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[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Glenn Devries Dr. Smith ENG 1302 4/24/08 George Orwell: The Man Behind 1984 Why did you choose George Orwell as your author to research? I chose George Orwell as my author to research because I was interested in learning more about the man behind the novel "1984." 1984 is a deep novel that is about three totalitarian nations that are always at war with each other in disputed territories so that they can maintain "peace" at their home territory. The three nations are Oceania, Eurasia, and East Asia. The government's control over their country and populace makes Soviet Russia look like a democracy. The main character and narrator, Winston Smith lives in Oceania and he works for the Ministry of Truth that edits historical records so they agree with what the government says. I do not know why the government even troubles itself to do that because 90-95% of the population cannot read books and the 5-10% that can are the ones running the country. Overall, I wanted to know what in George Orwell's life inspired him to write the novel 1984 and what experiences in his life helped him write 1984.

Who is George Orwell and what was his life like? George Orwell was the pen name of Eric Arthur Blair. Eric Blair was born on June 25, 1903 in Motihari, Bengal, in the then British colony of India (Pengelly). Although Eric Blair was born in India, Eric's mother, Ida, brought him to England at the age of one. Unfortunately, Eric "did not see his father again until 1907, when Richard visited England for three months before leaving again until 1912. (Pengelly)" Eric had an older sister, Marjorie, and a younger sister, Avril. "At the age of five, Blair entered the Anglican parish school of Henley-on-Thames which he attended for two years before entering the prestigious St. Cyprian's school in

Sussex. Corporal punishment was common in the day and possibly a source of his initial resentment towards authority. (Beasley)" These sources of resentment of authority paved the way for Eric to write novels criticizing Stalinism in " Animal Farm" and totalitarianism in general in " 1984. " Eric did well enough at St. Cyprian's to earn scholarships to both Wellington and Eton colleges. " After a term at Wellington, Eric moved to Eton, where he was a King's Scholar from 1917 to 1921. (Pengelly)" After finishing his studies at Eton, Eric was unable to obtain a university scholarship and his family unable to pay for his tuition, so he joined the Indian Imperial Police in Burma in 1922. " He came to hate imperialism, and when he returned to England on leave in 1927 he decided to resign and become a writer. (Smith)" He later moved to Paris in 1928 where his aunt lived, but his lack of success writing forced him to move back to England in 1929. Eric adopted his pen name in 1933, while writing for the New Adelphi. He chose a pen name that stressed his deep, lifelong affection for the English tradition and countryside: George is the patron saint of England, while the River Orwell in Suffolk was one of his most beloved English sites. " In December 1936, Orwell went to Spain to fight for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War against Francisco Franco's Nationalist uprising. Although he travelled alone to Spain, he became part of the Independent Labour Party contingent, a group of some 25 Britons who joined the militia of the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM). (Smith)" Although Eric saw that the current government of Spain was corrupt and hated the government for that reason, he wanted to fight against Francisco Franco because he hated Communism even more than a corrupt government. " By his own admission, Orwell joined the POUM rather

than the communist-run International Brigades by chance but his experiences, in particular his narrow escape from the communist suppression of the POUM in June 1937, made him sympathetic towards the POUM and turned him into a lifelong anti-Stalinist. (Smith)" During his military service however, Orwell was shot through the neck and nearly killed. " Back in the United Kingdom, Orwell supported himself by writing freelance reviews, mainly for the New English Weekly until he broke with it over its pacifism in 1940 and then mostly for Time and Tide and the New Statesman. He joined the Home Guard soon after the war began in 1941. (Smith)" Eric was later awarded the Defence medal for his service. " The wartime Ministry of Information, based at Senate House, was the inspiration for the Ministry of Truth in Nineteen Eighty-Four. (Smith)" The Ministry of Truth in 1984 is responsible for editing historical records so that " The Party" is always right. " In 1944, Orwell finished his anti-Stalinist allegory Animal Farm, which was published the following year with great critical and popular success. The royalties from Animal Farm were to provide Orwell with a comfortable income for the first time in his adult life. (Smith)" During most of Eric Blair's life he was poor which made him a socialist. Eric wrote " 1984" in 1948. He originally named the book " The Last Man in Europe" because the main character Winston Smith supposedly is the last man in Europe that believes in freedom, justice, and " real" peace. The peace that " The Party" provides through constant war but, is not really peace even though they call it peace. One of the three slogans of The Party is " War is Peace. (Orwell, 4)" He changed the title because his publisher said it would sell better if he changed it. " Orwell died in London at the age of 46 from tuberculosis, which he had

probably contracted during the period described in *Down and Out in Paris and London* in 1929. He was in and out of hospitals for the last three years of his life. Having requested burial in accordance with the Anglican rite, he was interred in All Saints' Churchyard, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire with the simple epitaph: Here lies Eric Arthur Blair, born June 25th, 1903, died January 21st, 1950. (Smith)" Beasley, Chris. *The Literature Network: Online classic literature, poems, and quotes. Essays & Summaries.* n. d. 19 Apr. 2008 .

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Why

does "1984" still have an impact even after 60 years after it was written and when the year 1984 has passed? 1984 has had such an impact because totalitarianism never changes. Totalitarian governments always do the same things to get their people to go along with what they want. Totalitarian governments who will do anything and everything to control its people and get the people to do what the government wants. One problem with totalitarian governments is that they can never destroy man's inner desire for freedom. Winston admits in 1984 that The Party "could not alter your feelings; for that matter you could not alter them yourself, even if you wanted to. (Watt)" Winston Smith knows that humans were not meant to live in fear from their government. Winston Smith knows that there are things worth fighting and dying for and freedom is one of them. 1984 has become a symbol for freedom and it also become a classic amongst its readers and

amazingly has “ sold over eleven million copies and has been translated into 23 different languages. (Rehnquist, 5)" Not only is 1984 a classic but, so is George Orwell’s “ Animal Farm. " Both “ Animal Farm" and 1984 “ have translated into more than sixty languages and have sold more than 40 million copies. (Myers, 6)" Not only has 1984 sold millions of copies Time Magazine ranked it as one of the “ Top 100 All Time Best Novels. " Time Magazine said “ When Smith is tempted by a beautiful resistance fighter into an act of rebellion, 1984 becomes something more: a strange, tragic, deeply sad love story. It is Orwell's triumph, and the century's misfortune, that 1984 is as prescient as it is pessimistic. (Time. com, 1)" Overall 1984 is one of the greatest novels written by one of the greatest authors, who was a much better author than Hemingway or Fitzgerald, of the 20th century. “ 1984 - ALL-TIME 100 Novels. " Rev. of 1984, by George Orwell. 1984 n. d.: 1-3. Time Magazine. n. d. . Myers, Jeffery. Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 2000. Rehnquist, William. “ 1984.. " Rev. of 1984, by George Orwell. n. d.: 1-8. Academic Search Complete. n. d. . Watt, Ian. “ Winston Smith: The Last Humanist, On “ Nineteen Eighty-Four. " Rev. of 1984, by George Orwell. Gale 2003: N. pag.

I have enjoyed researching and writing about George Orwell. I did not know that George Orwell was poor most of his life and the only real time where he was not poor was after he wrote “ Animal Farm. " As it usually happens with artists, George Orwell did not really become famous until after he died. 1984 is a great novel that will continue to inspire and impact its readers with its cry for freedom and justice. Although, George Orwell was against

Imperialism, Communism, and any other government that extended its purpose from helping its citizens to controlling its citizens; he was a Socialist. I think (I do not know if this is fact. It is just my personal opinion, hence the word “ think”.) that George Orwell believed in the socialism that was present during the Franklin Roosevelt era where there was a “ safety net” to help the poor, the same poor that George Orwell was apart of, and keep them on their feet. At least during Franklin Roosevelt era the Democratic Party actually represented the working class unlike today. Today the Democratic Party keeps promising things like health care for everyone and more Social Security that they are going to do even if it will plunge the government into an even deeper debt and that does not help anyone. The Democratic Party just seeks to say or do anything to get into or stay in power. The U. S. needs more than hope; we need action.