1984 by George Orwell

What You Need to Know
The Setting

- The year 1984 (but really just sometime in the future)
- Government=totalitarian dictatorship
  - Big Brother: symbol and glorified persona
  - Inner Party: intellectuals devoted to Party
  - Outer Party: powerless middle class
  - The Proles: the “subhuman” workers
Genre = Dystopia

Dystopia = a perfect society gone wrong

Orwell warns against what could happen in the future based on the atrocities and dictators that gained power in WWII

- The rise of totalitarian governments
- The use of science and technology to regulate or brainwash society
- The distortion of truth through rhetoric
- The restricting of individual freedoms
What Orwell Saw . . .

- Economic depression in the 1930s
  - High unemployment
  - Shortages of money, housing, and food
  - Restrictions on daily life and rations

- The beginning of the Cold War
  - Countries east of “iron curtain” were communist
  - Countries west of it were protected by US
Terms to Know

- **Oceania** = N. and S. America, Britain, Australia, S. Africa
- **Eurasia** = Russia, Western and Eastern Europe
- **Eastasia** = China
- **Land up for grabs** = Middle East and Northern Africa
- **Constant fighting for control of that land**
Terms to Know (cont)

Newspeak = official language of Oceania, words are condensed and simplified for communication, resulting in less thought

Ingsoc = English Socialism, these principles guide the state of Oceania

Doublethink = believing two contradictory ideas at the same time

Telescreen = a two-way television screen
Main Characters

- Winston Smith = the “everyman” who is a member of the Party; rewrites history, begins to rebel against the party
- O’Brien = a man with whom Winston feels a connection; member of “the brotherhood,” an underground rebel group
- Julia = a girl from Winston’s work that he becomes infatuated with
Things to think about . . .

- How does this novel connect with our own society?
- What is Orwell’s ultimate message about
  - Societal apathy?
  - The use of fear?
  - Mass manipulation?
  - Isolation and individualism?
Remember

- The book is supposed to be set in the future—it’s not necessarily supposed to be the real 1984. If it helps, just call the book by a different title: 2050 or something.

- Winston has flashbacks and dreams at times, so if you get confused, be sure to ask questions in class.

- You will have an in-class assignment for the book each day, so be sure to read carefully.