Book Review

1984 by George Orwell

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1949, 268 pp., $7.47

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War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength. And most importantly: Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past. In the dystopian world of 1984, written by George Orwell, these platitudes are a reality.

Winston Smith is in grave danger due to the simple act of remembering. He lives in London, a city in the superstate of Oceania, and works in the Records Department in the Ministry of Truth. His job is to destroy wrong statements or predictions made by Big Brother (the leader of Oceania), and replace them with newly corrected facts as if Big Brother had always been right. Nobody is curious whenever a certain date or result of a war from the past is changed, for how could Big Brother be wrong? The Party has insurmountable power. They can state that $2 + 2 = 5$, and the people would agree without hesitation. They insist that Oceania is at war with Eastasia—and has always been at war with Eastasia—but Winston vaguely remembers that they were at war with Eurasia merely a week ago.
The corrupt manipulation of the Party has stripped humanity of its freedom of thought. Big Brother is always watching, there are telescreens and microphones everywhere, the Thought Police can invade your mind, and children Spies study your every move. The easiest thing to do is be obedient and let the Party control your life, but Winston refuses to give them that power. He buys a journal from an antique shop, penning his thoughts and memories in an attempt to save his mind. It is not easy. Winston can barely remember the date, guessing that it is the year 1984.

He meets Julia, a beautiful young woman in the Ministry of Truth. Astonished that they both share the same dangerous thoughts against the Party, Winston and Julia quickly fall in love, meeting in secret and discussing futile attempts to overthrow Big Brother.

Together, Winston and Julia experience valor, corruption, love, and heartbreak. 1984 is a classic fiction for ages thirteen and up. It is an intricate story that relates a powerful message, which is why I rate it with five out of five stars.

-Mia