

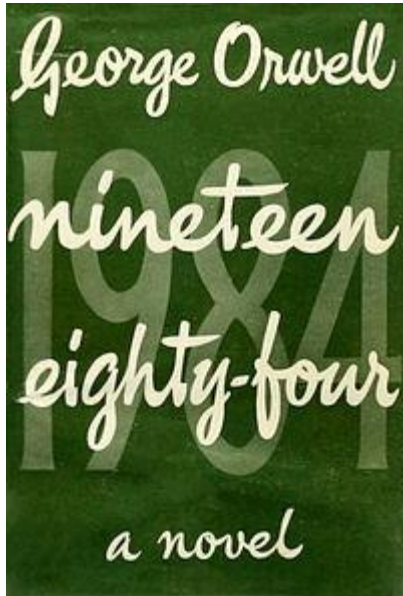
# *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

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This article is about the Orwell novel. For other uses, see [1984 \(disambiguation\)](#).

## *Nineteen Eighty-Four*



British first edition cover

<b>Author(s)</b>	<a href="#">George Orwell</a>
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*Nineteen Eighty-Four* (first published in 1949) by [George Orwell](#) is a [dystopian](#) novel about Oceania, a society ruled by the [oligarchical dictatorship](#) of [the Party](#).<sup>[1]</sup> Life in the [Oceanian](#)

province of [Airstrip One](#) is a world of [perpetual war](#), pervasive government surveillance, and incessant public [mind control](#), accomplished with a political system [euphemistically](#) named [English Socialism](#) (Ingsoc), which is administered by a privileged Inner Party elite.<sup>[2]</sup> Yet they too are subordinated to the totalitarian [cult of personality](#) of [Big Brother](#), the deified Party leader who rules with a philosophy that decries individuality and reason as [thoughtcrimes](#); thus the people of Oceania are subordinated to a supposed collective greater good.<sup>[1]</sup> The protagonist, [Winston Smith](#), is a member of the Outer Party who works for the [Ministry of Truth](#) (Minitrue), which is responsible for propaganda and [historical revisionism](#). His job is to re-write past newspaper articles so that the historical record is congruent with the current party ideology.<sup>[3]</sup> Because of the childhood trauma of the destruction of his family — the disappearances of his parents and sister — Winston Smith secretly hates the Party, and dreams of rebellion against Big Brother.

As literary political fiction and as dystopian science-fiction, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a classic novel in content, plot, and style. Many of its terms and concepts, such as [Big Brother](#), [doublethink](#), [thoughtcrime](#), [Newspeak](#), and [memory hole](#), have become contemporary vernacular since its publication in 1949. Moreover, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* popularised the adjective [Orwellian](#), which refers to official deception, secret surveillance, and manipulation of the past in service to a [totalitarian](#) or manipulative political agenda.<sup>[3]</sup>

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## [\[edit\]](#) History and title



 A 1947 draft MS of the first page of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, showing the editorial development.

George Orwell "encapsulate[d] the thesis at the heart of his unforgiving novel" in 1944, and three years later wrote most of it on the Scottish island of [Jura](#), during the 1947–48 period, despite being critically [tubercular](#).<sup>[4]</sup> On December 4, 1948, he sent the final manuscript to the [Secker and Warburg](#) editorial house who published *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on June 8, 1949.<sup>[5][6]</sup> By 1989, it had been translated in to some 65 languages, the greatest number for any English-language novel at the time.<sup>[7]</sup> The title of the novel, its terms, its [Newspeak](#) language, and the author's surname are contemporary bywords for privacy lost to the State; while the adjective *Orwellian* connotes a totalitarian dystopia characterised by government control and subjugation of the people. As a language, [Newspeak](#) applies different meanings to things and actions by referring only to the end to be achieved, not the means of achieving it; hence, the [Ministry of Peace](#) (Minipax) deals with war, and the [Ministry of Love](#) (Miniluv) deals with brainwashing and torture. The Ministries do achieve their goals; peace through war, and love of Big Brother through mind control.

*The Last Man in Europe* was one of the original titles for the novel, but in a letter dated 22 October 1948 to his publisher [Fredric Warburg](#), eight months before publication, Orwell wrote about hesitating between *The Last Man in Europe* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.<sup>[8]</sup> Warburg suggested changing the *Man* title to one more commercial.<sup>[9]</sup> Speculation about the choice of title includes perhaps an allusion to the title of the poem "End of the Century, 1984" (1934) by Orwell's first and then wife [Eileen O'Shaughnessy](#) (1905–1945),<sup>[10][11]</sup> to [G. K.](#)

[Chesterton](#)'s novel also set in a future London of 1984, *[The Napoleon of Notting Hill](#)* (1904),<sup>[12]</sup> and to the [Jack London](#) novel *[The Iron Heel](#)* (1908).<sup>[13]</sup>

In the novel *[1985](#)* (1978), [Anthony Burgess](#) proposes that Orwell, disillusioned by the onset of the [Cold War](#) (1945–91), intended to title the book *1948*. The introduction to the [Penguin Books](#) Modern Classics edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reports that Orwell originally set 1980 as the story's time, but the extended writing led to renaming the novel, first to *1982*, then to *1984*. Alternatively, the name was chosen because it is an inversion of the 1948 composition year.<sup>[14]</sup> Throughout its publication history, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been either banned or legally [challenged](#) as intellectually dangerous to the public, just like [Aldous Huxley](#)'s *[Brave New World](#)* (1932),<sup>[15]</sup> *[We](#)* (1924), by [Yevgeny Zamyatin](#); *[Kallocain](#)* (1940), by [Karin Boye](#); and *[Fahrenheit 451](#)* (1951), by [Ray Bradbury](#).<sup>[16]</sup> In 2005, *Time* magazine included *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in its list of 100 best English-language novels since 1923.<sup>[17]</sup> Among literary scholars, the Russian dystopian novel *[We](#)*, by Zamyatin, is considered to have inspired *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.<sup>[18][19]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Copyright status

The novel will be in the [public domain](#) in the United Kingdom and the [European Union](#) in 2020, and in the United States in 2044<sup>[20]</sup> although it is already in the public domain in [Canada](#),<sup>[21]</sup> [Russia](#),<sup>[22]</sup> [South Africa](#),<sup>[23]</sup> and [Australia](#).<sup>[24]</sup>

On 17 July 2009, after learning the publisher MobileReference had no US rights to their edition of the book,<sup>[citation needed]</sup> [Amazon.com](#) withdrew the MobileReference edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from sale (several other editions were unaffected).<sup>[25]</sup> Amazon also electronically [deleted](#) it from the synchronised e-book reader devices, which also made inaccessible the annotations made by users in their devices.<sup>[26]</sup> The deletion prompted customer complaints, and Orwellian comparison to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Amazon formally stated that they were “[c]hanging our systems so that in the future we will not remove books from customers’ devices in these circumstances.”<sup>[27]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Background



The banner of the Party in the 1984 film adaption of the book.

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is set in [Oceania](#), one of three intercontinental super-states who divided the world among themselves after a global war. Most of the action takes place in London, the "chief city of [Airstrip One](#)",<sup>[28]</sup> the Oceanic province that "had once been called England or Britain".<sup>[29]</sup> Posters of the Party leader, [Big Brother](#), bearing the caption "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU" adorn the landscape, while the ubiquitous *telescreen* (transceiving

television set) monitors the private and public lives of the populace. The social class system of Oceania is threefold:

- (I) the upper-class [Inner Party](#), the elite ruling minority
- (II) the middle-class [Outer Party](#), and
- (III) the lower-class [Proles](#) (from *proletariat*), who make up 85% of the population and represent the uneducated working class.

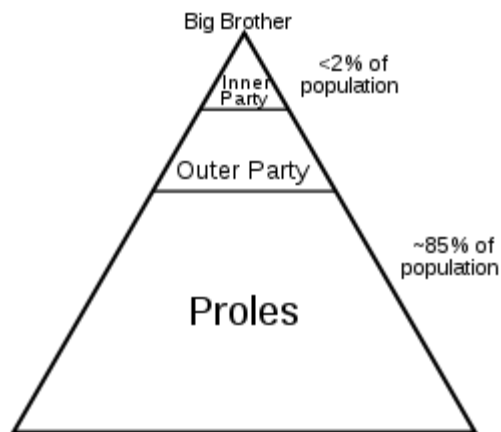
As the government, the Party controls the population with four ministries:

- the [Ministry of Peace](#) (Minipax),
- the [Ministry of Plenty](#) (Miniplenty),
- the [Ministry of Love](#) (Miniluv), and
- the [Ministry of Truth](#) (Minitrue),

In this last one, the protagonist [Winston Smith](#) (a member of the Outer Party) works as an editor [revising historical records](#) to concord the past to the contemporary [party line](#) orthodoxy — that changes daily — and deletes the official existence of [unpersons](#), people who have been "vaporized"; who have not only been [killed by the state](#), but effectively erased from existence.

The story of Winston Smith begins on 4 April 1984: "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen";<sup>[30]</sup> yet he is uncertain of the true date, given the régime's continual historical revisionism. His memories and his reading of the proscribed book, *[The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism](#)*, by [Emmanuel Goldstein](#), reveal that after the [Second World War](#), the United Kingdom fell to civil war and then was integrated to Oceania. Simultaneously, the [USSR](#) annexed continental Europe and established the second superstate of [Eurasia](#). The third superstate, [Eastasia](#) comprises the regions of East Asia and Southeast Asia. The three superstates fight a perpetual war for the remaining unconquered lands of the world, in pursuit of which they form and break alliances as convenient. From his childhood (1949–53), Winston remembers the Atomic Wars fought in Europe, western Russia, and North America. It is unclear to him what occurred first — either the Party's civil war ascendance, or the US's annexation of the British Empire, or the war wherein [Colchester](#) was bombed — however, the increasing clarity of his memory and the story of his family's dissolution suggest that the atomic bombings occurred first (the Smiths took refuge in a tube station) followed by civil war featuring "confused street fighting in London itself", and the societal postwar reorganisation, which the Party retrospectively call "the Revolution".

## [\[edit\]](#) Plot



Oceanian society: Big Brother atop, The Party in middle, the Proles at bottom, in 1984.

The story of Winston Smith presents the world in the year 1984, after a global atomic war, via his perception of life in Airstrip One (England or Britain), a province of Oceania, one of the world's three superstates; his intellectual rebellion against [the Party](#) and illicit romance with [Julia](#); and his consequent imprisonment, interrogation, torture, and re-education by the [Thinkpol](#) in the [Miniluv](#).

### [\[edit\]](#) Winston Smith

Winston Smith is an intellectual, a member of the [Outer Party](#), who lives in the ruins of London, and who grew up in some long post-World War II England, during the revolution and the civil war after which the Party assumed power. At some point his parents and sister disappeared, and the [Ingsoc](#) movement placed him in an orphanage for training and subsequent employment as an Outer Party civil servant. Yet his squalid existence consists of living in a one-room flat on a subsistence diet of black bread and synthetic meals washed down with Victory-brand [gin](#). He keeps a journal of negative thoughts and opinions about the Party and Big Brother, which, if uncovered by the Thought Police, would warrant death. The flat has an alcove, beside the [telescreen](#), where he apparently cannot be seen, and thus believes he has some privacy, while writing in his journal: "[Thoughtcrime](#) does not entail death. *Thoughtcrime IS death*". The telescreens (in every public area, and the quarters of the Party's members), hidden microphones, and informers permit the Thought Police to spy upon everyone and so identify anyone who might endanger the Party's régime; children, most of all, are indoctrinated to spy and inform on suspected thought-criminals — especially their parents.

At the [Minitrue](#), Winston is an editor responsible for historical revisionism, concurring the past to the Party's contemporary official version of the past; thus making the government of Oceania seem omniscient. As such, he perpetually rewrites records and alters photographs, rendering the deleted people as "unpersons"; the original documents are incinerated in a "[memory hole](#)". Despite enjoying the intellectual challenges of historical revisionism, he becomes increasingly fascinated by the *true past* and tries to learn more about it.

### [\[edit\]](#) Julia

One day, at the Minitrue, as Winston assisted a woman who had fallen, she surreptitiously handed him a folded paper note; later, at his desk he covertly reads the message: I LOVE



YOU. The name of the woman is "Julia", a young dark haired mechanic who repairs the Minitrue novel-writing machines. Before that occasion, Winston had loathed the sight of her, presuming she was a member of the fanatical Junior Anti-Sex League, because she wore the red sash of the League, and because she was the type of woman he believed he could not attract: young and puritanical; nonetheless, his hostility towards her vanishes upon reading the message. Cautiously, Winston and Julia begin a love affair, at first meeting in the country, at a clearing in the woods, then at the belfry of a ruined church, and afterwards in a rented room atop an antiques shop in a proletarian neighbourhood of London. There, they think themselves safe and unobserved, because the rented bedroom has no apparent telescreen, but, unknown to Winston and Julia, the [Thought Police](#) were aware of their love affair.

Later, when the Inner Party member [O'Brien](#) approaches him, Winston believes he is an agent of the Brotherhood, a secret, counter-revolutionary organisation meant to destroy The Party. The approach opened a secret communication between them; and, on pretext of giving him a copy of the latest edition of the *Dictionary of Newspeak*, O'Brien gives Winston The Book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, by [Emmanuel Goldstein](#), the infamous and publicly reviled leader of the Brotherhood. The Book explains the concept of [perpetual war](#), the true meanings of the slogans WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH, and how the régime of The Party can be overthrown by means of the political awareness of the Proles.

### [\[edit\]](#) Capture

The Thought Police capture Winston and Julia in their bedroom, to be delivered to the [Ministry of Love](#) for interrogation. Charrington, the shop keeper who rented the room to them, reveals himself as an officer of the Thought Police. After a prolonged regimen of systematic beatings and psychologically draining interrogation, O'Brien, who is revealed to be a Thought Police leader and becomes Smith's inquisitor, tortures Winston with [electroshock](#), showing him how, through controlled manipulation of perception (e.g.: seeing whatever number of fingers held up that the Party demands one should see, whatever the "apparent" reality, i.e.  $2+2=5$ ), Winston can "cure" himself of his "insanity" — his manifest hatred for the Party. In long, complex conversations, he explains the Inner Party's motivation: complete and absolute power, mocking Winston's assumption that it was somehow altruistic and "for the greater good". Asked if the Brotherhood exists, O'Brien replies that this is something Winston will never know; it will remain an unsolvable quandary in his mind. During a torture session, his imprisonment in the Ministry of Love is explained: "There are three stages in your reintegration . . . There is learning, there is understanding, and there is acceptance", i.e. of the Party's assertion of reality.

### [\[edit\]](#) Confession and betrayal

In the first stage of political re-education, Winston Smith admits to and confesses to crimes he did and did not commit, implicating anyone and everyone, including Julia. In the second stage of re-education for reintegration to the society of Oceania, O'Brien makes Winston understand that he is rotting away. Winston counters that: "I have not betrayed Julia"; O'Brien agrees, Winston had not betrayed Julia because he "had not stopped loving her; his feelings toward her had remained the same". One night, in his cell, Winston awakens, screaming: "Julia! Julia! Julia, my love! Julia!" O'Brien rushes in to the cell, but not to interrogate Winston, but to send him to [Room 101](#), the most feared room in the Ministry of Love, where resides each prisoner's worst fear, which is forced upon him or her. In Room 101

is Acceptance, the final stage of the political re-education of Winston Smith, whose primal [fear of rats](#) is invoked when a wire cage holding hungry rats is fitted onto his face. As the rats are about to reach Winston's face, he shouts: "Do it to Julia!", thus betraying her, and relinquishing his love for her. Julia, also, betrayed Winston, in what O'Brien described as "a text book case" of betrayal. At torture's end, upon accepting the doctrine of The Party, Winston Smith is reintegrated to the society of Oceania, because he loved Big Brother.

## [\[edit\]](#) Re-encountering Julia

After reintegration to Oceanian society, Winston encounters Julia in a park; each admits having betrayed the other:

"I betrayed you", she said baldly.

"I betrayed you", he said.

She gave him another quick look of dislike.

"Sometimes", she said, "they threaten you with something — something you can't stand up to, can't even think about. And then you say, 'Don't do it to me, do it to somebody else, do it to so-and-so.' And perhaps you might pretend, afterwards, that it was only a trick and that you just said it to make them stop and didn't really mean it. But that isn't true. At the time when it happens you do mean it. You think there's no other way of saving yourself and you're quite ready to save yourself that way. You *want* it to happen to the other person. You don't give a damn what they suffer. All you care about is yourself."

"All you care about is yourself", he echoed.

"And after that, you don't feel the same toward the other person any longer."

"No", he said, "you don't feel the same."

Throughout, a song recurs in Winston's mind:

*Under the spreading chestnut tree  
I sold you and you sold me—*

The lyrics are an adaptation of 'Go no more a-rushing', a popular English campfire song from the 1920s, that was a popular success for [Glenn Miller](#) in 1939.<sup>[\[31\]](#)[\[32\]](#)[\[33\]](#)</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Conversion

Smith has accepted the Party's depiction of life, and sincerely celebrates a news bulletin reporting Oceania's decisive victory over [Eurasia](#) for control of Africa. He then realises that "he had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother".

## [\[edit\]](#) Characters

### [\[edit\]](#) Principal characters

- [Winston Smith](#) — the [protagonist](#), is a [phlegmatic everyman](#).
- [Julia](#) — Winston's lover, is a covert "[rebel](#) from the waist downwards" who publicly espouses Party doctrine as a member of the fanatical Junior Anti-Sex League.



- [Big Brother](#) — the dark-eyed, mustachioed embodiment of The Party who rule Oceania.
- [O'Brien](#) — a member of the Inner Party who poses as a member of The Brotherhood, the counter-revolutionary resistance, in order to deceive, trap, and capture Winston and Julia.
- [Emmanuel Goldstein](#) — a former leader of The Party, the counter-revolutionary author of The Book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, and leader of the Brotherhood. He is the symbolic [Enemy of the State](#) — the national [nemesis](#) who ideologically unites the people of Oceania with the Party, especially during the [Two Minutes Hate](#), and other fear mongering by the Inner Party. It is unknown whether he is real or a fabrication of the Party itself for the purpose of propaganda.

## [\[edit\]](#) Secondary characters

- Aaronson, Jones, and Rutherford — Former members of the Inner Party whom Winston vaguely remembers as among the original leaders of the Revolution, long before he had heard of Big Brother. They confessed to treasonable conspiracies with foreign powers and were then executed in the political purges of the 1960s. In between their confessions and executions, Winston saw them drinking in the Chestnut Tree Café - with broken noses, suggesting that their confessions had been obtained by torture. Later, in the course of his editorial work, Winston sees newspaper evidence contradicting their confessions. He keeps the evidence covered on his desk for maybe ten minutes, but then drops it into the memory hole. Eleven years later, he is confronted with the same photograph during an interrogation.
- Ampleforth — Winston's one-time Records Department colleague who was imprisoned for leaving the word "God" in a Kipling poem; Winston encounters him at the [Miniluv](#). Ampleforth is a dreamer and an intellectual who takes pleasure in his work, and respects poetry and language, which traits and qualities cause him disfavour with the Party.
- Charrington — An officer of the [Thought Police](#) posing as a sympathetic antiques-shop keeper.
- Katharine — The emotionally indifferent wife whom Winston "can't get rid of". Despite disliking sexual intercourse, Katharine continued with Winston because it was their "duty to the Party". Although she was a "goodthinkful" [ideologue](#), they separated because she could not bear children.
- Parsons — Winston's naïve neighbour, and an ideal member of the Outer Party: an uneducated, suggestible man who is utterly loyal to the Party, and fully believes in its perfect image. He is socially active and participates in the Party activities for his social class. Although friendly towards Smith, and despite his political conformity, he punishes his bully-boy son for firing a catapult at Winston. Later, as a prisoner, Winston sees Parsons is in the Ministry of Love, because his daughter had reported him to the Thought Police after overhearing him speak against the Party whilst he slept.

- Mrs. Parsons — Parsons's wife is a wan and hapless woman who is intimidated by her children, who represent the new generation of Oceanian citizens, without memory of life before Big Brother, without family ties; the model society moulded by the Inner Party.
- Syme — Winston's colleague at the Ministry of Truth, whom the Party "vaporised" because he remained a lucidly-thinking intellectual. He was a [lexicographer](#) who developed the language and the dictionary of [Newspeak](#), in the course of which he enjoyed destroying words, and wholeheartedly believed that Newspeak would replace Oldspeak ([Standard English](#)) by the year AD 2050. Although Syme's politically orthodox opinions aligned with Party doctrine, Winston noted that "He is too intelligent. He sees too clearly and speaks too plainly". After noting that Syme's name was deleted from the members list of the Chess Club, Winston infers he became an unperson who never had existed.

## [\[edit\]](#) The world in 1984

### [\[edit\]](#) Ingsoc (English Socialism)

Main article: [Ingsoc](#)

In the year 1984, **Ingsoc** (English Socialism), is the regnant [ideology](#) and [pseudo-philosophy](#) of Oceania, and Newspeak is its official language, of official documents.

### [\[edit\]](#) Ministries of Oceania

In London, the Airstrip One capital city, Oceania's four government ministries are in pyramids (300 metres high), the façades of which display the Party's three slogans. The ministries' names are [antonymous doublethink](#) to their true functions: "The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation". (Part II, Chapter IX — *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*)

[Ministry of Peace](#) (Newspeak: *Minipax*)

Minipax supports Oceania's perpetual war.

The primary aim of modern warfare (in accordance with the principles of doublethink, this aim is simultaneously recognized and not recognized by the directing brains of the Inner Party) is to use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living. Ever since the end of the nineteenth century, the problem of what to do with the surplus of consumption goods has been latent in industrial society. At present, when few human beings even have enough to eat, this problem is obviously not urgent, and it might not have become so, even if no artificial processes of destruction had been at work.

[Ministry of Plenty](#) (Newspeak: *Miniplenty*)

The Ministry of Plenty rations and controls food, goods, and domestic production; every fiscal quarter, the Miniplenty publishes false claims of having raised the standard of living,

when it has, in fact, reduced rations, availability, and production. The Minitrue substantiates the Miniplenty claims by [revising](#) historical records to report numbers supporting the current, "increased rations".

### [Ministry of Truth](#) (Newspeak: *Minitrue*)

The Ministry of Truth controls information: news, entertainment, education, and the arts. Winston Smith works in the Minitrue RecDep (Records Department), "rectifying" historical records to concord with Big Brother's current pronouncements, thus everything the Party says is true.

### [Ministry of Love](#) (Newspeak: *Miniluv*)

The Ministry of Love identifies, monitors, arrests, and converts real and imagined dissidents. In Winston's experience, the dissident is beaten and tortured, then, when near-broken, is sent to [Room 101](#) to face "the worst thing in the world" — until love for Big Brother and the Party replaces dissension.

### [\[edit\]](#) **Doublethink**

Main article: [Doublethink](#)

The keyword here is blackwhite. Like so many Newspeak words, this word has two mutually contradictory meanings. Applied to an opponent, it means the habit of impudently claiming that black is white, in contradiction of the plain facts. Applied to a Party member, it means a loyal willingness to say that black is white when Party discipline demands this. But it means also the ability to believe that black is white, and more, to know that black is white, and to forget that one has ever believed the contrary. This demands a continuous alteration of the past, made possible by the system of thought which really embraces all the rest, and which is known in Newspeak as doublethink. Doublethink is basically the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them