



1984 is a dystopian novel written by George Orwell in 1948. The story takes place in an imaginary future – the year 1984 when the country has fallen victim to perpetual war, government surveillance and propaganda. It presents the consequences of a totalitarian state. The protagonist Winston Smith is a diligent worker at the Ministry of Truth who is tasked with rewriting history. He records his dissatisfaction by recording his thoughts in a secret diary.



George Orwell was born Eric Arthur Blair in India in June 1903. He was educated in England and became a policeman in Burma. Orwell was wounded whilst fighting in the Spanish Civil War and was plagued with ill health as a result. He worked as a journalist during World War 2, and the publication of Animal Farm led to him achieving fame. In his final years, he worked on the novel 1984 and lived between Jura in Scotland and London. He died in 1950 and is now considered one of the best British authors of all time.



The Spanish Civil War, fought between 1936-9 led to the death of 200,000 people and the displacement of 500,000 who became refugees. Orwell fought on the front line and sustained a serious injury. He was shot in the throat by a sniper which meant he was declared unfit to fight in World War 2, instead becoming a journalist.



The term 'Big brother is watching you' originated in the novel 1984. In the fictional totalitarian state of Oceania, every citizen knows they could be watched at any time. There are telescreens everywhere, and higher ranking party members can watch anyone they choose. Anyone who resists or disobeys is labelled a traitor and disappears.

Key Term	Definition
Dystopia	An imaginary futuristic state in which there is great suffering or injustice. It is typically totalitarian or post apocalyptic.
Orwellian	A characteristic of the writing of George Orwell, especially with reference to his dystopian account of a futuristic totalitarian society.
Totalitarian	A system of government that is dictatorial and requires complete subservience to the state. A political system that prevents all opposition.
Propaganda	Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature used to promote a political cause or point of view.
Post-apocalyptic	Relating to a time following a nuclear event or other catastrophic event. The event could be related to changes in the climate or environment.
Room 101	Room 101 is the final step towards brainwashing and submission. It is a torture chamber where you are forced to face your worst fears and was named after a meeting room where Orwell had to endure the most tedious meetings.