

BIG BROTHER



**IS WATCHING
YOU**

WAR IS PEACE



Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength.



1984

by George Orwell

The World of Nineteen Eighty-Four

The novel focuses on Winston Smith, who stands, seemingly alone, against the corrupted reality of his world: hence the work's original working name of *The Last Man in Europe*.

Although the storyline is unified, it could be described as having three parts:

- The first part deals with the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as seen through the eyes of Winston;
- the second part deals with Winston's forbidden sexual relationship with Julia and his eagerness to rebel against the Party;
- the third part deals with Winston's capture and torture by the Party.

The world described in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* parallels the Stalinist Soviet Union and Hitler's Nazi Germany. There are thematic similarities: the betrayed-revolution, with which Orwell famously dealt in *Animal Farm*; the subordination of individuals to "the Party"; and the rigorous distinction between inner party, outer party and everyone else.

Propaganda

There is also an extensive and institutional use of propaganda; again, this was found in the totalitarian regimes of Hitler and Stalin. Orwell may have drawn inspiration from the Nazis; compare the following quotes to how propaganda is used in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

Nazis

* “The broad mass of the nation ... will more easily fall victim to a big lie than to a small one.” — Adolf Hitler, in his 1925 book *Mein Kampf*.

* “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.” — Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels.

Nineteen Eighty-Four

* “Remember our boys on the Malabar front! And the sailors in the Floating Fortresses! Just think what they have to put up with.” (Part 1 - Chapter 3)

* “The rocket bombs which fell daily on London were probably fired by the government of Oceania itself, 'just to keep the people frightened'.” (Part 2 - Chapter 5)

* “The key-word here is blackwhite. Like so many Newspeak words, this word has two mutually contradictory meanings. Applied to an opponent, it means the habit of impudently claiming that black is white, in contradiction of the plain facts.” (Part 2 - Chapter 9)

* “To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed...” (Part 2 - Chapter 9)

The Party

"The ideal set up by the Party was something huge, terrible and glittering—a world of steel and concrete of monstrous marching and terrifying weapons—a nation of warriors and fanatics, marching forward in perfect unity, all thinking the same thoughts and shouting the same slogans, perpetually working, fighting, triumphing, persecuting—three hundred million people all with the same face. The reality was decaying, dingy cities where underfed people shuffled to and fro in leaky shoes, in patched-up nineteenth-century houses that smelt always of cabbage and bad lavatories. He seemed to see a vision of London, vast and ruinous, city of a million dustbins, and mixed up with it was a picture of Mrs Parsons, a woman with a lined face and wispy hair, fiddling helplessly with a blocked wastepipe." (Part 1 - Chapter 7)

Orwell created a world in which:

- citizens have no right to a personal life or to personal thought.
- Leisure and other activities are controlled through a system of strict mores.
- Sexual pleasure is discouraged .
- sex is retained only for the purpose of procreation, although artificial insemination (ARTSEM) is more encouraged.

The mysterious head of government is the omniscient, omnipotent, beloved Big Brother, or "B.B.", usually displayed on posters with the slogan "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU". However, it is never quite clear whether Big Brother truly exists, or whether he is a fictitious leader created as a focus for the love of the Party which the Thought Police and others are there to engender (it is possible that he is real, but we — and the book's characters — never know for certain). It is perfectly possible that the conflict between Big Brother and Emmanuel Goldstein is in fact a conflict either between two fictitious or dead leaders, whose true purpose is to personify both the Party and its opponents.

Goldstein is said to be the leader of the Brotherhood, a vast underground anti- Party fellowship. The reader never truly finds out whether the Brotherhood exists or not, but the implication is that Goldstein is either entirely fictitious or was eliminated long ago. Party members are expected to vilify Goldstein, the Brotherhood and whichever superstate Oceania is currently warring via the daily "Two Minutes Hate."

The Slogans

The three slogans of the Party, on display everywhere, are:

- * **WAR IS PEACE**
- * **FREEDOM IS SLAVERY**
- * **IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH**

Each of these is of course either contradictory or the opposite of what we normally believe, and in 1984, the world is in a state of constant war, no one is free, and everyone is ignorant.

The slogans are analysed in Goldstein's book. Though logically insensible, the slogans do embody the Party. For instance, through constant "war", the Party can keep domestic peace; when freedom is brought about, the people are enslaved to it, and the ignorance of the people is the strength of the Party. If (like Winston) anybody becomes too smart, they are whisked away for fear of rebellion. Through their constant repetition, the terms become meaningless, and the slogans become axiomatic. This type of misuse of language, and the deliberate self-deception with which the citizens are encouraged to accept it, is called doublethink. One essential consequence of doublethink is that the Party can rewrite history with impunity, for "The Party is never wrong." The ultimate aim of the Party is, according to O'Brien, to gain and retain full power over all the people of Oceania; he sums this up with perhaps the most distressing prophecy of the entire novel: If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face — for ever.

Ministries of Oceania

The Ministry of Love

Newspeak: Miniluv. The agency responsible for the identification, monitoring, arrest, and torture of dissidents, real or imagined. Based on Winston's experience there at the hands of O'Brien, the basic procedure is to pair the subject with his or her worst fear for an extended period, eventually breaking down the person's mental faculties and ending with a sincere embrace of the Party by the brainwashed subject. The Ministry of Love differs from the other ministry buildings in that it has no windows in it at all. The ministries' names are ironic — the Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Plenty: starvation, the Ministry of Truth: lies, and the Ministry of Love: torture. However, from the perspectives of the Oceanians who accept the propaganda, these names are accurate.

The Ministry of Plenty

Newspeak: Miniplenty.
Responsible for rationing and controlling food and goods

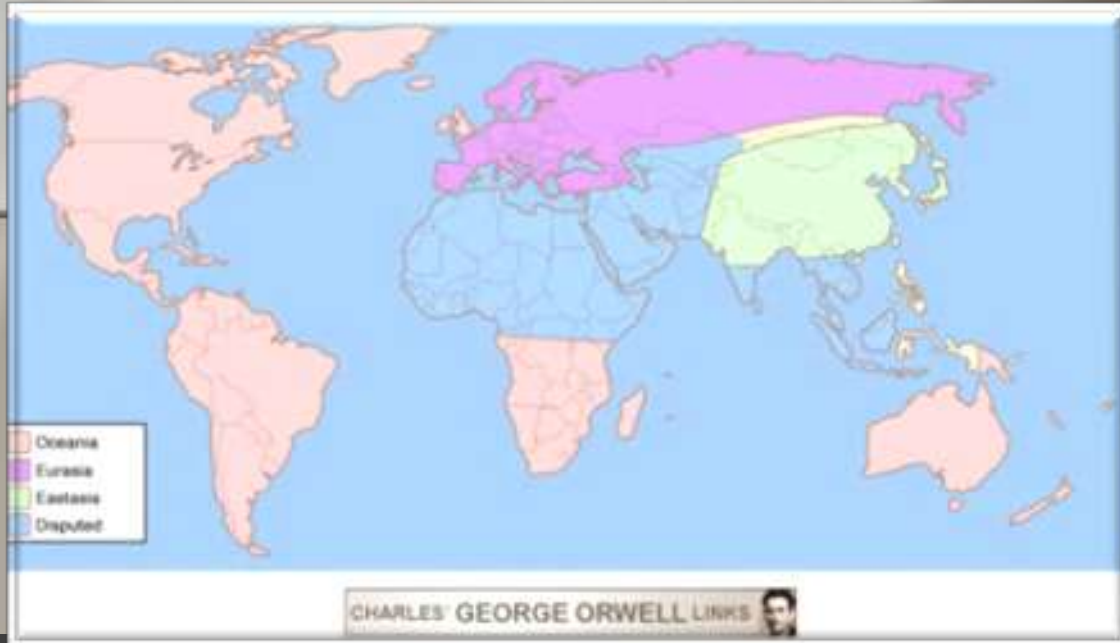
The Ministry of Peace

Newspeak: Minipax.
Concerns itself with conducting Oceania's perpetual wars.

The Ministry of Truth

Newspeak: Minitrue.
The propaganda arm of Oceania's regime. Minitrue controls information: political literature, the Party organization, and the telescreens. Winston Smith works for the Records Department (RecDep) of Minitrue, "rectifying" historical records and newspaper articles to make them conform to Big Brother's most recent pronouncements, thus making everything that the Party says true.

Political geography



The world is controlled by three functionally similar totalitarian superstates engaged in perpetual war with each other:

- * Oceania (ideology: Ingsoc or English Socialism),
- * Eurasia (ideology: Neo-Bolshevism),
- * Eastasia (ideology: Obliteration of the Self, usually rendered as "Death worship").

In terms of the political map of the late 1940s when the book was written, Oceania covers Britain, Ireland, Australia, Polynesia, and the Americas, Eastasia corresponds to China, Japan, Korea, and northern India. Eurasia corresponds to the Soviet Union and Continental Europe. That Great Britain (and Ireland) is in Oceania rather than in Eurasia is commented upon in the book as a historical anomaly. North Africa, the Middle East, southern India, and South East Asia form a disputed zone which is used as a battlefield and source of slaves by the three powers. Goldstein's book explains that the ideologies of the three states are the same, but it is imperative to keep the public ignorant of that. The population is led to believe that the other two ideologies are detestable. London, the novel's setting, is the capital of the Oceanian province of Airstrip One, the former Great Britain.

The war

The world of Nineteen Eighty-Four is built around a never-ending war involving the book's three superstates, with two allied powers fighting against the third. But as Goldstein's book explains, each superstate is so strong it cannot be defeated even when faced with the combined forces of the other two powers. The allied states occasionally split with each other and new alliances are formed. Each time this happens, history is rewritten to convince the people that the new alliances were always there, using the principles of doublethink.

In the first half of the novel, Oceania is allied with Eastasia, and Oceania's forces are combating Eurasia's troops in northern Africa.

- Mid-way through the book, the alliance breaks apart and Oceania, newly allied with Eurasia, begins a campaign against Eastasian forces in India.
- During "Hate Week" (a week of extreme focus on the evilness of Oceania's enemies, the purpose of which is to stir up patriotic fervor in support of the Party), Oceania and Eurasia are enemies once again.

The war itself never takes place in the territories of the three powers; the actual fighting is conducted in the disputed zone stretching from Morocco to Australia, and in the unpopulated Arctic wastes.

Conventional military technology is little different from that used in the Second World

War. Some advances have been made, such as replacing bomber aircraft with "rocket bombs", and using immense "floating fortresses" instead of battleships, but such advances appear to be rare. As the purpose of the war is to destroy manufactured products and thus keep the workers busy, obsolete and wasteful technology is deliberately used in order to perpetuate useless fighting.

Goldstein's book hints that, in fact, there may not actually be a war. The only view of the outside world presented in the novel is through Oceania's media, which has an obvious tendency to exaggerate and even fabricate "facts".

Sexual repression

The Party imposes anti-eroticism on its members (sponsoring the Junior Anti-Sex-League, etc.), since sexual attachments might diminish exclusive loyalty to the Party. In the novel, Julia describes party fanaticism as "sex gone sour;" Winston, aside from during his affair with Julia, suffers from an ankle inflammation, alluding to Oedipus Rex and symbolizing an unhealthy repression of the sex drive. Orwell supposed that the sufficient mental energy for prolonged worship requires the repression of a vital instinct, such as the sex instinct. This possibly alludes to the restrictions on sexuality imposed by authorities (civil, political, religious or otherwise, such as in the German National-socialist regime), be it consciously or by selective pressures on doctrine.

Welcome to
1984

La guerra è pace
La libertà è schiavitù
L'ignoranza è forza