

1984



by George Orwell

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1984: Introduction

Published in 1948 and set thirty-six years in the future, *1984* is [George Orwell's](#) dark vision of the future. Written while Orwell was dying and based on the work of the Russian author Yevgeny Zamyatin, it is a chilling depiction of how the power of the state could come to dominate the lives of individuals through cultural conditioning. Perhaps the most powerful [science fiction](#) novel of the twentieth century, this apocalyptic satire shows with grim conviction how Winston Smith's individual personality is wiped out and how he is recreated in the Party's image until he does not just obey but even loves Big Brother. Some critics have related Winston Smith's sufferings to those Orwell underwent at preparatory school, experiences he wrote about just before *1984*. Orwell maintained that the book was written with the explicit intention "to alter other people's idea of the kind of society they should strive after."

1984: The Principles of Newspeak

Summary

This section defines Newspeak, the official language of Oceania, and sets forth its purpose: to meet the specific needs of Ingsoc, or English [Socialism](#) while making all other methods of thought impossible. When Oldspeak has become obsolete, the last link with the past will have been destroyed.

The vocabulary of Newspeak has been built by inventing new words, eliminating old words, and stripping existing words of their finer shades of meaning. Newspeak, based on English, has three classes of vocabulary words:

1. "A" – words used for everyday life; reserved for simple thoughts, concrete objects, or physical actions.
2. "B" – words created for political purposes with the proper mental attitude; all are compound; made up without a plan.
3. "C" – supplementary; scientific and technical terms.

Analysis

The straightforward manner of the appendix and the elaborate care taken to construct the grammar and vocabulary lend credibility to the existence of Oceania.

Some critics believe that Orwell was pointing out the importance of language as a shaper of thought and the inadvisability of narrowing vocabulary to limit its range. When we consider the nature of the words in the "B" vocabulary, the satirical purpose of the novel becomes more obvious, for words like "honor," "justice," "democracy," and "religion" no longer exist. Instead, a few general words cover these terms, and, as Orwell illustrates throughout the novel, destroy them. Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth makes him an agent of this destruction, just as his attempts to write the illicit diary signify his rebellion against the power of language to destroy thought.

Study Questions

1. What is Newspeak?
2. What is the purpose of Newspeak?
3. When is it expected that Newspeak will become the only language in Oceania?
4. Which dictionary will contain the perfected version of Newspeak?
5. What purpose will be served by cutting down the choice of words in the language?
6. Give the composition of the "A" vocabulary.
7. What is the purpose of the "A" vocabulary?

8. What words make up the “B” vocabulary?
9. What kind of words make up the “C” vocabulary?
10. What is the delay in Newspeak becoming a fully adopted language at the present time?

Answers

1. Newspeak is the official language of Oceania.
2. Newspeak aims to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism.
3. Newspeak will probably supersede Oldspeak (Standard English) by 2050.
4. Perfected Newspeak will be found in the eleventh edition of the dictionary.
5. Cutting down the choice of words diminishes the range of thought.
6. The “A” vocabulary consists of words needed for everyday life, words already in existence.
7. The “A” vocabulary aims to express simple thoughts involving concrete objects or physical actions.
8. The “B” vocabulary is comprised of words made up for political purposes.
9. The “C” vocabulary contains scientific and technical terms.
10. The delay revolves around problems translating classic and utilitarian literature.

Suggested [Essay Topics](#)

1. Discuss the structure and composition of the “A”, “B”, and “C” vocabularies. Which vocabulary seems closest to its -final stage of development? Which vocabulary has undergone the most change from its Oldspeak structure? Why is the “C” -vocabulary termed “supplementary”?
2. Discuss the reasons for the delay in implementing the perfected, finalized version of Newspeak. Why does literature present an especially difficult problem? What problems would people such as Winston Smith have in adapting to this new language?

1984: Overview

Background

1984 is George Orwell’s most famous and enduring work, with the possible exception of his political fable [Animal Farm](#). The novel has been translated into more than 60 languages, condensed in the Reader’s Digest, made into two movies, and presented on television.

The widespread impact of *1984* is evidenced by the changes in language that it effected. Today, the word “Orwellian” refers to any regimented and dehumanized society. Words like “Newspeak,” “unperson,” “doublethink,” and “thoughtcrime” have become part of the English language. And the familiar phrase “Big Brother Is Watching You” has become synonymous with the concept of a totalitarian state.

1984’s influence on other twentieth-century works has been considerable: Ray Bradbury’s [Fahrenheit 451](#) (1954) shares the theme of repression and the destruction of a culture (in this case, books), and Anthony Burgess’s [A Clockwork Orange](#) (1962) shares a British setting as well as an invented language, much like the Newspeak of Oceania.

Orwell thought of writing *1984* as early as 1940, during [World War II](#) but he did not complete it until 1948 when the [Cold War](#) was beginning. The anti-Fascist writing of the 1930s and 1940s had a profound influence on Orwell, and is reflected in his writing.

Moreover, events in Communist Russia also impacted the plot and theme of *1984*. From 1922 when Lenin suffered a stroke until 1928—four years after his death—there was a power struggle between Leon Trotsky Minister of War, and [Joseph Stalin](#) then Secretary of the Communist party. Stalin continued to grow even more influential as a member of the Politbureau, a small group of party bosses where his function was to

manage the day-to-day activities of the Communist party. In 1921 Stalin became liaison between the Central Control Commission and the Central Committee; in this capacity he could control the purges designed to keep the party pure. He used this position to his advantage.

Stalin, along with allies Zinoviev and Kamenev, soon proved invincible as they utilized the secret police to put down all plots against them. While resisting Trotsky's urges to somewhat democratize the party, they eliminated his followers by sending them abroad. Trotsky was forced to resign as Minister of War. He was later expelled from the Politbureau, exiled from Russia, and eventually assassinated by one of Stalin's secret police.

From 1928 until World War II, Stalin enjoyed supreme power in Russia. Among the changes he brought to Russian life were collective agriculture, industrialization with forced labor, and the build-up of the authoritarian state combined with the annihilation of all political opposition. In 1928 began the era of the Five-Year Plans, each of which set ambitious goals for the next five years. The goals of the first Five-Year Plan were never actualized; nevertheless, the government announced that they had been realized in 1932. Immediately, another Five-Year Plan went into effect.

Changes were felt in Russian society as well. Freedom to choose one's job was non-existent; those who resisted were sent to labor camps. Stalin's dictatorship was complete when the vast majority of unskilled workers became controlled by a minority of loyal skilled workers and bureaucrats who enjoyed certain privileges restricted from the masses. Thus, the gulf between the classes widened and a new elite was created.

To refute contradictory information, Stalin had histories rewritten to show that Lenin had favored his accession to power. He enjoyed a certain amount of hero-worship as cities were named in his honor.

There were critics, however, whom Stalin eliminated during the Great Purges of 1934-1938, which destroyed all possibility of future conspiracies. By 1936, when Stalin proclaimed the constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) "the most democratic in the world," this was hardly an accurate description.

Under Stalin's dictatorship, the USSR had become a one-party state where elections were a mockery. Although all were eligible to belong to the Communist party, membership was, in fact, a privilege. The party was built upon a pyramidal structure with power and privilege for an elite few. At each level of the pyramid existed organizations to generate propaganda, train military personnel, and educate bureaucrats. All of these activities were designed to increase party loyalty and strength. Stalin remained a dictator through World War II until his death in 1953. Some elements in the plot of *1984* parallel this history.

Five books, in particular, seem to have had a direct impact on the creation of *1984*. Fyodor Zamyatin's [We](#) (1923), reviewed by Orwell in 1946, provided the idea for a futuristic, anti-Utopian frame for the novel. There are several resemblances between the works, both of which are also derived from H. G. Wells' anti-Utopian satire *When the Sleeper Walks* (1899). Likewise, Aldous Huxley's [Brave New World](#) (1932), to which *1984* is frequently compared, is set in the future and deals with a regimented society. From Arthur Koestler's [Darkness at Noon](#) (1941), Orwell took ideas about the atmosphere of a totalitarian society. This "concentration camp" literature details the struggle of its main character to maintain his individuality after his arrest and torture. James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* (1941) gave Orwell the idea for a world controlled by superstates. These powers became the Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia of *1984*.

The novel's bleak ending prompted readers and critics to take it as an attack on socialism in general and Communist Russia in particular and a prophesy of what would happen in the West should communism spread. Orwell was asked if his book should be interpreted as prophesy. He answered this question in a letter of June 1949:

I do not believe that the kind of society I describe necessarily WILL, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that something resembling it COULD arrive. I believe also that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences. (1)

In 1949, some readers were also concerned that Orwell had set the novel in Britain. Orwell replied, “The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order to emphasize that the English-speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, if not FOUGHT against, could triumph anywhere.” (2)

Opinions among critics have not been entirely favorable. Some point to the novel’s overwhelming pessimism and its denouement as flawed, claiming the novel obviously is a reflection of Orwell’s last illness. Others believe that it should be judged as a period piece bearing little relevance to today’s world. After all, there was no special significance to the title. Orwell simply transposed the last two numbers of the year in which he finished the book.

Thus, it can be seen that a number of factors influenced the creation of *1984*, including literary sources and historical events. In order to understand the full impact of this novel, the student needs to be familiar with these influences.

List of Characters

Winston Smith—main character of the novel, 39 years old, employee at the Ministry of Truth, inquisitive, intelligent.

Big Brother—supreme leader of the Party, controlling force of Oceania, never physically appears in the novel but is ever-present.

Thought Police—secret militia; Big Brother’s agents who eliminated potential rebels.

O’Brien—member of the Inner Party, employee at the Ministry of Truth, Winston’s chief.

Julia—Winston’s lover, 26-year-old employee at the Ministry of Truth, worker for the Junior Anti-Sex League.

Syme—Winston’s friend, specialist in Newspeak, employee in the Records Department.

Mr. Charrington—63-year-old shopkeeper, rents hideaway to Winston, secret member of the Thought Police.

Ampleforth—a poet.

Tillotson—employee in the Records Department, disliked by Winston.

Tom Parsons—Winston’s neighbor at Victory Mansions, devoted to the Party, arrested for “thoughtcrime.”

Mrs. Parsons—Tom’s wife, about 30, looks older, possibly will be denounced by her children to the Thought Police.

Martin—O’Brien’s servant, fellow Party member.

Emmanuel Goldstein—Enemy of the People, commander of the Brotherhood, former member of the Party, author of the “book,” probably a creation of the Party.

Katharine–Winston’s wife, disappeared 11 years ago, loyal member of the Party.

Winston’s mother–disappeared years ago; appears only in Winston’s dreams and vague memories.

Summary of the Novel

The concepts of free enterprise and individual freedom no longer exist in 1984. Only three superpowers remain to dominate a world of hatred, isolation, and fear. Eurasia and Eastasia are two of these superpowers. Oceania, the other, is always at war with one of them.

Winston Smith is a 39-year-old employee at the Ministry of Truth, London, located in Oceania. His world is shaped by the Party and its dictator/leader Big Brother, whose face is everywhere on posters captioned “Big Brother Is Watching You.” Big Brother controls life in Oceania through the four ministries of Peace, Love, Plenty, and Truth. Winston’s job at the Ministry of Truth involves revisions of historical documents and rewrites of news stories to reflect the Party’s infallibility.

The Party, which carries out government policies in Oceania, rations food, issues clothing, and selects social activities. Both chocolate and tobacco are in short supply during this latest war. Winston’s clothing, including his tattered pajamas, is government issued, and his evenings are spent in government-sponsored meetings.

War and hatred dominate Oceania, where the Party monitors every move and expression with telescreens, hidden microphones, and spies. The Thought Police, Big Brother’s secret militia, help the Party quell any sign of revolt by eliminating all who think or behave in a disloyal fashion. Hate Week intensifies feeling against Emmanuel Goldstein, Enemy of the People, while increasing devotion to Big Brother. The Party also preaches that the proles, the majority, are natural inferiors to be kept in check.

The Party, however, does not completely control Winston. He secretly buys an illegal diary in which he writes the heresy “Down With Big Brother.” In doing so, he commits the worst offense, “thoughtcrime,” a Newspeak term for the “essential crime that contained all others in itself.” Many of Winston’s thoughts revolve around his attempts to remember various events and people from his childhood, especially his mother who had disappeared years before. Winston tries to investigate the specifics of life in London before the Revolution, but it seems the Party has been successful in eradicating all remnants of daily life in the past.

Winston enters into an affair with the free-spirited Julia, a fellow employee at the Ministry of Truth. At the beginning they view their desire for one another as a political act against the Party dominated by hate and suspicion. Since promiscuity among Party members has been forbidden, they view their affair as an act of rebellion. As the affair continues, Winston’s feelings for Julia change. Although the couple knows the affair is doomed, they continue to meet secretly in an attic room above a junk shop owned by Mr. Charrington, the man who sold the diary, and later, a coral paperweight, to Winston. The lovers discuss the repressiveness of their lives and the possibility of joining the Brotherhood, the secret underground of Emmanuel Goldstein whose express purpose is to overthrow Big Brother.

At work at the Ministry of Truth, Winston is approached by O’Brien, an acquaintance who seems to share his views. After Winston and Julia visit O’Brien at his apartment, he recruits them as members of the Brotherhood and promises to send them a copy of Goldstein’s book, which details strategies to destroy Big Brother. Winston pledges to do whatever it takes, including murder and suicide, to erode the power of the Party.

The inevitable occurs when Julia and Winston are arrested in their secret room, betrayed by Mr. Charrington, a member of the Thought Police. Winston is taken to the Ministry of Love where he is starved, beaten, and tortured during the next months in an effort to “cure” him. Ironically, his torturer is O’Brien, who confirms his identity as a dedicated Inner Party member. Winston submits after a long struggle when he is taken to the

mysterious room 101 and threatened with a cage of hungry rats prepared to devour him. At this point he finally betrays Julia.

Soon Winston is released, but he awaits the bullet he knows will extinguish him. He unexpectedly runs into Julia, who admits that she too had betrayed their love. Surprisingly, Winston feels no desire for her, preferring instead to take his usual seat at the Chestnut Street Cafe where he spends another night in his habitual alcoholic stupor. Winston knows that it is only a matter of time before the Party executes him; nevertheless, when the telescreen barks the news of the army's latest victory, he weeps with joy. The Party finally controls Winston, whose defeat is summed up in the final sentence, "He loved Big Brother."

Estimated Reading Time:

1984 is divided into three major sections of approximately equal length, each with separate chapters. Orwell also included an appendix on Newspeak. Thus, in order to maximize understanding, the reader should plan no fewer than four reading sessions.

By reading approximately 30 pages per hour, the reader should be able to complete the entire novel in 8 to 12 hours. He or she should also plan to spend more time on Part I, where Orwell establishes the frameworks of plot, characterization, and theme.

Notes

1. J. R. Hammond, A [George Orwell](#) Companion—A Guide to the Novels, Documents, and Essays (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), pg. 172.
2. Ibid, pg. 173.

1984: George Orwell Biography

George Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair in Bengal India in 1903, into a middle-class family. The son of a British civil servant, Orwell was brought to England as a toddler. The boy became aware of class distinctions while attending St. Cyprian's preparatory school in Sussex, where he received a fine education but felt out of place. He was teased and looked down upon because he was not from a wealthy family. This experience made him sensitive to the cruelty of social snobbery.

George Orwell

As a partial-scholarship student whose parents could not afford to pay his entire tuition, Orwell was also

regularly reminded of his lowly economic status by school administrators. Conditions improved at Eton, where he studied next, but instead of continuing with university classes, in 1922 he joined the Indian Imperial Police. Stationed in Burma, his class-consciousness intensified as he served as one of the hated policemen enforcing British control of the native population. Sickened by his role as imperialist, he returned to England in 1927 and resigned his position. He planned to become a writer, a profession in which he had not before shown much interest.

In 1928, perhaps to erase guilt from his colonial experiences, he chose to live amongst the poor of London, and later, Paris. In Paris, he published articles in local newspapers, but his fiction was rejected. His own life finally provided the material for his first book, published in 1933. [Down and Out in Paris and London](#), which combined fictional narrative based on his time spent in those two cities with social criticism, was his first work published as George Orwell. The pseudonym was used so his parents would not be shocked by the brutal living conditions described in the book. The next year, Orwell published [Burmese Days](#), a novel based on his stay in Burma. Subsequent novels contain autobiographical references and served as vehicles for Orwell to explore his growing political convictions.

In 1936, Orwell traveled to Barcelona, Spain, to write about the Spanish Civil War and ended up joining the battle, fighting against Spanish leader Francisco Franco on the side of the Republicans. Wounded, he returned to England. Two nonfiction books, [The Road to Wigan Pier](#), a report on deplorable conditions in the mining communities of northern England, and [Homage to Catalonia](#), the story of his participation in the Spanish Civil War, allowed Orwell to explicitly defend his political ideas. Dozens of pointed essays also revealed his political viewpoint.

By that time, Orwell clearly saw himself as a political performer whose tool was writing. He wrote in a 1946 essay, “Why I Write,” that “every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic socialism, as I understand it.”

Orwell’s next book, [Animal Farm](#), a fable about the events during and following the Russian Revolution, was well liked by critics and the public. He had had trouble finding a publisher during [World War II](#) because the work was a disguised criticism of Russia, England’s ally at the time. When it was finally published, just after the war, however, it was a smashing success.

The money Orwell made from *Animal Farm* allowed him, in 1947, to rent a house on Jura, an island off the coast of Scotland, where he began to work on *1984*. His work was interrupted by treatment for tuberculosis, which he had contracted in the 1930s, and upon his release from the hospital in 1948 Orwell returned to Jura to complete the book. Under doctor’s orders to work no more than one hour a day, but unable to find a typist to travel to his home, he typed the manuscript himself and collapsed upon completion of the book. For the next two years he was bedridden. Many critics claim that Orwell’s failing health may have influenced the tone and outcome of the novel, and Orwell admitted that they were probably right.

Orwell did plan to write other books, according to his friends, and married while in the hospital, but three months later in 1950 he finally died of tuberculosis.

1984: Summary

Part One

In George Orwell’s *1984* Winston Smith, a member of the Outer Party from Oceania (a fictional state representing both England and America), lives in all visible ways as a good party member, in complete conformance with the wishes of Big Brother—the leader of the Inner Party (Ingsa). He keeps his loathing for the workings of the Party—for the vile food and drink, the terrible housing, the conversion of children into

spies, the orchestrated histrionics of the Two Minutes' Hate—deep inside, hidden, for he knows that such feelings are an offense punishable by death, or worse. But, as the year 1984 begins, he has decided, against his better judgment, to keep a diary in which his true feelings are laid bare. He sits back in an alcove in his dingy apartment, just out of view of the telescreen (two-way television screens that are in all buildings and homes, which broadcast propaganda and transmit back the activities of anyone passing in front of the screen) and writes of his hatred for Big Brother.

Winston works at the Ministry of Truth (Minitrue, in Newspeak), the branch of the government responsible for the production and dissemination of all information. Winston's job is to alter or "rectify" all past news articles which have since been "proven" to be false. Only once has he ever held in his hands absolute proof that the Ministry was lying. It concerned three revolutionaries, Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford, who were executed for planning a revolt against the state. Winston found evidence that their confessions were falsified and out of fear he destroyed that evidence.

One day during a Two Minutes' Hate session, Winston catches the eye of O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party who seems to carry the same disillusionment about the Party that Winston harbors. Winston realizes that all the stories told by the Party about Emmanuel Goldstein—the head of an underground conspiracy to overthrow the Party—and the traitorous Brotherhood are at least partly true. Perhaps there is another way, and he begins to see hope in the proletariat. They are the 85% of the population of Oceania that exists outside the Party, kept in a perpetual state of slovenly poverty but mostly unregulated, unobserved.

Winston's wanderings among the proles, desperately searching for that little bit of hope, take him one evening to the junk shop where he purchased his diary. The proprietor, Mr. Charrington, shows him a back room outfitted with a bed, where he and his wife used to live before the Revolution. And there is no telescreen—the proles aren't required to have them.

As he leaves the shop, Winston notices that he is being watched. A dark-haired woman from the fiction department at Minitrue was spying on him. Fearing the worst, Winston contemplates killing her, but instead he quickly heads home.

Part Two

Winston sees the dark-haired girl at the Ministry of Truth. She stumbles, and as he helps her up, she passes a slip of paper into his hand. Winston reads it in secret and discovers that it is a note saying that she loves him. Lonely and intrigued by her, he manages to eat lunch one day with her. They make plans for another such accidental meeting that evening. In the midst of a crowd, she gives him a complex set of directions to a place where they will meet on Sunday afternoon.

Winston and the girl—Julia—meet in the woods, far out in the country, away from the telescreens. There they are actually able to talk and make love. Julia reveals that she is not what she appears; she despises the Party, but pretends to be a good party member.

The couple meets at irregular intervals, and never in the same place, until Winston suggests the idea of renting Mr. Charrington's room. The two meet, sharing the delicacies that Julia gets on the black market (delicacies like sugar, milk, and real coffee) and relishing their moments of freedom. Their bliss is interrupted only once by the presence of a rat. Julia chases it off and prevents it from coming back.

O'Brien, under the guise of having a copy of the newest Newspeak dictionary, approaches Winston at the ministry and invites him to his apartment. Winston believes he has a friend and agrees to go with Julia. When Winston and Julia finally do appear, O'Brien assures them that Goldstein and the conspiracy to overthrow the Party do indeed exist, that he is part of that conspiracy, and he wants them to work for it. O'Brien sends Winston a copy of Goldstein's forbidden book on the secret history of Oceania which Winston and Julia read

in the privacy of Mr. Charrington's room.

Shortly after waking up from a long nap, Winston and Julia hear a voice from a hidden telescreen which suddenly commands them to stand in the middle of the room. Mr. Charrington enters with a crew of stormtroopers who beat Winston and Julia, then hurry them separately away.

Part Three

Winston is tortured in jail—known as the Ministry of Love—for an interminable length of time. O'Brien is in charge of the torture. Winston confesses to various crimes, including his years of conspiracy with the ruler of Eastasia—one of the three superpowers that are often at war with Oceania. O'Brien explains to Winston that, among other things, Goldstein's book was in fact a Party creation.

It becomes clear, however, that the purpose of Miniluv is not to produce forced confessions and then kill its victims, but to “cure” the confessors, to enable them to see the truth of their confessions and the correctness of the Party's doublethink, in which “War is Peace,” “Freedom is [Slavery](#),” and “Ignorance is Strength.” The Party is not content with negative obedience, but must have the complete and true belief of all members. No one is executed before coming to love Big Brother.

Winston is at length able to persuade himself that the Party is right about everything—that two and two, in fact, make five—but he has not betrayed Julia, whom he still loves. At last the time comes for that step, and O'Brien sends Winston to Room 101, where each individual's darkest fear is catalogued. In Winston's case it is rats. When they threaten him with rats, he betrays Julia.

One last hurdle remains: Winston must come to love Big Brother, for the Party wanted no martyrs, no opposition at all. Winston is released a shell of a man, his hair and teeth gone, his body destroyed. He is given a small job on a committee that requires no real work. He spends most of his time in a bar, drinking oily victory gin. He sees and even speaks to Julia one day, who admits matter-of-factly that she betrayed him just as he betrayed her. They have nothing more to say to one another.

At last, it is announced over the telescreen in the bar that Oceania has won an important victory in the war. Suddenly Winston feels himself purged, no longer running with the crowd in the street but instead walking to his execution in the Ministry of Love. He can be shot now, for he at last believes. He loves Big Brother.

1984: Summary and Analysis

Part 1, Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Winston Smith: main character, employee at the Ministry of Truth

Big Brother: leader/dictator of the Party

O'Brien: official of the Inner Party, Winston's co-worker at the Ministry of Truth

Emmanuel Goldstein: Enemy of the People

Julia: 26-year-old employee at the Ministry of Truth, worker for the Junior Anti-Sex League

Summary

On a cold afternoon in April 1984, Winston Smith returns to his apartment at Victory Mansions. He barely

notices the many posters of a 45-year-old man with a black moustache whose captions read “Big Brother Is Watching You.”

Inside the apartment is a telescreen through which the Thought Police monitor one’s every action and sound. Winston turns his back to the telescreen and looks out on London, chief city of Airstrip One, the third most populous province of Oceania. He sees bombed sites contrasted against the gleaming Ministry of Truth, which dominates the landscape. He reads the three slogans of the party:

WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

Winston also sees the three other ministries of government: Peace, Love, and Plenty. The stark, windowless Ministry of Love frightens Winston because no one enters except on official business.

Winston positions himself out of the telescreen’s range, drinks a cup of gin, and begins a diary. If he is found out, he will probably be put to death even though laws no longer exist in Oceania. Feeling helpless, he tentatively begins “April 4, 1984”; he’s not even sure of the date or of his reasons for writing the diary.

Winston remembers that an incident at work involving the Two Minutes Hate has provoked him to begin this journal. At the scene was a girl from the Fiction Department and O’Brien, a member of the Inner Party who appeared quite important. The purpose of the ritual was to increase antagonism toward Emmanuel Goldstein, Enemy of the People.

About 30 seconds into the Hate when Goldstein’s face appeared on the telescreen, people reacted violently with everyone joining in. Winston, too, felt hate, but it had been directed toward the Party, Big Brother, and the Thought Police. This hate was fleeting, though, for at the next moment he adored Big Brother.

The Hate had ended with the image of Big Brother and the Party’s three slogans flashing on the screen. In response, Winston’s co-workers chanted their love of Big Brother. Looking at O’Brien, Winston believed that his acquaintance knew and understood his disloyal thoughts.

Remembering this incident, Winston continues his diary and absent-mindedly prints “Down With Big Brother” repeatedly. By expressing himself in this manner, he has now committed “thoughtcrime,” an all-inclusive offense whose punishment is extermination.

Discussion and Analysis

The opening paragraphs of *1984* define the setting. Orwell’s choice of “cold” and “vile” as well as phrases such as “swirl of gritty dust” to describe the April afternoon establish the atmosphere for the “coldness” of the plot to follow. The appeal to the senses is especially effective. Additionally, the clock is striking “thirteen.” This seemingly minor detail suggests an abnormality in the setting, which foreshadows the events that will occur there.

Orwell paints a scene of destruction as he describes wartime London. The city has been virtually destroyed with “bombed sites where plaster dust swirled in the air.” Bombs have cleared paths where there have “sprung up sordid colonies of wooden dwellings like chicken houses.” Some critics have compared Orwell’s description of the city’s bleakness to the vivid pictures of London presented in the novels of Charles Dickens. In contrast, the dominating Ministry of Truth is an enormous pyramid of “glittering white concrete” that stands out, as do the three other ministries which “dwarf the surrounding architecture.”

These sights serve as the backdrop for the introduction of the protagonist Winston Smith, who observes these sights from his apartment window at Victory Mansions. Orwell's working title for this novel, *The Last Man in Europe*, suggests that his hero, an isolated, lonely figure, is the last believer in the values of the past, described in the book as pre-Revolutionary time. The surname "Smith," the most common in England, suggests the representative quality of the hero.

Winston's life, like the landscape, is dominated by the four ministries: Truth, Peace, Love, and Plenty, which are "led" by the dictator Big Brother, who, most critics believe, represents Russia's supreme dictator, Stalin. In fact, this control by the Party is the basis for the central conflict: restrictions of the totalitarian state under which Winston lives versus his growing restlessness with the rigidity of his life and his concern that the past as a shaper of history will be erased or forgotten.

Although Winston is only a member of the Outer Party, he is extremely intelligent. Scholars believe that this quality is Winston's downfall. Orwell describes Winston's unfocused hatred as he sits with his coworkers during the Two Minutes Hate:

Thus, at one moment Winston's hatred was not turned against Goldstein at all, but, on the contrary, against Big Brother, the Party, and the Thought Police; and at such moments his heart went out to the lonely, derided heretic on the screen, sole guardian of truth and sanity in a world of lies. And yet the very next instant he was at one with the people about him, and all that was said of Goldstein seemed to him to be true. At those moments his secret loathing of Big Brother changed into adoration. . . .

Despite having the outward appearance of a loyal, controlled Party member, Winston is capable of independent thoughts. Orwell continues:

Winston succeeded in transferring his hatred from the face on the screen to the dark-haired girl behind him. Vivid, beautiful hallucinations flashed through his mind. . . . He would ravish her and cut her throat at the moment of climax. Better than before, moreover, he realized why it was that he hated her.

Knowing that the consequences of his action will be death, Winston begins a secret diary. The writing is therapeutic, although crude, and the diary allows him to express several forbidden thoughts including the death sentence, "Down With Big Brother." Thus, the opening chapter of this novel clearly points toward the logical consequences of the events in the plot.

Part 1, Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

New Character

Mrs. Parsons: Winston's neighbor

Summary

Winston's writing is interrupted by his neighbor, Comrade—or Mrs.—Parsons, who asks his help with a repair. Her children play a favorite game: Spies. Thinking of the "child heroes" who denounce their parents, Winston supposes that the Parsons' children are typical of most others. Dressed in the uniform of the Spies, the children leap about accusing Winston of all sorts of crimes, including "thoughtcrime." Mrs. Parsons explains the children's exuberance as pent-up energy because they have not been out of the house all day. It seems she has been unable to take them to the much-anticipated public execution of Eurasian soldiers, the latest prisoners of war.

Back in his apartment as he prepares to write, Winston remembers a dream in which someone whispers, “We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness.” Winston believes the speaker is O’Brien, but his confusion persists as to what the message means.

The telescreen barks the announcement of another military victory followed by a long description of the execution of Eurasian soldiers. Next comes the not-so-surprising edict that the chocolate ration has been reduced. In the background Winston hears a rocket bomb explode, a constant occurrence these days.

Winston feels alone. He questions a number of factors regarding his existence. Did anyone else ever question the mutability of the past? Would the Party rule forever? Why is he writing this diary?

Winston feels there is no escape, that nothing in his life has meaning. Nevertheless, he continues his writing, expressing the idea that thoughtcrime means death. Even though Winston knows he now is marked for extermination, he hides the diary and tries to wash away the incriminating ink stains on his hands.

Discussion and Analysis

The incident at the Parsons’ apartment illustrates some everyday facets of life in Oceania. Mrs. Parsons is only 30 years old, but she looks considerably older. Her husband, occupied with Party business, is not home. Orwell depicts Mr. Parsons with little intelligence but more than enough devotion to the Party. Although we have not yet met Tom Parsons, the odor of his sweat permeates the home suggesting the hard work and drudgery that characterize his life.

Even at this early age the Parsons’ children are learning that disloyalty to the Party will not be tolerated. In fact, a number of children, or “child heroes,” have successfully denounced their parents to the Thought Police. The children are particularly disappointed today because they will be missing the hanging of several Eurasian war prisoners. Violence seems to be an integral part of childhood. The sight of so-called innocent children engaged in play with such violent overtones is alarming but enlightening. Allegiance to the Party rather than love for one’s family is cultivated at a very early age. The breakdown of family relationships is a dominant motif in this novel.

Back at his apartment, Winston continues to think of the early incident at work and of O’Brien. He believes that in a dream he has heard O’Brien whisper, “We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness.” Winston has no substantial proof that O’Brien is an ally, but his hope undoubtedly is a result of desperation for camaraderie.

Against the backdrop of war and hatred, Winston feels alone. Orwell tells us, “He felt as though he were wandering in the forests of the sea bottom, lost in a monstrous world where he himself was the monster.” This metaphor heightens the differences between Winston and his “comrades” by ironically emphasizing that it is not Winston who is monstrous.

Winston feels comforted by his belief that there is one thing the Party cannot take: the thoughts inside one’s skull. The struggle for Winston’s thoughts will become a dominant theme. Perhaps it is this conviction that prompts Winston to continue the diary, but as Orwell explicitly states, writing it means certain death.

Part 1, Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

New Character

Winston’s mother: appears only in Winston’s dreams, disappeared many years ago

Summary

Winston only vaguely remembers his parents, who disappeared in one of the Great Purges of the fifties. Winston's only memory of his father is of the thin soles on his shoes.

He recalls his mother and sister in a vivid dream where, as passengers on a sinking ship, they clutch one another right before it falls to the bottom of the sea. From the expression on his mother's face, Winston can see that she died loving him. Winston is struck by the impossibility of this emotion's existence in a society now dominated by war and hatred. Things have certainly changed since her disappearance when Winston was only 10 or 11.

His mind wandering, Winston drifts to a recurrent dream of a young girl approaching him in an open meadow that he calls the Golden Country. As she draws nearer, she throws off her clothes and gestures to Winston with a single, graceful movement of her arm. Winston is especially captivated by the freedom with which she makes this gesture.

A screaming telescreen leading the morning calisthenics awakens Winston who is muttering the word "Shakespeare." He finds these exercises particularly difficult as the exertion always leads to a coughing fit, but Winston continues to think as he mechanically follows through with the Physical Jerks.

Reminiscing about the past, Winston does not remember a time without war, which currently is being waged against Eurasia. Only four years before, Oceania had fought Eastasia, but since no official records now exist, the war officially never happened. Winston senses that this knowledge existing in his consciousness will soon be annihilated. The Party slogan, "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past," is frightening to him.

Winston continues to exercise as he tries unsuccessfully to remember when he'd first heard of Big Brother. He also recalls Ingsoc—"English Socialism"—but he cannot exactly remember when the phrase was first popularized. His thoughts are interrupted, and he is brought back to reality by the irate voice on the telescreen, which is not satisfied with his morning routine.

Discussion and Analysis

Orwell introduces the dream motif in this chapter. Winston's dream about his mother's and sister's disappearance serves two purposes. First, its setting on a sinking ship forecasts the hopeless future for the society in which Winston grew up. By the time Winston reaches adulthood, only remnants of family life as he knew it remain. Undoubtedly, Orwell is satirizing Stalin's Great Purges during which seven million were arrested, one-half million were executed, and 2.5 million died in labor camps.

Secondly, the dream allows Winston to explore his feelings about his mother's death, which he characterizes as tragic. Especially moving is the knowledge that although she was sacrificed for her son, Winston's mother died loving him. Orwell observes, "Such things, he saw, could not happen today. Today there were fear, hatred, and pain, but no dignity of emotion, or deep and complex sorrows."

Equally revealing is Winston's second dream. Surprisingly, it is not the girl's nakedness that fascinates Winston, but instead the utter freedom with which she gestures to him. This gesture is reminiscent of other times and individuals.

Orwell continues to develop the concept of his protagonist as an independent freethinker. Even though morning exercises are consuming all of Winston's physical energy, mentally he continues to dwell on the past. The Party's slogan, "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past," alarms Winston because he can see evidence that this policy is becoming reality. The war against Eastasia four years ago has been completely obliterated from records and history books; therefore, it never

happened. The mutability of the past with control by the Party is a major theme in this novel.

Part 1, Chapters 4 and 5 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Tillotson: employee in the Records Department

Syme: Winston's friend, expert in Newspeak

Tom Parsons: Winston's neighbor and coworker, loyal to the Party

Summary

Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth is to alter or "rectify" records to create documentary evidence supporting the Party. As soon as he finishes with the day's assignment, he drops the instructions into the memory hole, where he assumes they are destroyed along with the papers containing the original information.

The Records Department is only a small branch of the Ministry of Truth, the primary purpose of which is to supply the citizens of Oceania with information and entertainment via newspapers, textbooks, films, novels, and telescreen programs. The Ministry also creates entirely different information on a lower level for the proles, including the lowest form of pornography, "Pornosec," forbidden to Party members except those who have created it.

Winston loves his work, which for the most part is tedious, but in some ways challenging as he tries to anticipate what the Party wants him to say in his "revised" documents. There is a certain amount of competition among workers; Winston suspects that Tillotson, a coworker, has received the same assignment.

Today, as part of a revision of Big Brother's Order of the Day, Winston plans to commemorate the fictitious Comrade Ogilvy with a few false lines and photographs to bring this "unperson" into existence. It strikes Winston that once his work is complete, Comrade Ogilvy will exist as authentically as Charlemagne or Julius Caesar.

At work Winston sees his friend Comrade Syme, and over a dull, regulation lunch they discuss Syme's current project, the eleventh edition of the Newspeak dictionary. Syme is proud of his work streamlining the language; of particular interest is the destruction of verbs and adjectives. The new dictionary will simplify synonyms and eliminate antonyms altogether. Syme offers "ungood" as an example of how Newspeak will be able to narrow the range of thought by eliminating the finer shades of distinction within the language. Thoughtcrime will become impossible, he predicts, for there will be no words to express it.

Syme believes that by 2050 everyone will speak Newspeak except the proles, who are not considered humans. He seems especially confident that the great literature of the past, including the works of Shakespeare and Chaucer, will be destroyed. Privately, Winston believes Syme will be vaporized for his intelligence and directness. Syme's favorite hangout, the Chestnut Tree Cafe, is characterized as an "ill-omened" place where discredited leaders hang out.

The conversation is interrupted by Parsons as he collects block dues from Winston. From the telescreen comes an announcement from the Ministry of Plenty that because of the workers' superior output, the standard of living has increased at least 20 percent over the past year. Ironically, as Winston listens, he is smoking one of his few remaining cigarettes before the new rations start the next day.

Winston absorbs the announcement that there have been demonstrations honoring Big Brother for raising the chocolate ration to 20 grams a week, observing that only yesterday it had been announced that the ration was to be reduced from 30 to 20 grams. Winston wonders how people could so gullibly accept such news. Both Parsons in his stupidity and Syme with his intelligence accept it. Is Winston all alone?

Discussion and Analysis

Orwell continues to explore the theme of the mutability of the past as he examines the role of the Ministry of Truth, which controls versions of information given to the Party members of Oceania and to the proles. Many literary critics believe that Orwell modeled the ministry after the BBC for which he worked during World War II. The BBC broadcasts radio and television programs to countries all over the world. Orwell's experiences at the BBC gave him insight into the dangers of government control of information.

Ironically, Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth is to falsify records for the Party, leaving no trace of the alteration itself. Orwell describes Winston at work:

Winston's greatest pleasure in life was his work. Most of it was tedious routine, but included in it there were also jobs so difficult and intricate you could lose yourself in them as in the depths of a mathematical problem—delicate pieces of forgery in which you had nothing to guide you except your knowledge of the principles of Ingsoc and your estimate of what the Party wanted you to say.

Although Winston enjoys the process of creation itself, he continues to ponder the ethical implications of altering the past as he creates Comrade Ogilvy, a fictitious war hero. Orwell writes, "It struck him as curious that you could create dead men but not living ones. Comrade Ogilvy, who had never existed in the present, now existed in the past, and when once the act of forgery was forgotten, he would exist just as authentically, and upon the same evidence, as Charlemagne or Julius Caesar."

Orwell also begins to explore the impact of language on society through the character of Syme who is systematically destroying the language. He tells Winston, "You don't grasp the beauty of the destruction of words." When the finer shades of meaning are destroyed, Syme calls it a "question of self-discipline, reality-control." Orwell demonstrates his belief that there is a relationship between the destruction of language and the destruction of thought. Some critics also believe that Orwell was parodying created languages in this section. Winston predicts the vaporization of Syme for his intelligence; we readers notice that same character trait in Winston. Of note also is the hangout Syme frequents, the Chestnut Tree Cafe, which Orwell terms "ill-omened," a gathering place for discredited leaders before they are purged.

Another irony in Winston's life is shown through the announcement from the Ministry of Plenty that the standard of living has risen 20 percent over the past year. Winston's reality, like the reality of Orwell's post-[World War II](#) audience, is that many goods are rationed. The government's ability to disseminate propaganda and the public's gullibility is shown here through the character of Parsons, whom Winston realizes has accepted the announcement "with the stupidity of an animal."

Part 1, Chapters 6 and 7 Summary and Analysis

New Character

Katharine: Winston's wife, loyal Party member who disappeared years ago

Summary

At home, Winston continues the illicit diary. His next entry begins with a vivid account of an encounter with a prostitute many years before. Writing this account, an exercise in frustration, makes him want to bang his

head against the wall.

It occurs to Winston that one's worst enemy is his own nervous system. He thinks of a passerby on the street who was having muscle spasms; most frightening was the fact that they were unconscious. This leads Winston to observe the most deadly danger of all: talking in one's sleep.

Winston tries to refocus on the diary, but he can't. He thinks of Katharine, his wife, whom he recollects with revulsion. She truly believed what she had been taught: The only recognized purpose of marriage is to have children for the service of the Party. Finally, when the marriage had produced no children, she disappeared approximately 11 years ago.

As he finally gets his thoughts under control, Winston finishes this entry with a matter-of-fact account of a sex act with a prostitute, and then throws down the pen with disgust.

Winston explores his frustrations as he later continues to write. He believes that the only hope for the future lies with the proles who comprise 85 percent of the population. In Winston's estimation the Party could never be overthrown from within, for its enemies have no way of recognizing or meeting one another. On the other hand, the proles were the only group with enough physical force to overthrow the government should they ever become aware of their own strength.

Rebellion, however, is unlikely, for the Party controls everything, even the past. The Party claims to have liberated the proles from bondage and improved their living conditions; Winston notes that in actuality, the proles are treated like animals.

The frustration of trying to remember life before the Revolution is intensified as Winston copies into his diary a passage from a children's history book that presents life in London before the Revolution as a miserable existence.

Winston remembers the survivors of the great purges in which the original leaders of the Revolution were exterminated. Three men named Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford were arrested, confessed to espionage and a number of other offenses, and eventually pardoned by the Party and given sinecures. Winston had seen these three at the Chestnut Tree Cafe and they were shunned—certainly doomed. Later all three were rearrested and executed as a warning to others. But five years later Winston came upon a photo through his job proving that their confessions had been lies. This would have been extremely damaging to the Party. Winston destroyed the photo by throwing it down the memory hole. The effect of this was to destroy the past, of course. Winston now knows how, but he doesn't know why.

Intuitively, Winston knows that the Party has enough power to declare that $2 + 2 = 5$, and this dictum will be accepted. The Party is powerful enough to control external reality by mind control.

Unexpectedly, Winston thinks of O'Brien and decides to write the diary for him because he believes O'Brien is on his side. Today's diary entry ends: "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."

Discussion and Analysis

Writing as a means to explore feelings and vent frustrations is a central motif here as these chapters revolve around the diary. It seems logical that in these chapters, writing is a vehicle to reveal the truth, which follows and contrasts the chapters showing language as a mechanism to create lies.

Winston reveals his frustrations in the first entry exploring the Party doctrine on marriage and family life that expressly states that the only real purpose of marriage is to beget children. As Winston views the Party's

doctrine, “[s]exual intercourse was to be looked on as a slightly disgusting minor operation, like having an enema.” The impossibility of controlling such basic instincts is pointed out when Winston notes that prostitution is fairly prevalent in the poorer sections of the city.

Orwell also suggests that the repression of the sexual appetite affects the body in other areas; for instance, Winston notices the unconscious twitches and spasms in a passerby. Winston himself suffers from an oozing varicose ulcer. The atmosphere of repression had invaded even the most private areas of one’s life: Winston is even afraid of talking in his sleep.

Against this background lies Winston’s hope for the proles. Orwell’s comments about their living conditions seem directed at the Russian Revolution, which supposedly brought a better life to the masses, but, in fact, did not. His references to the great purges of the Revolution most likely are further attacks on Stalin’s Great Purges. The reference to Goldstein, who fled shortly before the arrests of Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford most likely is aimed at Leon Trotsky who was forced into exile during Stalin’s rise to power in Russia.

Winston’s destruction of the photo of the three men supports the recurrent theme of the mutability of the past, but raises another question. “I understand HOW,” writes Winston. “I do not understand WHY.” This remains a central question of the novel.

The setting of the Chestnut Tree Cafe as a place for dissidents who eventually meet their deaths has been mentioned twice so far and hardly seems a coincidence.

Lastly, underlying all of Winston’s writing is the hope that the mind is the one thing the Party cannot control; yet Winston is astute enough to know that the Party is powerful enough to declare $2 + 2 = 5$ and that the statement will be believed. The fact that the mind is a shaper of reality is a powerful message in this novel. Orwell borrowed this example from Stalin’s slogan “The Five Year Plan in Four Years,” which was symbolized in posters reading “ $2 + 2 = 5$ ” placed all over Russia.

Part 1, Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

New Character

Mr. Charrington: kindly old shopkeeper.

Summary

London is bombed as the war continues. Winston, who sees a human hand in an alley, has little reaction as he kicks it into the gutter.

On this long walk he meets an old man in a bar whom he asks about life before the Revolution. The old man has no recall of anything significant; as a result, Winston’s frustrations are intensified.

He wanders into the junk shop where he had bought the diary. There he buys a coral paperweight from the shopkeeper, Mr. Charrington, who seems glad for the business as antiques are not much in demand these days.

In an upstairs room Winston notices the absence of the telescreen and the presence of a print of a local church, St. Clement’s Dane, now ruined because of the war. Charrington and Winston are familiar with the rhyme “Oranges and lemons, say the bells of St. Clement’s,” although Winston has trouble remembering the last lines. Winston feels safe and hopeful here where at least some vestiges of the past remain.

In order to avoid being detected in this area of the city, Winston soon leaves. As he exits the shop, he sees the girl from the Fiction Department. Convinced she is a spy, he hurries along.

Surely, the Thought Police will seize him, thinks Winston, who is reminded of O'Brien's statement in his dream: "We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness." At the same time he looks at a coin and is reminded:

WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

With these two conflicting thoughts in mind, Winston hurries home.

Discussion and Analysis

Winston's growing fascination with the beauty and heritage of the past is symbolized when he buys a coral paperweight from Charrington. Orwell describes Winston's reaction:

What appealed to him was not so much its beauty as the air it seemed to possess of belonging to an age quite different from the present one. . . . It was a queer thing, even a compromising thing, for a Party member to have in his possession. Anything old, and for that matter anything beautiful, was always vaguely suspect.

Orwell accomplishes much in Part I. He has established the setting and tone for the novel. His characterization of the protagonist Winston Smith is fairly complete. By now we also thoroughly understand the nature of the internal conflict that is the crux of the plot. In addition, he has introduced elements of satire and parody.

Part 2, Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Four days after spotting the girl from the Fiction Department outside the junk shop, Winston sees her at work. After falling in the corridor she is having trouble regaining her balance since her arm is in a sling. Before he tries to help, Winston feels confused. On one hand, he believes the girl might be an enemy out to kill him; on the other hand, he sees a fellow human being in need. As Winston helps her from the ground, she slips a note into his hand.

Winston returns to his work station to begin some routine task. He thinks about the note. Maybe it is a summons from the Thought Police or perhaps a message from the underground, possibly from the Brotherhood. As soon as he senses that he is not being watched, Winston opens the note which reads, "I love you." Shocked, Winston rereads the note even though he risks detection in doing so. He then throws the note down the memory hole.

Now Winston's biggest problem lies in arranging to meet the girl whose sincerity he does not doubt. After reviewing a number of options—all unworkable—Winston decides that the canteen at work is the best place to meet her again.

A week passes. Winston has no idea what has happened to the girl. The next day he sees her in the canteen and nearly succeeds in speaking to her, but he is invited to eat lunch at another table. He cannot safely refuse.

Finally, on the next day, they meet at work. Winston fears she has changed her mind, for things like this do not really happen. Despite the presence of numerous telescreens that might spot them, they plan to meet at 19 hours in Victory Square.

Winston is early for their appointment. Near the base of the monument to Big Brother stands the girl. They cannot approach one another until more people arrive.

Suddenly there is a huge shout and everyone rushes to the south side of the square to see a passing convoy of Eurasian prisoners. Winston and the girl position themselves in the middle of the crowd where they exchange a few brief words. The girl then gives Winston a series of directions to an outlying area where they will meet on Sunday.

To avoid detection they try to separate, but the curious crowd does not move. To those in Victory Square the foreigners are no more than animals on display.

Before the crowd gives way, the girl squeezes Winston's hand. Even though the contact only lasts ten seconds, Winston learns every detail of her hand. Ironically, Winston does not dare to look at the girl's eyes, for even a glance would mean certain punishment.

Discussion and Analysis

Orwell continues to build the suspense toward the forbidden love affair. A week passes between the transmission of the note and the first meeting in Victory Square under the imposing statue of Big Brother.

Winston's reaction to the girl's distress in the corridor reveals his confusion over his basic humanity. "In front of him was an enemy who was trying to kill him; in front of him, also, was a human creature, in pain and perhaps with a broken bone." The reader should also recognize that when Winston receives the note, his reactions are of fear and mistrust.

Although Winston still retains a sense of the kinship within mankind, the same cannot be said for his comrades, the Party members. As they stand in Victory Square watching a convoy of Eurasian prisoners, they seem to have lost sight of the fact that they are watching fellow human beings suffering public humiliation. Such attitudes are reminiscent of Nazi Germany. Orwell writes, "The prevailing emotion was of simple curiosity. Foreigners, whether from Eurasia or from Eastasia, were a kind of strange animal."

Winston's feelings and actions here serve to differentiate him from the rest of the society in which he lives, a society grown immune to suffering and hatred, where little regard for human dignity remains.

Part 2, Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Summary

After traveling a considerable distance, Winston arrives at the predesignated meeting spot. Although there are no telescreens, he worries about concealed microphones and patrolling soldiers who might check his passport.

The girl arrives and leads Winston to a clearing on a grassy knoll surrounded by trees. Winston worries about rejection, but the girl is not put off by his age, physical appearance, or marital status. They embrace and kiss but Winston has no physical desire for her. He merely feels incredulous over the entire experience.

Winston finally learns her name: Julia. He confesses that he had hated the sight of her, thinking she was a member of the Thought Police. Telling the truth as a love offering seems a good prelude to the affair. Julia, in response, rips off the scarlet sash around her waist, the symbol of the Junior Anti-Sex League. She offers Winston a small piece of chocolate she obtained through the black market. The smell provokes Winston to a vague recollection, but he cannot remember exactly why the odor should be so disturbing.

Julia confesses that the reason she had selected Winston was that she is good at spotting people who do not belong. Instinctively, she knows Winston is against the Party.

Arms intertwined, the couple strolls to the edge of the field where they will leave one another. Winston recognizes the field from the one in his recurring dream, the Golden Country. Somewhere a thrush is singing beautifully. Winston admires its freedom and beauty.

Winston and Julia return to the clearing where they make love. It is almost the same as Winston's dream. Julia admits to other lovers; in fact, she is quite proud of her numerous liaisons. She makes no attempt to hide her animal instinct, the one act of rebellion that could ruin the Party.

Discussion and Analysis

The near impossibility of the affair's being consummated is made clear in the opening passages describing the roundabout route to the forbidden meeting, the hidden microphones, and patrolling soldiers. We are reminded of the caption "Big Brother Is Watching You," for it certainly appears that this is true. In view of these extensive preparations, Winston's earlier actions of washing the ink stains from his hands do not seem out-of-the-ordinary.

Winston's reaction to the gift of black-market chocolate suggests a repressed memory, a device Orwell uses to develop character. "But there was still that memory moving round the edges of his consciousness, something strongly felt but not reducible to definite shape, like an object seen out of the corner of one's eye. He pushed it away from him, aware only that it was the memory of some action which he would have liked to undo but could not."

Another recurrent motif is the dream. The setting for the first sexual encounter with Julia mirrors the setting in Winston's dream of the Golden Country. The thrush's exuberant song represents freedom and spontaneity. Marvelling at its song, Winston watches with "vague reverence." As with the girl in the dream, Winston admires Julia's independence and spontaneity. Orwell says, "when she flung them aside it was with that same magnificent gesture by which a whole civilization seemed to be annihilated." Similarly, before they make love, Julia flings aside the red sash around her waist, a symbol of chastity for the Junior Anti-Sex League.

Winston's reaction to the news of Julia's numerous lovers hardly shocks us in view of the Party's doctrine, already explained as: "Its real, undeclared purpose was to remove all pleasure from the sexual act. Not love so much as eroticism was the enemy, inside of marriage as well as outside it."

Julia reveals not only her independence but also her honesty as she admits to being absolutely corrupt. Initially, then, this affair begins for two different reasons. To Julia, the lovemaking is the culmination of their response to animal instincts. To Winston, however, their daring act becomes a political act of rebellion against the Party.

Part 2, Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Summary

During the next few weeks Julia and Winston make love only once, in a ruined church Julia knows. Since meeting is so dangerous, sometimes after arriving at a spot the most they can do is exchange glances. Time is a problem as well, since so many evenings are devoted to Party activities.

Winston learns more about Julia. She is 26 years old; she lives in a hostel with 30 other women, and she works on the novel-writing machines in the Fiction Department. By her own admission she is not intelligent.

Although she enjoys the process of creating books, she has little regard for reading them.

Julia remembers nothing prior to the early sixties. She is well-regarded at work, having been selected to work in Pornosec, the subdivision of the Fiction Department which produces cheap pornography for the proles.

To Julia, life is simple. She believes in having a good time and finds it necessary to break Party rules in order to do so. She hates the Party because it has infringed on her personal freedoms, but she seems disinterested in Party doctrine or in an organized Revolution.

The couple realizes the impossibility of marriage because the Party would never sanction such a union. Besides, Winston is already married. He tells Julia the details of his marriage to Katharine and her outlook on their sexual relations.

Julia, however, already knows the details since she too had been schooled by these monthly sex talks, a standard for all girls over 16. Unlike Katharine, however, Julia has rejected the Party's teachings. Everything revolves around her own sexuality. She understands that the Party can make use of their sexual privation, as frustrations increase the zest for war and hero worship.

Winston agrees. The Party had used repressed sexual impulses to its advantage and the impulse towards parenthood for its own benefit. Children spy on their parents and turn them in to the Thought Police routinely. In this way everyone is watched night and day.

On one point Julia and Winston disagree. She does not accept as inevitable the fact that the individual is doomed. She believes in a secret world where one can express his or her individuality. Winston, however, prefers to consider themselves dead, for happiness only occurs in the distant future long after death.

Discussion and Analysis

The character of Julia dominates this chapter. Although she claims not "to be clever," she reveals her cunning in a number of different ways. She is the one who plans the secret rendezvous sites and who immerses herself in Party activities so she will be least suspected of breaking the rules.

Julia is also independent. She hates the Party, which she describes with a number of profanities. Her independence does not stem from ideological differences with the Party; her aim in life is to have a good time, and the Party is preventing this.

Orwell explores the basic instinct of sexuality through Julia, for whom everything stems from that instinct. In this area she is far more intelligent than Winston. Unlike Winston, she realized the true meaning of the Party's puritanical stance on the issue of sexuality. It was not only that the sex instinct needed to be repressed if possible in order for the Party to maintain control; but, "What was more important was that sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war fever and leader worship." Later, the behavior of Party members prior to Hate Week seems to support Julia's view. We should also remember that Orwell wrote this novel during wartime England, when patriotism definitely played a major part in British life.

Like the thrush that sang so beautifully in the meadow, Julia represents hope and spontaneity. Although logic tells her that she and Winston are doomed, she earnestly believes in the ability to live in a secret world where one can be free. As Julia says so directly, "All you needed was luck and cunning and boldness." Thus far, Julia has demonstrated that she possesses all three of these characteristics.

Part 2, Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Winston rents the room above the junk shop. Mr. Charrington, who is obviously glad about the rent, seems unaffected by the fact that the room will be used for a secret affair.

Winston's paperweight sits on the table. He has brought some Victory Coffee and saccharine. The clock on the mantelpiece reads 7:20, but it is really 19:20 in the outside world.

From the courtyard a solid-looking proletarian woman sings as she hangs the laundry on the clothesline. She is singing a melody created just weeks before by a versificator in the Music Department. To Winston, the melody, combined with the usual sounds of the neighborhood, seems delightful. Despite the noise, however, without a telescreen the room seems to echo.

Julia arrives with a number of items usually possessed by Inner Party members: sugar, bread, jam, milk, but most importantly, real coffee. Julia matter-of-factly announces that she has stolen these things from "those swine."

Julia surprises Winston by painting her face with makeup from a shop in the proletarian section. Even though she is not very skillful, Winston appreciates the difference in her appearance since Party women are not allowed to wear makeup. They undress and make love. Julia has never been in a double bed, an uncommon sight except in the homes of proles.

After a brief nap they awaken to prepare some coffee. Winston is due back at his apartment by 23:30. Suddenly Julia flings a shoe into the corner of the room where a rat is about to enter through a hole in the bottom of the wall. Julia seems unaffected by the rat's intrusion, but Winston clenches his eyes shut in terror.

Winston recalls another recurring nightmare. In this dream, he stands before a wall of darkness; behind the wall is something dreadful, but unknown. He does not confide in Julia but dismisses the incident with the words, "It's nothing, I don't like rats, that's all."

Julia fixes a snack and they prepare to leave. She picks up the paperweight and asks Winston what it is. Winston tells her that the coral is a piece of history that the Party has forgotten to alter.

Julia examines the picture on the wall. Winston identifies the building in it as a church, St. Clement's Dane. Wistfully, he again remembers the fragments of the nursery rhyme: "Oranges and lemons, say the bells of St. Clement's."

Surprisingly, Julia remembers the next two lines, which she had learned from her grandfather who had been vaporized when she was eight. The two speculate on the lemons and oranges, which have become an uncommon sight.

As the room darkens, Winston stares into the paperweight. To him, the surface of the glass becomes the arch of the sky, which encloses its own tiny world. The coral then becomes his and Julia's life together.

Discussion and Analysis

In this chapter Winston and Julia attempt to construct a "secret world," and, at least for now, they appear to have succeeded. The clock set at 7:30, unlike those of the outside world, suggests a world and a time entirely their own. In the last month the room has become a refuge against the increased hatred in Oceania as its citizens prepare for Hate Week. Orwell suggests, however, that this happiness is short-lived when he says, "It

was as though they were intentionally stepping nearer to their graves.”

Orwell also employs foreshadowing when a rat invades the sanctuary. Julia, in her typical pragmatic fashion, throws a shoe at the vermin but Winston reacts differently:

For several moments he had had the feeling of being back in a nightmare which had recurred from time to time throughout his life. It was always very much the same. He was standing in front of a wall of darkness, and on the other side of it there was something unendurable, something too dreadful to be faced.

Winston’s paperweight takes on two additional meanings here. As Winston explains to Julia, the paperweight is a piece of the past the Party has forgotten to alter. On a symbolic level the artifact, with its solid core and domed sky, has come to represent safety and refuge, the dominant ideas of this chapter.

Part 2, Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Syme vanishes, almost as if he had never existed.

Meanwhile, preparations for Hate Week continue. Julia’s department is publishing a series of atrocity pamphlets. Winston spends part of his work day altering sections of old news stories that will be quoted in the latest speeches. The bombings of the city grow more frequent.

New posters that have no caption but show a large Eurasian soldier holding a submachine gun appear all over; wherever one goes the gun seems to follow. These posters seem to outnumber even those of Big Brother. Accompanied by the incessant bombing of innocent children, these posters foster an air of patriotism amidst the chaos of the city.

In the room over Charrington’s shop, Julia and Winston are in paradise. Even the ever-present bugs do not bother them. They meet several times during June.

The changes in Winston are dramatic. He has stopped drinking gin; he has gained weight; and his varicose ulcer has healed. He and Julia treasure this secret hiding place; just knowing it is theirs is a constant source of happiness. Although they know the affair is bound to end, as long as they have the room they feel no harm will come.

Sometimes they talk about rebellion against the Party, but neither has any idea of how to put their plans into action. They are not even sure that the Brotherhood exists, or how they could get into it. Winston considers approaching O’Brien, with whom he shares a strange affinity.

Although Julia takes for granted that everyone hates the Party and would break its rules willingly, she refuses to believe that a widespread, organized opposition such as the Brotherhood exists. In fact, she claims the tales of Goldstein have been concocted by the Party for its own benefit. Too young to remember anything before the Revolution, she cannot conceive of such a thing as an independent political movement.

In Julia’s opinion the war against Eurasia is not happening and the government of Oceania is bombing its own citizens to keep them frightened.

Winston tells her about the forgeries he creates at the Records Department, but she is unconcerned. He tries to tell her the story of Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford, but she fails to understand his point. Winston continues;

he is concerned that the past is being abolished with every record being falsified or destroyed, every book being rewritten. Winston worries that all that exists is a present time in which the Party is always right. The only evidence of the past is in his own mind. Julia counters that she is interested in neither the past nor the present—just in them.

Julia has the annoying habit of falling asleep when Winston tries to talk about Party doctrine, the principles of Ingsoc, doublethink, or the mutability of the past. Through her, Winston realizes how easy it is to present the outward appearance of the devoted Party member while having no inward idea of what the Party ideology conveys.

Discussion and Analysis

Ironically, by being vaporized, Syme becomes an “unperson,” stripped of his identity by a word of his own creation.

The contrast between the increased tensions prior to Hate Week and the peace and contentment in the room over Charrington’s shop is quite apparent. We are reminded of Julia’s earlier remarks on the effects of sexual privation as the frenzy over Hate Week accelerates. Parsons, with the odor of his sweat even more pronounced, seems absolutely tireless as he leads the Party preparations, thus reinforcing the idea that it is not difficult for the unintelligent to be leaders. The poster of the Eurasian soldier seems to mock Big Brother, and the deaths of innocent children heighten emotions.

In contrast, in the room over Charrington’s shop all seems well as Winston and Julia dare to dream of escape even though freedom is unlikely. When we see the physical changes in Winston and his increased sense of well-being, we see the correlation between one’s physical and emotional health that Julia has alluded to earlier.

Winston remains curious about the existence of an underground Brotherhood, but Julia voices an opinion that Winston has not quite dared to think. She believes Goldstein and the war are both creations of the Party, designed to further the cause of patriotism. In view of this, her admission to laughter during the Two Minutes Hate is thoroughly in line with her character.

The ability of the Party to manipulate seems to have credence here—Julia remembers nothing before the Revolution, and she does not realize that only four short years ago Oceania had been at war with Eastasia.

Orwell attacks the blindness of the masses in the chapter’s final analogy: “By lack of understanding they remained sane. They simply swallowed everything, and what they swallowed did them no harm, because it left no residue behind, just as a grain of corn will pass undigested through the body of a bird.”

Part 2, Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

Summary

O’Brien approaches Winston at work to talk to him about one of his recent articles on Newspeak. O’Brien refers to a friend whose name happens to have slipped his mind who has a high opinion of Winston’s work.

Winston thinks briefly of Syme, but Syme has been abolished, has become an “unperson.” Still, Winston believes this remark was intended as a sort of signal. In sharing this small act of thought-crime, Winston and O’Brien become accomplices.

As they continue down the hall, O’Brien remarks that Winston has used two words that are now obsolete in Newspeak. He offers Winston a new tenth edition of the Newspeak dictionary—not yet readily

available—suggesting that Winston might pick it up at his apartment.

In full view of the telescreen, O'Brien scribbles his address on paper and hands it to Winston. After memorizing the address, Winston throws the paper down the memory hole. Winston believes that O'Brien has contrived the meeting to let him know his address, since there are no directories of any sort.

Winston knows it is only a matter of time before he visits O'Brien. Frightened, he feels a chilling sensation passing through his body as he has the sensation of stepping into a grave.

Discussion and Analysis

This chapter is a turning point in the novel. An anxious Winston is approached by O'Brien, who dupes him into committing "thoughtcrime" through veiled references to Syme. There is no substantial evidence, however, that O'Brien is an ally. Given the oppressiveness of Winston's work environment, though, we understand why Winston so eagerly accepts O'Brien as a potential accomplice.

The novel's underlying pessimism becomes more apparent. Despite his happiness at connecting with a purported member of the Brotherhood, Winston knows the consequences of these actions will come later in the Ministry of Love. Orwell foreshadows the conclusion when he says: "He had the sensation of stepping into the dampness of a grave, and it was not much better because he had always known that the grave was there and waiting for him." Once again, the futility of Winston's struggle against Big Brother is underscored.

Part 2, Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Awakening from yet another dream, Winston remembers his last glimpse of his mother and the circumstances of her disappearance. For the first time he clearly remembers these events, which had been deliberately suppressed for years.

Winston remembers childhood afternoons spent scavenging the garbage bins for scraps. Even his father had been unable to fulfill his role as provider; Winston's most vivid memory of him is of his thin-soled shoes. After his father's disappearance, Winston's mother had merely gone through the motions of housekeeping and child care (a woman's role at that time); she seemed to be waiting for something to happen.

After a lapse of some weeks, a chocolate ration had been issued. The meager two ounces was meant to be divided into three equal parts, but young Winston had put up quite a fight for more than his share despite his mother's repeated requests that he consider his younger sister. Finally, she gave most of the chocolate to Winston, who also snatched his sister's portion before running from the apartment. As he reached out for the candy, Winston's mother instinctively had put her arm around his sister in a protective gesture.

Later, when he was again hungry, Winston had returned to the apartment, but his mother and ailing sister were gone. Even today, he does not really know what happened to them.

With this dream so vivid, especially the picture of the protective gesture of his mother's arm, Winston is reminded of a prior dream in which his mother and sister are on a sinking ship. His mother had had the same protective gesture then.

Winston confides in Julia, but she is not much interested except to observe that Winston, like all other children, must have been a swine.

Winston continues to think lovingly of his mother and the gesture. Even though it had not changed a thing, the natural impulsive gesture had meant something. Winston then thinks about the Party, which has done so much to persuade people that impulses and feelings are not important. In the Party's grip, feelings make no difference, and regardless of what had happened, a person vanished, never to be heard from again.

Winston thinks of how things have changed. People like his mother had been guided by private loyalties, not loyalties to the whole. These musings lead Winston to think enviously of the proles who, in his opinion, had stayed human, holding onto primitive emotions that Winston is only now relearning through his affair with Julia. His mind wanders to the human hand that only weeks ago he had kicked so mindlessly into the gutter.

Winston senses that their luck is about to run out and when it does, regardless of any confession, they will be shot. Winston hopes they will not betray one another.

Julia accepts the fact that they will both confess, but the real betrayal, they both agree, would come only if the Party could make them stop loving one another. Julia and Winston agree on one more point: the Party cannot get inside them.

Discussion and Analysis

Orwell returns to the function of dreams in this chapter as, for the first time, Winston fully understands the circumstances surrounding his mother's disappearance and the intense feelings she had had for both of her children. These memories, repressed for years, allow Winston to confront his past.

As Winston awakens, he imagines the dream to have taken place under the dome of the sky, like the dome of the paperweight, its events bathed in a soft light, symbolically the light of understanding. The protective gesture his mother made while Winston stole his sister's chocolate ration echoes the one she made in the dream of the sinking ship. Winston realizes this is the same gesture a Jewish woman had made on film immediately before she and a young boy were blown up. Even though the Jewish woman and Winston's mother are separated by time and place (Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia), they share a common emotion: love and the desire to protect loved ones.

Winston believes that only the proles have retained the basic emotions that make them human; unlike Party members, who are, in a sense, already dead. As he discusses the implications of these views with Julia, she offers the hope that the Party cannot divest a person of his or her thoughts. Julia believes that although the love affair will end and they will both confess, they will not have betrayed one another, for real betrayal can come only when they have stopped loving one another.

Julia's opinion, contrasted against a background of despair, reflects her belief in the dignity and goodness of the human spirit, for she truly believes that their object is to stay human, not necessarily to stay alive.

Part 2, Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

New Character

Martin: O'Brien's servant

Summary

After taking separate routes to avoid detection, Winston and Julia arrive at O'Brien's apartment, where they are admitted by the servant, Martin.

For a moment, Winston feels embarrassed and somewhat stupid for believing O'Brien to be a political ally without any substantial proof.

O'Brien turns off the telescreen, a privilege granted only to Inner Party members. Confessing that he believes O'Brien is involved in the underground, Winston expresses a wish to join. He admits that he and Julia are thoughtcriminals and adulterers. He tells O'Brien they want to put themselves at his mercy.

After Martin serves wine, they all drink a toast to Emmanuel Goldstein, leader of the Brotherhood. O'Brien asks a litany of questions to determine Winston's commitment to revolt. Winston says he is prepared to murder, kill the innocent, lose his identity, even to commit suicide. But when asked whether they are prepared to separate and never see one another again, it is Julia who answers first, "No."

O'Brien seems pleased with their honesty. He warns them that they will always be in the dark about their orders, which will come directly from him. He promises to send them a book with strategies to destroy the Party. Then they will become official members of the Brotherhood.

Although O'Brien recognizes that Winston and Julia will most likely be caught by the Party, he also says the Brotherhood is based on ideas, and ideas are indestructible.

Before Julia leaves, they drink a second toast, this time, to the past. Later, O'Brien makes arrangements to send Goldstein's book to Winston. O'Brien reassures Winston that they will meet again. Winston finishes with the phrase from the dream: "In the place where there is no darkness," and O'Brien seems to agree.

Discussion and Analysis

The reader should wonder why a person of Winston's perception and intuition so easily accepts O'Brien as a member of the Brotherhood. Winston's eagerness here underscores his desperation. Although the litany of crimes that Winston is all-too-willing to commit reinforces the hopelessness of his existence, O'Brien's method of interrogation is hypnotic. Note that it is Julia who interjects that she is not willing to accept a permanent separation from Winston, raising the question of what Winston's response would have been.

O'Brien's explanation of the Brotherhood is equally mysterious, for he tells Winston he will "always be in the dark." The circumstances of Winston's life seem bleak indeed, as O'Brien points out that change will not occur during his lifetime, and Winston's actions are certain to end in arrest, torture, and death. The statement "We are the dead" is both cryptic and prophetic.

Two factors especially lend a surrealistic quality to the meeting. O'Brien assures Winston that they will definitely meet, "In the place where there is no darkness," echoing the suggestion introduced earlier. In addition, Winston finally learns the last line of the nursery rhyme, "Oranges and lemons, say the bells of St. Clement's," which has so haunted him. He willingly accepts this remnant of an innocent past from O'Brien.

Part 2, Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Having worked over 90 hours in the past few days, a fatigued Winston makes his way to the hideout at Charrington's shop with Goldstein's book. Winston is thinking about the sixth day of Hate Week when, after numerous activities designed to increase hatred of Eurasia, the Party has announced that Oceania is at war with Eastasia and that Eurasia is an ally. After the announcement Winston spent much of the next week rectifying the political literature of the last five years. By the end of the sixth day, no documentary evidence of the war with Eurasia remains.

Upon arriving at Charrington's shop, Winston begins the book *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*. Chapter One, "Ignorance Is Strength," asserts that the goals of the three classes—High, Middle, and Low—contradict one another.

Winston, who is delighted with the freedom to read, now skips to Chapter Three, “War Is Peace.” This chapter details the locations of the three superpowers who have been permanently at war for the last 25 years. The book characterizes war as occurring without motive since, with the advent of self-contained economies, there is no reason to fight. The main purpose of war is to use the surplus of consumer products without raising the standard of living for everyone. When all are satisfied, wealth as a symbol of distinction means nothing. Moreover, once poverty has become nonexistent, people learn to think for themselves and realize there is no need for a privileged minority. Thus, in order to maintain a hierarchical society, poverty and ignorance must exist.

War, which accomplishes destruction in a psychologically acceptable way, provides a basis for fear and hatred. All members of the Inner Party believe that war terminates in conquest, perhaps resulting from the discovery of a new weapon. All three powers, for example, possess the atomic bomb which is the most powerful weapon. After the first atomic bombs were exploded, the superpowers became frightened, produced no more, and stored the remainder for the day when the inevitable would occur.

Usually, large-scale campaigns involve surprise attacks on an ally. Once an area is surrounded with a ring of bases, the powers sign a friendship pact to remain allies, but, in the meantime, a strategic missile build-up is ongoing.

No fighting ever occurs except in some disputed areas; there is never an invasion of enemy territory lest the soldiers discover that the conquered foreigners are fellow human beings.

Philosophies—in all three states are almost the same—Ingsoc (Oceania); Neo-Bolshevism (Eurasia); and Obliteration of the Self (Eastasia). Key concepts to all philosophies are:

1. pyramidal structures
2. worship of a semi-divine leader
3. economy geared toward war

With each of the three states becoming unconquerable, any ideological perversion can be made absolute.

Therefore, the previously held concept of war occurring because of some provocation no longer exists. In fact, permanent peace would be the same as permanent war; it has the same effects. This concept is the real meaning of the tenet “War Is Peace.”

Winston is not surprised by what he reads. After Julia arrives and they make love, he begins to read aloud Chapter One, “Ignorance Is Strength,” which begins with an overview of the class system with one underlying constant; history shows a recurring series of clashes for power with the low class remaining low.

By the late nineteenth century, the book claims, these patterns had become apparent but were of no real concern since historians had declared them as cyclical. Even variants of [Socialism](#) after 1900 aimed less and less for liberty and equality, but, instead, aimed for *unfreedom* and *inequality*.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, there was no longer any reason for social or economic class distinction because machines had made a life of productivity and leisure possible for everyone. Although the descendants affected by the French, English, and American revolutions may have believed in equality, by the 1930s political thought had changed and a hierarchy had become desirable. This thinking explains how long-abandoned practices such as trial, torture, and public executions became more widespread.

The new totalitarianism had leaders whose origins were in the salaried and upper middle class; therefore, wealth meant little to them, but power meant everything. Perhaps this interest in power stemmed from the fact that it became easier to control opinion via print and television.

In this setting the high class knew how to maintain its power, for it relied on the principle that oligarchy is collectivism, that wealth and privilege can be defended when they are possessed jointly. The real effect, though, is that when the principle of private property is abolished, the real control is in the hands of a few. Collectively the Party owns everything in Oceania, but the decisions are made by a few. Ingsoc, based on this Socialist idea, resulted in a permanent economic inequality.

The book outlines the ways to perpetuate the hierarchical society whose ruling group can only fall from power under the following circumstances:

1. defeat from the outside
2. inefficiency causing the masses to revolt
3. allowing the discontented Middle to gain strength
4. losing its desire to rule

Most importantly, the mental attitude of the ruling group is crucial to its success.

In Oceania the perpetuation of the hierarchy is due to the persistence of the belief through children. One becomes an Inner or Outer Party member at age 16 after taking an exam. The proles really are no threat since their world has been shaped by the Party. They need no education, since military and commercial rivalries no longer exist and they have no intellect.

Commitment to the Party, combined with hatred of the enemy, shapes the life of every Party member, who has been taught from the earliest ages the skill of “crimestop,” the faculty of stopping any dangerous thought. The need for flexibility in dealing with facts demands their continuous alteration made possible by “doublethink.”

Since mutability of the past is the central tenet of Ingsoc, “doublethink” becomes critical because the Party seems to have a firmness of purpose associated with honesty. Under the guise of straightforwardness, the Party has deviously altered events in accordance with its philosophy. Thus, the Party has been able to stop history.

The linking together of opposites is the distinguishing feature of Oceania’s society. Therefore, in the name of Socialism, the Party rejects its underlying principles. Even the major institutions are examples of “doublethink”:

1. The society undermines family but preaches family loyalty to Big Brother.
2. Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war.
3. Ministry of Truth disseminates lies.
4. Ministry of Love is in charge of torture.
5. Ministry of Plenty oversees starvation.

As he concludes Chapter One, Goldstein asks the same question that has continued to bother Winston throughout the reading: Why should history be stopped at this particular time to avert human equality? Goldstein seems as perplexed as Winston.

At this point Winston realizes that he has not really learned anything new from either chapter. He understands “how”; he does not understand “why.” At least, though, Winston feels somewhat comforted for he knows he is neither insane nor alone.

Discussion and Analysis

Set against a background of oppression, Winston’s joy at the freedom to read arouses the reader’s curiosity as well. The first chapter of *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* parodies Marx and Engels’s *Communist Manifesto* (1848), which explains a recurrent pattern of a class struggle between the proletarians and bourgeois, the concept of economic determinism, and the inevitability of communism. That these ideas foreshadowed Stalin’s totalitarianism is widely acknowledged.

The definition of Stalin’s totalitarianism is caricatured as well; specifically, the belief in a hierarchical system with a semi-divine leader, Big Brother, who represents Joseph Stalin.

Orwell uses the vehicle of Goldstein’s book to satirize several related concepts:

1. Indoctrination of youth by Hitler’s Youth Groups and Soviet Young Pioneers—illustrated by Goldstein’s explanation of admission to the Party at the age of 16 through exam
2. The accepted concept of rewriting history common to Stalin’s Russia and other societies as well—illustrated in the discussion of the desirability of mutability of the past
3. Disillusionment with socialism—illustrated by Goldstein’s statement that the Party strives for *unequality*

Goldstein’s book also details the arms race, and although Orwell lived before the development of thermonuclear weapons, his vision is frightening and prophetic. He describes a typical campaign:

During this time rockets loaded with atomic bombs can be assembled at all strategic spots; finally they will all be fired simultaneously, with effects so devastating as to make retaliation impossible. It will then be time to sign a pact of friendship with the remaining world power, in preparation for another attack. This scheme, it is hardly necessary to say, is a mere daydream.

Symbolically, Winston falls asleep before Goldstein is about to answer the central question: “I understand HOW: I do not understand WHY,” which will be addressed later in the novel. Although Winston does not get the answer to his most troubling dilemma, the reading at least proves to him that he is not insane, nor is he alone.

Part 2, Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

Summary

When Julia and Winston awaken to a cold room, it is 20:30. Winston looks from the window at the ever-present singing prole hanging the laundry below. Winston admires the sturdy peasant; in fact, to him she is beautiful. He thinks of all the people held apart by lies and hatred, yet possessing the same hopes and potential to overturn the world.

Winston suddenly feels convinced that he knows what Goldstein had written as his final message, that hope lies with the proles. Equality translates into sanity.

Winston reminds Julia of the thrush that sang so beautifully that first day they had met in the woods. Winston sees that everyone sings except the Party members. As a member of the Party, he feels dead, but Julia mocks him. From behind the picture comes another mocking voice. The painting crashes to the ground as a telescreen is revealed.

Soldiers intrude and one smashes the paperweight. Someone kicks Winston as he sees Julia double over in pain when she is punched. Flinging her over his shoulder, a soldier takes her from the room.

Winston remains alone with the soldiers. A younger, more authoritative Mr. Charrington steps into the room, and Winston realizes that for the first time he is staring directly at a member of the Thought Police.

Discussion and Analysis

As Winston continues to mull over the unanswered question, he determines that the future must lie with the proles. He envies the proles' vitality, having likened Julia and himself to the dead. Here, at least, was hope, for Winston realizes that even though people may be separated by boundaries, wars, class distinctions or ideologies, they are basically the same.

This hope is short-lived as Julia and Winston are about to be betrayed. Their world literally crashes down on them. Completely unaware that Big Brother was watching them, they have commented on the beauty of the picture of St. Clement's Lane, which ironically masks a telescreen. The smashing of Winston's paperweight is symbolic as the affair abruptly ends. Although this event has always been anticipated, Winston is shocked at betrayal by Charrington, who is a member of the Thought Police.

Part 3, Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

New Character

Ampleforth: a poet

Summary

Winston finds himself in a cold, barren cell, presumably in the Ministry of Love, with telescreens monitoring his every move. This is his second cell. He had shared the first one with several other prisoners, including Party prisoners and common criminals. The Party prisoners were obviously easily intimidated and controlled by the guards, who gave them all the dirty jobs. They never spoke to anyone, including one another, except for a reference to "room one-oh-one."

As Winston sits alone in his cell thinking of what lies in store, he thinks of O'Brien with hope, for perhaps the Brotherhood will send the razor blade before his next beating. Now Winston understands the meaning of the phrase "the place where there is no darkness." There are no windows so he cannot tell whether it is day or night; no clocks so he does not know what time it is—only rows and rows of porcelain bricks.

Winston's reverie is interrupted by the arrival of a prisoner, Ampleforth, who, Winston believes, might bear the razor blade—but this is not so. Ampleforth reveals his "crime": the inability to remove the word "God" from a line of poetry. The two men cease talking when Ampleforth is taken to Room 101.

To his surprise, Winston is joined by Parsons, who has been arrested for thoughtcrime, which Parsons believes had gotten hold of him without his realizing it. Before being taken away, Parsons claims to be proud of the daughter who denounced him.

A chinless man who reminds Winston of a rodent sits down. Next enters a tall, thin, mean-looking man; shocked, Winston realizes that the man is slowly starving to death. The chinless man realizes this as well and offers him a piece of bread. Suddenly a voice from the telescreen screams an order to drop the bread. Guards enter, beat the chinless man, and throw him across the room, as blood oozes everywhere. Humiliated, he takes his seat on the bench.

Next the guard turns to the skull-faced man. “Room 101,” he orders. The skull-faced man, terrified, falls on his knees and begs for mercy—even agreeing to sign a confession to anything. Desperate, he tries to convince the soldiers to take the chinless man. After a struggle during which the man’s fingers are broken, the guards drag him away.

Winston continues hoping for the arrival of the razor blade. In spite of his desire not to betray Julia, intellectually he knows that faced with beatings and torture, he probably will talk.

When the door opens, in walks O’Brien. For a moment, Winston hopes O’Brien is a fellow prisoner, but innately he realizes that this cannot be true. During the following beating, Winston’s arm is disabled.

Discussion and Analysis

As this section begins, Winston travels inside the Ministry of Love, which he had observed fearfully from his apartment at Victory Gardens in the opening chapter. The stark atmosphere, amplified by the “cold lights,” echoes the coldness of the April wind earlier. Orwell now reveals the true meaning of the “place where there is no darkness,” with a brightly lit, antiseptic looking room.

There is a reunion of sorts when Winston meets his comrade, Ampleforth. In a world of distortion it seems fitting that the poet should be imprisoned because he kept the word “God” in a line of Kipling’s poetry to better suit its rhyme scheme. It is hardly surprising to next see the naive, but effusive, Parsons, whose denouncement has been foreshadowed through the savageness of his children. Orwell here attacks the indiscriminate arrest, torture, and execution of the oppressed, a common practice in pre-Revolutionary France and Spain.

Fear dominates as Winston witnesses the “chinless man” begging for mercy right before he is taken to the mysterious Room 101. Winston’s fellow prisoners remain nameless to suggest their representative qualities. The “skull-faced” man becomes a coward pleading for his life, which is destined to end in the same way as those of his fellow prisoners. Orwell describes the scene: “The man looked frantically round at the other prisoners, as though with some idea that he could put another victim in his place.” These words foreshadow Winston’s ultimate act of betrayal when he too journeys to Room 101.

We see another form of betrayal in the character of O’Brien who, until this point, has symbolized Winston’s hope that the Party can be undone. Like Charrington, however, he is not what he appears to be. Learning that O’Brien is a loyal member of the Inner Party only reinforces the overall hopelessness of Winston’s struggle.

Part 3, Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Winston, who continues to be regularly beaten, realizes that these beatings are only the beginning, a matter-of-course. The torture continues by Party members whose aim is to humiliate and belittle him through the use of constant traps and contradictions. This torture is supposed to destroy his power of reasoning.

Even the suggestion of a beating brings Winston to tears, and his only purpose in life now is to avoid a beating by confessing to whatever the Party seems to want—including crimes he could not have possibly

committed.

Overhead, a light glares as Winston is strapped into a chair with several surrounding dials. Although he fades in and out of consciousness, he seems to think that O'Brien is in charge of the operation. The voice that whispers that it will save Winston is the same as the one that had whispered, "We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness."

As O'Brien stands over Winston, hand on a lever of a dial, he reminds Winston of his power as he delivers a jolt of electricity. The torturer suggests that Winston suffers from a defective memory. He points to the photo of Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford that Winston has always believed validates their innocence. As O'Brien throws Winston's "hallucination" down the memory hole, he proclaims that it had never existed. Winston suspects that O'Brien has really forgotten the existence of the photo.

O'Brien reminds Winston once again of the Party slogan: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past." Winston protests that even the Party cannot stop people from remembering things, but O'Brien disagrees, saying reality can only be looked at through the eyes of the Party. Winston, however, needs to humble himself before he can reach this point, which to the Party is sanity.

Holding his left hand with four fingers extended, O'Brien asks Winston to tell him the number of fingers he has raised. Winston answers, "Four," but O'Brien disagrees. Winston adheres to his belief, but every time he answers this question with "four" he is subjected to an electric shock. The jolts become progressively stronger until Winston finally capitulates with the answer, "Five."

An injection eases Winston's pain, but the games continue with O'Brien's telling Winston that he has been brought to this place to make him sane. The Party is not interested in the so-called crimes he has committed but in the thought process behind them. O'Brien tells Winston that when he gives in of his own free will, and undoubtedly he will, then he will be converted.

While speaking, he places a machine on Winston's head. "Three thousand," he hears right before a jolt passes through him. As a result, Winston now sees that Oceania has always been at war with Eastasia, that he had invented the photo of Jones, Aaronson and Rutherford, and that O'Brien holds five fingers in the air.

Before the session ends, O'Brien allows Winston to ask a few questions. First, he asks about Julia, who supposedly has betrayed him. He then asks about the real existence of Big Brother, and O'Brien replies that their leader is an embodiment of Party principles. Winston asks about the Brotherhood, but O'Brien says he will never know more about it. Lastly, Winston asks about the contents of Room 101—but O'Brien counters that Winston already knows the answer.

The session over, Winston falls into a drug-induced sleep.

Discussion and Analysis

Winston's physical torture is intense, but in many respects the mental degradation is worse. Some critics have likened O'Brien to Dostoyevski's Grand Inquisitor because of his desire for control and power with his willingness to inflict physical pain in the process. Orwell describes the joy he takes in Winston's interrogation as "a sort of exaltation, a lunatic intensity." As he plays a cat-and-mouse game with Winston's interrogation, O'Brien reveals both his perverseness and sincerity as he tells Winston that he enjoys their conversations.

Much of what Winston recalls in the Ministry of Love occurs when he is either dreaming or drugged. Orwell's descriptions of the Ministry of Love, especially its stark white light, lend a dreamlike, or nightmarish, quality to the events. Even O'Brien's voice has a hypnotic effect, and Winston falls in and out

of consciousness, suffering numerous blackouts, which we assume result from the intense pain of his torture.

We are reminded of Julia's statement, "They can't get inside you," as O'Brien continues to batter Winston to rid him of "defective memories." Orwell's description of Winston finally submitting to the Party's control conveys a real sense of the struggle. O'Brien's delight in his role as torturer is apparent in the long dialogue that ends with Winston's shaken belief that "2 + 2 'might equal' 5."

Part 3, Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Having completed the first phase of his treatment, "learning," Winston moves to the second stage, "understanding," which he must complete before being allowed to advance to the third stage, "acceptance."

O'Brien, who admits to collaborating on Goldstein's book, says that because the proletarians will never revolt, the Party will rule forever.

Winston now understands the "how," but O'Brien also tells him "why." Winston believes that O'Brien will tell him that the Party rules for the good of the majority. When he shares this view with O'Brien, he receives another jolt. O'Brien claims that the Party seeks power for its own self-gratification. He illustrates using Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia as examples of failures that could not admit their real motive: power.

O'Brien continues to explain that the real meaning of power lies in its collective characteristic; individuals can only have power when they give up their individuality. Secondly, power is power over the mind; therefore, external reality is unimportant. Since the Party controls the mind, reality stems from inside the skull.

O'Brien is proud that the Party can accomplish anything by making mankind suffer. In the Party's society, the emotions are hate, fear, triumph, and self-abasement. O'Brien graphically describes a boot stamping on a human face—forever.

The most frightening word to Winston is "forever." Winston maintains this is impossible. He is not sure how, but he is sure that the Spirit of Man will defeat the Party, for a society based on hatred cannot exist.

O'Brien offers proof that Winston is wrong. First, he plays a recording of the conversation they had had the night of Winston's visit to his apartment when Winston vowed to commit so many outrageous crimes against his fellow man for the Brotherhood. As further proof that the human spirit can be defeated, O'Brien makes Winston strip to his underclothes and look into a mirror.

The skeleton who returns his look is scarred and has an inflamed varicose ulcer. The curvature of the spine is pronounced. Reaching into Winston's mouth to jerk out one of the eleven teeth remaining, O'Brien observes that Winston is literally rotting away.

As Winston collapses in tears, O'Brien points out that escape from the misery is possible at any time he chooses. The only thing left is to betray Julia. Despite the fact that he has confessed to many aspects of their relationship, he still has not denied loving her.

Winston suddenly asks when he will be shot. O'Brien claims he does not know, but that the shooting is a certainty.

Discussion and Analysis

Orwell satirizes the foundations of totalitarianism through O'Brien's explanation of Party ideology. While departing from the standard interpretation of the motives of any totalitarian state, which is the welfare of its entire body, O'Brien claims that the motive of Oceania's Party is unique in that the Party seeks power for its own benefit. Through life in Oceania, Orwell caricaturizes the idea that there could be any noble-sounding idea behind the control of the masses, for this is a perverse society based on fear and hatred.

The bleak vision of the novel becomes more pronounced as the reader witnesses Winston's physical deterioration. Orwell calls him a "skeletonlike thing" and a "creature" to suggest that the Party has succeeded in stripping him of his humanity. The color "gray," which describes Winston's body, might more traditionally be reserved to detail the deterioration of a corpse. Even though we have always known that Winston's willingness to defy that Party would be punished, O'Brien's description of the "thing" has dramatic impact.

Part 3, Chapters 4 and 5 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Since the beatings have stopped, Winston slowly has grown stronger, spending much time thinking and dreaming. Acknowledging how futile it had been to resist the Party's power, Winston recognizes his own insignificance by mechanically writing, "Freedom Is [Slavery](#)," and, "Two and Two Make Five." Then, he writes "God is Power." Although he remembers some contrary things, he dismisses the incidents as false memories.

Winston practices "crimestop," a Newspeak term for the automatic process by which the mind stops any dangerous thought. In the back of Winston's mind, however, is the recognition that the only sure thing in his life is the certainty that he will be shot from behind. What remains unclear is when this will occur.

In his cell Winston, who is hallucinating, cries out for Julia, an action he immediately regrets. Thoughts of the bullet return. His cell door opens and in walks O'Brien, who seems disappointed that although Winston has been "cured" intellectually, he still presents a problem because he hates Big Brother. He tells Winston that the final step toward love of Big Brother will occur in Room 101, where the worst thing in the world is located.

The worst thing in the world, as it turns out, is all in the mind. In Winston's case the worst thing in the world is his fear of rats. As Winston begs for mercy, O'Brien slowly approaches with a cage containing enormous, squealing rats.

O'Brien tells Winston that the cage will be placed over his head, and when the rats are released, they will leap onto his face and devour him. Winston now knows that the only way to save himself is to interpose someone else's body between himself and the rats. Panic sets in as the mask is lowered over his head. Desperate to save himself, Winston betrays Julia.

Discussion and Analysis

After the beatings stop, Winston spends much of his recovery in a dreamlike state that lends an aura of fantasy to the next developments in the plot. Superficially it seems as if Winston's "cure" is almost complete until he "hallucinates" about Julia and further punishment becomes imminent. Not surprisingly, Winston dismisses the "hallucination" while worrying over the mysterious Room 101.

We have been prepared for Winston's ultimate torture, being devoured by rats, by their earlier intrusion into the room above Charrington's shop and Winston's revulsion. Orwell makes his point that the mind is a

shaper of reality through O'Brien's series of graphic images describing the rats: "They leap onto your face and bore straight into it. Sometimes they attack the eyes first. Sometimes they burrow through the cheeks and devour the tongue." He also attacks the savagery of common torture practices through the words of O'Brien, who boasts that these practices were common in Imperialist China.

Part 3, Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Finishing another Victory Gin, Winston occupies his usual seat in the Chestnut Tree Café where his routine is to sit alone in the corner table, drinking gin as he stares at the chessboard. He has been awaiting news of the war with Eurasia; Oceania had always been at war with Eurasia.

Winston's mind wanders as he continues to drink. Staring at the chess pieces in front of him, he briefly entertains the thought that Eurasia might win the war and the Party's power would be shattered, but the thought quickly fades as he traces "2+2=5" in the dust on the table.

Winston sees Julia after his release. Like him, she has changed. Winston likens her body to the stiffness of a corpse. When they unexpectedly meet in the street, they admit to betraying one another. Winston follows Julia, but the appeal of the Chestnut Tree Café is overwhelming because the nonstop supply of gin there is too much to resist.

He remembers a childhood experience when he and his mother had had such a wonderful time laughing as they played Snakes and Ladders by candlelight, but he quickly pushes the image from his mind as a false memory, one of the many he gets.

A horn blast announcing victory interrupts Winston's reverie. Winston reacts by drinking more gin. Thinking of himself, he looks at the ever-present poster of Big Brother and weeps. He knows that it is not long until the bullet eliminates him, but somehow this is no longer worrisome, for Winston loves Big Brother.

Discussion and Analysis

This chapter dramatically illustrates that the Party can get "inside you" as it details the drudgery characterizing Winston's life since his release. The theme of alienation comes to fruition as Winston spends most of his time alone in a corner in an alcoholic stupor. This miserable existence has been foreshadowed earlier through the actions of Syme whose vaporization Winston himself had predicted. Ironically, both he and Winston had shared the trait leading to downfall: intelligence. We can project that the promised bullet will soon arrive.

As Winston stares into the chessboard, we think of the bigger game that has been played for his sanity. And as he drops the white knight onto the board, we think of Winston who, like the knight, has been destroyed in a similar game. Winston's false memory of the laughter he and his mother had shared as they played a childhood game reinforces the fantasy-like quality that characterizes the entire novel from the moment the clock strikes "thirteen" in Chapter 1.

Several critics have faulted the conclusion with its overwhelming pessimism. The concluding sentence, "He loved Big Brother," carries the message that Winston's struggle against the Party is now over and, perhaps, warns the West of the consequences of acceptance of totalitarian ideas which have been so thoroughly satirized here.

1984: Quizzes

Part 1, Chapter 1 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. When does the novel begin?
2. Where does the novel begin?
3. Cite the caption on the posters in Winston's building.
4. What is Newspeak?
5. What does a telescreen do?
6. What are the Party's three slogans?
7. Name the four Ministries of the government.
8. What is the purpose of the Two Minutes Hate?
9. What is thoughtcrime?
10. What is the penalty for thoughtcrime?

Answers

1. The novel begins at 13 o'clock on a day in April 1984.
2. The novel begins at Victory Gardens.
3. The caption on the posters reads "Big Brother Is Watching You."
4. Newspeak is the official language of Oceania.
5. A telescreen monitors one's every motion and sound.
6. The Party's three slogans are: War Is Peace, Freedom Is [Slavery](#) and Ignorance Is Strength.
7. The four Ministries are Truth, Peace, Love, and Plenty.
8. The purpose of the Two Minutes Hate is to increase hatred of Emmanuel Goldstein, Enemy of the People.
9. Thoughtcrime is an all-inclusive crime.
10. The penalty for thoughtcrime is extermination.

Part 1, Chapter 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What form of address has replaced “Mrs.”?
2. What game are the Parsons’ children playing?
3. Give the crime the children accuse Winston of committing.
4. What popular spectacle took place that afternoon?
5. What is a “child hero”?
6. Who speaks in Winston’s dream?
7. What does the speaker in the dream tell Winston?
8. What is the bad news delivered via the telescreen?
9. Winston addresses his diary to whom or to what?
10. Explain why Winston washes his hands before he returns to work.

Answers

1. The new form of address is “Comrade.”
2. The Parsons’ children are playing Spies.
3. The children accuse Winston of committing thoughtcrime.
4. A public execution was the popular spectacle that took place that afternoon.
5. A “child hero” is an eavesdropper who has denounced his parents to the Thought Police.
6. O’Brien speaks in Winston’s dream.
7. The speaker in the dream tells Winston, “We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness.”
8. The bad news was that the chocolate ration would be reduced from 30 grams to 20.
9. Winston addresses his diary to a time when freedom of thought is the norm.
10. Winston washes his hands because ink stains might reveal that he has been writing.

Part 1, Chapter 3 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. How old was Winston when his mother disappeared?
2. What is the only thing Winston remembers about his father?
3. What does Winston surmise happened to his parents?

4. Where are Winston's mother and sister in his dream?
5. Who appears in Winston's second dream?
6. What is Winston muttering as he awakens?
7. What is Airstrip One?
8. With whom is Oceania at war?
9. What is the Party slogan?
10. What is Ingsoc?

Answers

1. Winston was 10 or 11 years old when his mother disappeared.
2. Winston only remembers the thin soles on his father's shoes.
3. Winston believes his parents were probably swallowed up in one of the purges of the fifties.
4. Winston's mother and sister are in the saloon of a sinking ship.
5. A dark-skinned girl who flings off her clothes appears in Winston's dream.
6. Winston is muttering "Shakespeare" as he awakens.
7. Airstrip One was formerly known as England.
8. Oceania is at war with Eurasia.
9. The Party slogan is: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past."
10. Ingsoc is the Newspeak form of "English Socialism."

Part 1, Chapters 4 and 5 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What is the official phrase for altering records?
2. What is the primary job of the Ministry of Truth?
3. What is "Pornosec"?
4. What is Winston's greatest pleasure in life?
5. Who is Comrade Ogilvy?
6. What is Syme's current project at the Records Department?

7. According to Syme, what is the whole aim of Newspeak?
8. What does Syme predict will have occurred by 2050?
9. Tell why Winston believes Syme will disappear one day.
10. Who does Winston believe is following him?

Answers

1. The official phrase for altering records is to “rectify” them.
2. Its primary aim is to supply information in all forms to the citizens of Oceania as well as to the proles.
3. “Pornosec” is the lowest kind of pornography, forbidden to Party members.
4. Winston’s greatest pleasure in life is his work.
5. Comrade Ogilvy is a war hero who actually never existed.
6. Syme’s current project is compiling the eleventh edition of the Newspeak dictionary.
7. According to Syme, the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought.
8. Syme’s prediction is that by 2050 all knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared.
9. Syme will disappear one day because of his intelligence, Winston believes.
10. Winston believes that the girl from the Fiction Department is following him.

Part 1, Chapters 6 and 7 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What does Winston believe is the most deadly danger of all?
2. What is the unforgivable crime?
3. What is the only recognized purpose of marriage?
4. Why did Winston call Katharine the “human soundtrack”?
5. Why does Winston believe a real love affair would be almost unthinkable?
6. What percent of Oceania’s population is comprised of proles?
7. What does Winston copy into his diary?
8. What is Winston’s proof that the confessions of Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford were lies?
9. What happened to Winston’s proof?

10. To whom is Winston writing the diary?

Answers

1. The most deadly danger is talking in one's sleep.
2. The unforgivable crime is promiscuity among Party members.
3. The only recognized purpose of marriage is to have children for the service of the Party.
4. Winston calls Katharine the "human soundtrack" because she repeated every Party slogan.
5. A real love affair would be almost unthinkable because chastity was an important aspect of Party loyalty.
6. Eighty-five percent of Oceania's population consists of proles.
7. Winston copies a passage from a children's history book into his diary.
8. Winston's proof is a photo of the three men in New York at a time when they supposedly had been on Eurasian soil.
9. Winston dropped his proof into the memory hole.
10. Winston is writing the diary to O'Brien.

Part 1, Chapter 8 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Instead of spending a night at the Community Center, where does Winston go?
2. What does the Newspeak term "ownlife" imply?
3. After the bombing, what does Winston see lying in the street?
4. What is the one public event to which the proles pay attention?
5. What does Winston learn from the old man in the bar?
6. What does Winston buy at Charrington's shop?
7. What is different about the room above Charrington's shop?
8. Why does Winston plan to return to the shop?
9. Who seems to be spying on Winston as he leaves Charrington's shop?
10. What is Winston's current interpretation of the phrase "place where there is no darkness"?

Answers

1. Winston heads into London.

2. The term implies individualism and eccentricity.
3. Winston sees a human hand lying in the street.
4. The proles pay attention to the Lottery.
5. The old man remembers nothing useful of the past.
6. Winston buys a glass paperweight with a coral center.
7. The room has no telescreen, and it has a print of St. Clement's Church.
8. Winston plans to return to buy the print, jog Charrington's memory, and, perhaps, to rent the upstairs room.
9. The girl from the Fiction Department seems to be spying on Winston.
10. Winston believes the phrase refers to the "imagined future."

Part 2, Chapter 1 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. How much time has passed since Winston spotted the girl from the Fiction Department outside the junk shop?
2. What conflicting emotions does Winston feel before helping the girl?
3. Give the possible sources of the note.
4. Give the message on the note.
5. Tell why Winston no longer believes the girl is an enemy.
6. Where do Winston and the girl plan to meet?
7. Tell what Winston and the girl witness in the square.
8. When and where will the couple meet again?
9. What emotion prevails when Party members see foreigners?
10. What does the girl do right before she leaves?

Answers

1. Four days have passed.
2. Winston feels apprehensive but concerned for the girl's well-being.
3. The note could have come from either the Thought Police or from the underground, as well as just from the girl herself.

4. The message was, "I love you."
5. Winston saw how frightened the girl was as she handed him the note.
6. They plan to meet in Victory Square, near the monument.
7. They witness a convoy of Eurasian prisoners.
8. They will meet Sunday in a field somewhere outside the city.
9. Curiosity prevails when Party members see foreigners.
10. The girl reaches for Winston's hand and squeezes it.

Part 2, Chapter 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Tell why a person is no safer in the countryside than in London.
2. What does Winston confess?
3. What is Winston's immediate feeling as he holds Julia in his arms?
4. What is Winston's idea of a love offering?
5. What is the emblem of the Junior Anti-Sex League?
6. Where did Julia obtain the chocolate?
7. What has attracted Julia to Winston?
8. Why is Winston shocked at the coarseness of Julia's language?
9. What is Julia's feeling about her many other lovers?
10. What is the one act of rebellion that could ruin the Party?

Answers

1. A person's voice might be picked up by hidden microphone or his passport might be checked.
2. Winston confesses to his age, marital status, and his physical condition. He also admits that at first he thought she was a member of the Thought Police.
3. Winston's immediate feeling is incredulity.
4. Winston's idea of a love offering is to start off telling the truth.
5. The emblem is a scarlet sash worn about the waist.
6. Julia had obtained the chocolate from the black market.

7. Julia is attracted to Winston because she sensed something different about him, and that he was against the Party.
8. Winston is shocked because Party members do not use profanity.
9. Julia is proud of her many lovers.
10. The act of rebellion that could ruin the Party is acting on animal instincts.

Part 2, Chapter 3 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Tell why Winston does not need to know Julia's surname or address.
2. What does Julia mean by "talking in installments"?
3. How does Julia spend much of her free time?
4. What does Julia do at the Fiction Department?
5. What special job was Julia selected for at work?
6. What is Julia's only interest in Party doctrine?
7. Give Julia's opinion of revolt against the Party.
8. What is Julia's reaction when Winston tells her the details of his loveless marriage?
9. According to Julia, what does sexual privation produce?
10. What does Julia believe will help Winston and her to construct a secret world in which they can live?

Answers

1. Winston does not need this information because it is unlikely he and Julia could ever meet indoors or exchange letters through the mail.
2. Julia is referring to furtive conversations interrupted by the presence of telescreens or patrols.
3. Julia spends much of her free time in Party-related activities.
4. Julia services the electric motors of the novel-writing machines in the Fiction Department.
5. Julia had been selected to work in Pornosec.
6. Julia was only interested in Party doctrine when it directly affected her.
7. Julia thought a revolt would be stupid and doomed to failure.
8. Julia is not surprised at these details.

9. According to Julia, sexual privation produces a hysteria which could be channeled into war fever and hero worship.
10. Julia believes luck, cunning, and boldness can help her and Winston construct a secret world.

Part 2, Chapter 4 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What does Winston's heart keep saying about the affair?
2. What does Winston see and hear under the window?
3. What is Winston thinking of as he awaits Julia?
4. What has Julia brought?
5. What does Winston see when he faces Julia?
6. Why does Julia throw a shoe into the corner?
7. What is Winston's reaction when Julia describes the rat?
8. What is Winston's opinion of the paperweight?
9. According to Winston, who might know the missing line to the nursery rhyme?
10. What has the paperweight come to symbolize for Winston?

Answers

1. Winston's heart tells him the affair is suicide.
2. Winston sees and hears a huge proletarian woman who is singing as she hangs the laundry to dry.
3. Winston has been thinking of the surety of the cellars of the Ministry of Love.
4. Julia has brought coffee, sugar, bread, jam, and milk.
5. Winston sees that Julia is wearing make-up.
6. Julia throws a shoe at an intrusive rat.
7. Winston feels as if he were back in a nightmare.
8. Winston believes that the paperweight is a piece of history the Party has been unable to alter.
9. Charrington may know the missing line.
10. To Winston, the paperweight has come to symbolize his shared life with Julia inside the room.

Part 2, Chapter 5 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Who vanishes?
2. How is Winston preparing for Hate Week at work?
3. Who organizes the squads of volunteers?
4. What is pictured on the new poster appearing all over London?
5. What causes the proles to feel increasingly patriotic?
6. How does Winston regard the room over Charrington's shop?
7. What does Julia take for granted?
8. What does Julia believe about the stories of Goldstein and the underground?
9. What is Julia's impulse during the Two Minutes Hate?
10. What is Julia's interest in the next generation?

Answers

1. Syme vanishes.
2. Winston is altering items from the back issues of the *Times*.
3. Tom Parsons organizes the volunteers.
4. The new poster pictures an Eurasian soldier pointing a submachine gun.
5. The proles feel more patriotic because there are more bombings than usual.
6. The room is a sanctuary where he and Julia are safe.
7. Julia takes for granted her belief that everyone hates the Party.
8. Julia believes these stories have been invented by the Party.
9. Her impulse is to laugh.
10. Julia is only interested in the present; the future, and the next generation, does not concern her.

Part 2, Chapter 6 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Where is Winston when O'Brien approaches him?

2. How does O'Brien compliment Winston?
3. Why does O'Brien refer to Syme only indirectly?
4. How does O'Brien turn Winston into his accomplice?
5. What does O'Brien think is an ingenious development in the tenth edition of the Newspeak dictionary?
6. What is O'Brien willing to lend Winston?
7. What happens to the paper with the address?
8. What prevents Winston from finding out O'Brien's address on his own?
9. What is the one thing of which Winston is now certain?
10. What feeling does Winston experience as he talks with O'Brien?

Answers

1. Winston is in the corridor at the Ministry of Truth.
2. O'Brien compliments Winston on his knowledge of New-speak.
3. A direct reference to Syme would have been dangerous, because Syme is now an "unperson."
4. They become accomplices through veiled references to Syme.
5. O'Brien thinks the reduction in the number of verbs is an ingenious development.
6. O'Brien is willing to lend Winston the dictionary.
7. Winston throws the paper down the memory hole.
8. Winston is prevented from finding the address because there are no directories in Oceania.
9. Winston is certain that a conspiracy against the Brotherhood does exist.
10. Winston experiences a chilling, shuddering feeling.

Part 2, Chapter 7 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What do the arm gestures made by Winston's mother in the dreams have in common with one another?
2. What does Winston remember in his dream?
3. What does Winston believe the proles have retained, but Party members have lost?
4. How did Winston spend many of his childhood afternoons?

5. How did Winston's mother react to her husband's disappearance?
6. What did Winston do with his sister's portion of the chocolate ration?
7. What did Winston find when he returned home?
8. What is a Reclamation Center?
9. In Winston's mind, what would prove he had betrayed Julia?
10. According to Julia, what is the one thing the Party cannot do?

Answers

1. They were gestures of protection.
2. Winston had remembered his last glimpse of his mother.
3. Winston believes the proles have retained ordinary human emotions, yet Party members have not.
4. Winston spent many afternoons looking through garbage bins for food.
5. Winston's mother only went through the motions of housekeeping and childrearing.
6. Winston stole his sister's portion of the chocolate ration.
7. When he returned home, Winston discovered that his mother and sister were gone.
8. A Reclamation Center is a colony for homeless children.
9. Winston's betrayal of Julia will occur when he stops loving her.
10. Julia believes the Party cannot get inside a person.

Part 2, Chapter 8 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What does Winston fear as he travels to O'Brien's apartment?
2. What is the only evidence that suggests O'Brien is a political conspirator?
3. Why can Winston not use the excuse that he had come for the dictionary?
4. What privilege is reserved for Party members?
5. To whom does the group drink a toast?
6. According to O'Brien, what is the most Winston will ever know about the Brotherhood?
7. What is Winston prepared to do for the Brotherhood?

8. Why will the Brotherhood never be destroyed?
9. What is in the book that O'Brien plans to send to Winston?
10. Where will O'Brien and Winston meet again?

Answers

1. Winston fears that guards will check his papers and send him home.
2. The sole pieces of evidence are an expression in O'Brien's eyes and a single remark.
3. Winston cannot explain Julia's presence.
4. Inner Party members are allowed to turn off their telescreens.
5. They drink a toast to their leader, Emmanuel Goldstein.
6. Winston will only know that the Brotherhood exists.
7. Winston says he is willing to do anything for the Brotherhood.
8. The Brotherhood is held together by an idea that is indestructible.
9. The book contains Goldstein's message.
10. They will meet "in the place where there is no darkness."

Part 2, Chapter 9 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. With what power is Oceania now at war?
2. What has Winston been doing for the past six days at the Ministry of Truth?
3. What is the title of Goldstein's book?
4. What are Goldstein's three classes?
5. What does Goldstein's book claim is the primary aim of modern warfare?
6. What is the only possible basis of a hierarchical society?
7. What are the two aims of the Party?
8. What happens to the most gifted proles?
9. Why must the past be altered?
10. Define doublethink.

Answers

1. Oceania is now at war with Eastasia.
2. Winston has been rectifying the political literature of the past.
3. The book is called *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*.
4. The three classes are High, Middle, and Low.
5. The aim of war is to use up products without raising the standard of living.
6. A hierarchical society exists based on poverty and ignorance.
7. The Party aims to conquer the earth and to destroy the possibility of complete thought.
8. The most gifted proles are eliminated.
9. The past must be altered to safeguard the Party's infallibility.
10. Doublethink refers to the power of believing and accepting two contradictory ideas.

Part 2, Chapter 10 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What is the only way that the secret of the love affair would be passed on?
2. What occurs to Winston as he thinks of all people?
3. What does Winston conclude is Goldstein's final message?
4. According to Winston, what kind of world would the proles create?
5. What makes Winston believe that proles are immortal?
6. How does Winston think he and Julia can share in the future?
7. What is behind the picture on the wall?
8. What follows the voice?
9. What happens to Winston's paperweight?
10. What occurs to Winston as he looks at Charrington?

Answers

1. The secret is to be passed by word of mouth.
2. Winston realizes that all people are the same.
3. Winston thinks the message is that the future belongs to the proles.

4. The proles would create a world where equality would exist.
5. Winston thinks that the vitality of the proles would be passed from generation to generation.
6. Winston thinks they should keep their minds alive to pass on the news that two plus two make four.
7. Behind the picture is a telescreen.
8. The intrusion of soldiers follows the voice.
9. A soldier smashes the paperweight.
10. Winston realizes that he is looking directly at a member of the Thought Police.

Part 3, Chapter 1 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Where does Winston presume he is when he awakens?
2. What difference does Winston observe between Party prisoners and ordinary criminals?
3. Who does all the dirty jobs in the prisons?
4. Why does Winston think of O'Brien with hope?
5. What is the "place with no darkness"?
6. Why has Ampleforth been arrested?
7. Who has denounced Parsons?
8. What crime has Parsons committed?
9. What does the chinless man offer the skull-faced man?
10. Who is Winston's surprise visitor?

Answers

1. Winston presumes he is in the Ministry of Love.
2. Party prisoners are quiet and terrified, but the ordinary criminals do not care.
3. The dirty work is done by political prisoners.
4. Winston hopes O'Brien will send the razor blade.
5. The "place with no darkness" is the Ministry of Love.
6. Ampleforth has been unable to take the word "God" out of a line of poetry.

7. Parsons has been denounced by his daughter.
8. Parsons has committed thoughtcrime.
9. The chinless man offers a scrap of bread.
10. O'Brien is the surprise visitor.

Part 3, Chapter 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What does Winston realize about his continuous beatings?
2. What is the aim of the Party torturers?
3. What becomes Winston's only concern?
4. Who is in charge of Winston's torture?
5. What does O'Brien think is wrong with Winston?
6. What does O'Brien throw down the memory hole?
7. What happens whenever Winston insists that O'Brien is holding up four fingers?
8. What was the Party's purpose in bringing Winston to the Ministry of Love?
9. What does O'Brien predict will happen after Winston's death?
10. According to O'Brien, what is the information Winston will never know?

Answers

1. Winston realizes the beatings are matter-of-course.
2. The torturers aim to humiliate Winston and destroy his power of reason.
3. Winston's aim is to find out what the Party wants him to confess, confess to the crime, and avoid a beating.
4. O'Brien directs the interrogation.
5. O'Brien thinks that Winston suffers from a defective memory.
6. He throws the photo down the memory hole.
7. Winston is subjected to electric shock.
8. Winston has been brought here to be cured.
9. O'Brien predicts that no one will remember Winston, as if he had never existed.

10. Winston will never know if the Brotherhood exists.

Part 3, Chapter 3 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Give the three stages of Winston's reintegration.
2. What is O'Brien's opinion of Goldstein's book?
3. Why does the Party seek power?
4. What power is most important?
5. Where does O'Brien believe reality exists?
6. How does the Party exert its power over humans?
7. What is the foundation of the Party's world?
8. What does Winston see when O'Brien forces him to look into the mirror?
9. What is the only degradation that has not yet happened to Winston?
10. What is the only certainty in Winston's life?

Answers

1. The three stages of Winston's reintegration are learning, understanding, and acceptance.
2. O'Brien says Goldstein's book is preposterous.
3. O'Brien says the Party seeks power for its own sake.
4. The most important power is power over the mind.
5. O'Brien believes that reality exists inside the skull.
6. The Party exerts its power by making man suffer.
7. The foundation of the Party's world is hatred.
8. Winston sees a skeleton when he looks in the mirror.
9. Winston has not betrayed Julia.
10. Winston's only certainty is that he will be shot.

Part 3, Chapters 4 and 5 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What does Winston write on his slate?

2. What does Winston think of his few remaining contrary flashbacks?
3. Define “crimestop.”
4. What is Winston’s hallucination?
5. What is Winston’s immediate reaction after he cries out for Julia?
6. How must Winston change his feelings toward Big Brother before he can be released?
7. Where does Winston’s final torture occur?
8. What is the worst thing in the world for Winston?
9. What does Winston believe is the only way to save himself from his torture?
10. Who is the only person to whom Winston can transfer his punishment?

Answers

1. He writes “Freedom Is Slavery” and “Two and Two Make Five.”
2. He thinks these flashbacks are false memories.
3. It is the process of developing a blind spot in the mind whenever a contrary thought occurs.
4. Winston has a hallucination of Julia.
5. Winston wonders how he will be punished.
6. Winston must love Big Brother.
7. The torture occurs in Room 101.
8. The worst thing in the world for Winston is rats.
9. Winston believes he can interpose the body of another person between himself and the rats.
10. Julia is the only person.

Part 3, Chapter 6 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What is Winston’s new hangout?
2. What news is Winston awaiting?
3. What is Winston’s usual routine?
4. What does Julia’s body remind Winston of when they unexpectedly meet?

5. What do Winston and Julia admit to each other?
6. Why doesn't Winston follow Julia through the streets?
7. What is Winston's latest false memory?
8. What is the telescreen's announcement?
9. Whose picture hangs in the cafe?
10. Whom does Winston now love?

Answers

1. Winston's new hangout is the Chestnut Tree Cafe.
2. Winston awaits news of the war with Eurasia.
3. Winston sits alone in the corner as he drinks gin and stares at the chessboard.
4. Julia's body reminds Winston of a corpse.
5. Winston and Julia admit to betraying one another.
6. Winston would rather drink gin at the cafe.
7. He remembers the time he played Snakes and Ladders with his mother.
8. The telescreen announces victory.
9. Big Brother's picture hangs there.
10. Winston now loves Big Brother.

1984: Essential Passages

Essential Passage by Character: Winston Smith

For whom, it suddenly occurred to him to wonder, was he writing this diary? For the future, for the unborn. His mind hovered for a moment round the doubtful date on the page, and then fetched up with a bump against the Newspeak word DOUBLETHINK. For the first time the magnitude of what he had undertaken came home to him. How could you communicate with the future? It was of its nature impossible. Either the future would resemble the present, in which case it would not listen to him: or it would be different from it, and his predicament would be meaningless.

[1984](#), Part 1, Chapter 7, p. 7 (*Plume: New York*)

Summary

Winston Smith is a low-level Party member who revises history so that past facts are aligned with the Party's present stance on issues and events. He likes his job, though he does not have much liking for the Party itself.

However, up until this point, he has kept his opinions to himself, as such views would surely alert the Thought Police and Winston would be summarily carted away to prison. Winston lives by himself in a small apartment in Victory Mansions, a complex situated in London in Oceania (once known as England). His neighbors are fellow Party members, who address him as "comrade," reminiscent of Soviet Russia. His sparsely furnished accommodations include a telescreen, which is a television screen that not only presents information from the Party twenty-four hours a day, but also monitors citizens at home and out in public. This constant surveillance is reflected in the motto displayed prominently on posters throughout the city: "Big Brother Is Watching You." Big Brother is the affectionate title given to the supreme leader of the party. All love and tribute is paid to Big Brother as the personification of the Party.

One day Winston strolls through the proletariat ("prole") district. The proles are individuals who are not part of the Party. Making up about eighty-five percent of the population, proles are not as strictly regulated as the Party members. This differentiation has led to a strict class system that prevents Party members from any real interaction with the proles. Thus it is a bit dangerous for Winston to be in the prole district, though not illegal since technically there are no laws against doing so. Winston has a strange attraction to the proles and is keenly interested in their lives outside of Party control.

Winston, browsing through a second-hand book shop, discovers a blank book, filled with cream-colored pages, meant to be a journal or diary. On a whim, Winston pays two dollars and fifty cents for the book and takes it home. He hides it in his desk in the alcove. The alcove, because of the curious nature of the construction of the apartment, is out of sight of the telescreen. Thus, while he is seated at his desk, Winston is invisible, though he can still be heard.

Winston decides he wants to use the book as a diary. Although keeping a diary is not illegal, Winston believes that it would be punishable by death, should he be discovered. He writes the date—April 4, 1984—at the top. He is unsure exactly why he wants to keep a diary. First of all, he is not even sure of the date. More importantly, whom is he writing for? He decides he is writing for the future. With this realization, he knows the deep significance of what he is doing. He is not sure exactly what this diary will accomplish. If nothing changes, no one will care. If things do change, he thinks, his predicament would be meaningless.

Analysis

Winston Smith is presented as a paradox, as signaled by his name. "Winston" alludes to Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Great Britain during World War II. Like Churchill, Winston will stand as a bulwark against the dark, braving the forces of darkness and tyranny in an earthly, as well as a spiritual, battle. The name "Smith" is the most common English surname, making Winston something of an Everyman, representative of the common people, going about their day-to-day business while the war goes on around them. In this dual nature, the conflict is set up between Winston the citizen-savior and Big Brother.

There are elements of the classic hero archetype in Winston. Separated from his parents at an early age, he is raised in an alien culture, destined to be its savior, should he choose the calling. His magic talisman could be said to be this diary, with which he will set the future free from tyranny. Akin to the Arthurian legend of the Fisher King, Winston's varicose veins are an unhealable wound, one which begins to improve once he connects with Julia. The exercise of free will inherent in their affair is an attempt to break the power of the evil Party. However, Winston fails in his quest in that he submits to torture, betrays Julia, and grows to love Big Brother.

The necessity for hiding this diary signals that danger of thought to the Party. Winston is intelligent and, more importantly, introspective. He thinks, and therefore he is dangerous. The danger, as Winston knows, lies in the fact that thought usually leads to action, even small, insignificant twitches that may alert the Thought Police that he is contemplating rebellion. He has observed co-workers and passersby who, by small facial expressions, alerted him to the possibility that they might be having thoughts that they consciously know are

against the dictates of the Party. Winston's biggest fear, he later states, is that he will talk in his sleep, revealing his unconscious thoughts. Though the common method of "crimestop" is used to stop anti-Party thoughts before they come to full flower, Winston pursues his thoughts, contemplating the ramifications of the actions he dreams of taking.

The words that Winston first writes down are "Down with Big Brother." This bold declaration is certain death. Winston believes that even after his death, his diary may spark the future with a desire for freedom. He does not write for himself; he writes for the future. He thus continues the hero motif in being willing to lay down his life for the good of his people. He continues to write, knowing that each word is damning him in the eyes of the Party if, and when, he is discovered. Though his official job is to revise history, his mission in keeping this diary is to record that most dangerous of concepts: Truth.

Essential Passage by Character: Julia

He felt her shoulders give a wriggle of dissent. She always contradicted him when he said anything of this kind. She would not accept it as a law of nature that the individual is always defeated. In a way she realized that she herself was doomed, that sooner or later the Thought Police would catch her and kill her, but with another part of her mind she believed that it was somehow possible to construct a secret world in which you could live as you chose. All you needed was luck and cunning and boldness. She did not understand that there was no such thing as happiness, that the only victory lay in the far future, long after you were dead, that from the moment of declaring war on the Party it was better to think of yourself as a corpse.

[1984](#), Part 2, Chapter 3, p. 135 (Plume: New York)

Summary

After their first sexual encounter, Winston and Julia manage to meet again only once, at an abandoned church, where they make love. In this encounter, Winston discovers more facts about Julia. She is twenty-six years old, a machine operator in the Fiction department, and lives in a hostel with thirty other girls, whom she despises. She does not think she is clever as she has no particular interest in reading the books she helps create. She makes a great show of being a Party loyal, participating in the Junior Anti-Sex League.

On the side, Julia is anything but a loyal Party member. She has been sexually active since she was sixteen, her first lover being a sixty-year-old man of the inner Party, who later committed suicide in order to avoid arrest. Winston notices that she is neither overtly against the Party nor particularly enthralled by it. Julia breaks the rules in order to break the rules, simply because they deprive her of doing what she wants.

Winston shares with her about his wife, Katherine, who disappeared a year and a half after they were married. He describes their life together as a cold and loveless marriage. Katherine followed the Party line that sex was only for creating children. It is not for pleasure, especially for the woman. As such, Winston does not have any particular feeling of loss. Julia is not bothered by the fact that he is a married man. Because the Party does not allow for divorce, they both know that there is no chance of the two of them ever getting married.

Julia explains her theory that the Party does not approve of sex because it is an attempt to manipulate people into using that pent-up sexual energy in fighting and in adoration of Big Brother. Thus, to her, sex is a means of getting back at Big Brother.

Winston relates to Julia about a time when he and Katherine were walking along a cliff. He had a strong desire to push his wife over the edge. He regrets now that he did not, though he is not sure that he could actually have convinced himself to do it. However, he knows that it would have made no difference, so he

cannot actually win. He states that some kinds of failure are better than other kinds.

Julia, he knows, does not agree with him. She cannot accept the premise that the individual is always defeated in a fight against Big Brother. She knows that she herself is doomed to be caught and killed by the Thought Police. Paradoxically, she is trying to create for herself her own secret world, one in which she can do what she wants, provided she is lucky and smart enough. She cannot understand that such things will not bring happiness and that true victory will only come long after death.

In the meantime, Julia insists on being alive. She rejects Winston's fatalism that they will both eventually die at the hands of the Party.

Analysis

Julia functions as a personification of free will, intent on going against the Party's dictates and pursuing her own course. However, she rebels, not for the good of society, but for her own pleasure. She wants to do what she wants to do, and the Party is simply standing in her way.

From an early age, Julia has rejected the Party's position that women are beings who exist merely to work and to bear children for the Party. The notion that women are not to enjoy sex is a target of contempt for her, and one that she has repeatedly endeavored to prove wrong. Her involvement with the Junior Anti-Sex League is symbolic of this fight. By holding up the restrictions on sex, speaking out against it, lauding it as one of the highest principles of Big Brother, Julia sets herself up as an intentional paradox, pursuing the very thing that she is supposedly fighting against. By making the Anti-Sex League her chief concern, she is also naming it as a target. It is through sex that Julia will fight against the repressions of the Party. By restricting pleasure, the Party has handed Julia a weapon to fight against them. She will engage in sex, frequently and with enjoyment, to prove the Party wrong.

Yet Julia's rebellion against Big Brother is not part of Winston's fight for the destruction of the Party. She takes little interest in his ramblings about the evils of Big Brother and is only halfheartedly eager to meet with O'Brien in order to join the Brotherhood, which is the underground organization of freedom fighters. The Party is not, to her, a tyrannical beast, but merely a barrier to her fulfilling her desires and wishes.

By using her body to rebel against Big Brother, Julia serves as a foil against which Winston is highlighted as the intellectual reasons for fighting totalitarianism. Julia does not pay much attention to Winston when he speaks of the logic behind resistance; in fact, she usually goes to sleep. She is willing to go along with his quest, solely because she is physically attracted to him. Her notion of love is the fulfillment of physical needs freely with a person of one's choice. To Winston, love is a bonding of souls and intellects. With his wife, Katherine, he experiences neither physical nor intellectual satisfaction. With Julia, he has at least accomplished the physical relationship. The marriage of true minds is still out of his grasp.

Julia accepts that fact that they will be caught and put to death. She has resigned herself to this fact as the price she pays for choosing her own course. To do what one wants, for one's own benefit and one's own pleasure, is to her the highest good. She uses her "noble hedonism" for the good of herself. The possibility of others having the same freedom does not seem to occur to her, and if it did, it is doubtful that she would be interested. Her stand against Big Brother is a lonely one, and even Winston's love cannot convince her to view their fight from a higher plane.

Essential Passage by Theme: Totalitarianism

"The proles are not human beings," he said carelessly. "By 2050—earlier, probably—all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been

destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron—they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not changed into something contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like 'freedom is slavery' when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will *be* no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness."

1984, Part 1, Chapter 5, p. 53 (*Plume: New York*)

Summary

Winston, in his job at the Ministry of Truth, is in charge of revising the news to more accurately reflect the image that the Party wants to project of history. Mostly, it is tedious work, rewriting data to match new quotas, changing news reports of the war, and so on. Among his co-workers is Syme, who works in the Research Department. Syme is writing the new eleventh edition of the Newspeak dictionary, to him a fascinating work to decrease the vocabulary of the English language. At lunch one day in the canteen, eating the unappetizing meals served to the workers, Syme joins Winston at his table. The conversation starts with Syme asking Winston if he has any razor blades. Winston replies that he does not, though in fact he does, hoarding two new blades since the supply has dried up a long time ago. Syme speaks of the recent hanging of prisoners, an event that is open to the public. In fact, the public is encouraged to attend. While Syme goes into graphic detail about the hanging, and specifically about the hangings as he thinks they should be carried out, Winston tries to avoid entering into the conversation.

Winston switches topics by asking Syme how the dictionary is coming along. This sparks Syme's interest, and he goes off on a detailed description again, but this time about the glories of Newspeak. He discusses how much improved the language will be, ridding itself of the numerous adjectives and adverbs, narrowing them down to just one or two. Syme laments Winston's lack of appreciation for Newspeak, pointing out that in his news revisions, Winston still has a tendency to lapse into Oldspeak. "You don't grasp the beauty of the destruction of words," Syme tells him.

Syme then tells Winston that the whole purpose of Newspeak is to "narrow the range of thought." Its final goal is to make thought-crime (thinking independently) impossible, because there will be no words to express it. Syme states, "The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect."

Syme points out that by the year 2050, no one will be able to understand the conversation that he and Winston are now having, because of the destruction of words. Winston starts to protest, "Except the proles," but stops himself, feeling that this remark would be "unorthodox."

Syme, however, knew what he was about to say and replies, "The proles are not human beings." He goes on to rejoice that, by the year 2050, Oldspeak will have disappeared. The great classics of the English language—Shakespeare, Chaucer, Milton, Byron—will have been destroyed. They will have been rewritten into Newspeak and thus mean something totally different. Syme says that even the Party slogans will change. Why say "Freedom is slavery" when the concept of freedom has been abolished? All thought will be gone.

Analysis

Syme and Winston both are employed in the destruction of information. Syme is destroying vocabulary. Winston is destroying history. Both these areas fall, ironically enough, in the humanities. The humanities cover the study and preservation of what humans have said and thought. By the destruction of the humanities, the Party is destroying what it is to be human. In this is the root of totalitarianism.

The third principle of Big Brother is "Ignorance is Strength." Syme very bluntly elucidates on this concept. The goal of the Party is to eliminate thought. It is not the individual citizen who gains strength through his

ignorance. The being that is strengthened is the totalitarian state. By controlling thought, the Party will control actions. By controlling actions, the Party will control history. And in a circular function, by controlling history, the Party will control thought.

Language and history are just two areas that are controlled by the Party. From the beginning, when the narrator states that the clock strikes thirteen, the reader is clued in to the fact that reality has changed, even down to the measurement of time. Rather than the standard clock of two twelve-hour sections, all time is military time of one twenty-four-hour cycle. This use of military time also reflects that military state of mind that all society functions under. War is a necessary part of society, in order to either gain power or to show power. “War Is Peace.” Without war, peace would destroy the power of the totalitarian system, which would then result in its overthrow: peace would be war. Such is the reasoning of Big Brother, and to make language say the opposite is the Party’s goal. Orwell is thus the unintended creator of “political correctness.” The current usage of terms like “negative growth” instead of “loss of profit” indicates that the power of language control is one of the many areas that Orwell saw with such clarity.

The control of actions is also part of this methodology. The redefinition of sex as solely for procreation, not to be enjoyed, is a control of emotional energy away from the individual to the glorification of the state. The elimination of emotion is not as desirable as the destruction of language. Thought can be more effectively control than emotion. Therefore the state has chosen to merely reassign emotion for the good of the state. The devolution of sexual passion and enjoyment to the mere animal instinct of reproduction takes away the humanness of the individual as much as the destruction of thought and language.

It is for this reason that Julia chooses sex as her means of rebellion. Winston, on the other hand, chooses thought for his means of attack. Julia, symbolizing the body, cannot effectively fight against the state. Animals have bodies, and use them for attack and reproduction. But it is only humans who think, who reason, who reflect. In this is the greatest danger, as Big Brother knows full well.

The most effective weapon against totalitarianism is thought, expressed in language. For this reason, to Winston, the destruction of language is the most obvious sign of the point where the Party gains total victory.

Essential Passage by Theme: Free Will

The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command. His heart sank as he thought of the enormous power arrayed against him, the ease with which any Party intellectual would overthrow him in debate, the subtle arguments which he would not be able to understand, much less answer. And yet he was in the right! They were wrong and he was right. The obvious, the silly, and the true had got to be defended. Truisms are true, hold on to that! The solid world exists, its laws do not change. Stones are hard, water is wet, objects unsupported fall toward the earth’s center. With the feeling that he was speaking to O’Brien, and also that he was setting forth an important axiom, he wrote:

Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.

[1984](#), Part 1, Chapter 7, p. 81 (Plume: New York)

Summary

Winston’s diary becomes the repository of all his “rebellious” thoughts. Though he thinks that O’Brien might be a compatriot of his feelings, he does not yet have an opportunity or the nerve to approach him. In the relative seclusion of his apartment, at his desk in the alcove that is not visible from the telescreen, Winston

writes his reflections of freedom and revolution.

He writes, “If there is hope, it lies with the proles.” The proles are not directly regulated as much as Party members are. They have the freedom to think, read, and live according to their own desires, within the limits of their poverty. Making up eighty-five percent of the population, the proles are seen by Winston as the possible force for change. Yet, on the other hand, he realizes that this is unlikely, since the Party controls everything. Thus revolution is unlikely to come from within.

Winston remembers one time walking down a street when he heard what he thought was a riot. Hoping that the people were rising up at last, he hurried to the spot, only to find them arguing over pots and pans being sold at a stall. Winston realizes that until the people become conscious, thinking human beings, they will not rebel. Sadly, he realizes, they will not become conscious until after they rebel. They live like animals, which is exactly what the Party wants them to do.

After reading a children’s history book, which he knew was a collection of Party lies, Winston tries to remember an incident from his past. In his work he had come across a photograph of three men. These men were accused of being traitors to the Party and Oceania, and had confessed to their crimes. The three men were then pardoned and released. Winston saw them once in the Chestnut Tree Café, their dejected faces showing that they knew they were doomed. Indeed, they were eventually arrested again and executed. The photograph Winston had found was proof that the confessions had been lies.

In frustration, Winston writes in his diary, “I understand HOW: I do not understand WHY.” He thinks that perhaps he is a lunatic, the only one to think the way he does. He worries, however, not so much that he is a lunatic, but that he is wrong.

The Party tells the people to reject what they see and hear. But Winston knows that he is right and that Big Brother is wrong. No matter what lies they tell, Winston has the power to disbelieve. Winston writes in his diary, “Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.”

Analysis

The concept of free will, an individual’s liberty to make his or her own choices, is a threat to the totalitarian state. This is presented throughout *1984* as free will in one’s actions, thoughts, and information. Free will encompasses not only a choice, but also a choice made on the access to true information.

Winston, as a Party employee involved in the rewriting of history, is well aware of the Party’s manipulation of the past. “He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.” By denying the individual access to accurate information of current events and history, the Party is taking away his or her power to make decisions based on what is happening in the world around him, as well as what has happened in the past. To learn from the mistakes of the past, as well as benefit from its wisdom, the average citizen is thus able to effectively evaluate the state. As the saying goes, “History is bound to repeat itself.” By rewriting history into that which has never happened, Big Brother is preventing history from thus repeating itself. By controlling the past, he thus controls the future.

Democracy cannot exist without an accurate presentation of history. By depriving the people of the knowledge of the past, the Party thus effectively cuts off any budding democracy at its roots. The free will of the people is denied them.

By controlling the language, the state also controls the expression of thought. Though it cannot effectively prevent a person from thinking, the state can take away the words necessary to express those concepts, either in thought or in words. No words, no thoughts. No thoughts, no choice. Free will is thus destroyed.

Winston places his hopes in the proles, the common people who live outside the strict dictates of the Party but not totally out of the control of Big Brother. Making up eighty-five percent of the population, Winston feels that they could easily overthrow the state if they chose. The problem is, he realizes, is that they have lost not only the right to choose but the power to choose. With the control of Big Brother of all information, the proles have been living almost hand-to-mouth, struggling for some means of existence beyond mere survival. They have become content with the way things are. They do not hope for more, because they have no concept of “more.”

Julia has a different view of free will than does Winston. To her, free will is simply the right to do what she wants. She wants to control her own body, and she exhibits this by what would be called by the state promiscuity. This is her power of resistance. However, it is limited only to herself. Her free will is only for Julia, with no thought of whether or not others have free will. To Julia, others are inconsequential, except when they are involved in her desire to exercise her own choices.

Winston, however, does have a higher view of free will. The individual will not have free will until the masses have free will. It is for this reason that he is writing this diary. Hopefully, if he does not survive, this diary will be a message of hope to future generations—a message of making one’s own choices and also participating in the choices made by the government and the country as a whole.

Winston thus states that the whole concept of free will lies not in the right to do what one wants to do but to do what one ought to do. It is in making the choice for right. It is standing against that which is wrong, whatever its source.

1984: Characters

Big Brother

Big Brother, the mysterious all-seeing, all-knowing leader of the totalitarian society is a god-like icon to the citizens he rules. He is never seen in person, just staring out of posters and telescreens, looking stern as the caption beneath his image warns “Big Brother Is Watching You.” Big Brother demands obedience and devotion of Oceania’s citizens; in fact, he insists that they love him more than they love anyone else, even their own families. At the same time, he inspires fear and paranoia. His loyal followers are quick to betray anyone who seems to be disloyal to him. Through technology, Big Brother is even able to monitor the activities of people who are alone in their homes or offices.

Of course, Big Brother doesn’t really exist, as is clear from the way O’Brien dodges Winston’s questions about him. His image is just used by the people in power to intimidate the citizens of Oceania. Orwell meant for Big Brother to be representative of dictators everywhere, and the character was undoubtedly inspired by [Adolf Hitler](#) Francisco Franco [Joseph Stalin](#) and Mao Tse-tung, all of whom were fanatically worshipped by many of their followers.

Mr. Charrington

Mr. Charrington is an acquaintance of Winston’s who runs a small antique/junk shop and rents Winston a small room above it. Winston and Julia do not realize he is actually a cold, devious man and a member of the Thought Police. Charrington is responsible for Winston and Julia’s eventual arrest.

Emmanuel Goldstein

Emmanuel Goldstein is the great enemy of Big Brother. An older Jewish man with white hair and a goatee, Goldstein is a former Party leader but now the head of an underground conspiracy to overthrow the Party. When his face is flashed on telescreens, people react to him as if he were the devil himself, frightening and evil. He personifies the enemy. Winston fears him yet is fascinated by him as well. He thinks Goldstein’s

speeches, which are broadcast as a warning against anti-Party thoughts, are transparent and shakes his head at the thought of people less intelligent and more easily led than him being taken in by such revolutionary talk. Yet Winston changes his mind later, and as he reads Goldstein's revolutionary tract, "The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism," he is more impressed than ever by Goldstein's ideas.

Goldstein is reminiscent of Leon Trotsky the great enemy of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin who led an unsuccessful revolt and was later brutally murdered by Stalin's men. It is no accident that he is a Jewish intellectual because dictators Stalin and Adolf Hitler deeply feared and hated the Jewish intelligentsia.

Julia

At first Winston doesn't like Julia because she seems like a zealous pro-Party advocate. Moreover, she is also a member of the Anti-Sex League, and deep down Winston resents that he will never be able to have sex with her. However, when he takes her up on her request that they meet privately, Winston discovers that Julia is smart and funny and loves sex, and she doesn't care at all about Big Brother. As for her membership in the Anti-Sex League, she is simply doing what is expected of her in society. A pretty woman with dark hair and freckles, she is basically a simple woman who doesn't worry about the revolutionary implications of her actions; she does what she does because it feels good and right. She cares little about revolution and even falls asleep when Winston is reading from Emmanuel Goldstein's revolutionary tract. Julia is practical as well. For instance, she is discreet in arranging her meetings with Winston and warns him that they will eventually get caught.

When they are caught, it is Julia who insists that her love for Winston cannot be destroyed, but she betrays Winston more quickly than he betrays her (at least, according to O'Brien), and when they finally meet again she is indifferent to him.

Katharine

Winston's wife. She was a tall, fair-haired girl, and, according to Winston, remarkably vulgar and stupid. Technically, he is still married to her, though they've lost track of each other. They parted ways about ten or eleven years before, after only fifteen months of marriage, when they realized that she could not get pregnant by him. The Party has declared that the only reason for marriage is procreation, and in fact it is illegal to have sex simply for pleasure. Therefore, there was no reason for Winston and Katharine to stay together. The Party does not believe in divorce, just separation, so Winston and Katharine just sort of drifted apart.

Readers only see Katharine through Winston's memory of her, and her main purpose in the novel is to show how the Party destroys love, sex, and loyalty between husband and wife.

O'Brien

O'Brien is a member of the Inner Party. He is a large, burly, and brutal-looking man, and yet Winston thinks he has a certain charm and civility. Winston suspects he is very intelligent and may share his subversive views of society. When O'Brien reveals that he does have revolutionary thoughts, Winston is excited to go with him to a secret underground meeting led by Emmanuel Goldstein. The group aims to overthrow the Party. Winston does not realize that O'Brien is secretly loyal to the Inner Party and that the secret underground group is simply a set-up by the Party to detect potential subversives. O'Brien betrays Winston and becomes his interrogator and torturer. It is he who reveals to Winston that the true, ugly purpose of the Party is to stay in power for power's sake. Like the Party, O'Brien cares for one thing only: power. He has no personal ambition, however. He only needs and wants to be a part of the Party's power structure.

As a torturer, O'Brien reveals himself to be extremely intelligent and sophisticated. His relationship with Winston is complicated and twisted. O'Brien seems to respect Winston, and he enjoys their conversations because Winston is a challenge. O'Brien and Winston ought to hate each other; after all, it's O'Brien's job to brainwash Winston and thereby destroy him. Still, they are drawn to each other out of respect and mutual

understanding.

Old Man

Old man is a prole who lives near Winston. He remembers a lot about the past, but only insignificant snippets of his own life, so he can't answer Winston's pressing questions, such as, "Was life better then than it is now?" Winston describes him as an ant who can't see the bigger picture.

Tom Parson

Winston's neighbor, Tom Parson, is a representative of the proletariat, or working class. His children, like children in Nazi Germany belong to scout-like organizations sponsored by the government. They wear uniforms and are encouraged to betray their parents to the authorities should they see any signs of disloyalty. His wife, Mrs. Parsons, is about thirty but looks much older because she lives in constant fear of her own children. Tom Parsons, age 35, is sweaty, fat, pink-faced and fair-haired. He is also not very bright, a zealous man who worships the Party. Eventually, his daughter turns him in for Thought crime because he says "Down with the Party" in his sleep. He tells Winston he is grateful he was turned in before his terrible thoughts became conscious.

Prole Woman

A heavyset neighbor of Winston's, he watches her singing to herself as she hangs out the laundry. She is a symbol of the future, representing the spirit of the proletariat that cannot be crushed.

Winston Smith

Orwell named his central character Winston Smith after [Winston Churchill](#) the Prime Minister of England during World War II; he also gave him the most common British last name, Smith. A thirty-nine-year-old man who works in the Ministry of Truth, Winston Smith is fairly ordinary. His heroism is heartfelt, not out of false notions of rebellion for the sake of power and glory. Because of the visceral nature of his actions, he acts in a foolhardy manner. For example, he keeps a diary in order to record events as he experiences them, even though he is very likely to get caught by the Thought Police. Similarly, he rents the room above a junk shop to use as a love nest with Julia despite the obvious risks. Finally, Winston trusts O'Brien, not suspecting that he is a loyal member of the Inner Party who is trying to entrap him.

When he is captured and tortured, Winston continues his defiance as long as possible. He has a strange respect for his torturer, O'Brien, and seems to enjoy their battle of intellect, ideas, and wills. Indeed, he has been thinking about and fascinated by O'Brien for years, even dreaming about him. In a way, he seems happy to be confronting him at last.

Syme

Syme, who works in the Research Department of the Ministry of Truth, is a small man with dark hair and large eyes. He is helping prepare a new dictionary of Newspeak which will eliminate even more words from the language. He is so smart and straightforward that Winston knows Syme is destined to be purged. Syme's lack of savvy and self-protectiveness irritates Winston because he knows he is loyal to Big Brother.

Winston's Mother

Dead for thirty years, Winston's mother appears only in his dreams of the past. He recalls her as a fair-haired and self-possessed woman. He's not certain what happened to her, but he thinks she was probably murdered in the purges of the 1950s (reminiscent of Joseph Stalin's infamous purges in Russia, in which large numbers of people simply disappeared overnight and were murdered). Winston misses his mother greatly and feels guilty that he survived and she did not. In fact, he has the feeling that somehow she gave her life for his.

1984: Themes

The Power of Big Brother

The sinister, mustachioed face symbolizing the Party's power is completely inescapable in George Orwell's parable of the future. When Winston Smith comes home to Victory Mansions, he feels the eyes of Big Brother on him thanks to posters on every landing in the stairwell. It is the same when he looks at a coin or cigarette packet. Each day, at the end of the Two Minutes Hate session directed at Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People, all Party workers return to a state of calm when Big Brother appears on the giant telescreen, illustrating the near-hypnotic hold he exercises over the masses. It is just as Winston reads in Goldstein's *The Theory of Oligarchic Collectivism*: "[Big Brother's]function is to act as a focusing point for love, fear and reverence, emotions which are more easily felt toward an individual than towards an organization."

When Winston is arrested and separated from the corrupting influence of Julia, O'Brien strives to make the rebellious civil servant an empty vessel that will once again surrender to Big Brother's all-consuming love. And in the end, Winston gives in: "He loved Big Brother." Orwell uses this figurehead for tyranny to powerfully illustrate the effect totalitarian government can have on the human spirit.

Freedom and Enslavement/Free Will

Orwell's *1984* is set in Oceania, a totalitarian state ruled by a god-like leader named Big Brother who completely controls the citizens down to their very thoughts. Anyone who thinks subversive thoughts can be turned in by spies or by Big Brother, who monitors them through highly sensitive telescreens. If someone does not have the proper facial expression, they are considered guilty of Facecrime, so all emotions must be extremely carefully guarded. It is even possible to commit Thoughtcrime by being overheard talking in one's sleep, which Winston Smith fears will happen to him; it actually happens to his neighbor Tom Parson. Freedom exists only in the proletarian ghetto, where crime and hunger are commonplace. Winston feels he could not live in this ghetto, even though his life is almost as grim as that of the ghetto dwellers.

The punishment for even minor crimes is severe, yet people occasionally choose to break the law. The Party knows that people instinctively want to have sex, form loving bonds, and think for themselves instead of accepting unquestioningly whatever the totalitarian government tells them. As long as people choose to exercise free will, the Party must be ever-vigilant against crime and make their punishments severe in order to remain in control.

Appearances and Reality

In totalitarian Oceania, it seems as if everyone is slavishly devoted to Big Brother and believes everything the government tells them. However, as we can understand from Winston's thoughts, all is not as it seems. Some people secretly feel and believe differently from how they behave; of course, they are extremely careful not to betray themselves. Moreover, the Party is in control of all information and revises history, even yesterday's history, to reflect their current version of events. Winston is very much aware of this, because it is his job in the inaccurately named Ministry of Truth to change the records of history. He cannot ignore what he remembers: Oceania was at war with Eurasia and allied with Eastasia yesterday, and not vice versa. If anyone else remembers differently, they certainly won't say so.

Only the old man, a powerless prole who lives on the street, speaks about what really happened in the past, but in short and irrelevant snippets about his personal experiences. It is Winston's need to reconcile what he knows with the Party's version of reality that leads to his downfall. The Party cannot allow people to have a perception of reality that is different from theirs. As Winston writes in his diary, "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."

Loyalty and Betrayal

In order to remain all-powerful, the Party destroys loyalty between people: co-workers, friends, even family members. Children are encouraged to betray their parents to the state if they suspect them of Thoughtcrimes (thinking something that goes against the Party line).

The Party has outlawed sex for pleasure and reduced marriage to an arrangement between a man and woman that exists only for procreation. Sexual urges must be repressed for fear they will lead to love, human connection, and personal loyalty, all of which threaten the Party. Winston believes that love like the love he and Julia share will eventually destroy the Party, but he underestimates the Party's ability to destroy that love and loyalty. Winston and Julia both give in to torture and betray each other. When they are released, their love and loyalty to each other has been destroyed.

Because the Party can easily detect Thoughtcrimes, people always act as if they are completely loyal to the Party. No one trusts anyone else completely. Winston makes fatal mistakes when he trusts O'Brien and Charrington, both of whom betray him. His misjudgment is almost understandable, given the subtle cues both give him to indicate that they are fellow subversives. But as it turns out, they are deliberately setting a trap for him and Julia. In the end, no one can be trusted.

Utopia and Anti-Utopia

1984 is clearly an anti-utopian book. As O'Brien tells Winston, the world he and his comrades have created is "the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined." Instead of being a society that is a triumph of human spirit and creativity, the society the Party has created is full of fear, torment, and treachery that will worsen over time. O'Brien gives Winston an image of the future: a boot stomping on a human face, forever and ever.

Such a pessimistic vision of the future serves a purpose, as Orwell knew. He wrote *1984* as a warning in order to make people aware that this type of society could exist if trends such as jingoism, oppression of the working class, and the erosion of language that expresses the vastness of human experience continued. Readers are supposed to see that this is only one possible future, one they must work to avoid. Orwell's anti-utopian vision captured the horrors of [World War II](#) and the fears of the cold war in the same way that earlier utopian novels, from British author Thomas More's [Utopia](#) to Edward Bellamy's [Looking Backward](#), captured the hope and self-confidence after the end of the medieval era.

Patriotism

The blind patriotism that fueled the dictatorships of German leader [Adolf Hitler](#) and Soviet leader [Joseph Stalin](#) in the 1930s and 1940s inspired Orwell to write of Oceania and its leader, Big Brother. Just as the Germans fanatically cheered and revered Hitler, treating him as a beloved father, the citizens of Oceania look up to Big Brother as their protector, who will watch over them just as a real brother would. The huge pictures of Big Brother that can be found everywhere in Oceania are reminiscent of those of Communist leader Mao Tse-tung displayed by the Chinese.

As in real totalitarian regimes, the children of Oceania play a large part in maintaining the loyalty and patriotism of the citizens. Just as German children joined the scout-like and militaristic Hitler Youth organization, the children of Oceania enjoy wearing their Junior Spies costumes, marching around, and singing patriotic songs. Orwell depicts how sinister it is for a government to use children to promote their policies when he portrays the Parsons' children as holy terrors, threatening to denounce their parents to the authorities if they don't give in to their childish demands. In the 1960s, the Chinese under Mao would indoctrinate an entire generation of children to be loyal to the state by taking them away from their parents for long periods in order to insure that the government's message could not be contradicted by the children's parents.

Information Control

There is no better proof of the Party's quest to dominate the mind as well as the body than the existence of the Ministry of Truth, where Winston works. By creating a sort of collective amnesia, wiping out the memory of unpleasant truths and always casting the Party's actions in the best light, the totalitarian government of Oceania can survive the present and ensure its future. The Records Department of the Ministry plays a significant role in this process, destroying or editing books, magazines, films and photographs that contradict the current orthodox Party view of the world.

Winston, adept at this work himself, can step back and see how the masses are being manipulated. In fact, he is horrified by it, and his rebellion against the Party is motivated in part by a hunger for objective truth. But the futility of resisting the Party's information control is illustrated by Julia, younger and more politically naïve despite her cynicism. She cannot even remember the fact that four years earlier Oceania had been at war with Eastasia rather than with Eurasia, because the Party has propagandized her into believing that Eastasia was always the enemy.

As an observer and chronicler of early 20th-century socialism, Orwell was well aware of the power of propaganda driving the movement, both positively and negatively. In *1984*, he shows his disgust with the revisionism and overriding orthodoxy that consumed the Soviet Union under Stalin.

Personal Rebellion

When the state exercises total control over the military, the economy, the press, and the very lives of its citizens, it is no longer possible for the individual to spark a large-scale political rebellion. When Winston and Julia meet with O'Brien, who tempts them with tales of a Brotherhood resisting the Party's hegemony, Winston is eager to believe that such a mass uprising might come someday. But of course, that hope is dashed.

So any acts of defiance that he can muster against the state are limited to the personal sphere. These are simple things that someone not living under totalitarianism would take for granted: keeping a diary, renting a room, making love with a girl. But they are cardinal sins for a Party member and ultimately attract the deadly attention of the Thought Police. Orwell shows why in his description of the aftermath of Winston and Julia's lovemaking: "Their embrace had been a battle, the climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act."

When personal rebellion is crushed in this world, hope for a grand liberation likewise perishes.

The Degradation of Language

One of Oceania's most distinctive features is its official language, Newspeak. Though only projected to supersede Oldspeak (standard English) by the year 2050, Newspeak reflects the state's desire to reduce the critical thinking abilities of its subjects. Using words like "thoughtcrime" and "doubleplusgood," Newspeak eliminates shades of meaning with the intention of "narrowing the range of thought," as Winston's acquaintance Syme explains. A smaller vocabulary offers less opportunity for political or moral deviation. Also, it enables the Party to cover up horrific crimes or radical shifts in policy by the use of well-known catchphrases.

In many respects, Newspeak reflects the concerns Orwell expressed in his famous 1946 essay, "Politics and the English Language." There, he gives numerous examples of how jargon can leave people with a distorted sense of reality. Certainly, a society in which leaders babble phrases like "complete and final elimination of Goldsteinism" has come to that sorry state.

The Triumph of Drudgery

The overall atmosphere of *1984* is dreary, depressing and murky. The moments of color and power occur

during Party rallies and martial celebrations. Otherwise, life consists of "boiled cabbage," "old flats," and "the sordid swarming life of the streets." The proletarians are obsessed with playing the Lottery and getting drunk. Lacking intellectual stimulation and culture, they are in no position to rebel against the Party. They are led to believe that things have never been any better than at present. Most, except the very oldest, simply swallow the notion that capitalism did nothing but oppress the lower classes. Women and men alike go through life as tiny cogs in a great machine, replaced easily when they die. This inertia is another powerful means of maintaining state control.

Orwell's picture of drudgery and inertia was largely adapted from the conditions he saw around him in post-World War II London. It was his fear that a state of perpetual war, such as depicted in *1984*, would lead to this becoming a reality throughout Europe and perhaps the world. Soviet Communism promised the liberation of the masses, but its actions more often mirrored the philosophy of Oceania's Party: "WAR IS PEACE. FREEDOM IS SLAVERY. IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH."

1984: Style

Point of View

Orwell's *1984* is told in the third person, but the point of view is clearly Winston Smith's. Through his eyes, readers are able to see how the totalitarian society functions, in particular how an individual deals with having illegal thoughts that can be detected easily by spies and telescreens that monitor one's every movement. Because readers are in Winston's head, they make the mistakes he makes in judging people. At one point he looks around a room at work and tells himself he knows just who will be vaporized within the next few years and who will be allowed to live. His perceptions of who is a loyal party member and who is not turn out to be inaccurate, however. In this way, Orwell shows that in a paranoid society, where personal relationships with others are at best only tolerated and at worst illegal, no one can really know his fellow man.

Winston is a well-drawn character with clear opinions (clear to the reader, that is; he cannot reveal his opinions to anyone in his society). Often, critics have claimed that these opinions echo George Orwell's. For example, Winston admires the spirit of the proletariat, but looks down on them because they will never have the means or intelligence to change their lives and their government. On the other hand, he admires the sophistication of the wealthy, cultured O'Brien, even though he is an evil character. This may reflect Orwell's own class prejudices, as someone who was far more educated and worldly than most of the people from the economic class in England (the lower middle class).

Setting

Written between 1947 and 1948, *1984*'s original title was 1948, but Orwell changed it so that it would be set in the future, but still be close enough to the present to be frightening. The action takes place in London, which is now part of a country called Oceania. Oceania is one of three world superpowers, and it is continually at war with one of the other two superpowers, Eastasia and Eurasia. Enemies can change overnight and become an ally, although the Party automatically rewrites history when this happens so that no one will remember that circumstances were ever any different. This perpetual state of war consumes most of the state's resources, so city buildings are in a constant state of disrepair. All consumer goods, from food to clothing, are rationed, just as they were in England during World War II. Winston lives in what was once London, now a drab, gray, and decaying urban area.

Language and Meaning

Orwell was very aware of the power of language, so he has the totalitarian government of the future create a new language called Newspeak. Newspeak is used throughout the book by the citizens of Oceania and explained in detail in an appendix. The language is derived from Standard English and will go through many versions over the years until it reaches its final version in the year 2050. The 1984 version, however, still

bears a strong resemblance to English.

The basic idea behind Newspeak is to take all words that refer to ideas the Party disagrees with and strip them of their original meaning or eliminate them entirely. The purpose of Newspeak is to narrow the range of ideas that can be expressed, so as the language develops it contains fewer and fewer words. Word forms and grammar are simplified, as is pronunciation, so that eventually the number of readers can be kept to a minimum. Newspeak also contains words to express new ideas, such as *oldthink*, which means the way people thought before the revolution. Naturally, it has a wicked and decadent connotation.

When Newspeak appeared citizens were unable to read about old ideas and express new ones that were counter to what the Party wanted them to think. An entire passage from the [Declaration of Independence](#) “We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .,” can be reduced to one word: crimethink. Simplistic slogans replace more complicated ideas. The Party’s most famous slogans are “War Is Peace,” “Freedom Is [Slavery](#),” and “Ignorance Is Strength.”

Through the device of a fictional language, Orwell is able to point out that language can be misused to mislead people. In creating Newspeak, Orwell was influenced both by political rhetoric that takes the place of substantive communication and advertising lingo that makes ridiculous and vague promises.

Structure

1984 is divided into three parts plus an appendix. Part one sets up Winston’s world, which readers see through his eyes and his thoughts. They understand his loneliness and why this leads him to take risks that will lead to his downfall.

In part two, the lengthiest part of the narrative, Winston becomes connected with people he believes are rebels like himself. He has an affair with Julia and follows O’Brien to an underground meeting of dissidents. Also in part two, Orwell includes lengthy sections from the fictional Emmanuel Goldstein’s political tract. It is interesting to note that his publishers originally wanted Orwell to delete this material, because it stops the action of the narrative.

In part three, Winston and Julia have been caught by the Inner Party and separated. Winston undergoes severe torture and brainwashing at the hands of O’Brien. His dialogue and interaction with O’Brien has much dramatic tension because underlying their battle is mutual respect. Unfortunately for Winston, this respect does not translate into O’Brien freeing him. O’Brien successfully brainwashes Winston into loving Big Brother.

The book ends with an appendix on the development and structure of the language called “Newspeak.” The appendix is written as if it were a scholarly article, and while it serves to clarify the use of Newspeak in the novel it is interesting to note that the publisher originally wanted to cut it, thinking it unnecessary.

1984: Historical Context

Totalitarianism

In 1948, when Orwell’s *1984* was published [World War II](#) had just ended. One of England’s allies had been Russia, which was ruled by a despotic dictator named Joseph Stalin. Stalin ruled with an iron fist, and was famous for his midnight purges: he would round up hundreds of citizens at a time and murder them in deserted areas, much as Oceania citizens are “vaporized.” Stalin’s victims were his imagined enemies, such as political dissidents, artists, or Jews. Meanwhile [Adolf Hitler](#) in Germany, had slaughtered his enemies as well, in the end killing six million Jews plus nine million Slavs, gypsies, political dissidents, homosexuals, and mentally challenged people. Mao Tse-tung in [China](#) was fighting for communism against Chinese

nationalist forces under Chiang Kai-shek. Mao would finally defeat the nationalists in 1949 and begin a long, oppressive totalitarian regime.

Other dictators of the time included Francisco Franco in Spain and Benito Mussolini in Italy. These oppressive rulers controlled citizens through propaganda and violence. This state of affairs prompted Orwell to create Big Brother, the ultimate totalitarian leader who dominates all political, social, and economic activities.

Socialism and Communism

Orwell fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War in the mid-1930s, supporting the socialist left. He was not a communist, but a dedicated Democratic socialist who believed that the government, not private enterprise, should control the production and distribution of goods, and as such he was greatly concerned about the lives of the poor and working class.

All over the world, throughout the twentieth century, working class people had been fighting for better lives. In America, workers fought a long and hard battle for labor reforms that would eventually include such benefits as job security, safety regulation, overtime and hazardous duty pay, vacation and sick days, health insurance, pensions, disability, and child labor laws, which modern workers sometimes take for granted. Some U.S. and British workers turned to socialism and communism, thinking that perhaps these alternate forms of economic and social structure would solve their problems. In the late nineteenth century [Karl Marx](#) of Germany proposed that to resolve the gross inequality between the workers and the bosses, the working class, or proletariat, would have to revolt and establish a new communist regime in which one authoritarian party would control the political and economic systems. He believed workers ought to own their farms and factories and distribute the profits evenly among workers.

Here in America, the capitalist factory and mine owners eventually conceded to labor's demands and the socialists and communists were marginalized. This act deferred American workers from revolting against their government. Communist revolutions did occur in Russia and in China, but eventually those countries modified their economic systems.

America's response to communism was extreme during the [Cold War](#) era of the 1950s; in fact, many people believed the U.S. government was acting just as oppressively as communist governments were. Under the leadership of Senator Joe McCarthy, the House (of Representatives) Committee on Un-American Activities aggressively attacked public figures who were suspected communists, demanding that they name other communists or be blackballed in their industries. Hollywood writers and filmmakers were especially hard hit by the mania and many careers were destroyed before President Truman and public opinion turned against McCarthy and the witch hunt ended. The paranoia that characterized the McCarthy era was similar to the paranoia in *1984*, as people were pressured to betray their friends, co-workers, and even parents in order to save themselves. Today, communism still has some followers in the United States and England, as does Democratic socialism, which Orwell embraced wholeheartedly.

Television

Aside from being concerned about labor and government, Orwell was very aware of an important invention that was just becoming popular after World War II and would eventually be a dominant force in Western culture: the television. The first BBC broadcast in Britain occurred in 1937, and TV was first demonstrated to the American public in 1939 at the New York World's Fair. Television's popularity grew enormously throughout the 1950s, and today 98% of American households own at least one color television set. Orwell recognized the enormous potential of this communication tool, which would soon be in every home. He imagined that the television could one day not only broadcast propaganda nonstop but that it could transmit back images of action in front of the screen, allowing the broadcaster to spy on its viewers.

1984: Critical Overview

When *1984* was published, critics were impressed by the sheer power of George Orwell's grim and horrifying vision of the future. They praised Orwell's gripping prose, which captured so well the details of life under an oppressive regime, from the tasteless, sodden public meals Winston eats to the gritty dust of the gray streets. In 1949, critic Mark Shorer wrote in his *New York Times Book Review* essay that "no real reader can neglect this experience with impunity.... He will be asked to read through pages of sustained physical and psychological pain that have seldom been equaled and never in such quiet, sober prose." In the same year, British novelist V. S. Pritchett wrote his reaction to the novel in *New Statesman and Nation*. "I do not think," the critic concluded, "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."

In the late 1940s, Orwell used many aspects of existing totalitarian and communist governments to construct the fictional government of Nineteen Eighty-Four. Pictured here are Chinese army tanks bearing down on a man during the Tiananmen Square uprising of 1989.

Critics also praised Orwell's ability to provoke moral outrage at Oceania, a society that so completely destroys the human values many people hold dear, from love to art.

Because *1984* was published during the reign of Russian leader [Joseph Stalin](#) a former ally of England and the United States who was proving to be a cruel and violent dictator, critics of the time believed that the novel was about the events in the Soviet Union. Some mistakenly believed that by setting the story in England, Orwell meant to criticize British socialism, particularly since he names the Inner Party Ingsoc ("ENGLISH SOCialism"). Orwell strongly denied this. Then again, some critics saw the novel as a satire of the contemporary social and political scene. Certainly, many of Orwell's details bear a resemblance to life in London post-World War II. However, over time critics came to realize that Orwell meant the story to be a

universal warning about the dangers of any totalitarian dictatorship.

1984: Character Analysis

Big Brother

This mustachioed face, whose resemblance to Soviet dictator [Joseph Stalin](#) is not coincidental, is quite literally the "poster boy" for the Party. It is uncertain and irrelevant whether Big Brother personally exists. What matters is that his image is everywhere, watching over everybody, simultaneously inspiring the love and fear that assure the perpetuation of the totalitarian state. More than any of *1984*'s other characters, Big Brother has entered the English language and the popular consciousness.

Julia

This dark-haired 26-year-old woman projects the image of a Party zealot, but secretly revels in her sexual escapades. Leading a double life comes naturally to Julia, an employee of the Ministry of Truth's fiction department. She sees the Party as an impediment to her unbridled sensual enjoyment of life, rather than as a malignant destroyer of humanity. She has never known any other system of government and therefore simply seeks to break the rules when she can. She is attracted to Winston because she can sense the rebelliousness in him as well.

But it is Julia's lack of deeper convictions that makes her so easy for the Party to break when she and Winston are captured and tortured. Unlike Winston, she does not harbor abstract moral or intellectual principles. She lives strictly for the moment. When Julia surrenders in the face of persecution, she can never regain her rebellious instinct.

O'Brien

O'Brien's surname has overtones of an Irish Catholic priest, and the comparison to a Jesuit father confessor is particularly apt. Throughout the novel, Winston finds himself somehow drawn to this large-bodied Inner Party official who seems to know something everyone else does not.

But Winston is fooled by O'Brien's pretence of being involved in a plot with Goldstein. O'Brien has placed his powerful intellect completely in the service of the Party, and he uses a mixture of pain and paternal reproofs to reshape Winston's mind away from a tendency toward "thoughtcrime." O'Brien is the personal embodiment of the Party's implacable, permanent rule.

John Hurt and Richard Burton in the film Nineteen Eighty-Four, released, appropriately enough, in 1984.

Winston Smith

It is difficult to justify calling the protagonist of George Orwell's *1984* a "hero" in the larger sense of that term. In this classic vision of a totalitarian future, Winston Smith's acts of defiance are intellectual, sexual and highly personal. From the start, doom hangs over this malcontent 39-year-old employee of the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth. There is no real way for him to translate his rebellion into a broader political context in the dismal London, capital of Oceania, where he lives.

Winston's awareness that he cannot hide from the ruling Party comes through in the opening passages of the novel. He sees posters of Big Brother in the hallway of his apartment building and then enters his flat to adjust his telescreen, which delivers constant propaganda, monitors his activities, and cannot be turned off.

Winston trudges through his daily activities, editing documents to make them conform to the Party's current version of "reality," while trying to summon up clear memories of his past. In his dreams, he visualizes a "Golden Country" of peace and serenity. Acutely aware of his physical ugliness, he fantasizes about the possibility of an uprising led by the traitor Emmanuel Goldstein. He is alienated from colleagues like Syme and Parsons, whose differing commitments to orthodoxy nauseate him. It is Winston's daring to reach out to two other people, Julia and O'Brien, which proves his undoing.

His initial distaste for Julia's apparent sexlessness is swept away when he enters into a passionate love affair with the rebellious young girl. But the pair are no match for the sinister power behind O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party, who turns out not to be the secret reformer Winston had hoped for. Winston is reduced to a shell of a human being through massive brainwashing and torture, finally conceding his love for Big Brother.

The essence of Winston's character is his secret, treasured individuality. Once he loses his desire to defy the Party, he has lost everything. Rather than growing as a character, he is forced to regress. With Communism on the rise in the post-[World War II](#) era, Winston's degradation represented a stark warning to Orwell's readers when this novel was published in 1949.

Emmanuel Goldstein

The Party presents Goldstein as the evil antagonist of Big Brother. The Jewish flavor of his name recalls Leon Trotsky Stalin's ousted rival, and like Trotsky, Goldstein can be accused of responsibility for every crime against the Party. Vilified by the citizens of Oceania during the daily "Two Minutes Hate" sessions, this "Enemy of the People" is not only a convenient scapegoat but occasionally becomes the focus of hero worship for someone rebellious like Winston. However, his actual existence is dubious, making rebellion in Oceania a mere fantasy.

Mr. Charrington

Mr. Charrington represents the impossibility of finding safety or privacy in a totalitarian society. He seems to be the genial owner of a junk shop, willing to sponsor and wink at the secret liaisons of Winston and Julia in a room above his business. Instead, he turns out to be a member of the dreaded Thought Police. He hands the couple over to the authorities after spying on their conversations and lovemaking via a hidden telescreen.

Syme

Superficially, Syme appears to be the sort of character the Party would approve. A researcher for the Eleventh Edition of the Newspeak Dictionary, he takes pleasure in destroying language and watching hangings. But his orthodoxy is undercut by an intellect which is too active for the Party's liking. He thinks ahead too much and reads too widely. Early in the book, Winston already recognizes that Syme will be vaporized, and that is what happens to him.

Parsons

A neighbor of Winston Smith, this 35-year-old Party drone participates eagerly and unquestioningly in all the

government's programs. But his own beloved daughter ultimately denounces him after hearing him say "Down with Big Brother" in his sleep. Parsons' demise makes a clear point: no one, not even the most faithful slave, can be completely safe in this society.

1984: Essays and Criticism

1984: Then and Now

George Orwell's dystopian (a fictional place where people lead dehumanized and fearful lives) vision of the year 1984, as depicted in what many consider to be his greatest novel, has entered the collective consciousness of the English-speaking world more completely than perhaps any other political text, whether fiction or nonfiction. No matter how far our contemporary world may seem from 1984's Oceania, any suggestion of government surveillance of its citizens—from the threatened "clipper chip," which would have allowed government officials to monitor all computer activity, to New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani's decision to place security cameras in Central Park—produces cries of "Big Brother is watching." Big Brother, the all-seeing manifestation in 1984 of the Party's drive for power for its own sake, has come to stand as a warning of the insidious nature of government-centralized power, and the way that personal freedoms, once encroached upon, are easily destroyed altogether.

Critics generally agree that the hero of the novel, Winston Smith, may be recognized by his name as related to both the great British statesman and [World War II](#) leader [Winston Churchill](#) and a non-descript Everyman. However, the point is not that Winston is a great man, or even that he is one man among many; rather, O'Brien, while torturing Winston, says that if Winston is "a man," as he claims to think of himself, then he is the last man. In fact this echo of the novel's original title, *The Last Man in Europe*, reveals Winston as symbolic of what critic Ian Watt has described as Orwell's conception of a dying humanism. Whether Winston Smith is truly a humanist, in the classical sense of the term, is of no matter; in comparison to the totalitarian regime which destroys him, Winston is, in fact, the last embodiment of the human. In converting Winston to the love of Big Brother, the last man in Europe is destroyed.

Winston maintains, throughout the novel, two avenues of hope for a life outside the confines of the Party and the watchful eyes of Big Brother, a life which may undermine or even overthrow the Party's hold on Oceania. One of these possibilities is conscious, spoken: the proles. Just as Marx foresaw, in the nineteenth century, that the Revolution would come from a spontaneous uprising of the proletariat as they shook off the chains of their oppressors, so Winston writes in his diary that if there is hope, it lies in this 85 percent of Oceania's population that exists outside the confines of the Party. And yet, the impossibility of a proletarian uprising presents itself to him at every turn. Echoing Marx, Winston writes: "Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious." And, unfortunately, he is right; as O'Brien admonishes Winston in the Ministry of Love, "The proletarians will never revolt, not in a thousand years or a million. They cannot." Thus this small bit of hope is crushed.

The second possibility remains mostly unspoken and unconscious: desire. It is this possibility, the momentary destruction of the Party through intimate union with another person, which solidifies Winston's relationship with Julia. Though they are drawn together at first by what seem to be basic animal urges, it is precisely the baseness and the animality of those urges that gives them their liberatory potential. As Winston relates earlier, in contemplating the sterility of his relationship with his wife: "The sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion. Desire was thoughtcrime." Desire is thoughtcrime in Oceania because it elevates the human, the individual, above the powers of the state to control him. In fact, as Winston and Julia begin to make love for the first time, this piece of repressed knowledge becomes conscious; "the animal instinct," he thinks, "the simple undifferentiated desire: that was the force that could tear the Party to pieces."

The threat to the Party of the thoughtcrime that desire represents is sufficiently serious that the state must exert formidable control over any such human, instinctual reactions. In his essay “1984: Enigmas of Power,” Irving Howe writes, “There can be no ‘free space’ in the lives of the Outer Party faithful, nothing that remains beyond the command of the state. Sexual energy is to be transformed into political violence and personal hysteria.” It is this recognition by the Party that there may be no element of “human nature” which can remain the province of the individual without endangering the Party’s hold on its members that represents the great “advance” of Ingsoc (English [Socialism](#) in Oldspeak) over previous totalitarian regimes. There was always room, notes Howe, in these previous regimes, for “‘free space,’ that margin of personal autonomy which even in the worst moments of Stalinism and Hitlerism some people wanted to protect.”

The “advance” represented by Ingsoc, according to Emmanuel Goldstein’s *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchal Collectivism*, the book written by a collective of Inner Party members including O’Brien, is the realization by the Party that all previous oppressive regimes were nonetheless “infected” with liberal ideas about the individual:

Part of the reason for this was that in the past no government had the power to keep its citizens under constant surveillance. The invention of print, however, made it easier to manipulate public opinion, and the film and the radio carried the process further. With the development of television, and the technical advance which made it possible to receive and transmit simultaneously on the same instrument, private life came to an end. Every citizen, or at least every citizen important enough to be worth watching, could be kept for twenty-four hours a day under the eyes of the police and in the sound of official propaganda, with all other channels of communication closed. The possibility of enforcing not only complete obedience to the will of the State, but complete uniformity of opinion on all subjects, now existed for the first time.

With that development, the totalization of surveillance of Party members, not only does private life come to an end, but so does the possibility of sexual desire as truly liberating. Julia and Winston do manage to steal their moments together away from the Party. But the Party’s enforcers, the Thought Police, are watching even when the lovers are convinced they are safe, and the revenge they exact for this transgression of Party control is enormous.

It is significant that the instrument of this totalized surveillance is the “telescreen,” Orwell’s projection of the future of television. As Orwell was writing *1984* in 1948, television was just emerging from the developmental hiatus forced upon the broadcasting industry by World War II. Many people were worried, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, about what this new medium would be, how it would function, how much control over its watchers it would create. Orwell’s own concerns about the future development of television are reflected in *1984*’s telescreens, which on the one hand, broadcast an endless barrage of Party propaganda, and on the other hand, act as transmitters as well, enabling the Party to exercise the total surveillance it required.

Martin Esslin has claimed in his essay “Television and Telescreen,” however, that Orwell’s fears about television missed the mark on two counts. First, Orwell was evidently more concerned about the potential for televisions to become cameras, a technological development which has not taken place, overlooking the importance of “what they have actually become, the omnipresent, constant providers of highly colorful visual entertainment for the broad masses.” Secondly, Orwell’s notion of what these telescreens did transmit was the crudest possible sort of propaganda—martial music and endless lists of production figures—which overlooks the utility of entertainment as a form of mass manipulation. In Esslin’s words:

There is, after all, not that much difference between a society that floods the masses with cheap, novelettish romance, raucous and sentimental pop music, and pornography to keep

them amused and politically inert and one that does the same thing for commercial gain—but with the identical ultimate political result: apathy, ignorance of real issues, and acquiescence in whatever the politicians are doing. And does not commercial television do just that?

Furthermore, both Esslin and Irving Howe point out another weakness in Orwell's depiction of the telescreen when compared to the development that television has actually taken in the latter half of the twentieth century: the proles—fully 85 percent of the population of Oceania—are not required to have telescreens. If the machine-made novels and songs are being put onto the market in order to keep the masses complacent, wouldn't the telescreen prove much more effective? Moreover, the proles, kept free of the telescreen's powers of surveillance, retain the ability to have a private life which Party members have lost. The Party clearly regards the proletariat as not being worth watching, as being unable to develop the "humanity" which must be guarded against in Party members. As it is stated in *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchal Collectivism*, "What opinions the masses hold, or do not hold, is looked on as a matter of indifference. They can be granted intellectual liberty because they have no intellect."

This division of society into Party members and proles in *1984* was clearly modeled on the division which was coming into focus in the Soviet Union in 1948, in which Party members were closely monitored while proles were less controlled. Both Esslin and Howe, however, point out that Orwell's vision of the powerlessness and inertia of the proles did not bear out, given the evidence of history. In fact, numerous uprisings against the Soviet machine, from the Hungarian Revolution to the student uprisings in France from the Prague Spring to the rise of Solidarity in Poland, to the eventual fall of the Berlin Wall, demonstrate that the proletariat, and even party intellectuals, were not completely crushed by Party ideology, and that, in Esslin's words, "the totalitarian manipulation of popular feelings and ideas by the mass media is far less effective than Orwell had imagined."

Nonetheless, by the novel's end, Big Brother is ultimately victorious, having won over the last man in Europe. In today's world, Big Brother is still a force, especially to those who worry about the continued possibility of the rise of totalitarianism today. However, there is another face to Big Brother, which is precisely that "manipulation of popular feelings and ideas by the mass media" about which Orwell warned. If people find in government endless new reasons to be vigilant about the incursions into personal liberties which *1984* depicts, they would do well to remember, as Neil Postman claims in the introduction to *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, that there is a very different version of the dystopian universe presented in Aldous Huxley's [Brave New World](#), in which "no Big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history. As he saw it, people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think." Big Brother may not be watching; he might be broadcasting.

Source: Kathleen Fitzpatrick, in an essay for *Novels for Students*, Gale, 1999. Fitzpatrick is an author and doctoral candidate at New York University.

Why Nineteen Eighty-Four Should Be Read and Taught

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* has been challenged on such grounds as profanity, immorality, and obscenity. It has been charged with being Communistic, containing sex references, and being depressing. Some of these charges are absurd, and though some have a grain of truth when items are taken out of context, on the whole the book stands up well and though frequently challenged has a history of rarely being removed from classrooms and libraries. Critics, as well as readers in general, have recognized the book as significant and valuable since its appearance at the end of the 1940s. Some examples: On the dust jacket of the first American edition of *Nineteen Eighty-four* Bertrand Russell and Alfred Kazin are quoted. Russell states, "*Nineteen Eighty-four* depicts the horrors of a well-established totalitarian regime of whatever type with great power and skill and force of imagination." He adds that it is important that we should be aware of these

dangers. Alfred Kazin characterizes the book as “an extraordinary experience . . . overwhelming in its keenness and prophetic power.” He further comments: “I hardly know which to praise more—Orwell’s insight into the fate of man under totalitarianism, or his compassion for him.” Reasons for reading and teaching *Nineteen Eighty-four* continue today to be much the same as these critics gave four decades ago.

The book does express a mood of near but not complete despair. The mood is despair only if readers do not heed the warning of what will happen if we continue on some of our present courses. But we do not have to become soulless automatons. It is not foreordained. The scenario of *Nineteen Eighty-four* is that atomic wars had started in the 1940s, accelerated ten years later in Russia, Western Europe, and North America. This atomic war led the governments (Eurasia, Oceania, and Eastasia) to conclude that unless atomic wars stopped, organized society would be doomed. Of course, this would also mean the end of governmental power. Thus atomic war stopped, but bombs continued to be stockpiled awaiting the right time to kill a large segment of the world’s population without warning in a few seconds. Orwell portrays this continued military preparedness as essential also for the continuation of the economic system and shows the consequences of a society in a constant state of war readiness, always afraid of being attacked.

As Erich Fromm says in the Afterword to the 1961 New American Library paperback, “Orwell’s picture is so pertinent because it offers a telling argument against the popular idea that we can save freedom and democracy by continuing the arms race and finding a ‘stable’ deterrent.” With technical progress geometrically progressing, the caves will never be deep enough to protect us.

The novel begins on a bright cold day in April, “and the clocks were striking thirteen.” From there on a world is presented that is permeated by fear and hate with such slogans as HATE WEEK, WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH. The society has nothing like our first amendment. Everything is censored by the MINISTRY OF TRUTH. It is even a crime to keep a diary and Winston Smith’s life is endangered by doing so. Ironically Winston is employed by the MINISTRY OF TRUTH, and his job is to constantly rewrite history. Government predictions which do not come true (and they never do) are made to disappear. And, of course, people have to be made to disappear too (to become nonpersons) if they commit THOUGHT CRIME, which the THOUGHT POLICE are to control. BIG BROTHER affirms that: “Who controls the past controls the future: Who controls the present controls the past.” The following extended quotation from the book demonstrates in some detail how this control of the past was accomplished:

As soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular number of the *Times* had been assembled and collated, that number would be reprinted, the original copy destroyed, and the corrected copy placed in the files in its stead. This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound tracks, cartoons, photographs—to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance. Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date. In this way every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct; nor was any item of news, or any expression of opinion, which conflicted with the needs of the moment, ever allowed to remain on record. All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary. In no case would it have been possible, once the deed was done, to prove that any falsification had taken place. The largest section of the Records Department, far larger than the one in which Winston worked, consisted simply of persons whose duty it was to track down and collect all copies of books, newspapers, and other documents which had been superseded and were due for destruction.

A few cubicles away from Winston is Ampleforth, who juggles rhymes and meters, producing garbled versions of poems which have become ideologically offensive but for one reason or another are to be retained in anthologies. There is also a whole army of reference clerks who spend all of their time preparing lists of

books and magazines to be recalled. There are also huge warehouses where corrected documents are stored and furnaces where original copies are burned.

By controlling all information BIG BROTHER controls responses of citizens, primarily through the giant two-way TV screens in every living space. These permit THOUGHT POLICE to observe all citizens to see that they are responding in a desirable manner—hating enemies and loving BIG BROTHER. Reality control, DOUBLETHINK in NEWSPEAK, means an “unending series of victories over our memory.”

In *Nineteen Eighty-four* orthodoxy means not thinking or even needing to think. It is unconsciousness. Orthodoxy is to close the book. One of the U.S. Supreme Court justices in the Island Trees case talks about censorship resulting in a “pall of orthodoxy.” One of the functions of literature in a free society is to help protect us from this “pall of orthodoxy.” This book is one of the best examples of a work of considerable literary merit worth reading and studying in the classroom as part of a protection program against the orthodoxy pall. It is also a very interesting study of the effects of an orthodoxy that finally convinces Winston Smith, a party member who opposes the system, that four is five. It takes brain-washing and torture by the MINISTRY OF LOVE to accomplish this convincing. Winston’s final orthodoxy is: “Whatever the Party holds to be true is truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party.”

In answer to the question of why this particular novel to study the relationship between totalitarianism, technology, psychology, and language instead of a social studies, science, or language text, Roy Orgren, writing in the Fall 1983 *Connecticut English Journal*, says:

Simply because, set forth in a work of fiction, the ideas are more accessible, more interrelated, and more engaging; the sheer horror of totalitarianism is more real. We flinch when the truncheon-wielding guards in the MINISTRY OF LOVE crack Winston’s fingers and shatter his elbow; we writhe in our armchairs as O’Brien virtually disembodies Winston with electric shocks; we shudder as moist pads are applied to Winston’s temples; and we, like Winston, are dazed by the “devastating explosion,” “the blinding flash of light” which so numbs his mind that he consents to seeing—no, actually sees—five fingers when only four are held to him.

We are jolted out of our complacency so that it is likely that we will never slacken our vigil against oppression and human rights violations.

Orwell, with his presiding interest in language, shows how BIG BROTHER manipulates society and controls reality by corrupting language. NEWSPEAK is calculated to get rid of individuality by limiting the range of thought through cutting the choice of words to a minimum. As Syme, the NEWSPEAK expert, says, “You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We’re destroying words—scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We’re cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won’t contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050.”

Studying the effects of NEWSPEAK can only help us in cherishing our language with all of its rich diversity and ambiguities. Valuable, exciting classroom discussion and writing projects can grow from this, and surely the lesson of the importance of using language that is not vague and misleading but clear and precise can be learned.

Another major emphasis of the novel is the use of technology combined with advertising techniques (especially by the government) that are deeply psychological to eliminate individuality and privacy. Many of the same techniques used in *Nineteen Eighty-four* are in use today in our world, and many of them have become much more sophisticated. We surely have full-wall TV screens and the two-way television. Closed circuit security systems are not just for banks anymore. In fact, they are practically everywhere. Heartbeat,

respiration, surface tension of the skin, stiffness of hair, and temperatures can be measured remotely by voltage sensors and ultrasensitive microphones. Our government puts out a glut of newspeak. It is significant that National Council of Teachers of English Doublespeak Award has twice been awarded to Ronald Reagan. The number of records, many kept without our knowledge, on each of us stored in computers, retrievable in seconds by almost any person or organization with the knowhow, is frightening. ©2000-2004 eNotes. Behavior modification and drug therapy are widely used. Studying about these technologies and techniques, discussing them, exposing them, can make students aware in a way that may serve to make them less vulnerable to these techniques.

Perhaps the most interesting and discussable feature of Orwell's novel is its description of the nature of truth. Is there an objective truth, or is "reality" not external? Does it exist only subjectively and internally? Is it reality that what the Party holds to be truth is truth? The Party believes that truth is only in the mind and that by controlling the mind truth is controlled. Controlling minds and truth is ultimate power. Truth is subordinated to the Party. As Erich Fromm says, "It is one of the most characteristic and destructive developments of our own society that man, becoming more and more of an instrument, transforms reality more and more into something relative to his own interests and functions. Truth is proven by the consensus of millions; to the slogan 'how can millions be wrong' is added 'and how can a minority of one be right.'" The "one" must be insane. The "consensus truth" concept can serve as the basis for much valuable discussion about many things such as individuality, minority rights, majority rule, and, of course, values.

It is hard to imagine a modern novel that has more reasons to be read and taught. In addition to its literary merit, it has special implications for our times and the society toward which we may be heading. Its depiction of a well-established totalitarian regime, a nuclear stand-off with a world in constant fear, total censorship, NEWSPEAK, DOUBLETHINK, orthodoxy, and consensus truth offer almost sure-fire topics for discussion and writing in classes—discussions that can serve to foster sincere thinking and maturity. Yes, the book is depressing, but readers can react to that by trying to do positive things to influence the future rather than becoming more depressed and pessimistic. *Nineteen Eighty-four* teaches us, as Erich Fromm says at the end of his essay, "the danger with which all men are confronted today, the danger of a society of automatons who will have lost every trace of individuality, of love, of critical thought, and yet who will not be aware of it because of 'doublethink'. Books like Orwell's are powerful warnings."

Critical language involving reading, thought, and discussion of books like *Nineteen Eighty-four* may help us to avoid Winston's fate of total loss of self, of humanity, as presented in the last paragraph of the novel:

He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark mustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.

Source: James E. Davis, "Why *Nineteen Eighty-four* Should Be Read and Taught," in *Censored Books*, Scarecrow Press, 1993, pp. 382-87.

George Orwell and the Mad World: The Anti-Universe of 1984

"I shall save you, Winston, I shall make you perfect." So O'Brien, the Grand Inquisitor of *1984*, has said to the antihero Winston Smith, in one of the dream sequences which strangely go almost unnoticed in that inverted Platonic dialogue which is Orwell's monument. It is as if the lives of the Platonic philosopher-kings were viewed from the point of view of one of the Auxiliaries. But it is not the old style of dialogue, in which

there is a certain amount of free interchange of ideas, even between master and disciple. Rather, in this new style of dialogue, one party has the ability to inflict pain on the other party in any degree desired, even while the two proceed to discuss the most abstruse political questions. Dialogue implies the ability to have one's mind changed, but in the condition of "controlled insanity" which is *1984*, communication consists in the imposition of an insane view of reality by the strong few upon the weak many, through overwhelming force. O'Brien must "save" Winston, but this is religious salvation turned backward, and its purpose is to prevent even one "just man" from existing anywhere in the world, by convincing that man that he is insane. "Is it possible that a whole society can be insane?" asked Orwell in one of his essays, speaking of Hitler's Germany.

Orwell's *1984* is about religion reversed, law and government reversed, and above all, language reversed: not simply corrupted, but reversed. In the world of *1984*, the mad world which Orwell sought by his writing to lead men to *avoid*—for he was a political activist not interested in simple prediction—in this world, which I call Orwell's "antiuniverse," because of his conversion of all the positives of Western civilization into their negatives, all of the channels of communication are systematically being closed down, restricted to just the minimums necessary for the technical functioning of society. For Orwell, as for his master, Swift, language and politics are equivalents, and political corruption is always preceded by linguistic corruption, of which the phrases "two plus two equals five" and "black is white" are only the ultimate logical (and mad) projections. Communication will become, if the political tendencies which Orwell saw in the forties continue, not the transmission of meaning, but the attempt to avoid meaning in furtherance of a political end which we feel must be mad but are unable to prove, even as Winston Smith cannot prove to his tormentor the madness of the Party's doctrines.

Instead of the Electric Age resulting in a quantum jump in communication, as Professor McLuhan asserts in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, when he says that "as electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village," what McLuhan calls both "cool" and "hot" media have been, in the Orwellian view, dampened down as between individual and individual, and distorted terribly as between the individual and the State. I mention McLuhan not only because his book is current but also for what I think is his place in the direct line of descent from Orwell on the general subject of communication, and Orwell would have understood what McLuhan was driving at while not agreeing with most of his doctrine. At any rate, the deliberate, managed breakdown in communication—not extension but breakdown—at the linguistic level and indeed in all media is one of Orwell's master themes, as it is such a theme in the Theater of the Absurd, the Beat Generation, the use of the lunatic in literature to convey truth, as in Faulkner's [The Sound and the Fury](#) or the recent hit play, *Marat-Sade*, and, it may be, in the language of current underground cultures, such as that of drug addiction or crime.

If meaningful communication has less and less chance of conveying impressions in the usual communications media, how does Orwell envision communication as taking place in his nightmare world? He does so primarily at the level of the infliction of pain. Torture is communication. Worse, to be tortured is not the worst thing in the world, if only the victim is *understood* by his torturer, as Winston feels he is understood by O'Brien.

In the mad world of *1984*, all human relationships are based on pain, either its infliction or its avoidance. "We are the dead," says Winston of himself and his mistress, Julia, but just as the Platonic dialogue form has been adapted in *1984* in the torture scenes for satiric purposes, so Orwell has modified the Cartesian *cogito* to "I suffer pain, therefore I am." No communication, nor self-definition, nor relation can occur in the Orwellian anti-universe without pain, and in this Orwell follows an important trend in modern literature. If one suffers pain, he is at least certain of being alive.

One is reminded, in the relationship between O'Brien and Winston which is the only human relationship in *1984*—the Winston-Julia relationship being hollow and merely physical by comparison—of relationships

between pairs of characters such as Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov, and while we think of [Crime and Punishment](#), one of the prime progenitors of this theme, also Raskolnikov and Porfiry Petrovitch. “Suffering, Rodion Romanovitch, is a great thing,” observes Porfiry, as he invites him to confess. There is the climactic, though brief, relationship between Joe Christmas and Percy Grimm—their entire lives having been preparation for this confrontation—in *Light in August*, when the only way in which Grimm can become a man communicating with another is via an automatic pistol, emptying its magazine through a tabletop into his victim and then castrating him and defining him as the hated *Other*. There is the relationship between the former *agent provocateur*, Rubashov, and the commissar Gletkin in Koestler’s [Darkness at Noon](#) which, written a decade before 1984, shows some of the same but is on a cruder level, especially in terms of the dynamics of the power-pain relationship between O’Brien and Winston Smith. And in Brecht’s haunting 1927 play, *Im Dickicht der Städte*, occurs the very sophisticated perception of the ambivalent relationship between Shlink, the Malay lumber dealer residing in the Chicago of 1912, and George Garga. “You observe the inexplicable boxing match between two men . . .,” says Brecht, and he explains it in sexual terms. Shlink explicitly dies the death of Socrates by poison, sitting upright, even as Winston Smith dies the death of Socrates reversed: spiritually, not physically, by the mastering of his will by that of the Party incarnated in O’Brien. Orwell explains the relationship in ostensibly non-sexual, political dynamics. Brecht uses such communication through pain in many of his plays, especially, I should say, in that between P. Mauler and Joan in *St. Joan of the Stockyards*, and in the enforced metamorphosis of Galy Gay in *A Man’s a Man*. This kind of communication only between political or sexual aggressors and victims is that which Orwell was to dwell on. The Brechtian distinction between sexuality and politics is blurred by Orwell, because he saw the two drives as convertible, each an aspect of the other, in that sexual frustration or hysteria was one of the primary causes of political fanaticism.

That human beings can communicate only by inflicting pain on each other, or at any rate that this will be the state of things soon, is a desperate thesis. Orwell’s life was a consistent development toward this frightening perception. But Orwell was, as has been said of Browning, “an ardent and headstrong conventionalist,” who was defining a norm by its opposite, a moral universe by an antiuniverse.

Orwell saw human life under the primary philosophical category of *relation*, and this may be why he was never able to create a “round” character, even those characters which in the terms of what we know about Orwell’s experience were clearly his own personae, aspects of himself at different stages of his life. He is the “I” as a schoolboy and the “I” as a Paris *plongeur* and English tramp in “*Such, Such were the Joys . . .*” and *Down and Out in Paris and London*, respectively. Incidentally, neither of these purportedly autobiographical documents is really the objective truth, as those who knew Orwell have testified; he took his artist’s liberty of arranging the time sequence in *Down and Out* in the same way as Thoreau did in [Walden](#), compressing two years of clock time into a single seasonal year, for increased concentration of effect. There is the civil servant, Flory, in [Burmese Days](#); Orwell, or rather his portrait of the artist as a young imperialist. Flory shoots himself, as one imagines Orwell about to do in Burma before he resigned from the Indian Imperial Police. There is Winston Smith as middle middle-class man of the future, whom I have called a member of the Auxiliaries, the Outer Party, in the inverted Platonic Republic which is 1984. There is S. Bowling, the very important member of the English lower-middle class who has sharp perceptions about his society as the result of native wit and his educating himself beyond his class because of absurd circumstances in World War I. There is Gordon Comstock, the literary intellectual of the English lower-middle class, who refuses to climb out of his impoverished and unsatisfactory life at first when he has the opportunity; he leads the life of [The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner](#), refusing the shackles of his society, until he is brought to bay by that most fundamental drive: the procreation of the race. Least believable of his characters is the antiheroine of *A Clergyman’s Daughter*—a novel in which we again have the impoverished middle class, seen through the eyes of a neurotic and repressed woman, and in this portrait we see more than a hint of Orwellian antifeminism. For while Orwell deplored what he saw as the modern denigration of love in favor of sheer power, he recognized power as the greater reality.

In each of these characters, essentially the same story—the conflict of an individual with an unsatisfactory, if not mad, society—is told from a somewhat different perspective. But all of them are two-dimensional, and the central focus is not even on society, but on power, the central question of which, as Orwell himself said, was “how to prevent it from being abused.” Orwell’s basic motivation was to communicate with other social classes, especially with the working class which is as near to a true hero, albeit a collective hero, as he ever developed. And he emphasized the difficulties of such communication: for him, bred to an extreme class-consciousness despite himself, the simple step of walking into a working-class pub, incognito, was as hazardous as visiting a tribe of isolated Australian aborigines, and his equivalent of obtaining First Class Honours in P.P.E. at Oxford, which he never attended, was his being accepted by English coal miners and Spanish revolutionaries in [The Road to Wigan Pier](#) and [Homage to Catalonia](#). This effort at interclass communication on Orwell’s part was to succeed beyond the achievements of any of his English contemporaries. But it led him to pessimistic conclusions. “If there is hope,” writes Winston Smith in *1984*, “it lies in the Proles.” But the Proles will never become rebellious against their insane surroundings until they become self-aware first, and, as O’Brien assures Winston, they will never become self-aware until they rebel, a rebellion which is impossible.

Lately, one still reads Orwell, and his books are available in most paperback stores, but few write about him. Perhaps this is a blessing, or the highest form of praise of him. One wonders why there is such a lack of interest in the man. Or is it that everything which can be said about him and his portrayal of the Mad World has been said? I doubt it. The biographical and critical studies, such as they are, leave one absolutely unsatisfied. Lionel Trilling expressed best a belief about Orwell, in his introduction to *Homage to Catalonia* fifteen years ago, that Orwell was a very unusual kind of man, almost a saint, and not a genius; one who, uncharacterized by really superior intelligence, *lived* his vision as well as *wrote* it. He is in this view a [Mark Twain](#) Thoreau, Whitman, or possibly Henry James. “He is not a genius—what a relief!” observed Trilling. “He was a virtuous man.”

Yet Orwell lived a life of allegory on which his works are the commentary, unobtrusively passing through the very worst phase to date of European and British civilization, noting everything about the actual power realities, successfully communicating in his personal life with a wide range of nationalities and classes both inside and outside of his own country. He told us something very significant about his works when, in his will, he specified that no biography of him was ever to be written. Perhaps his mystery is that he made no mysteries in his writings, though his life I would call mysterious; he may have concluded early that the rarest of all sophisticated literary devices is clarity. As he wrote of a mad antiuniverse in his work, and expressed his despair at the breakdown of valid communication, so his style was exceptionally clear, as though he would prove his point in terms of technique by its opposite, just as he wished to establish a norm by a portrait of its opposite. For him, the only valid communication is nondestructive communication.

In considering *1984* it is well to proceed by way of [Animal Farm](#), for it is substantive: the first work, as he himself said later, “In which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole.” This avowed political purpose accounts for the absence of real characters in Orwell’s writing, other than himself moving through an absurd world. It is, in fact, to his political interest to show non-characters, such as Winston Smith who, passive as he is in the grip of overwhelming force against which he briefly rebels, is the only one in *1984* who is even given a complete name: the most ordinary English family name, and the first name of the most extraordinary Englishman of the century. Winston is passive and not self-aware, though we see something of his stream-of-consciousness through his dreams, his diary, and his reactions to various tortures in the Ministry of Love. He does not act; he is acted upon, even in his revolt against Big Brother. Winston, from the first moment we meet him, never makes a free decision.

We can document the completeness of Winston’s slavery by reference to the series of dreams which he has, involving his mother, his sister, O’Brien, Julia, “The place where there is no darkness”—i.e., the torture cellars of the Thought Police—and The Golden Country. This last is the Orwellian archetypal dream, to be set

against the nightmare of the Mad World, which perhaps ultimately stems from some boyhood experience. Whatever it was, it is his pre-Adamic state, and it appears again in [Coming Up for Air](#), in the hidden fishing pool with the huge trout. The dreams are a key to the deeper meaning of *1984*, and to the lunacy of this projected world which is even more sinister than has been perceived. The truth is that Winston Smith has been designed as a victim of his society and his Party from childhood; he is marked down years before we meet him at the beginning of the book, on that day when he sets his will against that of the Party and, on April 4, 1984, writes in his diary: DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER!

Seven years prior to that date, Winston had dreamed that he was in a dark room and that someone had said to him: "We shall meet again in the place where there is no darkness." And that someone was O'Brien. It is clear that Orwell intended his readers to perceive that Winston has been under surveillance for at least that long. It may be, in the highly efficient madness of 1984, that O'Brien, one of the society's most important men, has had no other job than to be a sort of "project officer" in charge of Winston's entrapment, torture, and repentance. To be the project officer of Socrates would have been a full-time job in ancient Athens. It is O'Brien himself who explains to Winston in the torture chamber why such pains are being taken with him. And there is a deep psychological tie between Winston and O'Brien, with sexual overtones transposed into power fantasies. Winston has a guilt neurosis implanted in his subconscious; his parents and his sister have "disappeared," and as he tells Julia, he believes that he was partly responsible for this, though he had been only a child at the time. In defiance of his surroundings, he comes to the intuitive belief that everything about his society is mad. They foresaw this, too. Finally, when Winston is arrested by the Thought Police, and O'Brien appears to him in prison, he, Winston, realizes that he has always known that O'Brien was an agent of the State. "You knew this, Winston," said O'Brien. "Don't deceive yourself. You did know it—you have always known it." And Winston reflects, even as the guard moves toward him with a rubber truncheon: "Yes, he saw now, he had always known it."

This, too, follows the classic criminological theory that the criminal commits his crime because he is seeking to be caught and punished: seeking, in other words, structure and order, and in Winston's case seeking simply communication. The most ingenious tortures are used on Winston; some of them, for example, based on his fear of rats, could only have been known if he had been the object of minute study. This he has been—a textbook case.

As for Winston's job—the rewriting of history in a minor office of the Ministry of Truth—it is absolute madness by any rational norm, that is, if there were rational norms in 1984 instead of antinorms. History is bunk, and Winston's creation of a Party hero, a Comrade Ogilvy, has its exact, almost uncanny parallel in the published diary of the Chinese Communist soldier, Lei Feng, passages of which were reprinted in the *New York Times* of April 7, 1963. Lei Feng is "a model for the youth of New China." He exists on the same evidence as Comrade Ogilvy and is more likely than not a fictional creation.

As for law, this instrument for the structuring of society is reversed in 1984. In that antiworld, there is no written law, and everything is, or can be, considered a crime at the pleasure of the State. The legal maxim *nulla poena sine lege* is completely reversed. All crimes are comprehended in one crime: thoughtcrime, which involves the religious offense (converted into political terms) of setting up one's will against that of Big Brother, in "an instant of rebellious pride." Thoughtcrime involves, not forbidden *acts*, but forbidden *thoughts*. The common law, or the civil law, takes no account of thoughts, other than tangentially in the doctrine of *mens rea* in the specific instance of the establishment of degrees of homicide or manslaughter. These regard only acts, while for the Party in a universe whose values are transposed, the act is unimportant; it is the prohibited thought which is the cardinal danger. When Winston confesses to all of the crimes it is possible to commit, including treason and murder, it makes no difference that the confession is objectively false. By willing these acts, he has done them.

If, finally, in 1984, Orwell was presenting a satiric antiuniverse, with the expressed political intention of alerting democracy to the perils of its only and coming alternative, totalitarianism, what is his norm? It is expressed most straightforwardly in three works: *Down and Out . . .*, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, and a little-known short history which he wrote in haste right after [World War II](#) and before 1984, a History of the English people. This last is particularly valuable because it was not colored by the wartime propaganda from which even Orwell was not immune (proving his point about the Two Minutes' Hate and its all-enfolding nature in 1984, if proof were needed). What is the special thing, he asks, which the English can contribute to the Western world? Simply their outstanding and—“by contemporary standards—highly original quality . . . their habit of *not killing one another*.” In other words, he holds up the possibility of communication not by the infliction of pain but by rational discourse.

Orwell's thought, in this same History, about the English language adds to what he was to say in *Politics and the English Language* and in the linguistic satire of 1984. English, he said, is peculiarly subject to jargons. And, as he always did, he made the jump from the quality of language to the morality of politics, concluding that “the temporary decadence of the English language is due, like so much else, to our anachronistic class system.” This is, he adds, one of the chief evils resulting “when the educated classes lose touch with the manual workers.” And we can foresee, at this juncture, where he will end, for these statements about language touch on his own deep desire to immerse himself in a class other than that “lower upper-middle class” into which he was born. One must have human contact, and the world, if one can no longer communicate through language but only through the infliction of suffering or the enduring of pain, is mad, because embraced pain is madness—or sainthood. For Orwell, it is madness. Orwell desired to communicate without smashing in faces with monkey wrenches, or goosestepping over the prostrate, in a world which he saw as that of an increasing, though at the same time a controlled, madness. It is easy to decry his vision, and, after all, he was desperately ill while writing 1984, which may have darkened his outlook. But there he is, an honest man at noonday with a candle, searching for his like, seeking rational discourse, and not finding it.

Source: Ralph A. Ransdell, “George Orwell and the Mad World: The Anti-Universe of ‘1984,’” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Autumn, 1967, pp. 544-53.

1984: Suggested Essay Topics

Part 1, Chapter 1

1. Discuss the omnipresent posters of Big Brother in terms of his physical appearance as well as the phrase “Big Brother Is Watching You.” What does the caption imply about the society in which Winston Smith lives? Are these implications supported by evidence from Chapter 1?
2. Discuss the three party slogans and what each statement implies about this society. What does the public's easy acceptance of these mottos suggest about the populace at this stage of the story?

Part 1, Chapter 2

1. Examine the ways in which the Party makes itself stronger by influencing the youth of Oceania. Discuss the daily lives of the Parsons' children. What are their favorite games? How do they like to dress? What seems to be their attitude toward thoughtcrime?
2. Discuss Winston's need to continue his diary despite the obvious implications of capture and punishment.

Part 1, Chapter 3

1. Describe the circumstances surrounding the death of Winston's mother. What are his conflicting emotions? Tell why her death is doubly tragic, in view of societal changes since Winston's childhood.

2. Discuss the implications of Winston's dreams as acts of thoughtcrime.

Part 1, Chapters 4 and 5

1. Discuss the function of the Ministry of Truth. What is ironic about its title? Explain what Winston does there and how he feels about his work. Explain how the creation of Comrade Ogilvy supports the Party motto.

2. How would you explain both Parsons' and Syme's acceptance of obvious propaganda? Discuss the reasons.

Part 1, Chapters 6 and 7

1. The Party's influence on marriage and family life has been profound. What is the Party's official position on marriage and children? To what extent was Katharine affected by this position?

2. How does the Party acknowledge that the sexual instinct may not always be controlled? Evaluate Winston's feelings about his visit to the prostitute.

Part 1, Chapter 8

1. Explore Winston's attempts to hold on to the past. Tell why his conversation with the old man only increases his frustrations.

2. What does the upstairs room at Charrington's shop mean to Winston? Why does he buy the paperweight? How might this action be interpreted symbolically?

Part 2, Chapter 1

1. From the beginning, the circumstances surrounding this love affair suggest its doom. Explain how Winston first learns of Julia's interest in him. Detail their difficulties in arranging a meeting. Why can they not meet in the open? Why had Winston initially distrusted Julia, and why do his feelings change?

2. Discuss Winston's fearing Julia while at the same time wanting to help her because she is a human being.

Part 2, Chapter 2

1. Orwell makes use of several symbols here, especially those occurring in Winston's dream of the Golden Country. List and explain the common elements in the dream and in Winston and Julia's first sexual encounter. Focus especially on the landscape, the girl's gesture, and the thrush as symbols.

2. Explain how the establishment of a relationship between Winston and Julia has many levels of meaning—personal, political, etc.

Part 2, Chapter 3

1. Orwell has placed major emphasis on the character of Julia in this chapter. Evaluate her statement that she is "not clever." What evidence refutes this statement?

2. What does Julia's position on Party doctrine reveal? How does this position contrast with Winston's views?

Part 2, Chapter 4

1. The coral paperweight becomes a major symbol in this novel. When Julia asks about the paperweight, how does Winston explain its significance? What has the paperweight come to symbolize to Winston himself? Give evidence to support the fact that the room, like the paperweight, has become a sanctuary or refuge for Winston and Julia.

2. Discuss Winston's reaction to the peasant woman's song. What is ironic about its source? What additional qualities of the peasant woman does Winston admire?

Part 2, Chapter 5

1. As the novel progresses, we see several physical changes in Winston. Describe these changes, and explain why Orwell believes they are happening. Contrast these changes and Winston's overall delight in the affair with the increasing mood of hatred as the preparations for Hate Week continue.

2. Contrast Winston's and Julia's attitudes toward Party doctrine, rebellion, and Big Brother. Tell why it is unlikely that Winston and Julia will ever successfully rebel.

Part 2, Chapter 6

1. In many respects, O'Brien is the most important character in the novel, although at this point Orwell has not characterized him with the same depth as either Winston or Julia. On what pretense does O'Brien approach Winston? What inferences suggest that O'Brien might be less than honest? What concrete evidence does Winston have that a Brotherhood does exist?

2. What is foreshadowed by the chilling sensation Winston feels as he talks with O'Brien? Besides fear, what other emotions might have provoked these sensations?

Part 2, Chapter 7

1. Orwell interweaves the themes of betrayal and hope in this critical chapter. Discuss how Winston has arrived at his conclusion that the hope for the future lies in the proles. What has Winston learned about universal human emotions from his dreams? What belief dominates Winston and Julia's belief that they will not betray one another?

2. Discuss the additional insights into his mother's feelings for her family that Winston gains from his latest dreams of her disappearance.

Part 2, Chapter 8

1. How Winston so easily accepts O'Brien as a political conspirator is a problem for readers who accept his intelligence and intuitiveness. Analyze the reasons for Winston's willingness to believe in O'Brien. What details imply that O'Brien is not what he seems?

2. Discuss the implications of the recurring phrase "place where there is no darkness," versus O'Brien's statement that Winston will "always be in the dark."

Part 2, Chapter 9

1. What effect does the book have on Winston? What does he learn from reading it? What is the unanswered question? What does he learn about himself?

2. What is Julia's interest in the book? In view of the way Orwell has developed her character, are you surprised by her reaction? Why or why not?

Part 2, Chapter 10

1. Many of the developments in this chapter revolve around Winston's newly-formed acceptance of the universality of all people. Explain how Winston comes to that realization. How does the sight and sound of the prole woman affect Winston? Why does Winston believe that the future lies with the proles?

2. Tell how the events in this chapter are an extension of the "Big Brother Is Watching You" motif.

Part 3, Chapter 1

1. In this chapter we finally learn the full meaning of the recurrent phrase, “We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness.” Explain the literal interpretation of this phrase. How might the phrase be interpreted symbolically? Under what circumstances was the phrase introduced early in the novel?
2. What is ironic about the function of the Ministry of Love?

Part 3, Chapter 2

1. The focus is on O’Brien in these chapters. Explain what Orwell is saying about the power-hungry through him. What character traits does O’Brien possess? Why does he claim to enjoy talking to Winston? Why do you think he allows Winston to question him?
2. Contrast O’Brien’s definition of “reality” with that of Winston. What do you think is the foundation of each man’s belief?

Part 3, Chapter 3

1. Man’s inhumanity to his fellow man is a central element of the theme as the effects of Winston’s torture begin to make themselves known. What does O’Brien tell Winston about the history behind man’s suffering? What is the foundation of the Party’s philosophy?
2. Describe Winston’s physical state. What words and phrases are suggestive of death? Explain why O’Brien seems to take pleasure in Winston’s deterioration.

Part 3, Chapters 4 and 5

1. Describe Winston’s physical state in comparison to his emotional state. Suggest reasons for his dreams and constant lethargy as he begins his recovery.
2. Room 101 as a symbol of the thing most feared has remained a mystery to this point. What is in Room 101? In what way do the events occurring in Room 101 relate to the concept of the mind as a shaper of reality? What earlier chapter foreshadowed the events that transpire here? Explain.

Part 3, Chapter 6

1. As Winston sits at the Chestnut Tree Cafe sipping his gin, we are reminded of the unfortunate Syme who had been vaporized some time before. Based on previous descriptions of Syme, what most likely will happen to Winston? Evaluate Julia’s belief that “They can’t get inside you” in light of the conclusion.
2. Cite examples to prove that life goes on as usual in Oceania after Winston’s defeat. What does Orwell imply about the fate of others who might try to rebel against the Party?

1984: Sample Essay Outlines

These are topics on which you can write a substantial analytical paper. They are designed to test your understanding of major themes and details from this novel as a whole. Following the topics are outlines you can use as a starting point for writing an analytical paper.

• Topic #1

The theme of betrayal is a dominant thread running throughout this novel. Give examples of characters and events that contribute to Winston’s final self-betrayal. Make it clear that these examples intensify the novel’s overall mood of loneliness and alienation.

Outline

I. Thesis statement: Orwell explores various kinds of betrayal, including self-betrayal, to heighten the mood of loneliness and alienation in *1984*.

II. Party intolerance of betrayal to its ideology

A. Indoctrination of children to Party policy

B. Denouncement

C. Role of the Thought Police

D. Extermination

E. Room 101

III. Individual characters' betrayal of one another

A. Charrington's betrayal of Winston and Julia

B. Parsons' betrayal by his children

C. Ampleforth's betrayal by his work

D. O'Brien's betrayal of Winston

IV. The hope symbolized by Winston and Julia's love affair

A. The sanctuary of Charrington's room

B. The lovers' definition of betrayal

C. Winston's betrayal of Julia

D. Julia's admittance to betraying Winston

V. Self-betrayal

A. Winston's capitulation to the Party

B. Implications of Winston's defeat

VI. Overall pessimism of the conclusion

• **Topic #2**

Orwell uses the recurrent motif of the dream to reveal background, develop character, and foreshadow key events. Analyze these dreams for their implications.

Outline

I. Thesis statement: Orwell uses the dream, a recurrent motif, as a mechanism to reveal background, develop character, and foreshadow events.

II. The Golden Country

A. Part I, Chapter 2

B. Part II, Chapter 2

C. Common symbols and significance

III. The sinking ship

A. Part I, Chapter 2

B. Part II, Chapter 7

C. Interpretation as a key to Winston's mother's disappearance

IV. "The place where there is no darkness"

A. Introduction of the dream with O'Brien as its speaker

B. The nightmarish wall of darkness

C. Literal interpretation of the dream

D. Significance of the rats

• **Topic #3**

That *1984* is a satire on totalitarian states such as Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia and a warning to the West is one of the commonly accepted interpretations of the novel. Prove that this is so by showing that Orwell did create a complete, repressive totalitarian state in Oceania.

Outline

I. Thesis statement: Orwell's *1984* attacks the totalitarianism of the East while warning the West of its consequences.

II. Party ideology

- A. One-party system
- B. Hierarchical structure—Big Brother as leader
- C. Total control of society
- D. Party's motive as explained by O'Brien

III. Monitoring as an effort to eliminate insurrection

- A. Thought Police
- B. Telescreens
- C. Hidden microphones
- D. Passport checks
- E. Vaporization
- F. Room 101

IV. Control of mass communication

- A. Function of the Ministry of Truth
- B. Winston's job at the Ministry of Truth
- C. Ampleforth's function as poet
- D. Syme's work on Newspeak
- E. Constant announcements on telescreen
- F. Party motto—control of the past

V. Examples from History

- A. Stalin's Russia
- B. Hitler's Germany

• **Topic #4**

The paperweight Winston purchases at Charrington's shop takes on several meanings before its final destruction during Winston's arrest. Explain Winston's motive for buying the paperweight as well as its symbolic interpretation as it changes throughout the novel.

Outline

I. Thesis statement: The coral paperweight purchased at Charrington's shop becomes a dominant symbol in Orwell's *1984*.

II. Purchase of the paperweight

- A. Significance of Charrington's shop as the setting
- B. Winston's motive for its purchase

III. Interpretation as a symbol

- A. Relic of the past
- B. Sanctuary of the room
- C. Beauty of the affair, symbol of hope

1984: Compare and Contrast

- **1948:** West Berlin, Germany, is blockaded by the Soviets. The Americans begin an airlift to help the stranded Berliners.

1984: The Berlin wall, built in 1961 to keep East Germans from defecting to the West, remains in place.

Today: East and West Germany are reunified, after the Berlin wall was taken down in 1990.

- **1948/49:** Mao Tse-tung battles Chiang Kai-shek and his nationalist forces, finally defeating them in 1949 and establishing a totalitarian communist regime.

1984: [China](#) has survived the severe cultural purging of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. Opened to the West in the 1970s because of President Nixon's visit in 1972, China is now trading with the West and incorporating some small democratic and economic reforms.

Today: In 1989, students demanding greater economic and civil rights reforms protested in Tiananmen Square in Beijing and were gunned down by Chinese troops. China continues to trade with the West, but its democratic movement has been slowed considerably.

- **1948/49:** In September, 1949, President Truman announces that Russia, too, has the atom bomb, having developed the technology on its own.

1984: In 1991 the [Cold War](#) continues as the arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States escalates.

Today: On December 8, 1987, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev sign an agreement to dismantle all 1,752 U.S. and 859 Soviet nuclear missiles within a 300 to 3,400-mile range. In 1991 the former Soviet Republic breaks up. American investors are helping the Soviets establish new businesses as the Soviets concentrate their attention on revamping their economy.

- **1949:** There are one million television sets in the United States and two dozen TV stations. There will be ten million TV sets by 1951, fifty million by 1959.

1984: Eighty-five million U.S. households own a television set. Cable television reaches almost half of those households. Computers start to become a household product in the United States with approximately 13% or 516,750 computers owned by consumers.

Today: Ninety-eight percent of U.S. households (95 million homes) own a color television set, 28 percent own three or more televisions, 65 percent have cable access. New TV technology on the horizon includes high-definition television. In 1995, over three million people owned a personal computer. Use of a vast computer network, called the Internet, which originated in the 1960s and connects users from over 160 countries to each other via electronic mail, exploded during the 1990s with an estimated count of 20 to 30 million users in mid-1995.

1984: Topics for Further Study

- Explain how history is distorted and hidden from the citizens of Oceania. What is the result?
- Discuss how Newspeak works to alter the expression of thoughts in *1984*. Give examples from today's society of institutions and leaders that have used language to distort reality.
- Explain Winston's feelings about the proletariat, its past, present, and future.

1984: Media Adaptations

- *1984* (1984), a very fine adaptation of George Orwell's infamous novel, *1984*, by director Michael Kadford, features John Hurt and Richard Burton in his final screen performance.

1984: What Do I Read Next?

- [Animal Farm](#) (1945) was George Orwell's 1945 fable about the inevitable course of all revolutions. In it, a group of animals revolt against the farmer who is their master and set up their own form of government. The most intelligent animals, the pigs, are in charge, and hopes are high when the animals write their own bill of animal rights. However, over time, these rights are eroded as the pigs begin changing the rules.
- [Brave New World](#) by [Aldous Huxley](#) (1931) influenced Orwell's own futuristic novel, *1984*. Huxley's totalitarian state, which exists in London six hundred years in the future, is less grim than Orwell's, but its inhabitants are as powerless and oppressed as the citizens of Oceania. Huxley's characterization and prose is less sophisticated than Orwell's, but his novel is funny and fascinating. The inhabitants of his society are controlled from before birth by a handful of elite rulers with sophisticated technology. When a primitive person, the Savage, from outside the society is introduced, he confronts the shallow values of the citizens.
- *This Perfect Day* by Ira Levin (1970) is another futuristic novel about a totalitarian society with very different values from that of contemporary society. As in *Brave New World*, citizens dull their pain and fears through drugs and are genetically very similar. Those who have genetic differences have a greater tendency to be dissatisfied with the pacified society, which is controlled by a huge computer that dispenses the mood-altering drugs.
- [The Handmaid's Tale](#) by [Margaret Atwood](#) (1985) is the story of a woman named Offred, who lives in the Republic of Gilead, an oppressive society of the future in which women's roles are severely limited.
- [Harrison Bergeron](#), a satirical story by [Kurt Vonnegut](#) was inspired by Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World*. Harrison lives in a totalitarian state in the future. He is very intelligent—not an advantage in this society—so to “correct” this “defect” and allow Harrison to be as mediocre and middle-of-the-road as his fellow citizens, doctors plan to perform brain surgery. However, Harrison is whisked away by an elite group that secretly controls all of society and given a choice: join the rulers and disappear from society for good or be lobotomized.
- [We](#) by Russian writer Yevgeny Zamyatin (1924) influenced George Orwell's *1984*. It, too, is a dystopian novel set in the future, in this case the twenty-sixth century, and features a totalitarian state. This society, called OneState, is ruled by a Big Brother-type dictator called simply Benefactor, who has scheduled the day of every citizen down to the very minute. The narrator, D-503 (all the citizens have numbers, not names), is the designer and builder of a space probe called INTEGRAL and is waiting for the day when he finally has the

Great Operation: the lobotomy the government performs to erase the last vestige of each individual's humanity: the imagination.

1984: Bibliography and Further Reading

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1984: Pictures

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