

Who was George Orwell?

George Orwell was a famous English author whose most popular books are **Animal Farm** and **1984**. He also wrote many essays about topics such as other writers, popular culture, politics, and writing.

He also wrote some non-fiction books about his experiences, including **Down and Out in London and Paris**, about his experiences living in those cities, and **Homage to Catalonia**, about his experiences fighting in the Spanish Civil War.



Orwell died of tuberculosis at the age of 46, and his legacy as a writer has continued to this day – he is remembered and respected by many people.

Biography

- George Orwell was born as Eric Blair in India, which was then a part of the British Empire. He used the name 'George Orwell' only for his writing.
- He hated most of his time at school, but he developed his writing ability and even published some poems.
- His parents couldn't afford to send him to university, so his family encouraged him to return to Asia to become a policeman in Burma. His experiences here would inspire his first novel, **Burmese Days**.
- Orwell hated the empire, and found it difficult being a policeman. He felt that many of the Burmese people hated him, because as a policeman he was a symbol for the empire. He eventually returned to England when he became sick, and decided to not go back to Burma.
- Back in England, Orwell decided to experience what life was like for poor people in England. He wore different clothes and used a different name, visiting places in the poorest parts of London. He wrote about these experiences, and his experiences living as a teacher in Paris, in **Down and Out in London and Paris**.
- Orwell fought for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. This became the basis for his book, **Homage to Catalonia**.
- His two most famous books, **Animal Farm** and **1984**, were both attacks on totalitarianism (a belief in governments that don't let people have any freedom).

Famous Books By George Orwell

Animal Farm

In **Animal Farm**, many animals live on a farm that is owned by a bad farmer. He does not care for the animals, and they are often left with no food. Eventually, the animals decide to get rid of the farmer after listening to one of the pigs, and force him to leave the farm. They then decide to make the farm one run by animals, with their own sets of rules.

However, the pigs that manage the farm slowly change the rules, and lie to the animals. Many of the animals trust the pigs and forget the rules have been changed, allowing the pigs to control them just like the farmer did. This story is an allegory, meaning its characters and events are symbols for other things. **Animal Farm** is about the Russian Revolution and what happened after, where the people got rid of their king but replaced him with dictators – people who control a country completely, without offering any freedom – who behaved the same as kings.

1984

1984 is a story about a man, named Winston Smith, who works for the government in the future. This government controls everything, and controls and kills people who disagree. They use propaganda (fake information that is spread to influence people's opinions or beliefs) and they even change the language, so that it becomes more difficult to think against the government. On television, Big Brother, a character created by the government, watches everyone.

Winston Smith falls in love with a woman, and together they try to stop Big Brother. They believe there are other people that will help them, but they all work for Big Brother. They are caught by the government and sent to 'Room 101'. Here they are tortured into changing their way of thinking, and they become brainwashed. The last line of the book is 'He loved Big Brother' – Winston's mind has been changed forever, and he now likes the government.

Questions

Vocabulary Questions

1. What is the meaning of "totalitarianism" as used in the text?

2. What is an "allegory"?

What is the meaning of "brainwashed"?

3. What is the meaning of the word "legacy" as used in the text?

What is the meaning of the word "dictators"?

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What was Orwell's experience like as a policeman in Burma?

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2. How did Orwell's experiences in London and Paris influence his non-fiction works?

3. How did Animal Farm reflect the events of the Russian Revolution?

4. In what ways does the government control people's lives in the novel 1984, and what happens to the main character in the end?

Writing Questions

1. George Orwell wrote about the importance of freedom in his books. Why do you think freedom is important? What are some ways in which people can fight for their freedom?

2. Animal Farm uses animals to symbolise real-life events. If you were to create your own story that used animals to represent something, what would you choose and why?

3. George Orwell wrote about difficult experiences he had. Have you ever experienced difficult situations? How did it make you feel, and what did you learn from it?

Disclaimer: This resource has been made for the purpose of teaching English language learners. We know that students can be learning English in many different places, in many different ways and at age, so we try to keep these resources as general as possible.

There are many acronyms associated with English language teaching. These include (but are not limited to) ELT, TEFL, EFL, ELL, EAL and ESOL. While the term ESL may not fully represent the linguistic backgrounds of all students, it is the most widely recognised term for English language teaching globally. Therefore, we use the term 'ESL' in the names of our resources to make them easy to find but they are suitable for any student learning to speak English.