George Orwell Essay, Research Paper

george orwell

Eric Arthur Blair, most prominently known as George Orwell lived between the years of 1903-1950. His writings were influenced by both world events as well as his own personal experiences. Orwell displayed these influences in his last novel, Nineteen Eighty-four.

George Orwell was born in Motihari, Bengal, India on June 25, 1903 (”Orwell” Grolier n.pag.”). Orwell was only his pen name, while his real name was Eric Arthur Blair(”Orwell” Compton n.pag.). He was born a British citizen abroad(”George” Discovering 6). Orwell s father was a minor British official. His family had some social status but little money. This helped Orwell in formulating his opinions toward the English class system.(”Orwell ” Compton n.pag.) Orwell was born into a lower middle class family that struggled to provide him with an education(”George” Discovering 1).

In 1911, his family returned to England. He attended school in Sussex, where he was known for his poverty and intelligence. He then attended Eton College but decided not to continue and went to Burma in 1922, as a member of the British Imperial Police.(”Orwell” Compton n.pag.) In his spare time, he enjoyed fishing, carpentry gardening and racing animals(”George” Discovering 6).

On June 9, 1936, Orwell married Eileen O Shaughnessy(”George” Discovering 6). In 1945, his wife died and he married his second wife, Sonia Brownwell, an editorial assistant on October 13, 1949. Orwell married Sonia only eight months before his death.(”Orwell” Twentieth 745) During his marriage he adopted a son, Richard Horato(”George Discovering 6).

In December of 1947, Orwell was hospitalized for tuberculosis. He had suffered from this ailment since his mid-thirties(”George” Discovering 2). Orwell died at the age of 46 from complications from tuberculosis(”Orwell” Twentieth 745).

Throughout Orwell’s educational process, he had build up a sense of bitterness. St. Cyrian Prep. School, in which Orwell had attended, provided him with his first glimpse of misused power.(”George” Discovering 6+)

In 1922, he became an officer for the Indian Imperial Police in Burma. After five years with the Burma Police, he became disgusted with the British system. As a result, he left determined to become a writer.(”George” Discovering 1+)

Orwell hated the totalitarian governments and in 1936, had joined the republican forces in the Spanish Civil War. He fought against the communist overtaking of Spain and was eventually forced to flee for his life.(”George” [online] 1+) Orwell considered himself to be a Democratic Socialist and fought for the loyalists. He became a lieutenant while serving in the war. He was based in Catalonia, Spain. In 1937, Orwell joined the Party of Marxist Unity which was also known as POUM. Orwell was injured during a battle and was forced to hide and then flee for his life.(”George” Discovering 6+)

While back in England, he served as a sergeant during Word War II(”George” Discovering 6). When Orwell reflected on his experiences he stated that “In a world where the prime necessities were money, titled relatives, athleticism, tailor made clothes, neatly brushed hair, charming smile and so I was no good. I knew that the future was dark. Failure, failure, failure “(”George Discovering 8).

Orwell returned to England to become a writer and he quickly established himself as one of the most important and influential voices of the century(”Orwell” Grolier n.pag.). Walter Greenwood from the London Tribune said, “Orwell has the gift of writing vividly, of creating in the mind s eye a picture of the scene described”(”George” Discovering 10)

Orwell, looking back at his work, stated “Looking back through my work, I see that it is invariably where I lacked political purpose that I wrote lifeless books”(”George” Discovering 10).

Orwell s first major critical and popular success was Animal Farm. This novel was intended to depict the inevitable course of all revolutions especially the Soviet Union.(”George” Discovering 2+)

Animal Farm a modern beast-fable attacking Stalinism(”Orwell” Grolier n.pag.). The history of the revolution betrayed in the animal world is based partly on what Orwell had seen of the communist usurpation of power in Spain and partly on what he read of the Russian Revolution(Woodcock 21).

In 1947, Orwell said that “Animal Farm was the first book in which I tried with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole.”(Zeher 27). Animal Farm was an expression of Orwell s moral and intellectual fury before the concept of totalitarianism(Shorer 1+).

“The most common critical approach to Animal Farm acknowledges that, while Orwell s specific political purpose was to show that the Soviet Union was not fulfilling the promise of socialism and was also intended as an illustration of the inherent dangers of all totalitarian systems.”(”George” Discovering 3).

Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-four, both warn of the dangers of the growing power of modern governments(”George” Discovering 7). Basically, “Orwell s long struggle for success, his willingness to brave controversy and his untimely death all contributed to making him a legend”(”George” Discovering 14).

In England, the government was going through many changes in political officers. As a result of these changes, many new laws were being passed and movements such as feminism were advancing.(Clark 493)

“Several different kinds of feminism advanced steadily through the nineteenth century. In some British communities, for instance among the Quakers, women had enjoyed complete equality with men for centuries.”(Clark 493)

In Spain, the Spanish Civil War began in the middle of July, 1936. General Franco organized a right wing military rising against the government. As a consequence to Franco, an anti-fascist group rose to save the republic. By the end of 1936 it was obvious that the communists were going to control the future situation in Spain.(Oxley 67+)

In Russia, Joseph Stalin began his systematic destruction of all the trotskyite , opposition within the Russian Communist Party(Oxley 67).

“These two events at different ends of Europe, coming together as they did, formed the turning point in Orwell s life. They provided him with the possibilities of left wing dictatorship and the totalitarian destruction.”(Oxley 67)

Orwell was basically against totalitarianism and definitely for democratic socialism.

“All the great European powers used their resources, to the limit allowed by their social development, in training mass-armies, and building railways to mobilize them quickly and to transport them fully supplied, to strategic points.”(Clark 485)

In one of Orwell s novels, Nineteen Eighty-four, he tries to convey to the reader that that danger rests in the acceptance of the totalitarian type government. The story takes place in the year 1984 and begins in the end of April, early May. There are only three parts in the world, Oceania, east Asia and Eurasia. Majority of the novel takes place in Oceania which is dirty, polluted and filled with rats and other vermin. Oceania is also the place where Winston Smith lived.(Orwell 1+)

Winston Smith is at the age of thirty-nine and a member of the outer party. He is a representation of the normal citizen. As a member of the outer party, he rebels against the inhumanity, of life, in Oceania s society. All Winston is left to do is to dream that, hopefully, someone else will stop the Party.(Orwell 1+)

Another character is Big Brother. He is not an actual person but a figure in the inner party. In reality he resembles Stalin, as he is described to be at around the age of forty-five, mustache and ruggedly built.(Orwell 1+)

There were no rules in Nineteen Eighty-four, and therefore nothing was illegal(Orwell 1+). This novel is an expression of Orwell s moral and intellectual rage before the concept of totalitarianism(Schorer 16). Nineteen Eighty-four is a dystopian novel displaying his fears of a totalitarian state of the future(”Orwell” Grolier n.pag.). Another important theme is freedom. “Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.”(Orwell 81). When Winston writes this as though he was speaking to O Brien it explains that life was not very free and that everything was very restricted and closely watched.(Orwell 1+) Nineteen Eighty-four also shows Orwell s irritation at many facets of British Socialism(Shorer 16).

“Nineteen Eighty-four greatly dramatizes the famous apothegm of Lord Acton, Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely .”

Orwell is best known for his novels, Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-four, which warn of the growing power of the modern governments, threaten to eliminate ideals such as love of family, tolerance toward others, and the right to make up one s mind. Specifically, Nineteen Eighty-four was identified as the first major twentieth century dystopian novel.(”George” Discovering 4+)

“Earliest views of Nineteen Eighty-four have critics interpreting it as one of three ways: a satire of the contemporary social and political scene; as an attack on specific political parties or systems(e.g. communism); or as a general warning of the dangers of a totalitarian government which could result if any government assumed absolute power.”(”George” Discovering 5)

“Nineteen Eighty-four is a work of pure horror “, says Shorer(Shorer 1+). It depicts a totalitarian world by attacking totalitarianism and showing people that it can deprive people of their basic rights. On the other hand, many have interpreted the novel as an attack upon British Socialism.(”George” Discovering 1+)

Nineteen Eighty-four was also said to have best Known for the chilling depiction of the totalitarian society, while also displaying a sense of hope that people will survive attacks by the greedy and powerful(”Orwell” Grolier n.pag.).

Although Nineteen Eighty-four and Animal Farm brought Orwell much success, it also brought him troubles. Particularly in the American society. They saw his dislike toward totalitarianism but they failed to note his interest in humane socialism and praised him as a conservative anti-Communist.(”George” Discovering 14)

Nineteen Eighty-four was not meant to be Orwell s last book or his last assessment of the future(Shorer 1+). Many critics also contend that the overwhelming pessimism in the novel is directly due to his illness(”George” Discovering 2).

After the publication of Nineteen Eighty-four, Orwell stated, “It wouldn t have been so gloomy if I hadn t been so ill.”(”George” Discovering 2).

In conclusion, it is apparent that George Orwell was definitely influenced by the world events and his life experiences. The scenes depicted in Nineteen Eighty-four are directly related to his experiences as a child, in the Spanish Civil War, and in World War II. As a child he saw his first glimpses of power being misused, while attending the St. Cyrian Prep. School. In the Spanish Civil War, Orwell saw the threats that a totalitarian government, such as communism, can possesses. He also observed all of the destruction of humanity that totalitarianism is capable of doing. During and after World War II, Orwell got a chance to view the war and all of the destruction it causes in its aftermath. When Orwell put these events together he constructed the novel Nineteen Eighty-four.