

One cannot escape
big brother



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One Cannot Escape Big Brother In 1984, by George Orwell, society is portrayed as having lost all traces of individuality, creative thought, and love and humanity. This " Negative Utopia" depicts the possibility of the future despair of the human race whilst warning readers of the dangers of totalitarianism. The overlying mood in 1984 is the bleakness of the future of the human race. The main character though, Winston Smith, is caught in this society that is dedicated to conformity with a mind full of intelligence, individuality, and rebellious thoughts. Winston is targeted by the government from the beginning because of his continual thoughtcrime as well as his rebellious actions with Julia. However, in a society as bleak and desolate as Orwell has depicted, Winston's actions against the Party and Big Brother were essentially futile. Throughout the novel, Winston believes that though society forces him to conform on the outside, he can still fight the system with his thoughts and by being with Julia in secret. He believes that his own individuality reveals that there is at least a small sliver of hope for humanity, but this is not so. Syme even questions Winston, " How could you have a slogan like 'freedom is slavery' when the concept of freedom has been abolished?" (pg. 47). There is so much moral decay within the Party, Winston is wasting his breath and energy by trying to bring down Big Brother; it is too great, and he is too small, despite how intelligent he may be. In Orwell's fiction society, there is no hope, no potential light for the future. Society is too far gone, as shown through aspects of life such as telescreens, Hate Week, the Hate Song, and Newspeak. The government has molded the people of Oceania's minds into the ideal citizen: unfeeling, lacking any creative thought, love, or uniqueness. The citizens who slip by and do possess these qualities will be vaporized at some point and Winston knows

this throughout the novel. Yet he still believes that in some way, he may be of help to the Brotherhood, even though he is not even sure of its existence. One thing that separated the government of 1984 from any modern day government is that when someone was a traitor, or made some attempt to overthrow the government, they were not punished, but rather "cured". In the novel, O'Brien, who is a symbol Big Brother, states, "We are not content with negative obedience, nor even with the most abject submission. When finally you surrender to us, it must be of your own free will. We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us: so long as he resists us we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul. We make him one of ourselves before we kill him." (pg. 318) This portrays how Big Brother essentially ensures its own success by turning their enemies into supporters of their cause rather than persecuting them. Winston had no chance to take down Big Brother because when he was caught, he would not even become a legacy, or a shining light for others to follow suit; he would become nonexistent, a changed man who would be taught to love Big Brother. By not voicing his true opinions about the Party, Winston would have continued to know the truth behind it. However, because he did, O'Brien and other Party members "cured" him, and molded his mind into what they wished it to be. By going against Big Brother, Winston became a clay mold of the ideal fascist citizen. Winston had no chance of being happy in the world set by Orwell. He was too intelligent to go through life without questioning Big Brother, and the irony exists in the fact that that was ultimately his intellectual demise. However, if Winston had just lived in acceptance of the

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fact that society was so horribly corrupt, and turned away from the atrocities of civilization, he would have been much better off. He would not have been tortured, he would not have had to experience the betrayal of O'Brien, and he would not have gained then lost Julia. In today's world, it is perhaps better to have loved and lost; but in Orwell's 1984, one never truly gained anything because Big Brother was always watching. Orwell says in the novel, "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever" (pg 271). No amount of rebellion could possibly stop this metaphorical boot from crushing humanity. Winston could have saved himself from a lifetime of even more hurt and despair if he had just kept to himself and turned away from the evils of Big Brother. After all, the slogan "Big Brother is watching you" (pg 2) was not just a saying for the people of Oceania: it was a sad truth. Thus, Winston would have been much more fortunate given the circumstances if he had not gone against the Party.