

Example by StudyDriver

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Symbolism in 1984 Example

Set in 1984, Winston Smith a citizen of Oceania, one of three totalitarian states. It is ruled by the inner party, behind the mask of Big Brother. The upper classes of society follow the ideology of The English Socialist Party, also known as Ingsoc in Newspeak. The Ministry of Love keep them under constant surveillance with help by the Thought Police as well as telescreens, a two-way television monitor. Winston works for the outer party, in the records department of the Ministry of truth, his job to modify historical archives so they with match the party's agenda. Accidently Winston stumbles across evidence that the party is being dishonest, by questioning the regime he automatically becomes a thought-criminal. He later fears that one of the party members is an informant for the inner part but to his astonishment she shares his doubt. Unfortunately, the thought police capture them and O'brien- a member of the inner party, re-educates Winston into only having affection for Big Brother.

It goes without saying that one of the most important messages in George Orwell's novel 1984 is the abuse and misuse of language. He demonstrates how the government and media repeatedly abuse language for the purpose to mask the truth and manipulate the population. While the story plays out in a time filled with war the most frightening concept is not destructive weapons instead it is the elimination of will and expression. He

presents how altering the construction of the spoken language becomes a tool not only to control minds but to eliminate any possibility of rebellious thought. Orwell's intention is to increase the awareness of how language is used politically to mislead people into accepting propaganda as reality.

Where we generally try to expand our lexicon the government in 1984 uses Newspeak, an altered form of regular English. It is the official language of Oceania and has the primary purpose to reduce the number of words, as well as removing all the synonyms and antonyms. The Party controls which antonyms are used. Therefore, they can shift the attention into a positive or negative direction, to meet the requirements of their own needs. For instance, Bad becomes ungood, which reducing the negativity behind the word. By cutting out antonyms like Bad, the ability to express criticism is also removed. Synonyms are also eliminated entirely; words like great, excellent and marvellous would be reverted into some form of good. When the party cuts down the vocabulary the intensity and emotions behind words are reduced, and they are able to suppress thought and emotion even further.

One of language experts that are involved in the production of the eleventh edition of the Newspeak dictionary, named Syme says "Don't you see that the whole aim of newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thought-crime literally impossible because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten. (...) Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there is no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality control. But in the end there won't be any need even for that. (...) the whole climate of thought will be different. In fact, there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness."

Syme mentions due to the fact that Newspeak is narrowing the range of thought, it is ideal for a totalitarian state like Oceania. When lacking the capacity to think independently the population becomes significantly more passive, and for that reason will have a great tolerance for both past and present mistakes made by the government. Alternative attempts to control thought is illustrated by the concept of doublethink, it allows the

subject to hold two contrary beliefs simultaneously, and being unaware that they are contradictions. For instance, how one of the party spokesmen made a mistake by referring to the enemy as an ally in his speech, without facing any suspicion from the crowd.

Orwell impeccably uses not only language but also symbolic objects and actions to convey his message and assists the reader for a deeper understanding of the novels intentions. Even small objects play a big part, for instance the glass paperweight. It was first discovered by Winston in an antiques store owned by Mr. Charrington. He was instantly captivated by its beauty; he had never before seen an object designed to be beautiful. It is a presentation of the past, of the beauty the party abolished. While looking at it he yearns to learn about the world before big brother and a time where homes expressed individuality by the décor. The purchase was a desperate attempt to connect with his childhood memories. Another symbol of the past is the painting of St Clement's church, located in the rented room above Mr. Charringtons chop. The telescreen hidden behind the painting is what eventually aids the thought police to arrest Winston. It also symbolizes the party's absolute control of the past.

Not only was the painting a symbol but also the room and the singing prole woman are symbols of a momentary feeling of security as well as genuine hope for the possibility that future generations of the proles possess the strength to overcome the party. The first time Winston hears the prole woman singing beneath the window of the rented room it makes him comprehend that while the proles suffer from poverty, they are fairly free. She is able to truly sing anything she desires without any interference; at that moment Winston witness what life may have looked like before the revolution. Regardless of her rough appearance he perceives her as beautiful, the fact that she has been able to acquire and cherish a family as well as having the freedom to be able to love without the party interrupting, is what creates a beauty in her that Winston has not witnessed before outside of the prole quarter.