

# 1984 and 20thC History

George Orwell's timeless novel, *1984*, was written during a period of cold, dark and militaristic posturing, following the aftermath of WWII and the rise of the Cold War. The intent of the novel was to satirize the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's embrace of totalitarian practices founded on cold, drab architecture, dark and secretive governing and military symbols to promote nationalism. The spirit of Orwell's masterpiece is still relevant today, as our world once again embraces the ethos inherent in totalitarian visions of power (see George Bush) by "propagandizing" the perfect nature of society and contrasting it with the imperfect visions of others (non-Western cultures). The reality is that a totalitarian society, on the surface, promotes greatness and strength, but, in reality, the underbelly is often shambles and social chaos. Human rights are neglected. The Cult of Personality is given more weight than justice. Lies, disinformation and distortion of reality are reported and the free press is reigned in or ostracized.

The vision of reality that George Orwell creates in the reader's mind is supposed to be extreme, but there are truths in his words.

The following are some terms that will help you understand the general historical context that George Orwell was writing within. The source of this information is *from Encarta Online* and is an excellent source for further investigations.

# TOTALITARIANISM = INGSOC in George Orwell's 1984

Totalitarianism, in political science, system of government and ideology in which all social, political, economic, intellectual, cultural, and spiritual activities are subordinated to the purposes of the rulers of a state. Several important features distinguish totalitarianism, a form of autocracy peculiar to the 20th century, from such older forms as despotism, absolutism, and tyranny. In the older forms of autocracy people could live and work in comparative independence, provided they refrained from politics. In modern totalitarianism, however, people are made utterly dependent on the wishes and whims of a political party and its leaders. The older autocracies were ruled by a monarch or other titled aristocrat who governed by a principle such as divine right, whereas the modern totalitarian state is ruled by a leader, or dictator, who controls a political party.

## TOTALITARIAN GOVERNMENTS

Those countries whose governments are usually characterized as totalitarian were Germany, under the National Socialism of Adolf Hitler; the USSR, particularly under Joseph Stalin; and the People's Republic of China, under the Communist rule of Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung). Other governments have also been called totalitarian, for example, those of Italy under Benito Mussolini, North Korea under Kim Il Sung, Syria under Hafez al-Assad, and Iraq under Saddam Hussein.

## THE PARTY & ITS TOOLS

Under a dictator, members of the ruling party become the elite of the nation. The entire society is subjected to a hierarchical organization wherein each individual is responsible to another in a position of higher authority—with the single exception of the supreme leader, who is answerable to no one. All nongovernmental social groupings are either destroyed totally or coordinated to serve the purposes of the party and the state.

Total subjection of the individual became possible only through advanced science and industrial technology. Among the decisive, technologically conditioned features of totalitarian dictatorships are a monopoly of mass communications, a terroristic secret-police apparatus, a monopoly of all effective weapons of destruction, and a centrally controlled economy.

## CONTROL OF THE MASS MEDIA

By virtue of the monopoly of mass communications the ruling party and the government are in possession of all channels through which people receive information, guidance, and direction. All newspaper, magazine, and book publishing, as well as radio and television broadcasting, theater productions, and motion pictures, is centrally controlled

and directed. All writers, speakers, actors, composers, and poets are enrolled in party-controlled organizations, and they are licensed by the government. Usually they are required to be members of the party. The party line, that is, the party's interpretation of policy, is imposed on all mass media through censorship.

## THE SECRET POLICE = Thought Police in George Orwell's 1984

The secret-police apparatus employs the theories and techniques of scientific crime detection and modern psychology. It terrorizes the population in ways radically different from and much crueler than those of the police systems of earlier autocracies. The totalitarian secret police employs institutions and devices such as the concentration camp, predetermined trials, and public confessions. One of the dangers inherent in the totalitarian dictatorship is the possibility that the secret police might seize control of the party itself.

# COMMUNISM

Communism, a theory and system of social and political organization that was a major force in world politics for much of the 20th century. As a political movement, communism sought to overthrow **capitalism** through a workers' revolution and establish a system in which property is owned by the community as a whole rather than by individuals. In theory, communism would create a classless society of abundance and freedom, in which all people enjoy equal social and economic status. In practice, communist regimes have taken the form of coercive, authoritarian governments that cared little for the plight of the working class and sought above all else to preserve their own hold on power.

The idea of a society based on common ownership of property and wealth stretches far back in Western thought. In its modern form, communism grew out of the socialist movement of 19th-century Europe (see **Socialism**). At that time, Europe was undergoing rapid **industrialization** and social change. As the **Industrial Revolution** advanced, socialist critics blamed capitalism for creating a new class of poor, urban factory workers who labored under harsh conditions, and for widening the gulf between rich and poor. Foremost among these critics were the German philosopher **Karl Marx** and his associate **Friedrich Engels**. Like other socialists, they sought an end to capitalism and the exploitation of workers. But whereas some reformers favored peaceful, longer-term social transformation, Marx and Engels believed that violent revolution was all but inevitable; in fact, they thought it was predicted by the scientific laws of history. They called their theory "scientific socialism," or communism. In the last half of the 19th century the terms *socialism* and *communism* were often used interchangeably. However, Marx and Engels came to see socialism as merely an intermediate stage of society in which most industry and property were owned in common but some class differences remained. They reserved the term *communism* for a final stage of society in which class differences had disappeared, people lived in harmony, and government was no longer needed.

The meaning of the word *communism* shifted after 1917, when **Vladimir Lenin** and his Bolshevik Party seized power in Russia. The Bolsheviks changed their name to the Communist Party and installed a repressive, single-party regime devoted to the implementation of socialist

policies. The Communists formed the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics** (USSR, or Soviet Union) from the former Russian Empire and tried to spark a worldwide revolution to overthrow capitalism. Lenin's successor, **Joseph Stalin**, turned the Soviet Union into a dictatorship based on total state control of the economy and the suppression of any form of opposition. As a result of Lenin's and Stalin's policies, many people came to associate the term *communism* with undemocratic or totalitarian governments that claimed allegiance to Marxist-Leninist ideals. The term *Marxism-Leninism* refers to Marx's theories as amended and put into practice by Lenin.

After World War II (1939-1945), regimes calling themselves communist took power in China, Eastern Europe, and other regions. The spread of communism marked the beginning of the **Cold War**, in which the Soviet Union and the United States, and their respective allies, competed for political and military supremacy. By the early 1980s, almost one-third of the world's population lived under communist regimes. These regimes shared certain basic features: an embrace of Marxism-Leninism, a rejection of private property and capitalism, state domination of economic activity, and absolute control of the government by one party, the communist party. The party's influence in society was pervasive and often repressive. It controlled and censored the mass media, restricted religious worship, and silenced political dissent.

Communist societies encountered dramatic change in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as political and economic upheavals in the USSR, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere led to the disintegration of numerous communist regimes and severely weakened the power and influence of communist parties throughout the world. The collapse of the USSR effectively ended the Cold War. Today, single-party communist states are rare, existing only in China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam. Elsewhere, communist parties accept the principles of democracy and operate as part of multiparty systems.

# 1984

## questions\*concepts\*characters\*symbols

The novel, *1984*, is a reaction to an historical era that saw the possibility of a world without freedom, maintained by fear and paranoia. It is a "fantasy" or "nightmarish" scenario that uses a combination of cryptic concepts, adapted historical figures/characters and "symbols" that connect the reader with the historical possibilities and reality of the narrative.

A rich understanding of Orwell's ideas requires you, the reader, to think abstractly (critically and analytically) about the various concepts (terms and ideas), characters and symbols (settings, artifacts, etc.) that pop up throughout the novel.

When reading the novel, keep an ongoing LOG of the various concepts, characters, and symbols from the following list.

- The "Three" Paradoxes: War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength
- Winston Smith
- Big Brother/Big Brother is Watching You
- Emmanuel Goldstein
- the diary
- thought police
- orthodoxy
- The Party
- The Proles/If there is hope, it lies with the proles
- Junior Anti-Sex League
- sex
- The Brotherhood
- Newspeak
- Oldspeak
- memory/memory hole/ancestral memory
- the past/the mutability of the past
- Ministry of Peace (minipax)
- Ministry of Truth (minitrueth)
- Ministry of Plenty (miniplenty)
- Ministry of Love (miniluv)

Track each by creating a chart like the one below:

concept / character / symbol (meaning and characteristics)	page number	ideas/examples from novel	connection to modern Reality/ contemporary society (importance, revelations about human nature and society)

# EXPLORING THE ORWELLIAN REAL WORLD

## -media analysis scrapbook & oral presentation-

Fiction is often a (distorted?) mirror of the real world. It tells us things about life that maybe we are not entirely cognizant or aware of. Or maybe fiction just exposes the real world/life to a mass audience in a new way. George Orwell's, *1984*, is a fictional work that in many ways mirrors the world that we live in today. It's frightening and enlightening all at once.

**GOAL:** the objective of this media analysis scrapbook and oral presentation is for you to see the connections between *1984* and today's world by proving that aspects (see themes/ things to look for) in the novel were foreseen by Orwell and have indeed come true.

### TASK A: THE PROOFS

explore the media world for a variety of "proofs" that Orwell's futuristic and dystopian vision of the world has come true. Use five (5) quotes from the novel that reflect "truths in today's world" and find a minimum of three (3) "proofs" from a variety of media sources (articles, editorials, cartoons, ads).

For each "proof" provide the following. See attached example for guidance:

**The Example:** attach the "proof" (article, editorial, ad, cartoon)

**The Quotation:** match a quote from the novel that reflects - literally or figuratively - the proof. One proof may use more than one quote.

### TASK B: THE CONNECTION

for one "proof" write a commentary on how the proof (a contemporary example) is related to an aspect of the text. NOTE: some connections may be obvious and literal, however some may be less so (figurative and inconspicuous). The proof must reflect the "spirit" of Orwell's ideas.

### TASK C: THE COVER

create a unique cover (see attached for **one** example) that reflects one of the proofs or themes in the novel. Your cover can be in the form of:

- a collage
- an ad
- a poster

### TASK D: THE PRESENTATION

present one (1) proof to the class and explain & discuss (not read!) how the real world example is proof of Orwell's vision. Presentations will be no longer than five (5) minutes with discussion. SIGN-UP for your presentation slot. Be prepared to go on \_\_\_\_\_ but you may not present until \_\_\_\_\_.

1984

## thematic elements and things

### 1. social conformity and orthodoxy

- “popular” enemies, like Goldstein, to focus public hysteria
- violence as entertainment (Hate Week, 2 Minutes Hate)

### 2. ignorance and deprivation

- altering or abolishing history
- “news” manipulation
- taking love away from sex

### 3. surveillance and state induced paranoia

- invasion of privacy (Big Brother is Watching)

### 4. fear, torture and terrorism

- disappearing people
- government kidnapping

### 5. war and hatred

- war as a stabilizing force (War is Peace)

### 6. the “cult of leadership” and the “cult of personality”

- larger than life political leaders

### 7. reality and mind control

- propaganda
- NEWSPEAK – using language to control independent thought (advertising, slogans, TV, movies)
- DOUBLETHINK – political lies and distortions
- brainwashing and torture as political tools

### 8. class structure and social inequality

- urban decay and poverty – the gap between the rich (powerful) and the poor (powerless/no power)
- the Proles
- class and power – the rich work to remain powerful, the middle class works to become powerful and the poor just seek to survive

name:

# EXPLORING THE ORWELLIAN REAL WORLD: oral analysis

[literature studies + reading; oral; media studies]

focus	no	somewhat	yes
content of oral analysis is delivered clearly and creatively	0 - 0.5	1 - 1.5	2
connects material for audience with insight into key issues, ideas and themes (ie. modern reality and themes)	0 - 0.5	1 - 1.5	2
uses gestures (body language) to enhance presentation / analysis	0 - 0.5	1 - 1.5	2
oral analysis uses pauses, stress, various tones and emphasis effectively to convey important information/ideas to pitch effectively	0 - 0.5	1 - 1.5	2
prepared for oral interpretation	0 - 0.5	1 - 1.5	2
comments			total  /10

## EXPLORING THE ORWELLIAN REAL WORLD: MEDIA SCRAPBOOK

<b>Focus: Literature Studies &amp; Reading</b>	<b>below level 1</b>	<b>level 1</b>	<b>level 2</b>	<b>level 3</b>	<b>level 4</b>	<b>mark</b>
knowledge and understanding of ideas & themes; form and structure; language (K/U)	-shows minimal or no understanding of variety of works (supported description, connections) in terms of themes; form & structure; language	-shows limited understanding of variety of works (supported description, connections) in terms of themes; form & structure; language	-shows some understanding of variety of works (supported description, connections) in terms of themes; form & structure; language	-shows considerable understanding of variety of works (supported description, connections) in terms of themes; form & structure; language	-shows thorough and insightful understanding of variety of works (supported description, connections) in terms of themes; form & structure; language	<b>/20</b>
analysis (T/I)	analyzes work with minimal or no effectiveness	analyzes work with limited effectiveness	analyzes work with some effectiveness	-analyzes work with considerable effectiveness	analyzes work with high degree of effectiveness and risk-taking	
use of evidence, including quotations (T/I)	-provides minimal or no specific and relevant (examples from reality/modern life, direct quotes) evidence, from various works, to support interpretations	-provides limited specific and relevant (examples from reality/modern life, direct quotes) evidence, from various works, to support interpretations	-provides some specific and relevant (examples from reality/modern life, direct quotes) evidence, from various works, to support interpretations	-provides considerable specific and relevant (examples from reality/modern life, direct quotes) evidence, from various works, to support interpretations	-provides thorough and convincing specific and relevant (examples from reality/modern life, direct quotes) evidence, from various works, to support interpretations	
<b>FOCUS: Writing</b>	<b>below level 1</b>	<b>level 1</b>	<b>level 2</b>	<b>level 3</b>	<b>level 4</b>	<b>mark</b>
clarity (C)	-thoughts and feelings are communicated with minimal or no clarity	-thoughts and feelings are communicated with limited clarity	-thoughts and feelings are communicated with some clarity	-thoughts and feelings are communicated with considerable clarity	-thoughts and feelings are communicated with high degree of clarity	<b>/20</b>
connections (A)	-makes few or no connections to own and outside ideas, values and experiences	-makes logical connections to own and outside ideas, values and experiences	-makes some connections to own and outside ideas, values and experiences	-makes logical connections to own and outside ideas, values and experiences	-makes insightful connections to own and outside ideas, values and experiences	
language & voice (C)	-uses appropriate language and voice (literary devices/ rhetorical devices) with minimal or no effectiveness and consistency	-uses appropriate language and voice (literary devices/ rhetorical devices) with limited effectiveness and consistency	-uses appropriate language and voice (literary devices/ rhetorical devices) with some effectiveness and consistency	-uses appropriate language and voice (literary devices/ rhetorical devices) with considerable effectiveness and consistency	-uses appropriate language and voice (literary devices/ rhetorical devices) with high degree of effectiveness and consistency	
language conventions (A)	-applies grammar, usage (diction), spelling and punctuation with minimal or no accuracy	-applies grammar, usage (diction), spelling and punctuation with limited accuracy	-applies grammar, usage (diction), spelling and punctuation with some accuracy	-applies grammar, usage (diction), spelling and punctuation with considerable accuracy	-applies grammar, usage (diction), spelling and punctuation with high degree of accuracy	
<b>FOCUS: Media</b>	<b>below level 1</b>	<b>level 1</b>	<b>level 2</b>	<b>level 3</b>	<b>level 4</b>	<b>mark</b>
visual (C/A)	-media product incorporates visual elements that reflect themes, issues of literary text with minimal or no effectiveness	-media product incorporates visual elements that reflect themes, issues of literary text with limited effectiveness	-media product incorporates visual elements that reflect themes, issues of literary text with some effectiveness	-media product incorporates visual elements that reflect themes, issues of literary text with considerable effectiveness	-media product incorporates visual elements that reflect themes, issues of literary text with creativity and originality	<b>/10</b>
text (C)	-media product uses persuasive/literary language with minimal or no effectiveness	-media product uses persuasive/literary language with limited effectiveness	-media product uses persuasive/literary language with some effectiveness	-media product uses persuasive/literary language with considerable effectiveness	-media product uses persuasive/literary language with creativity and originality	
appearance (A/C)	-media product uses minimal or no organizing techniques, with minimal or no appeal	-media product uses limited organizing techniques with limited appeal	-media product appeals to audience using suitable organizing techniques with some effectiveness	-media product appeals to audience using suitable organizing techniques with considerable effectiveness	-media product appeals to audience using suitable organizing techniques with high degree of creativity and originality	
comments					<b>total</b> <b>/50</b>	