

1984 Book Review

1 Plot Summary

In the future world of 1984, the world is divided up into three superstates—Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia—that are deadlocked in a permanent war. The superpowers are so evenly matched that a decisive victory is impossible, but the real reason for the war is to keep their economies productive without adding to the wealth of their citizens, who live (with the exception of a privileged few) in a state of fear and poverty. Oceania, made up of the English-speaking nations, is ruled by a group known simply as the Party, a despotic oligarchical collective that is ideologically very similar to the regimes in power in the other two superstates, though each claims that their system is superior to the others. The Inner Party, whose members make up 2% of the population, effectively govern, while the Outer Party, who number about 13% of the population, unquestioningly carry out their orders. The remaining 85% of the population are proles, who are largely ignored because they are judged intellectually incapable of organized revolt. In order to maintain its power, the Party keeps its citizens under constant surveillance, monitoring even their thoughts, and arresting and "vaporizing" individuals if they show signs of discontent or nonconformity. The Party's figurehead is Big Brother, whose mustachioed face is displayed on posters and coins, and toward whom every citizen is compelled to feel love and allegiance. Organized hate rallies keep patriotism at a fever pitch and public executions of prisoners of war increase support for the regime and for the war itself.

2 Review

This was one of the most impressive books I have ever read. It was also one of the most depressing. I assumed it would be hard to plow through but it really wasn't. Orwell's specific horror made me race through this book in a matter of days. If you haven't read it you should. Right now! I cannot recommend this book enough and after a year-and-a-half, the imagery is still as vivid in my mind as it was when I first read the book. I find myself jokingly using words like doubleplusgood, I find myself questioning my lifestyle – and that currently acceptable by our society. Even if you hate the plot, even if you don't sympathize with Winston Smith, this novel does one thing above all else. It makes you think! I assume that's why it's so widely read in schools and I hope it will continue this way. Any friend I have, an avid reader or not, I beseech to read this book. Whether you're 16 or 86, if you have a shred of curiosity in you, read this book.