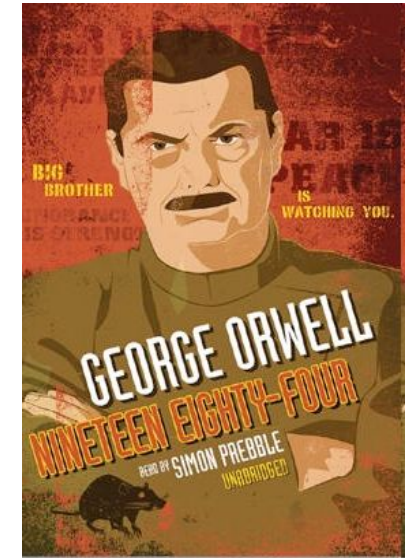
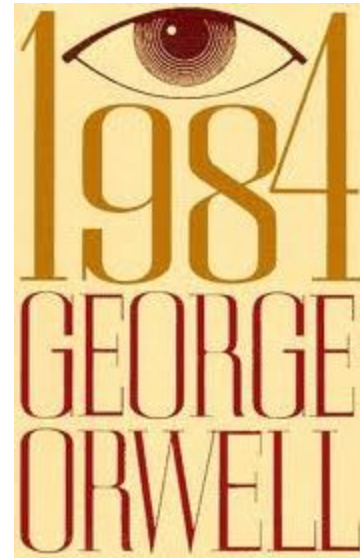
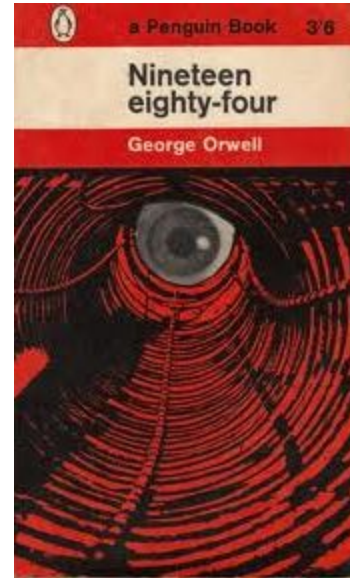

Historical Context of *1984*

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- Why Orwell Wrote It
 - The Russian Revolution and Stalin's Soviet Union
 - Nazi Germany
 - War and Postwar Britain

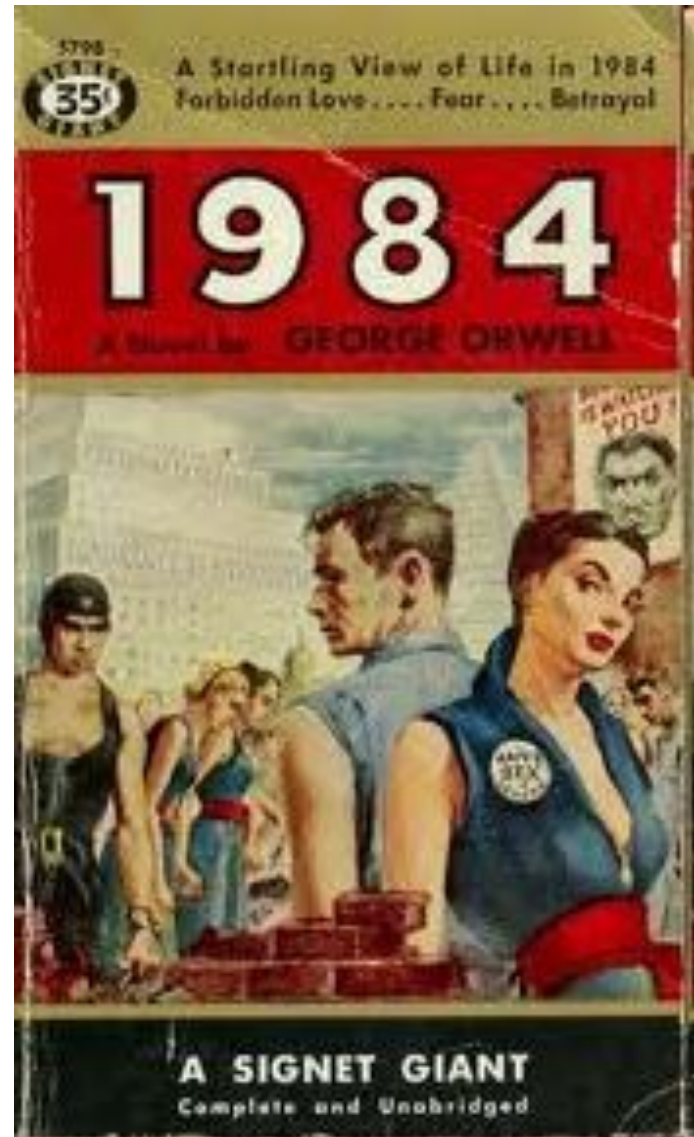
A Novel of Warning

- George Orwell wrote *1984* just after World War II ended, wanting it to serve as a warning to his readers.
- He wanted to be certain that the kind of future presented in the novel should never come to pass, even though the practices that contribute to the development of such a state were abundantly present in Orwell's time.



A Novel of Warning

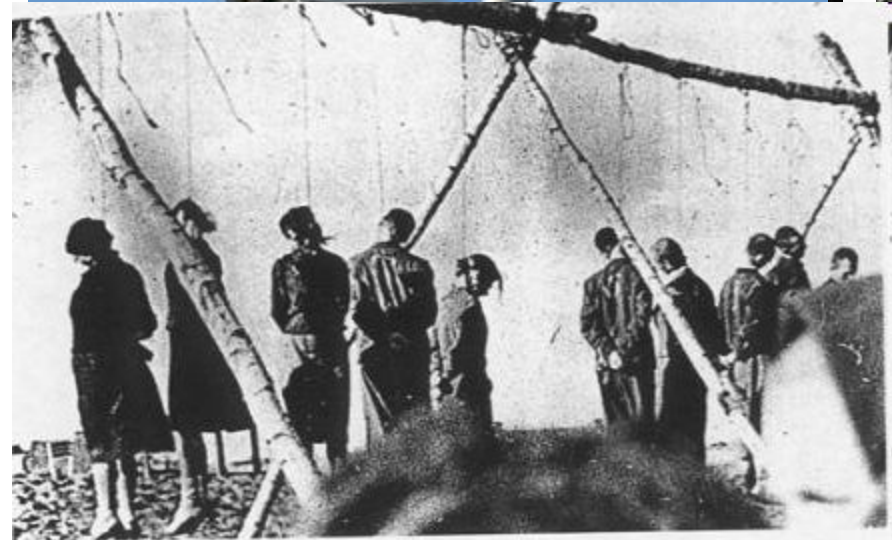
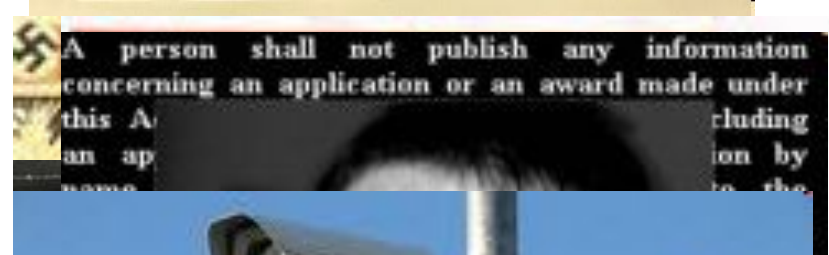
- The society in *1984*, although fictional, mirrors the political weather of the societies that existed all around him.
- Orwell's Oceania is a terrifying society reminiscent of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union—complete repression of the human spirit, absolute governmental control of daily life, constant hunger, and the systematic “vaporization” of individuals who do not, or will not, comply with the government's values.



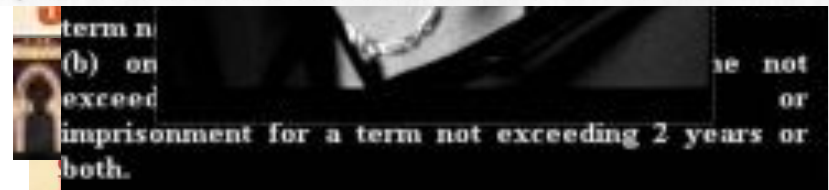
Why Orwell Wrote It

■ Against **Totalitarianism**

- Denotation - a political system where the state's authority is "total"; it recognizes no limits to its authority and strives to regulate every aspect of public and private life wherever possible.
- Totalitarian regimes stay in political power through an all-encompassing **propaganda** campaign, which is disseminated through the state-controlled mass media.
- The state consists of a single party that is often marked by
 - political repression
 - personality cultism
 - control over the economy
 - regulation and restriction of speech
 - mass surveillance
 - widespread use of terror.



Reprisals. Polish civilians hanged by the Germans on an improvised gallows.



Why Orwell Wrote It

- In favor of **Democratic Socialism**
 - Denotation: a form of government that combines socialism and democracy
 - Democracy is a form of government in which the citizens participate, assisting in various degrees in governing themselves
 - Socialism is an economic concept that calls for sharing the wealth of a society among all of its members, rather than reserving wealth for an exclusive few
 - Those areas affecting all people – health care, land use, manufacturing, housing - are owned and operated by the government. Basic needs of all people are met.



Why Orwell Wrote it

- A warning against what could happen should a revolution be betrayed by those who started it.
- A cautionary tale about the abuse of power or the exercising of power that crushes the human spirit.



Stalin's Soviet Union

- Parallels between 1984 and the post-war Soviet Union:
 - Big Brother: A combination of **Stalin** and **Hitler** (General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, 1922)
 - Goldstein: Trotsky (Expelled from Party and deported in '23)
 - Mutability of the Past: Stalin's "unpersons"
 - Two minutes hate: vilification of enemy States



Nazi Germany

- Dictators and Totalitarian regimes in general
- Jr. AntiSex League and the Parsons children as Hitler Youth



Orwell's Britain

- War: George Orwell (Eric Arthur Blair) worked for the **BBC** Eastern Service, where he supervised “broadcasts to India aimed at stimulating Indian interest in the war effort, at a time when the Japanese army was at India's doorstep. He was well aware that he was engaged in propaganda, and wrote that he felt like ‘an orange that's been trodden on by a very dirty boot’” (Wikipedia, Orwell entry)



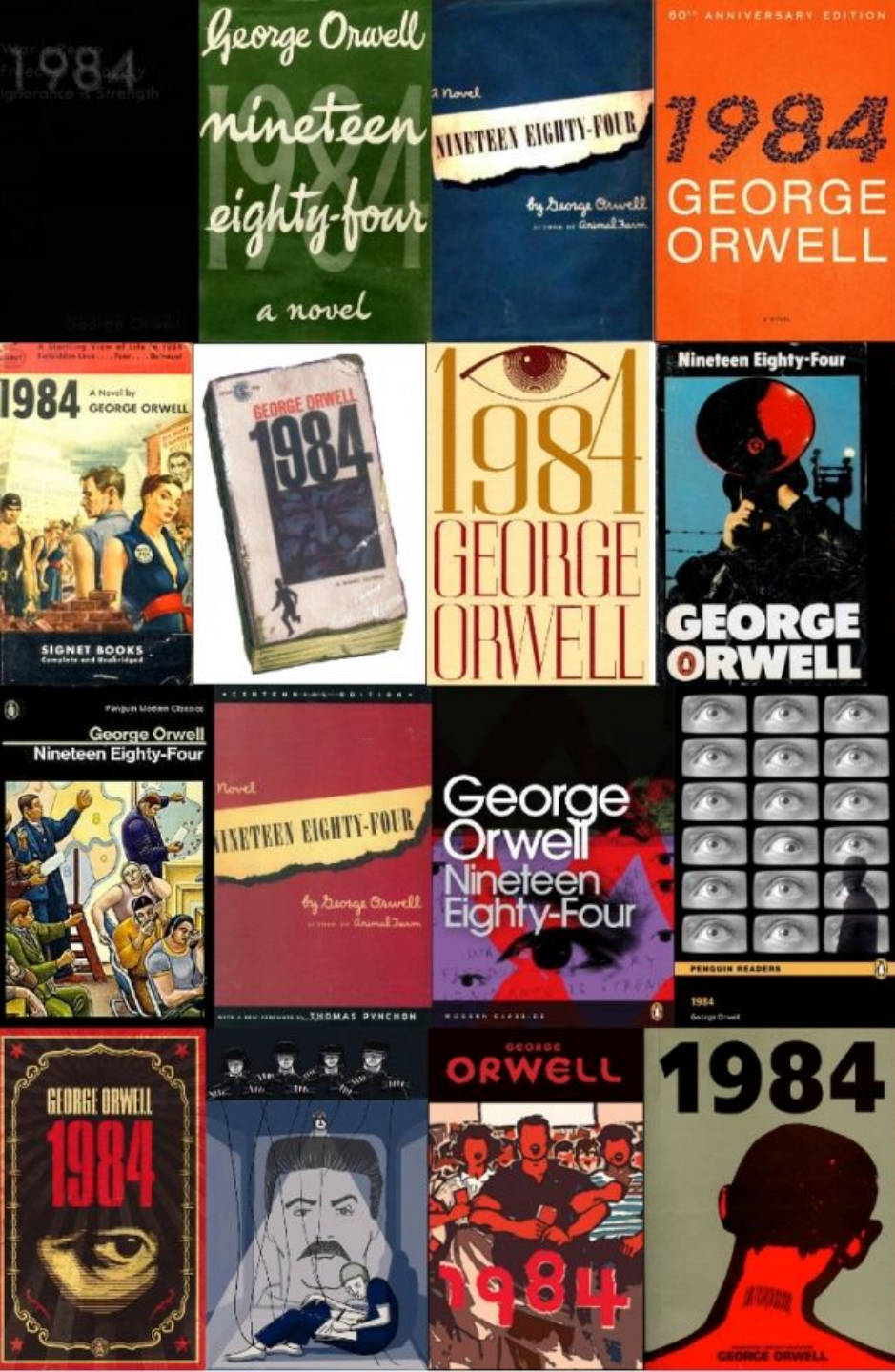
Britain Cont'd

- Ministry of Information controlled the overseas service of the BBC
- Postwar
 - Poverty in Britain
 - The British Empire was losing power (but the news claimed otherwise)
 - Cold War beginning (allies becoming enemies)



How Important is the Historical Aspect?

- In Spain, Germany, and the Soviet Union, Orwell witnessed the danger of absolute political authority in an age of advanced technology. He illustrated that peril harshly in *1984*.
 - In 1949, at the dawn of the nuclear age and before the television had become a fixture in the family home, Orwell's vision of a post-atomic dictatorship in which every individual would be monitored ceaselessly by means of the telescreen seemed terrifyingly possible.
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- For this novel, knowing the historical context is key to understanding the themes, the allusions, and indeed, the enduring message in this seminal work.
- Indeed, history **ALWAYS** informs the narrative.