

# [1984 – a dystopian novel](https://assignbuster.com/1984-a-dystopian-novel/)

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1984is a dystopian novel about the society of the future. Writing in 1948, he images Britain forty years in the future as a totalitarian dictatorship which combines elements of both Communism and Fascism in a powerful, omniscient police-state, based on terror. The story takes place in a totalitarian state called Oceania. The world has been divided up by Oceania and two other states, Eastasia and Eurasia. The post-war world is governed by power groups alternatively at war with one another. After the revolution, the establishment has been replaced by a dictatorship, whose leader is BB. In his features and look, BB clearly recalls Stalin, and the fact that his face is depicted everywhere is a denunciation of the cult ofpersonality, typical in all dictatorships.

Trying to control the thoughts of every citizen, the authorities rewrite history, changing events. The hero, Winston Smith, is an intellectual and rebels against this world and begins to dream of destroying the system. The description of London, capital of Oceania, in the first chapter of the book, is similar to wartime London. Theenvironmentrecalls bomb-damaged London in 1948. The influence of WW2 is clearly evident; it is a nightmare that still haunts the population. Personal freedom is restricted because Oceania is in a permanent state of war and everyone is potentially a traitor. The only chance of survival is by showing obedience to the Party's orthodoxy and complete devotion to the cult of BB. Everybody is constantly watched and the use of language modified to try and crush independent, individual, autonomous thought, so that the Party will at last be in control of the whole inner being of every man.

Winston Smith (whose name is a symbol: Winston stands for Churchill, and Smith is a common surname, making him a stereotype of every man) works for the Ministry of Truth, but he doesn't accept its fanatic attitude so he keeps a diary and falls in love with a girl called Julia. He makes friend with O'Brien, his superior in the Ministry of Truth, because he believes he is against the system as well. However, O'Brien turns out to be a party man who has Winston captured. Winston is the last man in BB's dictatorship who tries to keep control of his inner self, but he is arrested because his love story to Julia is illegal and mentally and physically tortured until he loses his mental integrity. When he is rehabilitated and finally released he has been turned into a robot just like all the others. He has not only understood and accepted party doctrine, he has even come to love Big Brother. The structure of the novel recalls a tragedy because it is divided into three parts: in Part 1, Winston tries to be free, in Part 2, when he is about to fulfil his dream, his hopes are crushed, and in Part 3, he surrenders to the system and loses his humanity.

Orwell gives a description of the political system of totalitarianism. In 1984 he described the methods used to control thought, to invade privacy and break down personal resistance. The totalitarian state tries to control the thoughts of citizens through language to limit the danger of independent thought. The use of language in 1984 is especially important because Orwell shows how every concept is turned into its exact opposite by the Party, bringing out a satiric effect and tragic irony. So the Ministry of Truth only tells lies, the Ministry of Peace is concerned with war and the language is contracted, taking out all creativity from its use, much as it happens today with mobile phones.

The three irrational slogans of the Party are particularly meaningful because they reveal the ideals the party is based on, thought control and reversal of concepts.

Orwell is concerned with the function of political language and shows that in Oceania words are so corrupted that they now mean their opposite. This implies that once language is controlled anything that the Party doesn't approve is impossible. Thus reality is distorted and these distortions alter the human perception of the truth. This is similarly the danger hidden in mass media, whose power pervades modern society. Mass media controlcommunicationand impose a global view on all aspects of everyday life. That is why the control of mass media is important for the political party in power, because through mass media they can create consensus and alters thought so that everybody comes to think and desire what the Party wants them to think and desire.

Therefore communication becomes manipulation and creates fear, as the dominant faces of BB in posters seem to say. BB IS WATCHING YOU means that everybody is controlled and can't escape. People are alienated, deprived of desires, individuality and interpersonal relationship, so that they can't but be obedient to the ruling party. So the media in the world created by Orwell in 1984 have a double function: to control human thought so that it comes to comply with the Party's wish and keep watch on people everywhere and at any time. Subject to constant surveillance, citizens never try to rebel or escape. Terror is used to monitor and control people's thoughts, feelings and actions.

Orwell was politically committed and 1984 shows how precious and fragile human freedom is. In a period of social unrest, unemployment, economicdepressionand Nazi expansion, he turned to left-wing ideals and he went to fight for the Republican forces in the Spanish war. The experience in Spain made him aware of the political threats that could destroy left-wing ideals; he was horrified of the result of Realpolitik. He was particularly concerned with the tragic development of communist ideals through Stalin's dictatorship in the USSR.

Orwell was disappointed by Socialism and believed that the writer should be independent. As a matter of fact, though he was a socialist, he was very critical of a Socialism which was detached from the reality and the needs of the working class it is supposed to represent.

One of the most outstanding features is the close connection between his political views and his writing. Orwell believed that the writer was a spokesman for the moral conscience of society and his duty was to denounce social evils. The influence of Dickens is shown in his choice of social themes and the use of realistic language because he used a simple, direct style. He believed in tolerance and justice and warned against the dangers of totalitarianism and thought control. He criticized totalitarianism, warning against the violation of personal freedom. 1984 shows a prophetic picture of the dangers caused by totalitarian dictatorships which annihilate individuality and justice. He wanted to warn readers against tyranny.

The world described in 1984 is a nightmare. The party has absolute control, rebellion is punished with prison and torture. He showed his concern for the quality of life, human dignity and creativity; in his opinion, these qualities are threatened by the prevailing trend in modern society, where mass media control human actions, tastes and choices. He had a pessimistic view of the masses, because he believed they could be easily manipulated through language. BB's dictatorship controlled thought, invaded personal privacy through microphones and tele-screens and broke down all attempts at resisting by brain-washing people.

Moreover the strategies of the Party control not only the present and the future but also the past, by re-writing history. Winston's job in the Ministry of Truth is to alter historical records to eliminate allmemoriesof past events and adapt them to party policy when they are inconsistent with party doctrine.

Orwell's assumption is that a totalitarian state controls the thought of citizens through language to limit the dangers of independent thought. This is still true today because mass media are potentially dangerous, as they break down individuality and independent ideas by crushing imagination with conformity.

1984 is a picture of how the political system can suppress individuality and make man inhuman. Throughsciencefiction he depicts a future world in such a realistic way as to make it very credible. The main character's will and body are broken into total submission, leaving no hope in the future of freedom, non-conformism and use of individual reason. Orwell's final conclusion of 1984's nightmarish plot is that totalitarian powers destroy human nature and men are hopelessly overwhelmed by oppressive political forces.