

THE ACTORS' GANG

GEORGE ORWELL'S

1984

THE WORLD PREMIERE OF A NEW ADAPTATION

DIRECTED BY TIM ROBBINS

Script from Orwell's novel by
MICHAEL GENE SULLIVAN

"A great work of kinetic art."
— First review of the novel, *The New York Times*, 1949

THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

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George Orwell's

1984

Synopsis of the Novel

In 1984, Winston Smith lives in London which is part of the country Oceania. The world is divided into three countries that include all the lands around the globe: Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. Oceania, and both of the others, is a totalitarian society led by Big Brother, which censors everyone's behavior, even their thoughts. Winston is disgusted with his oppressed life and secretly longs to join the fabled Brotherhood, a supposed group of underground rebels intent on overthrowing the government. Winston meets Julia and they secretly fall in love and have an affair, something which is considered a crime.

One day, while walking home, Winston encounters O'Brien, an inner party member, who gives Winston his address. Winston had exchanged glances with O'Brien before and had dreams about him giving him the impression that O'Brien was a member of the Brotherhood. Since Julia hated the party as much as Winston did, they went to O'Brien's house together where they were introduced into the Brotherhood.

O'Brien is actually a faithful member of the Inner-Party and this is a trap for Winston, a trap that O'Brien has been cleverly setting for seven years. Winston and Julia are sent to the Ministry of Love, which is a sort of rehabilitation center for criminals accused of thoughtcrime. There, Winston was separated from Julia, and tortured until his beliefs coincided with those of the Party. Winston denounces everything he believed in, even his love for Julia, and was released back into the public where he wastes his days at the Chestnut Tree drinking gin.

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Newspeak Dictionary



Bellyfeel - Blind, enthusiastic acceptance of a concept, i.e. full emotional understanding.

Big Brother - As in "Big Brother is Watching You" Also referred to as "B.B." 1. The leader of the nation worshiped almost as a god; 2. personification of the power of the state, monitoring and directing people's actions (i.e., data banks that tell Big Brother all about us).

Blackwhite - The ability to accept whatever "truth" the party puts out, no matter how absurd.

Chocorat - Chocolate ration. **1:** The chocolate ration in 1983 was 30 grams per week. (standard Hershey Bar is 43 grams) **2:** In the year 1984, the chocolate ration went up to 25 grams per week. Winston himself is charged with the task of re-writing history to make this little feat possible.

Crimethink - Sometimes referred to as ThoughtCrime. Any thought, idea or consideration not in line with or doubting the principles of the party. "Control thought, Control crime." (e.g. mention of an Inperson (q.v.) is a thoughtcrime). Crimethinker - anyone found to be crimethinking.

Doublethink - Reality Control. To hold two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously and accept both of them.

Duckspeak - To speak without thinking. Can be either good or bad, depending on who is speaking, and whether or not they are on your side. (To quack like a duck).

Facecrime - a punishable offence - nervous tic, unconscious look of anxiety or disbelief (i.e. incredulity when a victory is announced), muttering to oneself -- anything suggesting



abnormality, or having something to hide, or letting your thoughts wander, in a public place or near a telescreen.

FicDep - Fiction Department of the Ministry of Truth

Free - Only usable as in "The dog is free of lice". NOTE: the concept of political freedom is crimethink..

Fullwise - (adverb) Fully. Newspeak rule 9 - Words are to be turned into adverbs by adding the suffix "-wise" to allow for removal of "completely" and "totally" from the language.

Goodsex - Sex for the purpose of producing children for the party. The opposite of sexcrime.

Goodthink - Adhering to the principles of Newspeak. (used liberally as in goodthanked (goodthought can only be a noun), goodthinker, goodthinking, goodthinkful, goodthinking, goodthinkwise)

Hate week - Annual Event of compulsory attendance at pre-arranged rallies and parades to inflame hatred of Party enemies and heighten their efforts.

Inner Party. Upper class Party members (about 2% of the population) enjoying middle class comforts, but with the addition of two or three servants and possibly a helicopter).

Joycamp - Forced-labor camp

Junior Anti-sex League - Organization promoting celibacy and the eradication of the orgasm (known to promote ownlife (q.v.)).

Memory hole - A system of pipes or pneumatic tubes used to quickly destroy documents & wipe them from history.

Minipax - Ministry of Peace (war)

Miniplenty - Ministry of Plenty which controls the entire economy (Rationing).

Miniprod - Ministry of Production, controlling all manufacture.

Minitrue - Ministry of Truth (propaganda) - Government office in charge of record keeping, history re-writing, and Prolefeed (q.v.)



Newspeak - The official language, "politically correct," requiring no thought what-so-ever. All "unorthodox" political ideas/words removed. Others words removed to limit the range of ideas that could be expressed.

Oldspeak - Standard English.

Oldthink - Old ideas and patterns of thought inconsistent with government policy; maintaining beliefs no longer acceptable.

Oldthinkers - Those who either engage in oldthink or who have not fully accepted the new way of thinking.

OD - Order of the Day, daily advertised admonitions by Big Brothers intentions for proles.

Outer Party - Middle class. Bureaucrats, and other government employees. Comprising approximately 13% of population. There is a huge gap between the standard of living of Inner and Outer party members. Outer Party members have very little possessions, and almost no access to basic consumer goods. All outer party members have a telescreen in every room of their pathetic excuse for an apartment.

Ownlife - Individualism and eccentricity. A desire to do something for your own benefit. (i.e. hobbies, ownership of property, love, or any other Thoughtcrime)

Ownlife - Individuality. NOTE: considering such is a thoughtcrime.

Physical Jerks - Morning Exercises. Daily exercises at Wake-Up Call (7:15am)+ 3 minutes. Participation mandatory for all outer party members.

Pornosec - A department of Minitrue (q.v.). sub-section of the Fiction Department Produces the "lowest-kind" of pornography for the proles. In the Novel, it is described as a " which turned out cheap pornography for distribution among the proles. It was nicknamed Muck House by the people who worked in it". They "produced booklets in sealed packets with titles like Spanking Stories or One Night in a Girls' School, to be bought furtively by proletarian youths who were under the impression that they were buying something illegal.



Prole - Proletarians (approx. 85% of population). Viewed as animals by party members. Less rigidly watched than party members (few, if any, have home telescreens). Permitted to indulge in pornography, prostitution, and, "little joys" (i.e., minor thoughtcrimes) to keep the masses content (i.e. impossible to watch them all).

Prolefeed - Trash "Entertainment" and spurious news which the Party hands out to the masses. This includes written literature, movies, porn, music, and other various propaganda created for the proles. (For a modern example of prolefeed, just turn on your

television or radio. With the exception of some scientific programming, everything else is prolefeed.)

Recdep - Records Department (Ministry of Truth). responsible for correcting "mistakes" in past newspaper articles.

Room 101 - The site of "worst thing" - the final punishment for thoughtcriminals by the Ministry of Love, whatever the "worst thing" may be - burial alive, impalement, et al.

Sexcrime - Sex for pleasure. or in the hope to create a family. See also, Goodsex.

Speakwrite - to dictate. Speakwriter. A machine for taking dictation voice recognition capability for security.

Speedwise - (adverb) quickly. One of the rules of newspeak is that any word can be turned into an adverb by adding the suffix "-wise". This allowed the removal of repetitive words such as quickly and promptly from the language.

Steamer - Prole word for Rocket Bomb

Teledep - The Telegrams Department of the Ministry of Truth

Telescreen - Two-way television. All party members has one in every room of their apartment.

Thinkpol - see Thoughtpolice

Thoughtcrime - see Crimethink

ThoughtPolice - Crimethink Police force that monitors the public using spies (narcs), helicopters, and telescreens.



Two Minute Hate - Daily telescreen special; a packaged parade of Crimethink images and sounds; used so viewers can boo, hiss, and curse to release negative emotions.

Unperson - Person made to unexist. All historical references removed. Party members directed to clear them from memory to eliminate the possibility of martyrdom.

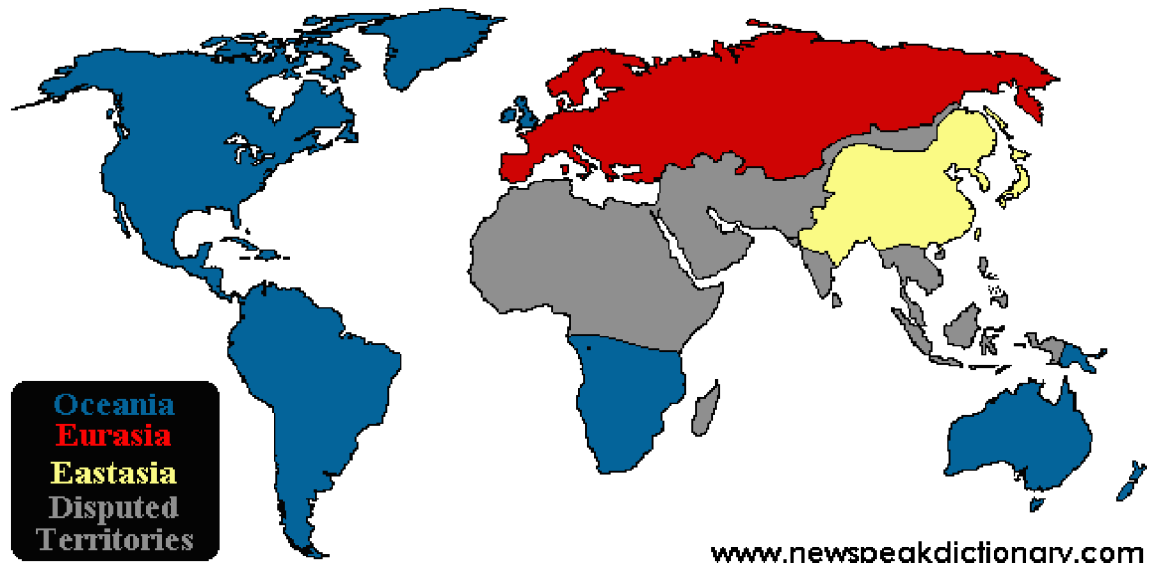
Ungood - Bad. NOTE: Newspeak Rule 11: any word becomes an antonym by adding "un-"; allows removal of words such as horrible, terrible, great, fantastic, and fabulous from the language.

Upsub - To get authorization from superiors (i.e., submit to "Higher-ups" for approval)

Vaporize - State execution, with the added benefit of becoming an unperson (q.v.)

Versificator - A writing machine. A mechanical device that produces "literature" and "music" (i.e., tabloid newspapers - sport, crime and astrology, sensational nickel novelettes, films oozing sex, and sentimental songs) for the proles. Invented so that a party member would not be forced to cloud their mind with such frivolous concepts.

The World according to NewSpeak



George Orwell: An Artist for Academia

Orwell's voracious reading of English literature and his passionate interest in the political implications of chronic social injustice inspired the man to action as well as creativity. After an early life of middle-class ease under the British Raj in India and later in England, it was his experiences as a policeman in Burma embedded in the social caste system of the subcontinent that brought about his revulsion with the class-ridden British Empire. This in turn inspired a life devoted to understanding the lower classes and writing about their plight, thereby forcing the comfortable British middle-class to see how much their lives depended upon the virtual enslavement of those who did their bidding. His observations of human behavior from close quarters (living in some of poorest neighborhoods of London, Paris, and Barcelona) and his keen analysis of the psychology of the masses and the individual in relation to the masses allowed him to create a body of dystopian work that has had a profound impact on writers, philosophers and psychologists for more than half a century. All this plus his wartime experiences (fighting for the Socialists in the Spanish Civil War; propagandizing for the British in World War Two) shaped the mind that would see the world in a unique and iconic, indeed, mythic manner. His embracing of poverty and his 12 year bout with tuberculosis (lasting 'til his death) particularly while living on a bleak far flung island off the coast of Scotland, helped to shape his unique imaginative powers. The intensity of his artistic focus enhanced his predictive powers which created a vision of the future dangers inherent in man's nature that will haunt humanity forever.

Orwell in Academia

Cinema

Power of Images/Images of Power in *Brave New World* & *1984*
- by MARIO VARRICCHIO

Two OF THE MOST IMPORTANT dystopic novels of our century, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, make use of cinema and television – Huxley dedicates more space to the former while Orwell to the latter – to perform a crucial political function by preventing and repressing protest and, more generally, by conditioning and inhibiting oppositional forces in a fashion that ominously foreshadows the present.

Economics

Orwell On Capitalism

Nineteen Eighty-Four and George Orwell's Other View of Capitalism - A. M. ECKSTEIN

If Orwell remained in his own mind a man of the Left, something of a paradox appears in the references to the capitalist "past" in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a "past" which is to a great extent Orwell's present, and which has much to recommend it -- indeed, just about everything to recommend it.

Epistemology

Chaos over Contingency Theory

Chaos versus contingency theory: epistemological issues in Orwell's 1984.
by Alexander J. Argyros

There is a consensus in contemporary theory that globalizing claims are inherently suspect. The association of totalization with terror has gained such currency that it is nearly impossible to use the verb "to globalize" in any but a sarcastic or aggressive fashion.

History, Sociology

Orwell and English Socialism

Many on the Left held that it is never timely to tell salutary truths about the home team. Many on the Right accepted his fierce libertarianism but either ignored his egalitarianism or dismissed it as silly and superficial. And perhaps ordinary readers who did not know where Orwell stood already might be forgiven for thinking that the two satires are just about the Soviet Union and not also all forms of power hunger and rational hierarchy.

Language and Linguistics

Beyond Orwell: Clarity and the English Language

- MADELYN FLAMMIA

Nineteen Eighty-Four presents the catastrophic outcome of a perversion of language by politics and politics by language. But it is his classic essay, "Politics and the English Language," that pretends to finger the inner mechanisms effecting that perversion of plain sense.

The Evolving Nature of Dystopian Languages

Other than their national and generic links as English dystopias, Huxley's **Brave New World**, Orwell's **Nineteen Eighty-Four**, and Burgess' **A Clockwork Orange** share few surface similarities. Yet a substantial element of these novels's timelessness comes from their shared concern with language and freedom, issues whose relevance has not faded.

Law

Orwell's 1984 & The Law

- RANSFORD C. PYLE Department of Public Service Affairs - University of Central Florida

1984 may be viewed at first blush to have a lot to do with politics, almost nothing to do with law. To a lawyer, the most notable feature of the ruling regime is the absence of lawyers and courts - an administrative state controlled not by lawyers but by psychiatrists (or psychologists or other social scientists). I suspect that Orwell, was confusing legality with legitimacy. Oceania has laws, we just do not like them.

Literature

Orwell the Writer

Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Novel of the 1930s
-JEFFREY MEYERS

Nineteen Eighty-Four is a projection of the future that is based on a concrete and naturalistic portrayal of the present and the past. Its originality is rooted in a realistic synthesis and arrangement of familiar materials rather than in prophetic and imaginary speculations.

Dystopian Fiction

Utopia Reconsidered: Comments on *1984*
-William Steinhoff

Long before *1984* was written, events in Europe had shown Orwell that no "remedy in human nature" could prevail against the organized assaults of fascism and communism, bolstered as they were by armies and massive armament as well as by control of the press.

Mass Media

1984 and the Massaging of the Media - W. RUSSEL GRAY

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* increasing relevance is most notable in Orwell's chilling sense of how susceptible our mass media are to manipulation. Has the recent debate over the Iraq war not revealed Orwellian undertones?

Political Science

The Lure of Power in Post-Orwellian Political Fiction

- RICHARD I. SMYER

What we find in writers of political fiction is not simply a case of malevolent ruler and abjectly victimized subjects but, rather, an authoritarian, sometimes totalitarian, system holding out to the individual a strength to compensate for his own mortal limitations. The state is what the lone individual is not. The totalitarian political system fascinates by embodying the fantasy of permanence in a world of change.

Totalitarianism and Terror

The New Barbarians:

Totalitarianism, Terror and the Left Intelligentsia in Orwell's *1984*
JOHN DAVID FRODSHAM

"One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. . . . The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now do you begin to understand me?" Orwell, *1984*

Whatever the date, *1984* will always remain as a menacing possibility, being not so much a year as a state of mind, a nightmare which we dread because we know it to be essentially true; because something in us responds ineluctably to Orwell's warning cry.

The Political Basis of Orwell's Criticism of Popular Culture

- WILLIAM T. ROSS

Orwell "virtually invented" the study of popular culture, and some of his essays "have formed the foundation for a whole branch of contemporary British criticism devoted to the study of popular culture." He was committed to the eradication of totalitarianism, and his use of popular culture springs from a search for some viable alternative to the future of the totalitarians.

George Orwell: The Politics of *1984* & Asian Ambivalences

- KIRPAL SINGH

Unlike several of his contemporaries, George Orwell has not been subjected to critical scrutiny by Asian literary scholars. This is a matter of both curiosity and regret; the more so when we realize that at least *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have become household terms among most educated Asians.

Politics & Literature

If one set a group of good students an essay with this title, one might anticipate any or all of these interpretations: (i) the antipathy of the two concepts; (ii) their necessary interdependence; (iii) the duty of writers to commit themselves; (iv) the duty of writers not to commit themselves; (v) the influence of politics in writers; (vi) the influence of writers on politics; (vii) the clash of censorship and free expression; (viii) the control and use of writers by the state in other countries than our own; (ix) examples of good and bad political writing; (x) a case for the privatisation of public libraries; (xi) a demand for subsidies for unsuccessful writers; and (xii) a demonstration (granted certain theoretical premises) that Literature is a bourgeois concept and that the novel has a special role in maintaining the class system.

Psychology – Torture, Drugs, Fear

The "Not Me" Myth: Orwell and the Mind

-Margaret Thaler Singer

Orwell's genius was in sensing that combinations of social and psychological techniques are easier, more effective, and cheaper than the gun-at-the-head method of coercion. Social and psychological persuasion are also less likely to attract attention and thus are unlikely to mobilize opposition early and easily from those being manipulated.

Religious Studies

Orwell and Christian Doctrine

-James Connors

Animal Farm promotes Orwell's conviction that historically the Christian concept of heaven propagated by a variety of Christian churches had served to rationalize the cynical exploitation of the common man by government.

Behavioral Sciences

From *1984* to One-Dimensional Man:

Critical Reflections on Orwell and Marcuse

- Douglas Kellner

The visions of totalitarianism in contemporary industrial societies in the works of George Orwell and Herbert Marcuse offer insights that illuminate various features of the contemporary social and political world.

THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

George Orwell

Biography

Orwell (*a pen name for **Eric Blair***) born in India, a son of the British Raj, knew from the age of five or six he would be - must be - a writer which meant he had to read literature. But when he was 13 and at Eton in England, they didn't teach literature, so he apprenticed himself to the masters of English prose who most appealed to him—including Swift, Sterne and Jack London. At 19, he joined the Indian Imperial Police but soon came to realize that besides taking time from becoming a writer, it meant supporting a political system in which he no longer believed. He hungered to "escape from ... every form of man's dominion over man" *Road to Wigan Pier* (1937).

At the age of twenty-four, he returned to England, to a grubby little apartment in a poor district and set about to teach himself how to write, and at the same time to change himself from Eric Blair, old Etonian an English colonial policeman, into George Orwell, classless antiauthoritarian. By writing autobiographical novels that would bring the English middle class, of which he was a member, to an understanding of what life they led and enjoyed, was founded upon, that is the life of the those right under their very noses. As a writer his idea of himself as exposé of painful truth, which people do not wish to look at and as a representative of the English moral conscience.

Living among the poor, he received a commission from the Left Book Club to examine the conditions of the poor and unemployed. This resulted in *The Road to Wigan Pier*. The commissioners were not pleased with what he had written about the English class system and English socialism, particularly that English socialism was the province of the middleclass who spout phrases like "proletarian solidarity" but who are put off by the decent folk Blair/Orwell had come to know as the salt of British earth. In 1936 he went to Spain to report on the civil war between the communist, socialist Republic, and Franco's Fascist military rebellion. In Barcelona, he experience the evaporation of class distinctions and saw that there was hope for a socially aware world, only to be shocked when the end of the war brought as "return to normal," and he became persona non grata. These experiences convinced him that while there was hope, there was also something in human nature that seems to seek out violence, conflict, power over others.

In 1938 he contracted tuberculosis and when World War II broke out was rejected for service as physically unfit. Still he did his bit and after the war, he moved his family to a remote island off Scotland where he created his two most enduring works, **Animal Farm** and **1984**. The islands climate was unsuitable for someone suffering from tuberculosis. He admitted that the island influenced the bleakness of human suffering, the indignity of pain he captured in **1984**. He said that the book wouldn't have been so gloomy had he not been so ill.

THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

Company History

The Actors' Gang is one of Los Angeles' most enduring theatre ensembles. Founded in 1981 by a group of renegade theatre artists, the Gang's mission is to create bold, original works for the stage and daring reinterpretations of the classics. Our work is raw, immediate, socially minded, and crafted with the highest artistic standards.

Over the course of our first 20 years we have produced 72 plays and won over 100 awards, winning acclaim for our interpretations of Shakespeare, Bruchner, Brecht, Moliere, Aeschylus, Ibsen and Chekhov, while developing in workshop new plays that address the world today through a prism of satire, popular culture and raucous stagecraft, and bringing important new scripts from today's most thought-provoking writers dealing with burning issues of our times to audiences around the Nation.

Through co-productions, The Actors' Gang presented the West Coast Premiere of Eric Bogosian's "Suburbia" with the Namaste Theatre Company, Roger Guenver Smith's "A Huey P. Newton Story," Danny Hoch's "Jails, Hospitals, Hip Hop" with Center Theatre Group, and "Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella" with The Cornerstone Theatre Company. The Actors' Gang has toured with productions as the US representative at the Edinburgh Festival and to New York's Public Theatre with "Carnage, A Comedy"; with "The Imaginary Invalid" to the Rushmore Festival in New York, and in 2001 saw "Bat Boy, A Musical," developed at the Actors' Gang, won the Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics award for best new musical Off-Broadway in New York. Tim Robbins' "Embedded" which premiered in Los Angeles and toured the country, also played extended runs in New York (at the Public Theater) and in London, before being filmed for a screening at the Venice international Film Festival and broadcast on PBS in the US.

1982

LA Weekly Award - Outstanding Direction - "Ubu the King"

1988

LA Drama Critics Circle - Margaret Harford Award for Excellence in Theatre

6 Drama-Logue Awards (including Outstanding Production) - "Carnage"

1989

Representing the USA at **The Edinburgh International Theatre Festival** - "Carnage"

1991

2 Drama-Logue Awards including Best Production - "Good Woman of Setzuan"

LA Drama Critics Circle Nomination - "Good Woman of Setzuan"

1993

3 Drama-Logue Awards including Best Production - "Blood! Love! Madness!"

3 Drama-Logue Awards - "Woyzeck"

LA Weekly Production of the Year - "Woyzeck"

1994

1 Ovation Award & 11 Nominations - "Hysteria"

1 Ovation Award - "The Orestia"

3 LA Weekly Awards - "The Orestia"

1 Drama-Logue Award - "Mein Kampf"

1995

3 Drama-Logue Awards - "Peer Gynt"

1 Ovation Nomination - "Peer Gynt"

1996

4 Ovation Awards & 6 Nominations - "The Imaginary Invalid"

1 Drama Logue Award - "Asylum"

1997

2 LA Weekly Awards & 6 Nominations including Best Musical - "Euphoria"

2 Ovation Awards including Best Musical - "Euphoria"

9 Drama-Logue Awards including Best Production - "Kick-Ass Militia"

1998

1 Ovation Award & 4 Ovation Nominations - "Bat Boy"

1 LA Weekly Award for Best Musical - "Bat Boy"

2 Drama Logue Awards - "Little Man In The Box"

8 Backstage West Garland Awards including Best Production - "Salome"

9 Backstage West Garland Awards incl. Best Production - "Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella"

2 Ovation Awards - "Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella"

1999

3 Ovation Nominations - "Broadway"

5 Backstage West Garland Awards including Best Production - "Broadway"

5 Backstage West Garland Awards including Best Play - "A Fairy Tale"

2 Backstage West Garland Awards - "Four Roses"

5 Backstage West Garland Awards - "Ugly's First Word"

2000

5 Backstage West Garland Awards - "Swan Ride"

2 Backstage West Garland Awards - "XXX Love Act"

2001

3 Ovation Awards including Best Production and Best Actor -
"Under the Lintel"

Richard Rogers Award - The Academy of Arts & Letters - "Bat Boy"

8 Drama Desk Nominations - "Bat Boy" (New York)

Outer Critics Award - "Bat Boy" (New York)

2002

Lucille Lortel for Best Off Broadway Musical - "Bat Boy" (New York)

1 L.A. Weekly Award - "The Seagull"

1 Ovation Award and 5 nominations - "The Exonerated"

1 Ovation nomination - "Mephisto"

2 NAACP nominations - "The Exonerated"

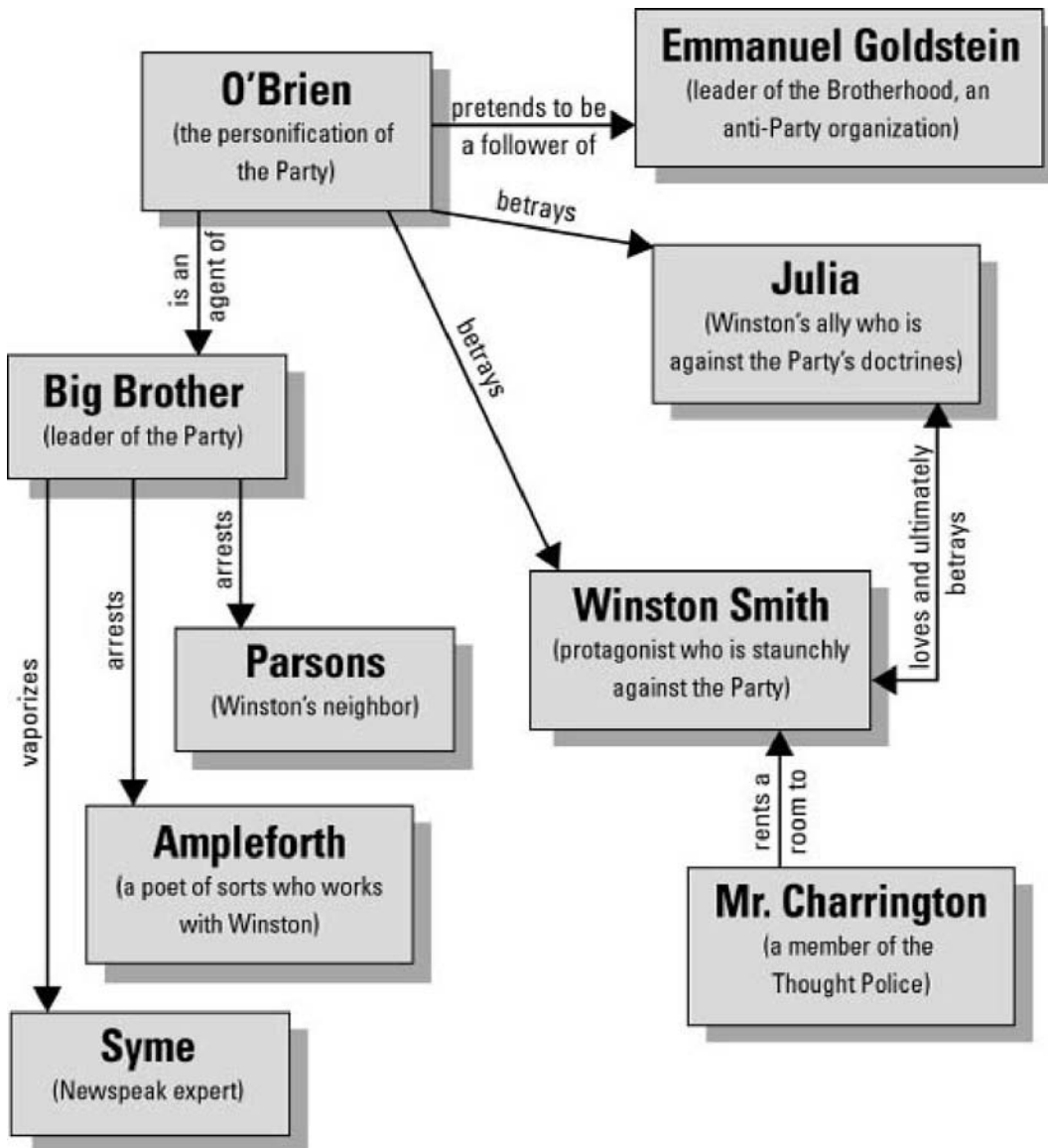
2003

1 Ovation nomination - "Orlando"

2004

3 L.A. Weekly Awards including Best Actress & Supporting Actress)
"Self-Defense"

Character Map



Elements of The Story

In creating a theatrical production, the first element is usually the book, or spoken word. The book contains the plot, characters, thoughts, dialogue, placement of songs and dances, and some stage direction.

Since this theatrical production began with a book, let's examine the elements of the text.

A. Plot

The plot is the structure of the play. It is the actions/ events which make up the story. The plot has five parts:

Exposition: The presentation of information that the audience needs to enter the play's action.

Rising Action: Central part of the story during which various problems and complications arise, which cause the characters to take action.

Climax: The highest point or turning point in the action, which pits protagonist and antagonist against each other in a final confrontation that settles all their difficulties.

Falling Action: Contains the action or dialogue necessary to lead the story to a resolution or ending.

Resolution: The end of the story in which the problems are solved and the story is finished.

Discussion Section:

The function of the exposition is to acquaint the audience with the characters in such a way that the audience becomes concerned with what happens to them. In The Actors' Gang production of "1984", the audience learns about all the major characters through exposition revealed both in dialogue and action. Identify the following moments of exposition in the play.

- An action that showed the cruelty of Big Brother
- An action that showed Winston's strength and point of view
- Dialogue that revealed Winston's entrapment
- Movement that expressed O'Brien's authority and power

- Is there a subplot in The Actor's Gang production of 1984 (a story within a story)?

B. Structure

Definition: The way the story is organized and presented. The order of the action and the placement of characters within it.

- Is the structure of the play similar to or different from the book?
- Would you choose different or more information to the play? Or take away different elements?
- How did the actors encompass all the characters in the play? How did they physically or vocally transform themselves for each character?

C. Setting

Definition: The time and place of the story. Geography, social eras and political events are all influential to a story's setting.

The Actors' Gang production of 1984 is set in today's world. In his novel, Orwell was setting the stage for a future government and world. Do you feel that setting the play in today's world did the novel justice? Do you feel Orwell was actually foreshadowing the world in which we live today, or one in the future, or none of the above?

- How did the setting of the production affect the storytelling?
- How did the costuming of the production affect the story?
- How was the lighting of the production used to tell the story?

Discussion & Essay Questions

1. Orwell wrote 1984 as a warning. Explain what he was warning people about. Be sure to examine the influence of political climates in the world during the time when Orwell wrote. Does The Actors' Gang production of "1984" also send out a warning, or does it say something else?
2. Do you believe that Julia did confess right away as O'Brien states, or do you believe this is just another torture tactic, knowing that your one love crumbled before you did?
3. Orwell creates a very specific social structure in his novel 1984. Oceania's political structure is divided into three segments: the Inner Party, the ultimate ruling class, consisting of less than 2 percent of the population; the Outer Party, the educated workers, numbering around 18 to 19 percent of the population; and the Proles, or the proletariat, the working class. Do you believe that Los Angeles has a similar social caste system? If so, how is it divided? On a larger scale, does the United States?
4. The Actors' Gang production brings Orwell's novel into the present day. Do you see examples of governmental control over privacy in your life? (i.e. Internet tracking and Google Earth) Do we have a contemporary version of a telescreen in our homes?
5. Can you find any examples of Newspeak in our contemporary language? (ex. Interpol, Email, cell)
6. Discuss the power of media in both The Actors' Gang production and in your own life?
7. 1984 is rife with irony (that is, things being different from what is expected) and doublethink (being able to absolutely believe in two opposing ideas simultaneously). Divide a piece of paper into two columns. On one side, list as many examples of doublethink as you can; on the other, list examples of irony. Discuss what you think Orwell's purpose was in using both.
8. What role does the "voice" play within the theatrical production? What effect does it have on Winston? Is Winston's obsession with Big Brother fundamentally similar to or different from his obsession with O'Brien?

Activities

Role Playing:

Break into partners and label one person A and the other B. Person A must retell a ritual that they did that day, i.e. getting ready for school. Partner B must continually request that Partner A be more “precise” with their storytelling until they are satisfied. Then switch roles. This activity will allow students to realize how little awareness we give to our everyday routines, what our actions say about ourselves, and how they are perceived by others.

Translating Newspeak:

Take a couple for sentences out of the newspaper and see if you can “dumb them down” by replacing words with Newspeak. Compare articles and discuss what meaning is lost in the translation.

Sensory Awareness:

Option #1: Break into partners and label one person Winston and the other Big Brother. Repeat a call and response with each other by saying the other’s name. For example, the partner labeled Big Brother will call “Winston” and the other partner will respond with “Big Brother”. After everyone feels comfortable with rehearsing their call and response, everyone should spread out throughout the room far away from their partner. Then everyone closes their eyes and through call and response needs to find their way safely back to their partner.

Option #2: Select one student to be Winston and another to be the “real” Julia. Have them practice their call and response of Winston and Julia. Then have them close their eyes and the teacher should lead them blindly away from each other a good distance. Once settled they can begin their call and response to find their way back to each other. After a couple of seconds, the rest of the class should also be wandering through the room and responding to Winston’s calls of “Julia” with frequent responses of “Winston” either individually or collectively until the pair finds each other.

This activity recreates the disorientation feeling that Winston’s torturers used on him in The Actors’ Gang production. How did you feel when your sense of sight was taken away? Did you find you got more anxious and nervous as time progressed? Did your need to connect with your partner increase with time?

Connections:

Create a report on the similarities between Orwell’s Oceania and some current or past totalitarian regime. In doing so, consider the role of children and family, the idea of “thoughtcrimes,” the re-creation of history, and the use of propoganda.