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NEWSPEAK

or
The language
of control

CHECK YOU KNOW THE MEANING
OF THE FOLLOWING WORDS
(go to page 7 for help).

- ★ MANIPULATE
- ★ REPRESSION
- ★ TOTALITARIANISM


1984, the story you are about to read, is a strong warning against totalitarianism and repression. The story is set in Oceania, a huge superstate which is constantly at war with either Eurasia or Eastasia (the two other superstates which make up the world of the novel). Oceania is ruled by the Party, and everyone believes and obeys what its leader, Big Brother, says. The Party has created a controlled language, **Newspeak**, with simple grammar and a restricted vocabulary.


- **concept:** idea
- **constantly:** always
- **determines:** (here) decides
- **obeys:** does what (he) says
- **restricted:** limited
- **ultimately:** at the end
- **warning:** something that tells you that something bad could happen.


NO WORDS, NO REBELLION

The Party believes that, by controlling language, will be able to control what people think, and ultimately stay in power. By cutting language to a minimum, people will no longer have the words to express themselves, and their thoughts will automatically be restricted. If you don't have the word for something, it simply doesn't exist. In this way, any real verbal communication between people becomes impossible. And if people can't speak to each other, they can't organise a rebellion against the Party. All thoughts against the Party become unthinkable.



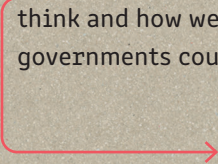
 In pairs, imagine one of the following situations. How do you explain yourself?

 You are a young child, and you see someone stealing a bag from your family car, but don't know the words *thief*, *robber* or *steal*.

 You are in a foreign country, and you can't speak the local language. You see someone steal something, but don't know the words *thief*, *robber* or *steal*.

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

Orwell was a journalist, and he strongly believed in the power of language. For Orwell, **language deeply influences and determines** the way we think and how we understand the world. He also believed that totalitarian governments could use language to restrict and manipulate people's ideas.



LANGUAGE DETERMINISM

is the concept that language influences, and determines human thought and behaviour. Find out more online. Then watch the film *Arrival* for an exciting example of language determinism.

LESS WORDS

Syme, a character in the book who is working on the current Newspeak dictionary, says that Newspeak is the only language that is getting smaller and smaller. Simple words are modified* by prefixes and suffixes in order to change their meaning. 'Bad' becomes 'ungood', 'better' is 'gooder' and 'excellent' is 'plusgood'.

BAD UNGOOD BETTER GOODER
EXCELLENT PLUSGOOD



Think



In pairs, discuss what 'unperson' may mean.

COMPOUND WORDS*

Another feature of Newspeak is the use of compound words. These words have been created for political reasons and reflect the ideas of the Party. They are generally made up of a noun and a verb, and are pleasant and easy to say; that way, the speaker uses them without thinking about their deeper meaning.

Winston works at 'Minitru' or the Ministry of Truth, and in the book, he worries that he has committed* 'facecrime' or used a facial expression that may be considered to be inappropriate* by the Party. Another famous example is 'doublethink', but we will look at that next.

- **appendix:** extra chapter at the end of a book
- **committed:** (of crime) done
- **compound words:** words that are made up of 2 or more words
- **inappropriate:** not good or right
- **modified:** changed
- **principles:** most important ideas
- **simultaneously:** at the same time

DOUBLETHINK

Doublethink is a concept invented by Orwell where two opposing ideas are simultaneously said to be true. Examples include the three slogans of the Party:

WAR

IS

PEACE

FREEDOM

IS

SLAVERY

IGNORANCE

IS

STRENGTH

Doublethink allows everything to be true and false at the same time.

It allows history to be rewritten and rewritten again as facts are no longer important.

Think

Can you think of examples of *doublethink* in today's world? How would you translate the word '*doublethink*' into your language?

THE PRINCIPLES OF NEWSPEAK

The full version of *1984* includes an appendix called *The Principles of Newspeak*. In the appendix, Orwell describes the language and how it is used as a political tool by the Party.

The appendix describes Newspeak using the past tense. This has made some critics take the optimistic view that Newspeak and the whole dystopian world of the novel no longer exist.



O'Brien

Aaronson

Jones

Rutherford

1984



Mr Charrington

Winston Smith

Julia

BEFORE READING

1 1984 is set in London, in the year 1984. Great Britain is now a part of Oceania, one of the three superstates that rule the world.

 Below are some terms used in the story. In pairs, discuss what you think that they may mean. Then match them to their definitions.

- Big Brother the Brotherhood the Fiction Department
 the Ministry of Truth the Records Department
 the Thought Police the Party

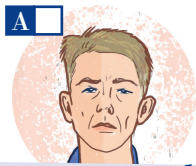
- a The political force which rules in Oceania.
- b An organisation that finds and punishes people who think in a different way to the Party.
- c A government organisation which controls news, education, entertainment and the arts.
- d A secret army which fights against the Party.
- e The part of the Ministry of Truth which rewrites news articles, changes facts, and deletes people from official records.
- f The part of the Ministry of Truth which writes new books for the people to read.
- g The mysterious leader of the Party.

 2 Read and listen to the extract below. Find and underline four of the terms from Exercise 1.

It was almost eleven in the Records Department, where Winston worked. Everyone was preparing for the Two Minutes Hate when two people came into the room. One of them was a girl from the Fiction Department. She was about twenty-seven, with dark hair and a pretty face, and she moved quickly. Winston thought that she seemed dangerous, and that she might be an agent of the Thought Police. The other person was a man named O'Brien who wore the black uniform of the Inner Party. He was a large man with glasses and a thick neck, and a funny, but brutal face. Winston secretly believed that O'Brien was not a perfect Party member.



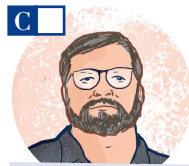
3 Look at the pictures of some of the characters from the story. Which two characters are described in Exercise 2? Tick (✓).



Winston Smith



Julia



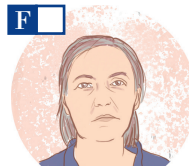
O'Brien



Big Brother



Mr Charrington



Mrs Parsons

4 Match the descriptions below to the other four characters. Write the names above the descriptions.

a

On the wall there was a large poster of a handsome forty-five-year-old man with a thick black moustache.

b

He was small and thin, with fair hair and a pale face. He always wore the blue overalls of the Party.

c


Winston thought that the old man with his long nose, thick glasses and velvet jacket looked like someone from the past.

d

A sad, colourless woman was standing outside. She was about thirty years old, but looked much older. She seemed to have dust in the lines of her face.



1 WINSTON SMITH

 It was a bright, cold day in April, and the clocks were striking• thirteen. Winston Smith entered Victory Mansions. The hallway was smelly. On the wall, there was a large poster of a handsome forty-five-year-old man with a thick black moustache. Winston walked slowly up the stairs to his seventh-floor flat, stopping to rest his sore• ankle• on the way. The poster was on every floor, and the man's eyes seemed to follow him everywhere. “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” was written on it, in big letters.

Inside the flat, a voice on the *telescreen* was reading out a list of numbers. Winston turned the volume down•, but there was no way of turning it off completely.

Winston was small and thin, with fair hair and a pale face. He always wore the blue overalls• of the Party. From his window, the world looked cold, and there seemed to be no colour in anything except the posters of Big Brother. Behind his back, the voice on the *telescreen* was still talking. The screen could record and watch every sound and movement he made. You never knew for sure when you were being watched by the Thought Police.

TELESCREEN

The idea of *telescreens* was invented by George Orwell. *Telescreens* are televisions, security cameras and microphones, all at the same time. In the book, they are used for controlling people. What things control us, or collect our data today?

- **ankle:** part of the leg just above the foot
- **overalls:**



- **sore:** painful; that was hurting
- **striking:** (here) telling (time)
- **turned the volume down:** made it more quiet

Winston could see the Ministry of Truth, where he worked, in the distance. Minitrue, as it was called in Newspeak, was a very tall white pyramid that looked over the dirty city of London. It was the centre for news, education, entertainment• and the arts. From his window, Winston could read the three slogans of the Party on its wall,

WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE• IS STRENGTH

In London, there were three other buildings like the Ministry of Truth. They were the homes of the other three Ministries. The Ministry of Peace, Minipax, dealt with• war. The Ministry of Love, Miniluv, dealt with law and order•. And the Ministry of Plenty•, Miniplenty, dealt with money and business. The Ministry of Love was the most frightening one. It had no windows at all, and it was guarded by gorilla-faced men in black uniforms.

Winston turned towards the telescreen, put on a happy face – you never knew when they were watching you – and walked into his tiny• kitchen. He drank a cup of Victory Gin, which immediately made him feel sick, and then happy. Then he went into the living room, and sat at a small table which could not be seen by the telescreen. From the drawer, he took out a pen, ink•, and a beautiful new diary. The Party didn't like its members going into shops, or buying things, but it wasn't illegal. Nothing was illegal, because there were no laws. Writing a diary was not illegal either, but he knew that it could be punished by death.

- **dealt with:** (here) looked after
- **entertainment:** shows, films, TV etc. that help people relax and enjoy themselves
- **ignorance:** lack of knowledge or education
- **ink:** liquid in pens (for writing)
- **law and order:** rules people have to follow
- **plenty:** lots of something
- **tiny:** very small

He lifted the pen and started writing in small untidy letters,

April 4th, 1984.

He stopped. Was it 1984? Was he born in 1944 or 1945? He wasn't sure. But he knew that he was thirty-nine, so it must be near that date. Then he realised that he didn't know why he was writing the diary. Who would read it? For some time, he sat looking at the page.

Suddenly, he began writing everything that came into his head. Then he remembered something from earlier that day, and stopped. It was the reason why he was now writing in the diary.

It was almost eleven in the Records Department, where Winston worked. Everyone was preparing for the Two Minutes Hate when two people came into the room. One of them was a girl from the Fiction Department. She was about twenty-seven, with dark hair and a pretty face, and she moved quickly. Winston thought that she seemed dangerous, and that she might be an agent of the Thought Police. The other person was a man named O'Brien who wore the black uniform of the Inner Party. He was a large man with glasses and a thick neck, and a funny, but brutal face. Winston secretly believed that O'Brien was not a perfect Party member. He hoped that the two of them could talk one day.

Suddenly, there was a horrible noise from the telescreen. The Two Minutes Hate was starting. As usual, the face of Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People, flashed onto the screen. Everyone hated Goldstein. He was a traitor, and the leader of the Brotherhood, a secret army which fought against the Party. He was also the author of *The Book*, a collection of terrible stories against the Party. Everyone started shouting loudly at the telescreen. Winston was shouting with the others. The worst thing about the Two Minutes Hate was that it was impossible not to take part.

When it was over, the powerful and mysteriously calm face of Big Brother filled the telescreen, followed by the three slogans of the Party. At that moment, Winston's and O'Brien's eyes met. Winston knew that they were thinking the same thing.

Back in his room, Winston's eyes looked down at the page. He saw that he was writing,

DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER

He had committed• a thought crime, and the Thought Police would find out about it sooner or later. One day, he would disappear, and his name would be removed• from the records. He would be vaporized•.

Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. Already? Winston's heart was beating like a drum, as he got up to open the door.

THOUGHT CRIME

What was Winston's thought crime?

In Orwell's story, a person commits a thought crime when their thoughts are different to those of the Party.



In groups, write a definition of 'cancel culture'.

How is thought crime similar to cancel culture?

- **committed:** did; carried out
- **removed:** cancelled; deleted

- **vaporized:** (here) secretly murdered and removed from society



AFTER READING VOCABULARY

1 Use five of the words in the box to complete the sentences.

belly luxury narrow ration
sling sore threat weak

- a As she came nearer, Winston saw that her arm was in a
- b Winston suddenly felt a pain in his
- c A voice announced that the chocolate would be cut by a third.
- d Winston was now in a street with a few dark shops.
- e As he walked up the stairs, Winston often stopped to rest his ankle.

2 Write sentences with the three words left out in Exercise 1.

3 To or at? Choose the best option to complete the following sentences.

- a As they were talking, Julia suddenly threw her shoe a rat in the corner.
- b The guard kicked Winston, then pulled him his feet and took him to Room 101.
- c He was tied a chair and could not move.
- d The soldier's gun was pointing straight you.
- e As soon as he moved, they yelled him from the telescreen.
- f It was usual for children to report their parents the Thought Police.
- g The same operation was repeated a lower level for the proletariat.



4 Listen and check.

P B1 Preliminary English Test Reading Part 5

1 Complete each sentence by choosing the correct answer (A, B, C or D).

1 The boy pointed a toy gun at Winston, who his hands.

- A raised B rose C arose D raise

2 He was in a more comfortable cell than before and three meals a day.

- A made B got C made D did

3 There was a newsflash on the telescreen. The war end soon.

- A must B can C needs D might

4 Both Winston and Julia knew that these days could not long.

- A become B be C last D get

5 There were also some interesting jobs that Winston could lose himself

- A at B in C for D with

6 Winston didn't understand why all the lying place.

- A took B had C about D for

7 Winston liked his rented room. It him think of the past.

- A got B went C reminded D made

8 Suddenly, his heart froze fear.

- A for B on C with D about

9 They joined the crowd, and stood together.

- A far B open C next D close

10 There were rats all the place.

- A over B through C along D in