

The pen is mightier

Business



Language is a vital part of the world because it is not only practical, but necessary; it is not only good, but beautiful. Language creates world culture, provides the pleasure of creative writing, and shapes the media. It is the central and integral part of essentially everything around us. Without its abundance, our world would be bland and our minds would be blank. While Joseph Campbell's explanation of archetypes and Aristotle's belief in the importance of plot are imperative, they would be incomplete without language. The way in which a story is told is at least as important as its content.

In this respect, language is one of the most powerful aspects of mankind. 1984 by George Orwell is an analysis of the psychology of power. In this dystopian novel, control is gained by mechanisms of intimidation, including the manipulation of history, thought, and language. One of Orwell's most compelling observations in this novel is the link between language and thought. Destroy one and you destroy the other. Rebellion and control are guided by the way in which we use our language, which not only defines the way we speak, but the way we live our lives.

Oceania, through doublethink and newspeak, has created a world that overwhelms the capacity of the minds of its citizens for independent thought. The devastating power of Newspeak lies in its limitations. It is a language that makes rebellion impossible because it has eliminated not only words, but entire concepts from the dictionary. By cleansing Oldspeak of its "vagueness and useless shades of meaning" (46), Oceania has created a world not unlike that of book-burning Nazi Germany, and a situation similar to the constant attack of the First Amendment to the United States

Constitution. While in a cafe, Winston speaks to his friend Syme, who explains his work in the creation of Newspeak: You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words – scores of them, hundreds of them, every day.

We're cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050 (45). By eliminating the majority of the English language, Syme and his comrades are essentially destroying the citizen's right to free speech. The extremely limited vocabulary contributes to extremely limited thought. But Syme is lead to believe that his work is for the greater good, something that contributes to society rather than demolishing it: It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words.

Of course the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn't only the synonyms, there are also the antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word that is simply the opposite of some other words? (46) Oceania is a world where words such as “exquisite” and “beautiful” have been replaced by “doubleplusgood” and the opposite of something is simply created by adding the prefix “un.” Without the freedom of expression through language, every human uses the same words, so has essentially the same thoughts. The clones and shells of people walking around Oceania don't even realize that by taking away their language, the Party is manipulating their thought process. Not only does language constitute our logic, but it plays with our emotions.

Winston walks through life doing as the party instructs him, but full of internal turmoil. He finds solace in a small diary he buys secretly, and writes in when he is not under strict, watchful eyes. Only through his journal is Winston able to come to terms with his emotions toward the party. While it is the thing that ultimately causes his downfall because it solidifies his feelings against the party, the diary was where Winston turned when he was looking for a way out of his emotional predicament and uncertainty. Three words scrawled in a secret note from Julia changed Winston's life: I love you.

At first, these words shock him, and he is tempted to throw the note into the memory hole because he instantly feels negatively towards it. But Winston's emotions are impacted by Julia's words, and he finds joy in them: " At the sight of the words ' I love you' the desire to stay alive had welled up in him, and the taking of minor risks suddenly seemed stupid." This is said in a world where the word " love" might not even exist in a few years. The note is the spark that ignites Winston's relationship with Julia, which causes his arrest, but he begins to understand that going against the party is worth the risk. He knows that he would never be happy otherwise.

The profound influence of art is seen everyday, in every aspect of life. Things such as music and drama and language not only provide a creative outlet, but are truly essential to humanity. Language is a powerful tool that can create or destroy, love or hate. As Oceanian citizens are stripped of their rights to privacy and free speech, every evil can be attributed to one thing: the manipulation and destruction of their language.