

The world of Big Brother has three main slogans:

WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

These slogans seem to be paradoxical and contradictory on the surface, but in the world of Big Brother, they make a kind of sense. Each is like an equation, but how can one thing equal its opposite? Perhaps it would be better to ask “How can one thing lead to its opposite?” Could war abroad lead to peace at home? Could absolute freedom make you a slave to your own desires? Could knowing too much make you think more than act? Choose one of these slogans and explore what it means in *1984*, using examples from the book. Then think about how the slogan might apply in our own society.

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*1984* provides a cautionary tale about the potential of surveillance technology to allow an authoritarian government to control the population. At present, current technology, including smartphones, web cams, GPS tracking, internet-connected home appliances, and many other items, is being used to make daily life more convenient. However, each of these is potentially a very powerful surveillance technology that the totalitarian oligarchy of *1984* would have been overjoyed to use. At this moment, the government, or another entity, could easily see every Web site you have visited, read every message you ever sent, and listen to every phone call. In what ways does *1984* suggest that we should be worried that our use of electronic devices could someday lead to totalitarian control? If Big Brother really might use our electronics to watch us, what could we do to stop it?

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Science fiction novels don't always try to predict the future, but in *1984*, Orwell is trying to warn us of what might happen if new propaganda techniques and technology were combined in the hands of an authoritarian leader. As a prediction of the future, how accurate is *1984*? In a well-organized essay, discuss what Orwell got right, and what he got wrong. Support your arguments with examples from the texts.

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“Newspeak” is attempt by Big Brother to control thought by reducing the number of words in the language and eliminating words that might lead to “thoughtcrime,” which is itself a Newspeak word. Is it possible to control thought through controlling language? Does our own society have similar tendencies? In a well-organized essay, discuss examples of Newspeak in the novel and how this kind of control might function in our own society.