

Name:

Course Instructor:

Course Name:

Date of Submission:

1984 by George Orwell

1984 by George Orwell is a classic book about a dystopian future in which a totalitarian regime suppresses the critical thoughts of its people. To avoid the tyranny of the government, Winston Smith escapes into his world by starting a diary. Although having a diary is a crime punishable by death, he is determined to remain humane despite the government's constant surveillance. Orwell uses several stylistic devices to express his ideas in the novel.

The book starts on a harsh day of April in London. Winston arrives at his apartment during lunch break, and he pours himself a drink generously. He muses about the totalitarian regime of London, Oceania. Winston decides to start a diary despite the fact such a crime is punishable by death (Orwell 1). To avoid surveillance, he uses a small corner of his apartment that is not covered by government's tele screen, a device used to spy on the citizens. Restricted by a writer's block, Winston realizes that he does not know the target audience of his diary. He starts writing about his recent encounter with a girl in the movies and a fellow member of the Inner Party. As he continues to write, his material becomes substantive, and it focuses on the political context of Oceania.

In this passage, Orwell uses a foreboding tone to set the tone of the entire novel. It is the tone that prevails throughout the novel, and it introduces the reader to live under the regime. A

statements such as "cold day in April," "gritty dust," and "hallways smelling of boiled eggs and old mat" set the foreboding mood that characterizes the entire novel (Orwell 2). Orwell introduces important images and issues that become motifs in the novel. The reader is not drawn immediately to the manipulation and surveillance of the government. Winston's apartment, "victory mansions" may create a false image because the hallways smell like boiled eggs and electricity is switched off during the day.

Language is an important theme in Orwell's *1984*. During lunch, Winston is lectured on the principles of newspeak by Syme, one of his friends from work. According to Syme, Newspeak will be the primary language by 2050 (Orwell 193). It is the primary tool used by the "big brother" to control the people. Additionally, it is a language that drops words instead of acquiring them. Although Winston is horrified by this thought, he dares not express his feelings. They are joined by Winston's neighbor Parsons, who tells him that his children are constantly on the lookout for unusual behavior. He praises his children for their effort, but it is evident that it makes him uneasy. Here, it is apparent that the government is corrupting language to control and contaminate individual thought processes.

A language is a tool that facilitates communication of new ideas, inventions, and changing behaviors and attitudes. Newspeak does not support these essential functions of language because it destroys important words such as antonyms and synonyms. Syme argues that there is no need for words such as "evil" when there are words such as "good". He proposes the use of "ungood" since it is the direct opposite of "good." The goal of language such as Newspeak is to minimize the number of words to the point where individual thought is narrowed. The language was a weapon that had both economic and political implications.

Foreshadowing is another stylistic device that is utilized by Orwell in *1984*.

Foreshadowing is a device that is used to tell what is going to happen in the future. While Winston is busy writing his diary, he hears a knock on his door. It is that of Mrs. Parsons. She requests him for help in unclogging the sink because her husband has not yet come home from work. Mr. Parson works with Winston at the Ministry of Truth. Although he agrees to help her, Winston is confronted by her children who accuse him of being a criminal, traitor, and Goldstein (Orwell 77). When he returns to continue with his diary, he remembers a dream he had seven years earlier. In the dream, he heard a voice, which he suspected to be that of O'Brien. The voice tells him that they will finally meet in a place where there is no darkness.

At this point, it dawns to him that the prophecy in the dream will come to pass in the future. Furthermore, he realizes the target audience of his diary, and the certainty of his demise at the hand of the police. Orwell uses Winston's dream to foretell what will take place in the future. By engaging in independent thought, Winston is rebelling against the dictates of the "big brother", and ultimately he was going to pay for his crime. Although his dream does not materialize, they meet with O'Brien in prison or the Ministry of Love. The fact that Winston is not vaporized for his crime shows his pessimistic and fatalistic nature. Winston has been influenced by the party's doctrines to the point where he cannot imagine escaping punishment for his crime. Winston's objective becomes a struggle to stay alive, since he is aware of the punishment that will be imposed if he is found guilty of committing a crime.

The relationship between Julia and Winston is surprising considering the conditions created by the "big brother." Winston and Julia meet in a hideout in the forest that she has frequented with her other lovers. It is here that they make love and talk about their personal lives. According to Winston, Julia is fond of intimacy, unlike his former wife. He learns that she

participates with other party members. This knowledge comes as a relief to Winston because it is evident that unusual acts and corruption are rife in the party. When they meet again in the belfry, Julia talks more about her love affairs, her job, and her hatred of the party (Orwell 237). They also discuss the ramifications of being caught, and they agree that they will be killed. However, Julia is optimistic that they will meet again.

From this passage, it is evident that oppression is a major theme in *1984*. Orwell uses Julia to personify suppression by the totalitarian regime. The regime suppresses individual relationships, creativity, and individuality, forcing party members to hide when engaging in individual thought or intimacy. Julia seems to be an ideal member of the party who follows its customary practices. However, it is not the case when it comes to herself. She represents the opposite of what the party expects from its members. Although she takes part in the anti-sex league, she partakes in improper relationships with party members. The passage shows that the beliefs of party members are different from their actions. These behaviors are common in despotic regimes where the individual is not separated from politics. Although despotic regimes may attempt to control individual life, they cannot succeed because people have personal interest and needs that cannot be provided by politics. Julia represents the conflict between individuality and the demands of the party.

When Julia and Winston meet in the countryside, they walk to the end of the pasture. Winston recalls the place from his Golden Country dreams. As they stand on the edge of the pasture, a bird comes and rests on a branch adjacent to the couple (Orwell 303). Winston contemplates the significance of the bird's presence. The Golden Country and the bird introduces the theme of symbolism in the novel. Earlier, Winston had dreamed about the meeting where Julia removed her clothes. Furthermore, the bird that landed on branch symbolizes freedom. It is

the type of freedom that Winston longs for, but cannot get. He asks himself questions about why and for whom the bird was singing. Since birds are free to fly and land anywhere, Winston wonders what compelled it to perch on a branch near them and sing. He notes that no rival or mate was watching it. These are important questions that Winston should be asking himself concerning his loyalty to the "the big brother." His focus on the bird shows his desire to be free. The bird also symbolizes the freedom in his relationship with Julia. Compared to his former wife, Julia likes intimacy. It may mean that she is free when she is with Winston. He has not enjoyed the kind of intimacy he experiences with Julia.

The troubling dream that Winston had concerning his mother and sister is important in understanding his character. He wakes up from the dream and tells Julia that he is liable for the death of his mother. Winston recalls a moment in his childhood when he was starving and begging for food. He recalls snatching chocolate from his weak young sister and running outside to eat (Orwell 257). He failed to return for some hours, and it was the last time he ever saw his mother and sister. The memory prompts him to think about proles. According to Winston, proles are humans regardless of their present society. The use of flashback by Orwell helps the reader to understand Winston's character and motivations for his action.

The flashback into his past reveals his selfish nature and why he is pessimistic. The act of snatching chocolate from his younger and weak sister shows that he only cares about himself. It is a character trait that will reveal itself in the book when he is got and imprisoned for his crimes. He claims that he could take Julia's pain, while he understands that there is a difference between what people say and what they do. His pessimistic and fatalistic nature is also a product of his failure to find his mother and sister when he returned after snatching the chocolate. He believes that everything will end in disaster.

Another interesting part of the novel is when Julia and Winston go to O'Brien's house to confess that they have rebelled against the party and are opposed to it. They learn of the secret brotherhood from O'Brien, which is a group that wants to eliminate the party. They are initiated into it and agree to follow the requirements except not to see one another. Winston is offered the book about Goldstein's heretical writings (Orwell 291). O'Brien also promises that they will meet again, and Winston completes the sentence by saying that they will meet in the place with no darkness. They part when O'Brien completes the nursery rhyme that Mr. Charrington had started earlier in the novel. Orwell uses irony to foreshadow what will happen to Winston in the end. It is ironical that their honesty with O'Brien comes to haunt them. During their initiation, O'Brien had warned that in case they survive, they may not recognize one another. Additionally, O'Brien has knowledge of the ending to the nursery rhymes is the start of Winston's end. He betrays Winston, and is later imprisoned.

Sitting at the Chestnut Tree Café and drinking Victory Gin while watching the tele screens, Winston is excited by the news of the war with the Eurasian army (Orwell 388). The news feels him with excitement and dread because he is concerned with the results of the day's battle. Thoughts of Julia come to his mind. He recalls that he saw her by accident. When they met, they both confessed to having betrayed each other. Both their lives have changed. Winston no longer works at his former job, while Julia seemed thicker compared to the past. When the tele screens announce victory in the war, Winston is filled with joy. This passage reveals that Winston has overcome his struggles and from that moment supports "big brother". It is a surprise ending to the novel because Winston was strongly opposed to the regime. Nevertheless, totalitarianism has won. He is now part of the party and has shelved his ambitions of destroying it. Although he remembers former times when he experienced vague feelings, he is convinced

that the feelings were false. One can speculate that Winston has been indoctrinated by the party, and his time in the ministry of love changed his opinions about the regime. During his meeting with Julia, both repeat each other's phrase. It is evidence that Winston has become the party's puppet, just like the others. His only hope of freedom will come through a bullet in the back of his head.

Looking at the characters in the novel, I can readily identify them with Winston Smith. He is the protagonist of the novel, and one can see the world from his perspective. It is through Winston that the reader can understand the sufferings of the masses under big brother's regime.

It is important to note that *1984* was written in 1949, in the aftermath of the Second World War. Winston Churchill was the revered leader of wartime England, and Smith is one of the most common surnames in England. Orwell wanted the readers to see Winston Smith as an ordinary person trying his best under extraordinary circumstances. It is not possible to identify any person with Winston because he is just an ordinary man working for the government, but he attempts to break away from its control.

His desire for freedom is common to every human being, and this desire is clearly presented in the novel. Although he understands the implications of his actions, Winston represents the hope that things will change. Orwell ensures that there is no happy ending in the novel despite the hope that Winston had when he started writing his diary. If Orwell had allowed Winston to succeed, he would have failed in showing the real face of totalitarianism.

For a modern day reader, Winston's circumstances are not different from the current world. The proliferation of modern technologies has made it possible for governments to spy on their citizenry. Furthermore, addiction to modern devices such as smartphones is a new form of

slavery that controls every action. One cannot imagine living without today's gadgets; therefore, they are not different from the "big brother."

O'Brien is another interesting character in the novel. Although he has no official title in the party, he is a prominent member and cannot avoid thinking that he may have been part of the party's leadership. At first, he seems to be a friend of Winston and co-conspirator, but by the third part of the novel his true nature is revealed. It becomes apparent that he is a loyal party member who has been monitoring Winston closely for many years. O'Brien represents the party, and Orwell used him to reveal the machination of the Inner Party. Without him, the party would have remained a mysterious entity to the reader. He is a mysterious character, which is also a characteristic of the party. By maintaining this mysteriousness, Orwell continues with the plot. If O'Brien's true nature had been identified earlier in the book, the novel would have come to an abrupt end.

It is also impossible to tell whether O'Brien shares the same attitude towards the party like Winston. However, due to his position in the party, he cannot wish for things to change.

1984 is an interesting book which presents the ideas that are relevant to the modern world more than ever. The use of tele screens by "big brother" to spy on its citizens bears close similarities to modern day governments that use modern technology to spy on people. It is not long ago that the American government was accused of spying on innocent Americans in the fight against terrorism. Although Orwell's book was about the far future, what he forecasted in the book is now a reality. Winston embodies the determination of ordinary citizens. He values freedom, peace, democracy, and decency, but these values are very elusive in his world just like in our modern world. However, the protagonist fails in his struggle to defeat the regime which is the fate that befell freedom fighters of the 20th century. The tyranny in *1984* mirrors the

leadership that preceded the Second World War in countries such as Germany and Italy. Orwell succeeds in reminding us that totalitarianism is not over, and the struggle between evil and good forces continues.

Work Cited

Orwell, George. *1984*. Enrich Culture Group Limited, 2016.