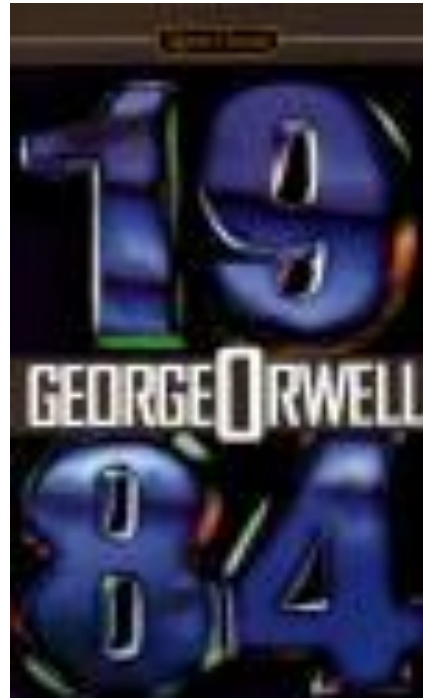


# George Orwell's 1984

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Background Information  
and Context



# About the Author

- “George Orwell” was the pen name of Eric Blair.
- Orwell was an Englishman born in India in 1903. He died at age 47.
- Orwell was educated at Eton, a prestigious boarding school in England.

# More About the Author

- Orwell decided to skip college and work as a British Imperial Policeman in Burma
- He hated working in Burma and returned to England on sick-leave
- Once back in England he dedicated himself to writing full time.
- *1984* was written in 1948



# Orwell's Political Views

- He considered himself a democratic socialist and was critical of communism
- He hated intellectuals, lying, cruelty, political authority, and totalitarianism
- He strongly opposed Stalin and Hitler -- he was very outspoken during WWII



# 1984: Setting and Genre

- Futuristic, cautionary novel
- Setting: London, in the mythical country of Oceania, 1984 (in the future)



# Characters: Winston Smith

- Winston Smith: Main character and the narrator of the story.
- Winston is a 39 year old low-ranking member of the ruling Party
- He secretly hates Big Brother and harbors revolutionary dreams
- Winston is thin, frail, contemplative, intellectual



# Characters: Julia

- Julia is Winston's 25 year old lover
- She is a beautiful, dark-haired woman who enjoys sex and claims to have had affairs with many Party members
- She is optimistic and her rebellion is small and personal



# Characters: O'Brien

- A mysterious, powerful, and sophisticated member of the Inner Party
- Winston believes O'Brien is a member of the "Brotherhood" -- a legendary group of anti-Party rebels
- Winston trusts and admires O'Brien, but never quite figures him out



# Characters: Mr. Charrington



- A kind and encouraging old man who runs a second-hand shop in the prole district
- He rents Winston and Julia a room without a telescreen so they can carry on their love affair
- He seems supportive of Winston's rebellion against the Party

# Characters: Big Brother

- Big Brother is the perceived ruler of Oceania -- he looks like a combination of Hitler and Stalin
- Big Brother's God-like image is stamped on coins and projected on telescreens -- his face is unavoidable



**BIG BROTHER**  
IS WATCHING YOU

# 1984: Oceania's Ranks

- Oceania is a huge country ruled by The Party, which is led by a figure called “Big Brother”
- The Inner Party (1% of pop.) control the country
- The Outer Party (18% of pop.) are controlled by the Inner Party
- The Proles (81% of pop.) are the labor power who live in poverty
- The Brotherhood is an underground rebellion organization lead by Emmanuel Goldstein

# 1984: Newspeak

- Newspeak is the official language of Oceania
- The goal of the Party is to have Newspeak replace Oldspeak (standard English)
- Newspeak eliminates undesirable words and invents new words -- all to force Party conformity



# 1984: Doublethink

- Doublethink is the manipulation of the mind by making people accept contradictions
- Doublethink makes people believe that the Party is the only institution that knows right from wrong
- “The Ministry of Truth” (where Winston works) changes history, facts, and memories to promote Doublethink

# 1984: Story Overview

- Winston is sick of his job fabricating and changing history at the “Ministry of Truth”
- Winston has a sexual affair with Julia -- he trusts her and shares his rebellious thoughts with her
- Winston wants to get involved with O’Brien, who he thinks is part of the Brotherhood rebellion
- Eventually both Winston and Julia are captured by the Party

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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCZBnUt6rZ0>
  - 1984 BBC TV Version
  - <https://archive.org/details/ORWELL1984>