

1984

by George Orwell.
Adapted and Created by
Robert Icke & Duncan Macmillan.



EDUCATION PACK

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Welcome to *1984*.

April, 1984. 13:00. Comrade 6079, Winston Smith, thinks a thought, starts a diary, and falls in love. But Big Brother is watching him - and the door to Room 101 can swing open in the blink of an eye.

Its ideas have become our ideas, and Orwell's fiction is often said to be our reality. The definitive book of the 20th century is re-examined in a radical new staging exploring surveillance, identity and how thinking you can fly might actually be the first step to flying.

This exciting production explores the world inside Winston Smith's head, as well as the world without, and catches the euphoria and bliss buried deep underneath the cold face of Big Brother. Headlong's version explores why Orwell's gaze is as applicable to the here and now as it ever was.

This production is a new adaptation of the novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* by George Orwell. It was created by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan.

How to use this Resource Pack

Both the research information and the activities in this pack have been inspired by the Headlong, Nottingham Playhouse and Almeida Theatre production of Robert Icke & Duncan Macmillan's *1984*. This pack may be used to explore and develop the play through practical activities in the classroom.

More materials are available at
www.headlong.co.uk/work/1984/explore

“There is truth and there are facts. Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two makes four.”

Winston Smith

1984

by George Orwell.
A new adaptation by
Robert Icke & Duncan Macmillan

Creative Team

Directed by

Robert Icke & Duncan Macmillan
With Daniel Raggett

Set & Costume Designer

Chloe Lamford

Lighting Designer

Natasha Chivers

Sound Design

Tom Gibbons

Video Designer

Tim Reid

Casting Director

Ginny Schiller CDG and Maggie Lunn CDG

Originally Produced by

Headlong, Nottingham Playhouse and Almeida Theatre

Produced in the West End by

Sonia Friedman Productions, Headlong, and Eleanor Lloyd Productions

Adapted & Directed by



Duncan Macmillan & Robert Icke
Photo Manuel Harlan

What drew you to *1984* in the first place?

We were interested in looking at big important canonical texts whilst asking the questions:

- Why are these texts important?
- Are these texts still important?
- What have they got to say?

There is a 15 year old boy in me who gets really bored in period dressed productions of classic plays. Just because everyone says it's a classic doesn't mean anything. If it is boring it's still boring. One of the things we've talked about a lot is wanting to be able to allow young people access. Theatre is in competition with a lot of great stuff. We spend our time watching *Mad Men*, *The Wire*, *The West Wing* and video games. There is a real desire to want to be current in that conversation and to want to be able to say to young people who come that we can deliver them a live experience that is as fizzy and exciting and immediate as they might find their Grand Theft Auto 5 session. That's the aspiration.

What aspects of the novel did you find most important when adapting it for the stage?

I think the appendix is the most important bit. Structurally, the appendix is the thing that defines the whole novel. I don't understand how you can adapt this novel if you don't touch the appendix and the footnote which is on page 3 'New speak was the official speak of Oceania. For further

information see appendix.'

Orwell put something at the end that a lot of people hilariously and ironically haven't bothered to finish. One of the key moments of the novel itself is Winston not bothering to finish the book that is going to tell him the secret of the world. And one of the things the novel really thinks about is the status of the text and what text means and whether text can have any authority when it's been messed with. Can you trust words to delivery any sort of information?

We wanted to make the show have a psychological pressure that started when the curtain went up and when we spat it back out at the end and the harsh lights came up again you felt like you've been under this tight pressure for the whole thing. This is the reason it doesn't have an interval.

How did you approach the framework and structure of the play?

One of the questions we set ourselves early on was how do you stage double think? The novel is very successful at putting forward two contradictory ideas and never resolving which one is the right one. Which many people find frustrating about the novel and we've always found really exciting.

The aspiration was always to be like the appendix and the footnote. Because the footnote comes at the start and the appendix goes at the end. So it is a framed novel. The novel itself exists in a frame that reads it contextually backwards. When you read Goldstein's book, your eyes go with Winston's eyes but from the moment you read 'It was a bright cold day in April', you're reading the book with somebody else because that person has footnoted it and written you an appendix. So there is another reader in your experience of the novel at all times. It's a third person novel but it also has odd access to Winston's subjective thoughts which O'Brien also has.

The framing device comes out of a very close reading of the novel. Once we understood what the appendix did we got quite obsessed with the fact that the adaptation had to manage that.

We realise that Goldstein probably doesn't exist as a literal person, neither does Big Brother. In which case if you have actors playing them then you're saying this is a literal universe. That's not accurate to what the book is trying to say. So it was trying to provide a frame where the characters are not necessarily literally there. You have to set up a space which might be imaginary. There was a post-show discussion about whether Winston in scene 1 is a guy in a book group imagining his way into George Orwell's novel in 1984 or whether he is Winston Smith imagining an imaginary future or if there are a lot of people in the room who then imagine Winston Smith. The status of who is dreaming and where that ends up seemed to us to be so important to try and capture some of the subjectivity that Orwell achieves in the novel. That you can never quite be sure whether this is real, dreamed or remembered.

Many argue that *Nineteen Eighty Four* is an unstable novel as Orwell's feverish completion of the book in his almost dying days allows holes to creep in. However, in your production, are you arguing that these holes stand up because if you look closely enough the dream state is foreshadowed in even quite minor details?

That's right. The holes are often perceived as being the weaknesses of the play but I think they are the bits you want to stage. I really felt this about the novel. That's the exciting stuff. We looked at the contradictions in the novel. For example, the fact that we are introduced to Julia as thought police and then Winston switches to saying that she's not thought police and we never really get a payoff to whether she is or she isn't. An early provocation that we gave each other is that if the party is going to fall it is because there are people like O'Brien high up in the inner party who are members of the brotherhood. The party does fall. So does that suggest that O'Brien might actually be brotherhood after all and Winston is just a terrible radical? He is not radicalised properly. He doesn't finish the book.

There are feelings that *Nineteen Eighty Four* is a prophecy of a self-destructive mission foretold. There are no surprises because the surprises in a sense were there if you spotted them. Would you agree with this notion?

Yes. Which is why O'Brien keeps saying to him – 'You know this already. You've always known about this. You know the answer to that question already.' One of the things we talked about at the start was the theory that the whole novel happens on the duress in room 101. So you're seeing strange flashbacks to things that have already happened, which explains the fevered quality and the ambiguities. Someone could retrospectively view the entire play as having taken place in room 101 in terms of what we do with the staging and design at that point. Also, O'Brien's voiceovers and sound effects we hear in room 101 are used earlier on in the performance. This also contributes to how you stage double think. It is also important to us that the book that they discuss could be Winston's diary, it could be Orwell's novel, and it could also be Goldstein's book.

How did you approach the adaptation process?

I think the overriding thing was how do we find a theatrical form for how complicated this is? How do we achieve double think? How do we deliver the intellectual argument? We were always talking about the audience. Can we take along a 15 year-old who has never read the book? And can we also satisfy the scholar who has read this book a hundred times and can it stand up to re-reading? I think we have ended up being incredibly faithful to the book.

I feel your responsibility is to whoever is in the room that day and to the person who wrote it originally and you're trying to connect the audience and the world of now with whatever the text is. If the text is worth looking at there will be a way of bridging that gap whilst remaining honest and being truthful to both parties. I think it is profoundly dishonest to do the blue overalls April the 4th version of 1984 because what it doesn't deliver is so much of the complexity which is what we found so exciting.

For a voice recording of an extended version of this interview please visit:

<http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/headlongs-robert-icke-and-duncan-macmillan-talk-orwell-and-1984/>

Exercise 1. Diary Entries and Monologues

1984 opens with the line ‘A diary’. The audience witness Winston making a diary entry before a voiceover states...

‘A diary. The thing that he was about to do was to open a diary. If detected it would be punished by death. There was no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police watched any particular individual was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. Winston faltered for a second. He did not know with any certainty that this was 1984; it was never possible nowadays to pin down any date within a year or two. Whether he went on with the diary or not made no difference. The thought police would get him just the same. He had committed, would still have committed, even if he had never set pen to paper, the essential crime that contained all others in itself. Thoughtcrime. Thoughtcrime could not be concealed for ever. Sooner or later they were bound to get you.’ (1984, 2014)

Part 1

Write a diary entry as though you were Winston Smith in the moment he first thinks of creating his diary. Talk about how he felt in this moment. This could be done as a homework exercise and then developed in the classroom using the development activity in Part 2.

Part 2 – Development

Using the diary entries in Part 1, think about developing the writing as a monologue for performance. You may find the character questionnaire on page 8 useful to build a strong identity for your character.

Ask the class to think about the setting for their character:

- Where are they when they perform their monologue?
- How soon after the event is it?
- How are they feeling?
- What will happen next?

Part 3 – Extension

If you have time you might find hot seating to be a useful technique.

Hot seating – You will need a single chair set up in the middle of a semi-circle.

The class will have an opportunity to ask questions to a character from the group. The aim is to help the Actor think deeply about the character behaviours and motives that they might not have considered yet.

Start by asking the group to work in pairs to discuss a list of potential questions for the characters with their partner, they may ask the same to all characters or think about a variety of questions.

This works best with an example from the teacher, so when the questions are prepared take the ‘hot-seat’ and introduce yourself in character inviting questions from the audience. Be sure to remain in character for the entire time spent in the ‘hot-seat’.

Once demonstrated ask for a volunteer who is confident enough to sit in the ‘hot-seat’ as the character and field further questions. Set a time limit for both the character and the questioners, and if at any point the character wants to stop questioning, they may get up out of the chair.

Further Development ideas

Why not try putting the hidden and non-typical characters in the 'hot-seat', such as the father/mother of a character, his/her best friend? What do the reactions of these characters tell us about the main character, or protagonist?

Expand

You may try expanding the character questionnaire to discuss the setting of 1984.

- Is the performance set in the future that Winston imagines when he starts to write the diary?
- Is the play set in a date in the future e.g. 2050 or 2084 looking back at the text and imagining Winston?
- Is the entire performance performed retrospectively from room 101?

Character Questionnaire:

1. Where does your character live?
2. Who does your character live with?
3. Where is your character from?
4. How old is your character?
5. Which time period is your character from?
6. What does your character look like?
7. Who else is in your characters life?
8. What kind of childhood did he or she have?
9. What is your characters role in their community?
10. How does your character deal with conflict and change?
11. What is your character most afraid of?
12. What is your characters goal or motivation in this story or scene?



Matthew Spencer
Photo Manuel Harlan



Simon Coates, Christopher Patrick Nolan, Hara Yannas, Sam Crane, Tim Dutton, Stephen Fewell, Mandi Symonds & Matthew Spencer - Original West End cast 2014

Photo Manuel Harlan

Exercise 2. Protest: THOUGHT CRIMINAL

It is difficult to imagine what it must be like to not be allowed to speak or even think your mind.

Part 1

Ask a volunteer to talk about a subject they feel passionately about. Once they have decided on the subject, have the group brainstorm words associated with that subject. Pick your top five and write them on the wall. Now ask the volunteer student to talk for two minutes on their subject without using any of the listed words or even giving the impression they are thinking of those words. If they do, the other students must sound a buzzer or shout 'THOUGHT CRIMINAL'. How did that feel for the volunteer? What was it like to not be able to speak freely? What did it make him/her want to do?

Part 2 – Extension

You could extend this exercise by creating a physical representation of protest. Place a chair at one end of the room. Have the group decide what the protest is about. The chair now represents this. Ask for a volunteer. The aim for this person is to reach the chair, stand on it, and shout aloud what they are protesting about. Now ask the other students (the censors) to create different obstacles to physically stop that person from getting to their destination. No touch allowed. Does the person succeed? What tactics did they use? How did they find this? How did they feel if/when they were eventually heard? Remind the students that protest doesn't have to be in the form of a march – in the play Winston uses the power of writing and free thought as a medium to share his views.

Parts 3 – Further Extension

As an extension, you could have students write an article on a subject that they feel passionately about.

Exercise 3. Debate: Ethical Surveillance in Journalism

Ethics in journalism are regularly under the microscope in today's media, with high profile cases under the spotlight.

Part 1

Start as a class by discussing the following terms and cases to ensure understanding. Detailed research into these topics might be set as homework:

- Leveson Enquiry
- Phone Hacking Scandal
- Celebrity Super-injunctions
- 1997 Sun Newspaper Labour Election Victory
- Millie Dowler Case
- Wikileaks

In the box on page 12 is the Code of Ethics from the UK National Union of Journalists. Below are some essay titles which should support individual research into Ethics in Journalism.

Part 2 – Suggested Essay Titles

- It is the responsibility of the reader to regulate the press by not buying newspapers that they do not think are ethical. Discuss?
- What are the challenges inherent in differentiating between fact and opinion? Are there any areas where the boundaries blur?
- Why do I need to know about the private lives of public figures? Is it in the public interest to know the private details of notable public figures such as politicians, footballers and celebrities? Discuss.

The NUJ's code of conduct has set out the main principles of UK and Irish journalism since 1936. The code is part of the rules of our union.

All journalists joining the NUJ have to sign up and agree they will strive to adhere to its professional principles.

A journalist:

1. At all times upholds and defends the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed.
2. Strives to ensure that information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair.
3. Does her/his utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies.
4. Differentiates between fact and opinion.
5. Obtains material by honest, straightforward and open means, with the exception of investigations that are both overwhelmingly in the public interest and which involve evidence that cannot be obtained by straightforward means.
6. Does nothing to intrude into anybody's private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest.
7. Protects the identity of sources who supply information in confidence and material gathered in the course of her/his work.
8. Resists threats or any other inducements to influence, distort or suppress information and takes no unfair personal advantage of information gained in the course of her/his duties before the information is public knowledge.
9. Produces no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.
10. Does not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial product or service save for the promotion of her/his own work or of the medium by which she/he is employed.
11. A journalist shall normally seek the consent of an appropriate adult when interviewing or photographing a child for a story about her/his welfare.
12. Avoids plagiarism.

The NUJ believes a journalist has the right to refuse an assignment or be identified as the author of editorial that would break the letter or spirit of the NUJ code of code. The NUJ will support journalists who act according to the code.

Source: <http://www.nuj.org.uk/about/nuj-code/>

Exercise 4. Censorship and Surveillance

In the UK, as a democratic country, we take our rights to freedom of speech for granted. In contrast, the play creates a world with extreme censorship and surveillance laws that if broken could present individuals with fatal consequences. *1984* deals with the ideas of censorship and surveillance throughout, mainly through the presence of the party. The play presents a world in which everyone is constantly under the surveillance of Big Brother. The following exercise, entitled Paranoia, aims to engage participants in what it feels like to be watched by many people at one time, and the effect of surveillance on your behaviour.

Practical Exercise: Paranoia

This exercise is a more complex variation of the popular ‘wink murder’, whereby two participants need to find ‘secret code’ to communicate with each other to defeat another ‘detective’.

For this exercise, you will need: paper and a pen. Have enough pieces of paper for each person in the group. Number these pieces of paper (i.e. if there are 14 group members including yourself then numbers 1 all the way up to 14). Fold each sheet or place face down. Each member of the group should take one number. They should memorise this and keep it a secret from everyone else in the group.

1. Ask group members to stand in a circle; ask one volunteer to stand in the middle of the circle and call two numbers out, neither of which can be their own number.
2. The two people who have had their numbers chosen need to secretly find each other and swap places before the person in the middle can jump into their place. If they manage it then the person in the middle has to go again (or you can just ask for another volunteer anyway). The people who haven’t had their numbers chosen can pretend to be about to move or do other actions like distracting the person in the middle to make the person in the middle extra paranoid. After each go get everyone to select a new number, so people get a different number each time.
3. After everyone has had a go in the middle, discuss the following with the group.
 - What was it like being in the middle?
 - What was it like being on the outside?
 - What was it like having your number chosen?
 - What sort of things were you looking out for when you were in the middle?
 - What was it like constantly being watched?
4. You can talk about paranoia, and relate it to surveillance as everyone is being watched, and there are certain signals, people have to do things in secret to avoid being seen, people get paranoid in the middle.

What’s the relationship between being watched and being paranoid? Can you think you’re being watched when you aren’t? What kind of feelings does that give you? When else do we feel like we are constantly being watched? When else do we feel paranoid?

Exercise 5. Digital Privacy : Is Big Brother Watching You?

The following activities are aimed to widen student’s awareness of the personal information they make available through social media and the use of various digital software. It provides a small insight into how it would feel to live under the control of Big Brother.

The following exercises require access to IT facilities and iphone devices.

Part 1

- Visit www.headlong.co.uk/work/1984/explore
- Click on the **Digital Double** link

Allow the students to explore their own digital doubles. Hopefully, they will discover how much personal information can be found online and be able to experience a similar sense of invasion of privacy that comrades under the control of Big Brother suffer from in the performance.

Part 2

- Visit www.youarewhatyoulike.com
- Allow each student to log in

This website contributes to research being carried out at the University of Cambridge into the observation of personality traits and how they correlate to the things people like on Facebook.

The website analyses the things you like on Facebook and then describes your personality type.

Again, this activity should make students aware of the information they make available about themselves on social media.

Part 3

This may be done in or out of the classroom depending on various school policies concerning mobile phones.

Ask the students to take out their iPhones or look at a fellow student’s iPhone if they do not have one. The following steps will reveal an aspect of the iPhone that tracks the movements of its owner. This will only work for those who have downloaded the iOS7 software on their iPhone.

- Click on **Settings**
- Scroll down and click on **Privacy**
- Click on **Location Services** (this will be turned on automatically unless the user has actively turned location services off)
- Scroll down and click **System Services**
- Scroll down and click **Frequent Locations**

Allow the students to explore their frequent locations and discover how it feels to be tracked. Almost as though Big Brother is watching.



Tim Dutton
Photo Manuel Harlan