

George Orwell: The Political Pen

Keith Ferrell

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Born as Eric Blair in India in 1903, George Orwell was a sickly child who was sent away to boarding school at age eight. Later he won a scholarship to Eton, where he was not a good student and earned a reputation as a rebel. Following Eton, he returned to Burma as a police officer, deliberately postponing his dream of becoming a writer.

Orwell moved to Paris in 1928. He was concerned with the plight of the poor and was determined to find his own literary voice and themes. In the following years, he traveled and lived among the poor and unemployed. Orwell published several books and novels about his experiences, but success and recognition seemed slow in coming.

In England, Orwell became known as an angry political writer and crusader for the left. He stood up for his convictions and fought in the Spanish Civil War, despite ill health. After this disillusioning experience, Orwell became an enemy of any form of totalitarianism.

He tried to do his part for England under the Nazi siege through his journalism and broadcast scripts. Orwell completed *Animal Farm* during the war but was unable to find a publisher until the war was over.

After the book's enormous success in 1946, Orwell planned another novel set in the future ina totalitarian society. Writing from his house on the island of Jura in the Scottish Hebrides, he created the story of Winston Smith, who lived in a world where Big Brother was always watching. This was his masterpiece, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell died soon after its publication, but not before witnessing its success.

In a special epilogue, Ferrell deals with Orwell's impact as a political moralist and the way in which the year 1984 has come to stand as a fearful symbol.



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