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Grade: Sophomore

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Author: George Orwell

Book Title: 1984

Rate 1-5: 4.5

“1984” is a dystopian novel by George Orwell focused on a totalitarian government. We follow the story from the protagonist, Winston Smith who is described as 39 years old with poor health. The novel is set in one of the three totalitarian states Oceania (the other two being Eurasia and Eastasia). The idea of totalitarianism is the government rules with full power and controls what its citizens say (over the phone & in person), read, and even the mail they send out are read upon. Technology is heavily used in this novel with the most occurring and important one being the “telescreen.” The telescreens are located everywhere in public, even in the apartments of the people. The telescreens are used as a way for “Big Brother” (a symbol) to keep an eye out on the people to make sure nothing is being planned or thought of against the Party. Throughout the novel, the people of Oceania are constantly reminded of the slogan “Big Brother is watching you.”

I thought the book was a very good read because I always find dystopian novels interesting and fun. Some of the themes of this novel include surveillance, totalitarianism, lack of free - thought/freedom, technological control, and love. The novel expresses themes and warnings that are still applicable today. Additionally, one con is that the novel is quite challenging to understand at times and also a long read.

I would recommend this book to anyone interested in dystopian or political literature. Although it is a good read, anyone should only read it if they are between the ages of 14 and 16 as it does include some topics that may be disturbing such as manipulation (emotional, psychological) and constant surveillance. This novel reminds me of "*Fahrenheit 451*" by Ray Bradbury and "*Animal Farm*" by George Orwell. These three novels share common themes of manipulation, propaganda, and censorship.