

Modern day issues in '1984' by george orwell

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



There exists a line that separates the world of fiction and the real-life society we live in. We seem to know to distinguish between the two worlds clearly through movies, television, or books with works of fiction such as superheroes, supernatural events, and mythical creatures. The novel named 1984 written by George Orwell is a fictional story that displays a world where the world is confined by war, governmental surveillance, and propaganda. Although it is a work of fiction, it fades the line that separates fiction from real-life with its issues and themes that apply to our world today. It seems that the two worlds are colliding as the manipulation of the media, persisting physical and mental stress and surveillance described by Orwell is also prevalent in the world we live in today. It may not be noticed, but Orwell's clever depiction of the public's influence in his book applies almost exactly to today.

Winston Smith lived in a country named Oceania that contained a single totalitarian dictator that his citizens call Big Brother. The country consists of a harsh application of constant propaganda to an extent where there is no turning back after its effects. To control the public's image of the country, "Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted...the past is falsified...no evidence ever remains". The idea of how the government and its citizens are altering what the public sees still exists today though in other forms such as social media, advertisements, and news. A social media app, Instagram is known for its negative impacts especially toward our teens through the unrealistic images it shares on body image, mental health, society, and more. Everyone is guilty of falsifying photos and texts that a British online newspaper named The

Independent says is linked to depression, anxiety, and bullying (Blair). When Winston is captured from being caught with loving Julia, he goes through extreme torture by O'Brien. Two plus two equals four, but "the Party says that it is not four but five", as this was one method that O'Brien used that brainwashed and "tortured [Winston] to the edge of lunacy".

As we are continuously met with society's false expectations or portrayals, people start to believe them. It is alike O'Brien attempting to "cure" Winston with information contrary to the truth. We are brainwashed by the depictions on the ideal body, self, and life that are not necessarily true.

The 1984 of today is happening right now. As more issues blow out in the world, the fires inside us are also burning. Inside and out, there is pain to encounter and overcome but many attempt to suppress it. Inside the Ministry of Love Winston is forced to learn, understand, and accept the ways of Big Brother. The physical and mental pain felt as if "his body was being wrenched out of shape, the joints were being slowly torn apart... He set his teeth and breathed hard through his nose, trying to keep silent". Despite the various forms of torture he encountered such as psychological manipulations, beatings, and starvation, they did not strip away Winston's spirit. He continues to protest against the sayings of O'Brien until the very end. This tolerance of pain during physical and mental struggles is all too common in our society today with political, social, or school as everyone learns to adapt and endure. However, this can also be negative with issues such as sexual abuse as Forbes Magazine shows that "many millions of women are being abused in the U. S. and beyond, and so many are turning a

blind eye, or worse, helping to support its continuation by not taking a stand to speak up or fight against it" (Caprino). To be able to fight for what you believe in is a powerful trait that many of us have today, as well as Winston Smith who tried to rebel. O'Brien asks him if he is prepared to sacrifice his life, sanity, country, and Julia and he is because they are "enemies of the Party. [They] disbelieve in the principles of Ingsoc... are thought criminals".

Sneaking behind his government to work against it led to suffering but it was what he stood for. We can see people speaking up against issues and opening up about their opinions on their society; their voices can clearly be heard online or on the streets. Having the courage to fight and the belief that change is possible is the key link between the themes Orwell portrayed and today's world. Although 1984 was written before the extensive modernization of the present, the systems of surveillance of today and of the book match. In Oceania, "it was terribly dangerous to let your thoughts wander when you were in any public place or within range of a telescreen. The smallest thing could give you away...to wear an improper expression on your face was itself a punishable offense. There was even a word for it in Newspeak: facecrime".

The Party's advanced forms of technology are found everywhere in order to keep their citizens under control. This intense surveillance is similar to today's social media, CCTV, and all types of computers with their possible spying abilities. However, whether it is useful or not is still debatable. The New York Times presents two different sides saying that "too much surveillance... is detrimental and leaves people without any privacy in

public.", or that " a society with cameras everywhere will make the world safer and hold criminals more accountable for their actions" (Bilton).

Moreover, Oceania's surveillance also extends to its people.

Winston and Julia were betrayed by a man named Mr. Charrington who rented them the room for their secret meetings. He was revealed as a person of deception when Mr. Charrington changed his appearance to show Winston that " for the first time in his life he was looking, at a member of the Thought Police". Winston mistakenly trusted this man, displaying how betrayal is hidden deep within Oceania by the Party. Surveillance is not only security cameras, cell phones, and social media, but the people all around us as well. Modern day is where technology meets human forces to create a massive system of surveillance together. The rich details presented in Orwell's 1984 seem to diminish the distinguishing of the separation of fiction and reality by connections with the media's forms of manipulation, perseverance through stress, and endless surveillance. It is a novel filled with issues and themes that continue to exist over time and outside of its fictional realm. George Orwell might as well have successfully predicted the future.