**George Orwell and 1984**

**The Basics**

* Born Eric Arthur Blair
* June 25th, 1903 – January 21st, 1950
* He was an English novelist, essayist, journalist, and critic.
* Born in British India. Father worked in the Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service. He had two sisters, Marjorie and Avril. When he was one they moved back to England.
* He started writing while in school, which he attended on a scholarship.
* He also worked as a police officer, a teacher, an assistant in a book shop.
* Married Eileen O’Shaughnessy in 1936.
* Went to Spain to fight in the Spanish Civil War.
* Was injured in the war.
* His health deteriorated after he returned to England and he spent some time in a sanatorium as they thought he had tuberculosis. He eventually recovered, but his lungs were never strong again.
* During WWII he tried to get war work, but was unsuccessful. His wife worked in the Ministry of Information in the Censorship Department. Eventually he joined the Home Guard and later worked for the BBC.
* In 1944 they adopted a boy named Richard.
* In 1945, Eileen died under anesthetic while getting a hysterectomy.
* After her death, he wrote a lot and employed a housekeeper to look after his son.
* In 1947 he was diagnosed with tuberculosis.
* 1949 – Courted Sonia Brownell and they got engaged in September. Sonia took charge of his affairs and took care of him in the hospital. They got married in the hospital in October.
* Died when an artery burst in his lungs. He was 46.
* Buried in Oxfordshire at the All Saints’ Churchyard.
* Son raised by his sister.

**Orwell the Man**

* “He used to say the one thing he wished in this world was that he’d been attractive to women.” He was a bit of a womanizer and had many girlfriends and even cheated on his wife a few times. He was an excellent letter writer.
* He identified as an atheist but with humanist stance. However, he did go to church regularly.
* He had a few close friends, but noticed that he was out of place in a crowd and uncomfortable outside of his class. He didn’t have much in common with those who didn’t share his intellectual interests.
* He was a heavy smoker, which was not good for his lungs.
* He considered fish and chips, association football, the pub, strong tea, cut price chocolate, the movies, and radio among chief comforts for the working class.
* He dressed unpredictably, but usually casually.
* He was openly homophobic.

**His Work**

* His work is marked by lucid prose, awareness of social injustice, opposition to totalitarianism, and outspoken support of democratic socialism.
* He wrote literary criticism, poetry, fiction and polemical (a type of contentious rhetoric) journalism.
* His best known works are *Animal Farm* (1945), an allegorical account of the Russian Revolution, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*(1949), a dystopian novel.
* He also wrote non fiction pieces such as *The Road to Wigan Pier* and *Homage to Catalonia.*
* The Times ranked his second on the list of “The 50 greatest British writers since 1945.”
* Decided on the name George Orwell as his pseudonym because “It is a good round English name” and he needed one so that he wouldn’t shame his family when *Down and Out in Paris and London*, an account of his time spent as a tramp, was published.

**Legacy**

* Orwell’s work is still popular and influences popular and political culture.
* The term Orwellian, derived from his name, is a descriptive term referring to totalitarian or authoritarian social practices has entered the English language. It also describes an attitude and policy of control by propaganda, surveillance, misinformation, denial or truth, and manipulation of the past.
* Other phrases he’s coined are Big Brother, Thought Police, Room 101, memory hole, newspeak, doublethink, proles, unperson, and thoughtcrime.
* He wrote about the importance of precise and clear language, arguing that vague writing can be used as a powerful tool of political manipulation because it shapes the way we think.

**Orwell’s Six Rules for Writers**

* Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
* Never use a long word where a short one will do.
* If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
* Never use the passive where you could use the active.
* Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
* Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

**Nineteen Eighty-Four (or 1984)**

* Published in 1949 (June 8)
* Dystopian novel
* It was inspired by politics at the time, including the idea of splitting the world into zones of influence as suggested by the Tehran Conference.
* He wrote most of it on the Scottish island of Jura, despite suffering from tuberculosis.
* 1989 – It had been translated into 65 languages.
* The title was chosen because it was considered more commercial, but a suggestion was made that 1984 was chosen because it was an inversion of 1948, the year he finished the manuscript.
* The book uses themes from life in the Soviet Union and wartime life in Great Britain for sources of many of its motifs.
* The basic goal was imagining the consequences of Stalinist government ruling British society.

[*Nineteen Eighty-Four] was based chiefly on communism because that is the dominant form of totalitarianism, but I was trying to imagine what communism would be like if it were firmly rooted in the English speaking countries and no longer a mere extension of the Russian foreign office.*

***-George Orwell***

**Russian Revolution**

List a few things you learned from the video.

**Totalitarianism**

List a definition for the term.

**Stalin and Totalitarianism**

What features did it have in Russia/USSR?

**1984 and Stalin**

* Throughout the novel there are consistent references to the Soviet Union.
* 2+2=5, a slogan used to torment Winston Smith, was a communist party slogan from the second five year plan.
* The switch of Oceania’s allegiance relates to the Soviet Union’s changing relations with Nazi Germany.
* The description of Emmanuel Goldstein from the book, evokes the image of Leon Trotsky.
* The images of Big Brother, a man described as having a moustache, bears resemblance to the cult of personality built up around Joseph Stalin.
* And more.

**Dystopia/Dystopian**

* A community or society that is undesirable or frightening. It is translated as “not-good place”.
* It is an antonym for utopia, a term which was coined by Sir Thomas More as a title of his best known work, which was a model for a society with minimal crime, poverty, and violence. The use of it as an antonym can be traced back to a speech in parliament by J.S. Mill in 1868.
* Dystopian works are typically set in the future.
* They are designed to draw attention to real world issues regarding society, environment, politics, economics, religion, psychology, ethics, science, or technology.
* However, some people use it to refer to actually existing societies with totalitarian regimes.

**Examples**

* *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell
* *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury
* *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
* *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins
* Any others? Write an example or two below.

**Themes of the Novel**

* **Nationalism –** patriotic feelings, principles, or efforts.
* **Futurology –** systematic forecasting of the future, especially from present trends in society.
* **Censorship –** the suppression of prohibition of any parts of books, films, news, etc, considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security.
* **Surveillance –** close observation, especially of a suspected spy or criminal.