living standards**

The society of Airstrip One and, according to "The Book", all of the world, lives in poverty; hunger, disease and filth are the norms. Ruined cities and towns are commonplace—the consequence of the civil war, the atomic wars, and purportedly enemy (but quite possibly self-serving Oceanian) rockets. Social decay and wrecked buildings surround Winston; aside from the ministerial pyramids, little of London was rebuilt. Members of the Outer Party consume synthetic foodstuffs and low-quality luxuries such as oily gin and loosely packed cigarettes, distributed under the "Victory" brand (taken from low-quality Indian-made "Victory" cigarettes that were widely smoked in Britain and by British soldiers during World War II). Winston describes something as simple as the repair of a pane of broken glass as requiring committee approval that can take several years. All Outer Party residences include telescreens that serve as both outlets for propaganda and devices through which to monitor the Party members; they can be turned down, but they cannot be turned off.

In contrast to their subordinates, the Inner Party upper class of Oceanian society reside in clean and comfortable flats in their own quarter of the city, with pantries well-stocked with foodstuffs such as wine, coffee, and sugar that are denied to the general populace. Winston is astonished that the lifts in O'Brien's building function, that the telescreens can be switched off, and that O'Brien has an Asian



manservant, Martin; indeed, all of the Inner Party are attended to by slaves captured in the disputed zone, and "The Book" suggests that many have their own motorcars or even helicopters. Nonetheless, "The Book" makes clear that even the conditions enjoyed by the Inner Party are only relatively comfortable and would be regarded as austere by the standards of the pre-revolutionary elite.

The proletariat, or "proles," live in poverty and are kept sedated with alcohol, pornography and a national lottery (whose actual winnings are never paid out, a fact obscured by propaganda and lack of communication between various parts of Oceania). At the same time, the proles are freer and less intimidated than the middle class Outer Party; they are subject to certain levels of monitoring but are not expected to be particularly patriotic, lack telescreens in their own homes, and often jeer at the telescreens that they see. "The Book" indicates that this state of things derives from the observation that the middle class, not the lower class, traditionally started revolutions. The model demands tight control of the middle class, with ambitious Outer Party members neutralised via promotion to the Inner Party or "reintegration" by Miniluv, while proles can be allowed intellectual freedom because they lack intellect. Winston nonetheless believed that "the future belonged to the Proles".

The standard of living of the populace is low overall. Consumer goods are scarce, and those available through official channels are invariably of low quality; for instance, despite the Party regularly reporting increased boot production, upwards of half of the Oceanian populace goes barefoot. The Party claims that this poverty is a necessary sacrifice for the war effort, and "The Book" confirms this is partially correct, since the purpose of perpetual war is consuming surplus industrial production. Outer Party members and proles occasionally gain access to better-quality items through the market, dealing in goods pilfered from the residences of the Inner Party

## Themes

### Nationalism

Nineteen Eighty-Four expands upon the subjects summarised in the essay "Notes on Nationalism" about the lack of vocabulary needed to explain the unrecognised phenomena behind certain political forces. In Nineteen Eighty-Four, the Party's artificial, minimalist language 'Newspeak' addresses the matter.

Positive nationalism: Oceanians' perpetual love for Big Brother; Neo-Toryism, Celtic nationalism and British Israelism are (as Orwell argues) defined by love.

Negative nationalism: Oceanians' perpetual hatred for Emmanuel Goldstein; Stalinism, Anglophobia and antisemitism are (as Orwell argues) defined by hatred.

Transferred nationalism: In mid-sentence an orator changes the enemy of Oceania; the crowd instantly transfers their hatred to the new enemy. Transferred nationalism swiftly redirects emotions from one power unit to another (e.g., Communism, Pacifism, Colour Feeling and Class Feeling). This happened during a Party Rally against the original enemy Eurasia, when the orator suddenly switches enemy in midsentence, the crowd goes wild and destroys the posters that are now against their new friend (Eurasia) and many say that this must be the act of an agent of their new enemy (and former friend) Eastasia. Even though many of the crowd must have put up the posters before the rally, they now say that the enemy has always been Eastasia.

O'Brien concludes: "The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power."

### **Futurology**

In the book, Inner Party member O'Brien describes the Party's vision of the future:

There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. All competing pleasures will be destroyed. But always—do not forget this, Winston—always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever.

—Part III, Chapter III, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

### **Censorship**

A major theme of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is censorship, especially in the Ministry of Truth, where photographs are modified and public archives rewritten to rid them of "unpersons" (i.e., persons who have been arrested, whom the Party has decided to erase from history). On the telescreens figures for all types of production are grossly exaggerated (or simply invented) to indicate an ever-growing economy, when the reality is the opposite. One small example of the endless censorship is when Winston is charged with the task of eliminating a reference to an unperson in a newspaper article. He proceeds to write an article about Comrade Ogilvy, a made-up party member, who displayed great heroism by leaping into the sea from a helicopter so that the dispatches he was carrying would not fall into enemy hands.

### **Surveillance**

The inhabitants of Oceania, particularly the Outer Party members, have no real privacy. Many of them live in apartments equipped with two-way telescreens, so that they may be watched or listened to at any time. Similar telescreens are found at workstations and in public places, along with hidden microphones. Written correspondence is routinely opened and read by the government before it is delivered. The Thought Police employ undercover agents, who pose as normal citizens and report any person with subversive tendencies. Children are encouraged to report suspicious persons to the government, and some even denounce their parents. Surveillance controls the citizenry and the smallest sign of rebellion, even something so small as a facial expression, can result in immediate arrest and imprisonment. Thus, citizens (and particularly party members) are compelled to obedience.

### **The Newspeak appendix**

"The Principles of Newspeak" is an academic essay appended to the novel. It describes the development of Newspeak, the Party's minimalist artificial language meant to ideologically align thought and action with the principles of Ingsoc by making "all other modes of thought impossible". (For linguistic theories about how language may direct thought, see the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.)

Whether or not the Newspeak appendix implies a hopeful end to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* remains a critical debate, as it is in Standard English and refers to Newspeak, Ingsoc, the Party, et cetera, in the past tense (i.e., "Relative to our own, the Newspeak vocabulary was tiny, and new ways of reducing it were constantly being devised", p. 422); in this vein, some critics (Atwood, Benstead, Milner, Pynchon) claim that, for the essay's author, Newspeak and the totalitarian government are past.

### Sources for literary motifs

Nineteen Eighty-Four uses themes from life in the Soviet Union and wartime life in Great Britain as sources for many of its motifs.

The statement " $2 + 2 = 5$ ", used to torment Winston Smith during his interrogation, was a Communist party slogan from the second five-year plan, which encouraged fulfillment of the five-year plan in four years. The slogan was seen in electric lights on Moscow house-fronts, billboards and elsewhere.

The switch of Oceania's allegiance from Eastasia to Eurasia is evocative of the Soviet Union's changing relations with Nazi Germany, who were open adversaries until the signing of the Treaty of Non-Aggression. Thereafter, and continuing until the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, no criticism of Germany was allowed in the Soviet press, and all references to prior party lines stopped.

The description of Emmanuel Goldstein, with a "small, goatee beard", evokes the image of Leon Trotsky. The film of Goldstein during the Two Minutes Hate is described as showing him being transformed into a bleating sheep. This image was used in a propaganda film during the Kino-eye period of Soviet film, which showed Trotsky transforming into a goat. Goldstein's book is similar to Trotsky's highly critical analysis of the USSR, *The Revolution Betrayed*, published in 1936.

The omnipresent images of Big Brother, a man described as having a moustache, bears resemblance to the cult of personality built up around Joseph Stalin.

The news in Oceania emphasised production figures, just as it did in the Soviet Union, where record-setting in factories (by "Heroes of Socialist Labor") was especially glorified. The best known of these was Alexey Stakhanov, who purportedly set a record for coal mining in 1935.

The tortures of the Ministry of Love evoke the procedures used by the NKVD in their interrogations, including the use of rubber truncheons, being forbidden to put your hands in your pockets, remaining in brightly lit rooms for days, and the victim being shown a mirror after their physical collapse.

The random bombing of Airstrip One is based on the Buzz bombs, which struck England at random in 1944–1945.

The Thought Police is based on the NKVD, which arrested people for random "anti-soviet" remarks. The Thought Crime motif is drawn from Kempeitai, the Japanese wartime secret police, who arrested people for "unpatriotic" thoughts.

The confessions of the "Thought Criminals" Rutherford, Aaronson and Jones are based on the show trials of the 1930s, which included fabricated confessions by prominent Bolsheviks Nikolai Bukharin, Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev to the effect that they were being paid by the Nazi government to undermine the Soviet regime under Leon Trotsky's direction.

In 1940 Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges published *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* which described the invention by a "benevolent secret society" of a world that would seek to remake human language and reality along human-invented lines. The story concludes with an appendix describing the success of the project. Borges' story addresses similar themes of epistemology, language and history to 1984.

The song "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree" ("Under the spreading chestnut tree, I sold you, and you sold me") was based on an old English song called "Go no more a-rushing" ("Under the spreading chestnut tree, Where I knelt upon my knee, We were as happy as could be, 'Neath the spreading

chestnut tree." ). The song was published as early as 1891. The song was a popular camp song in the 1920s, sung with corresponding movements (like touching your chest when you sing "chest", and touching your head when you sing "nut"). Glenn Miller recorded the song in 1939.

The "Hates" (Two Minutes Hate and Hate Week) were inspired by the constant rallies sponsored by party organs throughout the Stalinist period. These were often short pep-talks given to workers before their shifts began (Two Minutes Hate), but could also last for days, as in the annual celebrations of the anniversary of the October revolution (Hate Week).

Orwell fictionalized "newspeak," "doublethink," and "Ministry of Truth" as evinced by both the Soviet press and that of Nazi Germany. In particular, he adapted Soviet ideological discourse constructed to ensure that public statements could not be questioned.

Winston Smith's job, "revising history" (and the "unperson" motif) are based on the Stalinist habit of airbrushing images of 'fallen' people from group photographs and removing references to them in books and newspapers. In one well-known example, the Soviet encyclopaedia had an article about Lavrentiy Beria. When he fell in 1953, and was subsequently executed, institutes that had the encyclopaedia were sent an article about the Bering Strait, with instructions to paste it over the article about Beria.

Big Brother's "Orders of the Day" were inspired by Stalin's regular wartime orders, called by the same name. A small collection of the more political of these have been published (together with his wartime speeches) in English as "On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union" By Joseph Stalin. Like Big Brother's Orders of the day, Stalin's frequently lauded heroic individuals like Comrade Ogilvy, the fictitious hero Winston Smith invented to 'rectify' (fabricate) a Big Brother Order of the day.

The Ingsoc slogan "Our new, happy life", repeated from telescreens, evokes Stalin's 1935 statement, which became a CPSU slogan, "Life has become better, Comrades; life has become more cheerful".

### **Influences**

During World War II (1939–1945) Orwell believed that British democracy as it existed before 1939 would not survive the war, the question being "Would it end via Fascist coup d'état from above or via Socialist revolution from below"?

Later he admitted that events proved him wrong: "What really matters is that I fell into the trap of assuming that 'the war and the revolution are inseparable.'" Thematically *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and *Animal Farm* (1945) share the betrayed revolution; the person's subordination to the collective; rigorously enforced class distinctions (Inner Party, Outer Party, Proles); the cult of personality; concentration camps; Thought Police; compulsory regimented daily exercise and youth leagues. Oceania resulted from the US annexation of the British Empire to counter the Asian peril to Australia and New Zealand. It is a naval power whose militarism venerates the sailors of the floating fortresses, from which battle is given to recapturing India, the "Jewel in the Crown" of the British Empire. Much of Oceanic society is based upon the USSR under Joseph Stalin—Big Brother; the televised Two Minutes Hate is ritual demonisation of the enemies of the State, especially Emmanuel Goldstein (viz Leon Trotsky); altered photographs and newspaper articles create unpersons deleted from the national historical record, including even founding members of the regime (Jones, Aaronson and Rutherford) in the 1960s purges (viz the Soviet Purges of the 1930s, in which leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution were similarly treated). A similar thing also happened during the French Revolution in which many of the original leaders of the Revolution were later put to death, for

example Danton who was put to death by Robespierre, and then later Robespierre himself met the same fate.

In his 1946 essay "Why I Write", Orwell explains that the serious works he wrote since the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) were "written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism". *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a cautionary tale about revolution betrayed by totalitarian defenders previously proposed in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) and *Animal Farm* (1945), while *Coming Up for Air* (1939) celebrates the personal and political freedoms lost in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Biographer Michael Shelden notes Orwell's Edwardian childhood at Henley-on-Thames as the golden country; being bullied at St Cyprian's School as his empathy with victims; his life in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma and the techniques of violence and censorship in the BBC as capricious authority. Other influences include *Darkness at Noon* (1940) and *The Yogi and the Commissar* (1945) by Arthur Koestler; *The Iron Heel* (1908) by Jack London; *1920: Dips into the Near Future* by John A. Hobson; *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley; *We* (1921) by Yevgeny Zamyatin which he reviewed in 1946; and *The Managerial Revolution* (1940) by James Burnham predicting perpetual war among three totalitarian superstates. Orwell told Jacintha Buddicom that he would write a novel stylistically like *A Modern Utopia* (1905) by H. G. Wells.

Extrapolating from World War II, the novel's pastiche parallels the politics and rhetoric at war's end—the changed alliances at the "Cold War's" (1945–91) beginning; the Ministry of Truth derives from the BBC's overseas service, controlled by the Ministry of Information; Room 101 derives from a conference room at BBC Broadcasting House; the Senate House of the University of London, containing the Ministry of Information is the architectural inspiration for the Minitru; the post-war decrepitude derives from the socio-political life of the UK and the USA, i.e., the impoverished Britain of 1948 losing its Empire despite newspaper-reported imperial triumph; and war ally but peace-time foe, Soviet Russia became Eurasia.

The term "English Socialism" has precedents in his wartime writings; in the essay "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius" (1941), he said that "the war and the revolution are inseparable... the fact that we are at war has turned Socialism from a textbook word into a realisable policy" – because Britain's superannuated social class system hindered the war effort and only a socialist economy would defeat Adolf Hitler. Given the middle class's grasping this, they too would abide socialist revolution and that only reactionary Britons would oppose it, thus limiting the force revolutionaries would need to take power. An English Socialism would come about which "will never lose touch with the tradition of compromise and the belief in a law that is above the State. It will shoot traitors, but it will give them a solemn trial beforehand and occasionally it will acquit them. It will crush any open revolt promptly and cruelly, but it will interfere very little with the spoken and written word".

In the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, "English Socialism" — contracted to "Ingsoc" in Newspeak — is a totalitarian ideology unlike the English revolution he foresaw. Comparison of the wartime essay "The Lion and the Unicorn" with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* shows that he perceived a Big Brother régime as a perversion of his cherished socialist ideals and English Socialism. Thus Oceania is a corruption of the British Empire he believed would evolve "into a federation of Socialist states, like a looser and freer version of the Union of Soviet Republics".

### Critical reception

When first published, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was generally well received by reviewers. V. S. Pritchett, reviewing the novel for the *New Statesman* stated: "I do not think I have ever read a novel more frightening and depressing; and yet, such are the originality, the suspense, the speed of writing and withering indignation that it is impossible to put the book down". P. H. Newby, reviewing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for *The Listener* magazine, described it as "the most arresting political novel written by an Englishman since Rex Warner's *The Aerodrome*". *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was also praised by Bertrand Russell, E. M. Forster and Harold Nicolson. On the other hand, Edward Shanks, reviewing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for *The Sunday Times*, was dismissive; Shanks claimed *Nineteen Eighty-Four* "breaks all records for gloomy vaticination". C. S. Lewis was also critical of the novel, claiming that the relationship of Julia and Winston, and especially the party view on sex, lacked credibility, and that the setting was "odious rather than tragic".

### Cultural significance:

The effect of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on the English language is extensive; the concepts of Big Brother, Room 101, the Thought Police, thoughtcrime, unperson, memory hole (oblivion), doublethink (simultaneously holding and believing contradictory beliefs) and Newspeak (ideological language) have become common phrases for denoting totalitarian authority. Doublespeak and groupthink are both deliberate elaborations of doublethink, while the adjective "Orwellian" denotes "characteristic and reminiscent of George Orwell's writings" especially *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The practice of ending words with "-speak" (e.g. mediaspeak) is drawn from the novel. Orwell is perpetually associated with the year 1984; in July 1984 an asteroid discovered by Antonín Mrkos was named after Orwell.

In 1977 the British rock band The Jam released the album *This Is the Modern World*, which includes the track "Standards" by Paul Weller. This track concludes with the lyrics... "...and ignorance is strength, we have god on our side, look, you know what happened to Winston."

In September 2009, the English alternative rock band Muse released *The Resistance*, which included songs influenced by 1984.

References to the themes, concepts and plot of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have appeared frequently in other works, especially in popular music and video entertainment. An example is the worldwide hit reality television show *Big Brother*, in which a group of people live together in a large house, isolated from the outside world but continuously watched by television cameras.

In November 2011, the United States government argued before the US Supreme Court that it wants to continue utilizing GPS tracking of individuals without first seeking a warrant. In response, Justice Stephen Breyer questioned what this means for a democratic society by referencing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Justice Breyer asked, "If you win this case, then there is nothing to prevent the police or the government from monitoring 24 hours a day the public movement of every citizen of the United States. So if you win, you suddenly produce what sounds like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*..."

In 1984, the book was made into a movie which starred John Hurt as the central character of Winston Smith. In 2006, the movie version of *V for Vendetta* was released, which has many of the same running themes and principles as 1984 and, coincidentally, also stars John Hurt taking on the role of the leader of a totalitarian party, though the film is based on the graphic novel by Alan Moore and David Lloyd. An episode of *Doctor Who* called "The God Complex" depicts an alien ship disguised as a hotel containing Room 101-like spaces, and quotes the nursery rhyme as well.

The book touches on the invasion of privacy and ubiquitous surveillance. From mid-2013 it was publicized that the NSA has been secretly monitoring and storing global internet traffic, including the bulk data collection of email and phone call data. Sales of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* increased by up to 7 times within the first week of the 2013 mass surveillance leaks. It is also seen in the book how mass media was a catalyst for the intensification of destructive emotions and violence. Since the 20th century news and other forms of media has been publicizing violence more. It is no coincidence that in the same year, the Almeida Theatre and Headlong staged a successful new adaptation (by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan) which twice toured the UK and played an extended run in London's West End.

**Further study:**

- Closed-circuit television, CCTV
- Culture of fear
- Language and thought
- List of stories set in a future now past
- Mass surveillance
- New World Order (conspiracy theory)
- Utopian and dystopian fiction
- Totalitarian societies

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