

NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR (1984)

Lexile 580

Nineteen Eighty-Four is a **novel** written by George Orwell (1903–1950) in 1949. A novel is a long, made-up story. This novel is about a future time. In this time, **governments** have become too strong. Governments are groups of people who lead countries. In the story, the government has taken over people's lives. People are not allowed any freedom. The hero of the story tries to fight back against the unfair government. This novel warns people about governments taking away people's rights.

Background

Nineteen Eighty-Four was written by a British author named George Orwell. George Orwell was born in India on June 25, 1903. At that time, Britain ruled India. Britain had an **empire**. An empire means one country ruling other countries. Orwell later believed that empires were wrong and people should be free.

Orwell's books often deal with governments that are unfair. Two of Orwell's most famous novels are *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Both are about bad governments. Orwell **published** *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1949. Published means printed a book.

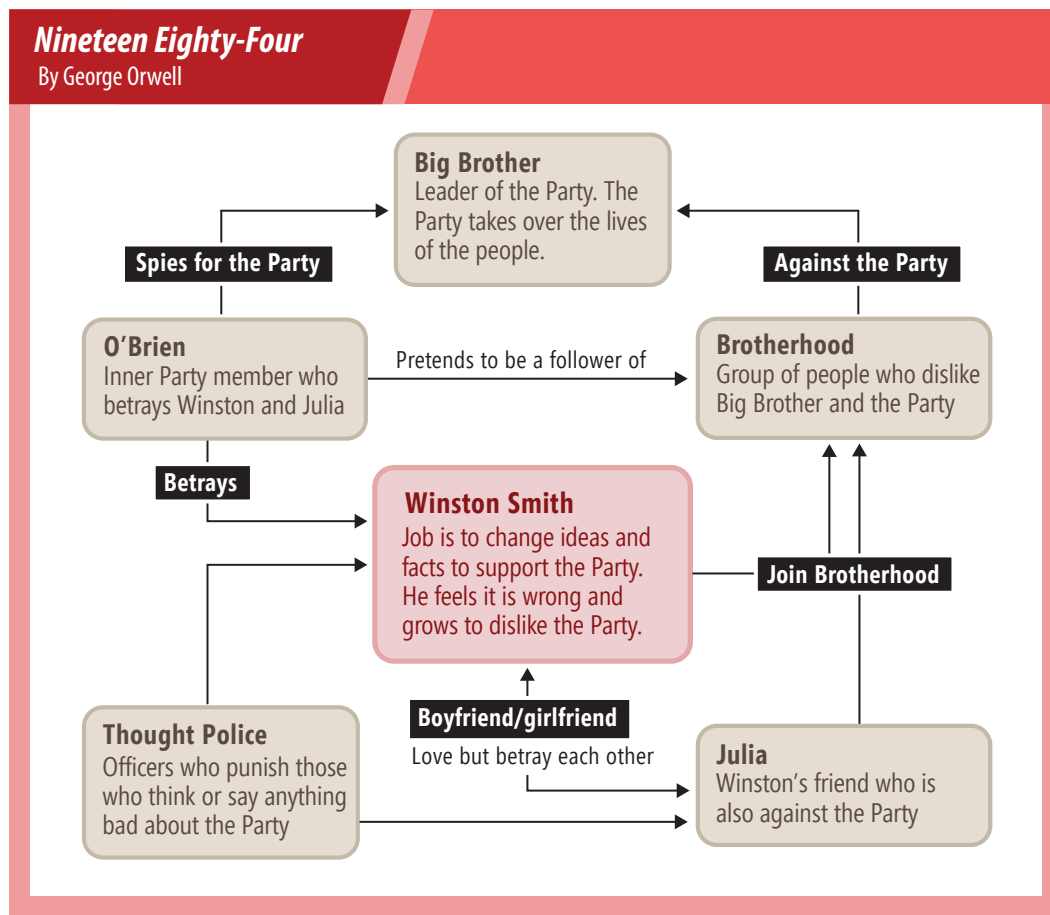
Setting

The **setting** is when and where a story takes place. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* takes place in the year 1984. That was a future time to Orwell because he lived long ago. The story takes place in a made-up country called Oceania. Oceania is at war with two other countries, Eurasia and Eastasia. This war never ends. It makes people feel afraid and angry.

Oceania has a very strong government called the Party. The leader of the Party is called Big Brother. The Party takes over the lives of the people. It tells them how to speak and act. People must use the right words at all times. They are not allowed to say or even think anything bad about the Party. People who do not follow the Party are punished by the Thought Police.

Plot

The **plot** is what happens in the story. The people in the plot are called **characters**. The main character in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is Winston Smith. He is a regular man who lives in Oceania. His job is to change the ideas and facts in books. He has to get rid of all ideas and facts that do not agree with the Party. Then, Winston has to write new ideas and facts that support the Party.



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The Party believes that truth can be changed. Winston feels differently. He thinks what he is doing is wrong. He knows that the Party is lying to the people of Oceania. Winston wants truth and freedom. He falls in love with a woman named Julia. Julia agrees with his feelings about the Party and its rules. Winston and Julia begin living together. They also start looking for other people who secretly disagree with the Party.

Winston and Julia begin working with the Brotherhood. This is a secret group of people who dislike Big Brother and the Party. Winston makes friends with a man named O'Brien. O'Brien seems to be a member of the Brotherhood. However, he is really a **spy** for the Party. A spy is a person who watches other people and reports anything they do wrong.

O'Brien has Winston and Julia arrested, or taken to jail. Winston and Julia hold on to their love and their beliefs. Party members then take Winston to Room 101. Room 101 is a room that contains a person's worst fear. The Party knows that Winston is afraid of rats. They cover him with rats until he gives up. Winston **betrays** Julia. Betraying means turning against someone you care about. Julia also betrays Winston.

At the end of the story, the Party has won. Winston and Julia have both given up. They no longer love each other. Instead, they only love and obey Big Brother.

Importance

Nineteen Eighty-Four is an important book. It tells a scary tale about a future government. This government is too strong. It is cruel and unfair to its people. The Party is a **totalitarian** government. That means a government that takes people's freedom. Readers found this idea worrying. They did not want governments to act like this in the future. The novel served as a warning. It told readers to beware unfairness. It told readers to protect their freedom while they have it. George Orwell died on January 21, 1950. However, his scary tale of the future lives on for millions of readers.

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■ By Mark Dziak

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COMPREHENSION TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Where does Winston Smith live?

- A. Oceania
 - B. India
 - C. Eastasia
 - D. Eurasia
-

2. What is in Room 101?

- A. old books
 - B. Big Brother
 - C. a person's worst fear
 - D. a person's greatest love
-

3. What is Winston Smith's job in this novel?

- A. He is a spy.
 - B. He is a leader.
 - C. He helps the police.
 - D. He changes books.
-

Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

4. The people in a novel or other story are called the _____.

5. An _____ is made of a country that rules other countries.

6. Someone who _____ a book has made many copies of it.

COMPREHENSION TEST ANSWERS

Multiple-Choice Questions

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Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

4. The people in a novel or other story are called the characters.

5. An empire is made of a country that rules other countries.

6. Someone who published a book has printed many copies of it.