

# George orwell's 1984 vision of the future

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George Orwell wrote his famous novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* between the years 1945 and 1948. Although the title is 'Nineteen Eighty-Four', the novel wasn't meant to be a detailed description of the exact year of 1984 but a critical, futuristic novel. In Orwell's criticism of a perfect society, his novel became known as one of the greatest anti-utopian novels of all time.

Although the novel starts out as a story of a neurotic man, it quickly turns into a protest against a totalitarian government. The novel seems to be a satire at the start, similar to novel *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, but quickly the reader will discover that it is not wholly satire. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not only criticism of what Orwell saw happening in his country with the coming of English Socialism, but a warning of the consequences of contemporary government actions and what they were threatening to cause.

Perhaps the novel seems so bleak because it was written in the conditions and environment in which Orwell lived in 1948, straight after the Second World War. Perhaps people would be more comfortable with the novel if they could forget the thought of the possibility of the prediction becoming real. In year 1984 it seemed to be a huge trend to discuss which aspects of the novel had come true, although the title of the novel was only acquired by switching the last two numbers of the publishing year the other way round.

The most obvious feature in the novel that existed -and still exists for example in Cuba - is the totalitarian government. Although Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Nazi Germany obviously gave the model for Oceania, Orwell and no-one else in the end of the 1940s knew what exactly was happening inside these states. For example the truth of Stalin's government came up only after 1952 when the head of the country died. KGB could be

linked to the Thought Police in the sense of "vaporising" people who were against the leader mysteriously during the night. In this sense, Orwell interpreted in his novel quite well the secret actions inside the totalitarian government.

Also Orwell's view of television seems to have partly "come true". The television was a quite new invention in the end of the 1940s when *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published, and therefore Orwell developed the idea of an unswitchable TV, telescreen, for his novel. Although the modern TV's can be switched off and the Party members can't observe us through them, Orwell wouldn't probably have been surprised by the fact that in 1984 the average American household spent over 7 hours in front of the television every evening. The number is even greater for those families who happen to have a cable TV.

As Winston in the beginning of the novel is a middle-aged man living alone, and working only because everyone has to, his position resembles the one of a modern, marginalised man. He can't remember his childhood or even his mother clearly. It is possible to see here one of Orwell's insights more, even though it is quite unlikely that he actually predicted in 1948 that marginalisation would become a problem fifty years later.

The theme of Newspeak and the destruction of language was also one aspect of the future that George Orwell saw in advance. Although the governments of today are not trying to eliminate more and more words from our vocabularies in order to eliminate our ability to unite or conspire against them, the language is changing. Words that sound as if they were the purest

Newspeak already exist, for example the word 'infomercial' (information + commercial) could be straight from Oceania. Also new words come to existence at the same time when old words almost disappear. The disappearing, or forgotten words are usually names of old objects that are not used anymore. New technology in turn brings new products that need new names.

No other work of the 20th century has inspired people with such love of liberty and hatred of tyranny. Because of the many predictions of the future that Orwell made over fifty years ago and which later on have actually "come true", Nineteen Eighty-Four remains one of the great novels of the previous century.