

Worksheet 1 – Introduction

Recall

Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. What was the name of Orwell's childhood friend who described *1984* as 'the book that changed the direction of the world'?
 - a) David Astor
 - b) Jacintha Buddicom
 - c) Aldous Huxley
 - d) Harvey Breit
2. Which of these is NOT a phrase popularized by *1984*?
 - a) Newspeak
 - b) Doublethink
 - c) Thoughtcrime
 - d) Fake news
3. Complete this quotation from Orwell's publisher, Fredric Warburg: "This is amongst the most _____ books I have ever read."
 - a) Terrifying
 - b) Depressing
 - c) Heartbreaking
 - d) Hopeless
4. When was *1984* published?
 - a) 1946
 - b) 1947
 - c) 1948
 - d) 1949
5. What was one of the original working titles of the novel?
 - a) The Last Man In Europe
 - b) The Last Man In England
 - c) The Last Man In The World
 - d) The Last Man Standing
6. When did sales of the novel spike by 10,000%?
 - a) After Brexit
 - b) After Donald Trump was elected President
 - c) After the Covid pandemic
 - d) After the Iraq War

Analysis

7. Below is a summary of the 1908 novel *The Iron Heel* by Jack London, which was mentioned in the lecture [2:45]. What similarities can you find between the book and *1984*? Or, if you have not finished reading *1984* yet, what themes / key ideas can you spot?

Avis Cunningham (Everhard), a middle-class-lady-turned-revolutionist in the United States, writes a manuscript of events that have occurred in her past (1910s), but narrates it in the present tense. She writes about the ongoing revolution to topple the capitalist system, not knowing that it would actually take multiple revolts after her for capitalism to finally fall.

The plot within the manuscript first focuses on Cunningham's encounter with Ernest Everhard, who eventually becomes her husband. She first meets Everhard, a man from the working class, at her father's dinner party. Everhard challenges the higher classes to recognize the contemporary flaws and inevitable crumbling of the capitalistic system, debates socialist theories with them, and describes the current reality of the working class. Everhard opens up the door of socialism for Cunningham, Dr. Cunningham, and Bishop Morehouse—gradually allowing each to come to accept a revolutionist's perspective.

This ultimately leads Everhard to state, "That, gentlemen, is socialism, a greater combination than the trusts, a greater economic and social combination than any that has yet appeared on the planet. We meet combination with greater combination." (London, Ch. 8).

Cunningham discovers real flaws within the capitalistic system—from company negligence to unjust courts, and from dirty conspiracies to bribes and treason. There are multiple confrontations between Everhard and capitalist defenders. In one instance, he reveals the hypocrisy of middle-class merchants, who support capitalism but rage against "bigger dogs" who have taken their profits. Everhard describes the rise of the socialism, and how a impactful uprising throughout the world is in the works.

The entire second half of the novel deals with the physical revolutionary action against the "Iron Heel". The revolutionaries plan to seize power and control through a *coup d'état*, rather than a social revolution. The proletariat/laborers plan to take power from the ruling class, from the trusts, and gain control of all the machinery. Cunningham goes into secret hiding, changes her identity, and sends and receives messages to/from other revolutionaries—all for the socialist cause. Cunningham and Everhard, even though briefly jailed and separated, continue their plans for the First Revolt with enthusiasm.

The First Revolt was planned for the spring of 1918. The revolutionaries planned to blow up wireless stations; transportation networks (bridges, tunnels); and seize officers of the Mercenaries, police, and Oligarchy. Other simultaneous events were to occur in neighboring cities and countries all around the world. It was doomed from the start, however. While undercover with the Oligarchs, Cunningham discovers that the revolutionary plot in Chicago—the "storm-centre of the conflict between labor and capital"—has been discovered (Ch. 22). Knowing that "Chicago is to be sacrificed," she still makes her way to the doomed city, where Everhard is presumed to be. Although she is able to reunite with her husband, the destruction is obvious—bodies lay in red pools in the streets, suspicious traitors are questioned and executed on the spot, and bombs and explosions fill the city with noise and destruction.

Although the First Revolt fails, the revolutionaries quickly plan a Second Revolt—even with a recent passing of one of their capable leaders, Everhard (which is never explained). The story ends in mid-sentence, and it is suggested that Cunningham must have been rushed to hide the manuscript. She was never able to return to finish the manuscript, and her fate is also unknown. Unfinished and kept hidden until discovered 700 years into the future, the manuscript gets updated with footnotes and a foreword by Anthony Meredith, who provides useful historical context and explanations. By this time, Meredith is living under socialism.

Evaluation

8. Read this article from *The Guardian* about the legacy of 1984 and write down at least 5 ways in which the novel still has relevance today.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/may/19/legacy-george-orwell-nineteen-eighty-four>

Glossary

- **Manuscript** – A book, document or piece of music written by hand.
e.g. The museum had a beautiful collection of illustrated manuscripts.
- **Totalitarian** – Relating to a system of government that is run by a dictator and requires complete subservience to the state.
e.g. 1984 is about the dangers of totalitarian regimes
- **Iron Curtain** – A political, military and ideological barrier dividing the Soviet Union and its satellite states from the rest of Western Europe during the Cold War.
e.g. The Iron Curtain fell with the end of the Cold War in 1991.
- **Authoritarian** – Favouring strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom.
e.g. The transition from a democratic regime to an authoritarian one was terrifyingly quick.
- **Enthralling** – Capturing and holding one's attention; a synonym for fascinating.
e.g. He found the novel so enthralling that he read it in just one night.