

# George Orwell's *1984*

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Please Silence Cell Phones

# Biography (1903-1950)

- Born in India; scholarship student
- Worked as MP in Burma
- Quit government service to become a writer
- Lived among poor and wrote about it
- Miners; gave up on Capitalism; supported Democratic Socialism
- Covered the Spanish civil war; Watched rise of Fascism and Totalitarian States
- Animal Farm 1945
- *1984*, 1949

# Dystopia

- Anti-Utopia
- Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, 1516
- H.G. Wells, *Men Like Gods*, 1923
- Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, 1934

# Plot Summary

- Winston Smith: Big Brother, the Party, and Totalitarian Society; Telescreens; Diary
- Ministry of Truth: O'Brien; Girl; Brotherhood and Emmanuel Goldstein
- Proles; Bar and the Past; Antique Shop; Sees Girl
- Note: "I love you"; Julia; Sex and Love as Taboo; Love affair grows, Hatred of Party; Message from O'Brien

# Plot continued

- Visit O'Brien: Join Brotherhood; reads Goldstein's manifesto in the room; Police capture them; Mr. Charrington is Thought Police
- Ministry of Love: O'Brien also a party spy; Brainwashing and Interrogation; Room 101;
- Confront your Worst Fear; Cage around head and Rats; Smith Caves and begs that they do it to Julia not him;
- Giving her up is what they wanted; he is released and sees her but feels nothing; They both betrayed the other; In the end "he had won the victory over himself: He loved Big Brother."

# Family and Children

- Junior Spy Group based on Hitler's Youth Group
- Children are spies even against their parents
- In order to exert total control this most basic human connection of parent-child must be severed
- Total infiltration of one's most intimate thoughts if you can't trust even your family
- Purpose of sex is procreation for the State

# Rewriting History

- If someone is vaporized then they no longer exist; all records involving them must be edited
- If someone who was a loyal party member becomes a rebel, things they said and did, stories praising them must be rewritten
- Winston is aware of this; but what he wants is some proof of this; He had a document
- The importance of the independence of History and the Protection of the Press

# (Mis)Information

- They are getting less food, but the official records pretend they are getting more
- 30 grams of chocolate to 20; by the next day everyone acts as if 20 is more than they used to get!
- Razor Blades
- War and the enemy
- Dictionary rewritten to include fewer words; without words you cannot have thoughts

# Doublethink

- Doublethink is the ability to think two contradictory ideas simultaneously
- War is Peace
- Freedom is Slavery

# War

- War is endless
- In the middle of a speech the speaker clarifies that Oceania has never been at war with Eurasia but always with Eastasia
- All the records must be changed
- The three powers keep involved in border war to distract populace and maintain status quo for the elite

# Prison in Ministry of Love

- Poet who left "God" in a Rudyard Kipling poem
- Neighbor, who is turned in by children
- While being tortured Winston admits that O'Brien is holding up five fingers although he knows it is only four
- He comes to love O'Brien for being able to make the pain cease

# Questions

- W. asks about Julia and is told she betrayed him immediately
- W. asks about Big Brother and if he exists and is told that Winston does not exist
- The Party seeks power; could they change the stars or universe? O'Brien answers: Yes, in people's minds, and that is all that matters.

# Room 101

- W. shouts out Julia's name over and over
- He denies Big Brother and claims to hate the Party
- He is told he must not only accept BB but Love him
- He is taken to room 101
- He must betray the one he loves in order to love the one he hates
- Finally he succumbs to doublethink

# 1984 in Retrospect

- Most contemporary critics are quick to say that Orwell's vision did not come true; Democratic Capitalism won the Cold War
- Yet, many of the technological means of control in Oceania are even more available today
- Ability to track our Phone Calls; Banking; Shopping; Computer Access; Books and Library Use (Patriot Act)
- National ID Cards or Chips; Satellite Tracking of Prisoners or Children
- Consolidation of Media into a few large Companies
- Government agencies creating News as newsrooms are cut
- Fear of Questioning the Government and the War on Terror in particular
- Old Enemies, new Friends: Iraq and France

# Summary

- America in 2008 is not a totalitarian state
- Totalitarianism is largely on the defensive, but it still looms in countries that we are now allied with like China
- A threat to our own security quickly led us to use our technology to spy on ourselves
- 1984 is an important work as a reminder about the need to be vigilant against Doublethink and Groupthink and Doublespeak
- Maintaining a free, vigorous, and independent Press should be a concern for all Americans