



Nineteen Eighty-Four

Author: George Orwell
Genre: Fiction
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Nineteen Eighty-Four remains in my opinion (and in that of many others) the most important book of the twentieth century... Big Brother was never, ever, just a TV show...

Winston Smith lives in a world where the government track and trace its citizens' communications, spies on their every movement with CCTV and tells them what to think, what to say and how to live. Sound familiar?

Set in what was at the time of writing several decades in the future, the great George Orwell's accuracy in predicting the growing power of the State in this, the last of his many great works, was chilling; even if his timing was a few decades out. His protagonist, Winston, works for the Ministry of Information. A middle class in to the top fifth of the population, he has a comfortable life. But this luxury comes at a price. Winston's job is to rewrite history to make it appear as if the Government, under the mysterious leader Big Brother, is always right. The Government hold all records, all information; destroying all evidence that contradicts their views and ideology, and he helps them do it. Seemingly alone in his thinking, Winston starts to wonder if Big Brother's version of what has happened is really the truth, and seeks to find out for himself. But it is not just the explicit that make this book so powerful, it is the implicit, the information just dropped in as an afterthought... things stated unambiguously, that we know to be wrong. What we know as Trafalgar Square is to Winston Victory Square, Big Brother himself stands atop the column. The great Book Tower of Senate House, the University of London's central library, is now the 'Great White Pyramid' where history is perverted, books destroyed and history rewritten. After all, to paraphrase the bad guy in the narrative: 'If I say something happened, and you say something happened and there is no evidence to say that it didn't... then it happened, and there is now way to prove otherwise.'

Nineteen Eighty-Four addresses prejudice, politics, the class system and governmental power like no other book, before or since. And though it may not be an entirely accurate depiction of our world, with the rise of the internet, Orwell's last great work does paint a disturbingly familiar picture... it is a warning of what society might become if we allow it to. Read it. Tell your friends to read it. It *needs* to be read.

10 sausages out of 10

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