

The background is a dark blue gradient with a pattern of concentric circles and a grid of dashed lines. The circles are centered around the text, and the grid lines are spaced evenly across the page.

1984 – Pre-reading guide

George Orwell's classic tale of a
future world gone horribly wrong

Orwell on Orwell

On the purpose of 1984:

- *“...I do not believe that the kind of society I describe necessarily will arrive, but I believe that something resembling it could arrive. I believe also that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences. The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order to emphasize that the English-speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, if not fought against, could triumph anywhere.”*

On modern dictatorships and human nature:

- *“The terrifying thing about modern dictatorships is that they are something entirely unprecedented. Their end cannot be foreseen. In the past every tyranny was sooner or later overthrown, or at least resisted, because of ‘human nature’. But we cannot be at all certain that ‘human nature’ is constant. It may be just as possible to produce a breed of men who do not wish for liberty as to produce a breed of hornless cows. The Inquisition failed, but then the Inquisition had not the resources of the modern state. The radio, press-censorship, standardized education, and the secret police have altered everything. Mass-suggestion is a science of the last twenty years, and we do not know how successful it will be.”*

Utopia

Literally it means <<*place that does not exist*>> is a perfect society governed by an ideal socio-politico-legal system. I.e., a utopia is a society that attempts to eliminate *all* social problems.

The utopia-based narrative involves the descriptions of societies similar to the author's but based on better principles. The author tries to stimulate the reflection of the readers about the differences between reality and fiction with the final purpose of improving reality itself.

- There are some basic points in a utopian novel:
 - The story is set in an isolated place
 - The story is developed by following the principles of that place
 - In the place there is a ruling class
 - A tragic development occurs in contrast with the expectations of the reader

Dystopia

The term was coined in the late 19th century by some British philosophers in contraposition with UTOPIA and, like this, it indicates an indefinite world, in which the contradictions of the author's society brings to a pessimistic vision of the future.

- The characteristic elements of this kind of literature are:
 - A hierarchical society where divisions between the upper, middle and lower classes are definitive and unbreakable (Caste system).
 - The propaganda and the educational system have the purpose of preserving the Caste system
 - The cancellation of individuality
 - The presence of symbols presented as commandments of a religious faith, that at the same time summarize and hide the aims of the state
 - The constant surveillance by state police agencies
 - Back story of a disaster that justifies the dramatic social changes
 - A protagonist that doubts the society
 - More advanced technologies

UTOPIA



KNOWLEDGE



EMOTIONS



DYSTOPIA



UTOPIA



DYSTOPIA

dylan, 10



Events and Ideas that Orwell Used As The Basis For *1984*

- World War II just ended and the world witnessed horrible violence at the hands of authoritative rulers
- Russia was ruled by a dictator named Joseph Stalin
- Adolf Hitler used propaganda and race to murder millions of Jews, Slavs, gypsies, homosexuals, mentally ill people, and political rebels

Events and Ideas that Orwell Used As The Basis For *1984*

- Mao Tse-tung in China was fighting for communism and when he won he began a long oppressive totalitarian regime
- There were other dictators: Francisco Franco in Spain and Benito Mussolini in Italy
- The world was going through economic reform caused by the Great Depression and WWII

Events and Ideas that Orwell Used As The Basis For *1984*

- Orwell was a democratic socialist
 - Believed that the gov., not private enterprise, should control the production and distribution of goods
 - Was greatly concerned about the lives of the poor and working class

Technology in Orwell's Time

- Poison gas used as a weapon
- Lie detector invented
- Talking movies invented
- First liquid-fuel rocket
- First solo flight across the Atlantic/first flight around the world
- Scientists split the atom
- First computer built
- Microwave oven invented
- U.S. drops atomic bombs on Japan
- Polaroid cameras invented
- Antibiotics invented
- Television invented
- Radar invented

What's it about?

- A novel of psychological terror that warns us about a future where the government controls everything and individual rights are taken away
- The novel was a response to totalitarian governments (Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, etc.)
- The world of *1984* is a negative utopia --- a *dystopia*.
- The main character, Winston Smith, tries to rebel against society
- He begins his rebellion with the simple act of writing in his journal --- which is illegal & punishable by death

Winston Smith – the protagonist

- A normal, insignificant, lonely man in a world that is devoid of creativity and color
- Feels that something is missing in his life and wants to break free
- Constantly paranoid that he will be discovered and arrested for Thought Crime
- Was once married
- Works in the Records Department

1984: Setting and Genre

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



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 — Newspeak is the only language that gets smaller

What's this world like?

- All citizens are monitored by telescreens which are present in all homes and workplaces
- The government is represented by Big Brother, a figure who “sees everything” – who or what does this make you think of?



More...

- Laws are enforced by the Thought Police, who arrest and “vaporize” anyone who even *thinks* disruptive thoughts – how can they tell what someone is thinking????
- History is constantly rewritten so that the predictions of Big Brother will never be wrong – does history get re-written today???
- Citizens are constantly asked to show their allegiance by engaging in rallies and meetings to support Big Brother
- Hatred for the enemies of Big Brother is encouraged through the use of *propaganda*
- The society of Oceania is constantly at war with other countries: Eurasia and Eastasia --- or so Big Brother says.

A few terms from *1984*

- *Doublethink* – the ability to believe two contradictory things at the same time
- *Newspeak* – the language of Oceania
- *Ingsoc* – Oceania's form of government
- *Thought crime* – thinking anti-party thoughts
- *Inner Party/Outer party* – those closest to Big Brother and those on the outside
- *Proles* – the lower classes who live in a separate part of the city

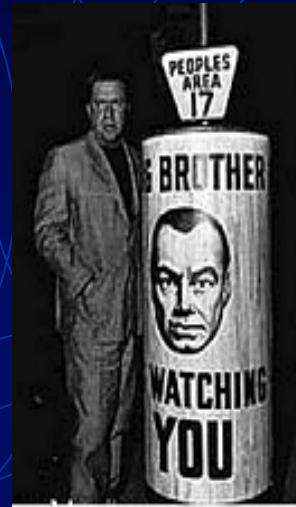
Themes, Symbols and Motifs

- Power of Language
- Illegal Love
- Individuality/Freedom of Thought and Speech
- Memory and History
- Sensation Equals Freedom
- Dust



Orwellian?

- This word comes directly from Orwell's writing in *1984*. It carries a negative connotation and refers to anything involving systematic controlling/monitoring of the individual. For example, the installation of security cameras covering all of Rocklin H.S.



Questions to consider as you read

- This novel predicted one *possible* future. Are we closer to *1984* today than we were in 1949?
- How are our thoughts controlled today?
- Who is Big Brother?
- What are the key symbols in the novel?
- In what ways are we watched and monitored today?