

Unit 4 - Britain



The objectives for this unit are:

- reading: read an extract from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
- colloquial English: learn some Orwellian language.

Unit 4 - Britain - Reading: Key phrases

The following words and phrases appear in the text you are going to read in this section:

china white clay used to make delicate Cups, plates, etc.
The vase is made of china.

wink close one eye and open it again quickly
He winked at the boss as he said it.

sloppiness the State of containing too much liquid
The food was inedible due to its sloppiness.

pannikin a metal container for drink or food
Penny packed her pannikin in her backpack.

pedant a person who is too concerned with small details or rules especially when learning or teaching
The new consultant is a bit of a pedant, to be honest.

wastage amount of something that is wasted
There is little wastage from the new production processes.

afterthought a thing that is thought of, said or added later, and is often not carefully planned
They only invited Jack and Sarah as an afterthought.

vapid lacking interest or intelligence
That is a vapid use of our resources.

unorthodox different from what is usual or accepted
We chose an unorthodox method of negotiation.

divine find out something by guessing
She could divine what he was thinking just by looking at him.

abolish officially end a law, a system, or an institution
This tax should be abolished.

George Orwell
**Nineteen
Eighty-Four**



The gin was served out to them in handleless china mugs. They threaded their way across the crowded room and unpacked their trays on to the metal-topped table, on one corner of which someone had left a pool of stew, a filthy liquid mess that had the appearance of vomit. Winston took up his mug of gin, paused for an instant to collect his nerve, and gulped the oily-tasting stuff down. When he had winked the tears out of his eyes, he suddenly discovered that he was hungry. He began swallowing spoonfuls of the stew, which, in among its general sloppiness, had cubes of spongy pinkish stuff which was probably a preparation of meat. Neither of them spoke again till they had emptied their pannikins. From the table at Winston's left, a little behind his back, someone was talking rapidly and continuously, a harsh gabble almost like the quacking of a duck, which pierced

'How is the Dictionary getting on?' said Winston, raising his voice to overcome the noise.

'Slowly,' said Syme. 'I'm on the adjectives. It's fascinating.'

He had brightened up immediately at the mention of Newspeak. He pushed his pannikin aside, took up his hunk of bread in one delicate hand and his cheese in the other, and leaned across the table so as to be able to speak without shouting.

'The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition,' he said. 'We're getting the language into its final shape – the shape it's going to have when nobody speaks anything else. When we've finished with it, people like you will have to learn it all over again. You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words – scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050.'

He bit hungrily into his bread and swallowed a couple of mouthfuls, then continued speaking, with a sort of pedant's passion. His thin dark face had become animated, his eyes had lost their mocking expression and grown almost dreamy.

'It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. Of course, the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn't only the synonyms; there are also the antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take "good", for instance. If you have a word like "good", what need is there for a word like "bad"? "Ungood" will do just as well – better, because it's an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of "good", what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like "excellent" and "splendid" and all the rest of them? "Plusgood" covers the meaning, or "doubleplusgood" if you want something stronger still. Of course, we use those forms already. But in the final version of Newspeak, there'll be nothing else. In the end, the whole notion of goodness and badness will be covered by only six words – in reality, only one word. Don't you see the beauty of that, Winston? It was B.B.'s

A sort of vapid eagerness flitted across Winston's face at the mention of Big Brother. Nevertheless, Syme immediately detected a certain lack of enthusiasm.

'You haven't a real appreciation of Newspeak, Winston,' he said almost sadly. 'Even when you write it you're still thinking in Oldspeak. I've read some of those pieces that you write in the *Times* occasionally. They're good enough, but they're translations. In your heart, you'd prefer to stick to Oldspeak, with all its vagueness and its useless shades of meaning. You don't grasp the beauty of the destruction of words. Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?'

Winston did know that, of course. He smiled, sympathetically he hoped, not trusting himself to speak. Syme bit off another fragment of the dark-coloured bread, chewed it briefly, and went on:

'Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten. Already, in the Eleventh Edition, we're not far from that point. But the process will still be continuing long after you and I are dead. Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there's no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. But in the end, there won't be any need even for that. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak,' he added with a sort of mystical satisfaction. 'Has it ever occurred to you, Winston, that by the year 2050, at the very latest, not a single human being will be alive who could understand such a conversation as we are having now?'

'Except —' began Winston doubtfully, and then he stopped.

It had been on the tip of his tongue to say 'Except the proles,' but he checked himself, not feeling fully certain that this remark was not in some way unorthodox. Syme, however, had divined what he was about to say.

'The proles are not human beings,' he said carelessly. 'By 2050 — earlier, probably — all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron — they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like "freedom is slavery" when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact, there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking — not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.'

One of these days, thought Winston with sudden deep conviction, Syme will be vaporized. He is too intelligent. He sees too clearly and speaks too plainly. The Party does not like such people. One day he will disappear. It is written in his face.

Nineteen Eighty-Four: Read the text and answer the questions.

Decide if the statements from the text are **true**, **false**.

1. Winston likes the gin.
2. The food is appetizing.
3. Syme works for a newspaper.
4. Newspeak has fewer words than Oldspeak.
5. Nobody speaks Oldspeak.
6. Syme believes people will stop thinking in the future.

Nineteen Eighty-Four: Read the text and answer the questions.

Complete the sentences with the correct words.

1 Syme is currently working on the

Dictionary

2 The Eleventh Edition will be the last

edition of the .

Newspeak

3 The Dictionary won't contain any

.

Oldspeak

4 Winston sometimes writes for the

.

adjectives

5 All literature is being rewritten in

.

Times

6 Party slogans will change to remove

traces of .

synonyms

Unit 4 - Britain - Orwellian language

The following words and expressions from the extract of Nineteen Eighty-Four were invented or popularized by George Orwell. They are now commonly used in English::

newspeak language that is not clear or honest, for example the language that is used in political propaganda

'Negative growth' is newspeak for contraction.

Big Brother a person or organization exercising total control over people's lives

Big Brother will be watching you from next week when security cameras start to operate in London.

thoughtcrime an idea or opinion that is considered socially unacceptable or criminal

You have to be careful about what you write online, in case you are accused of committing a thoughtcrime.

prole (informal, derogatory) a member of the working class

The proles have no jobs and no hope under this government.

The following colloquial words and expressions also appear in the extract:

gabble talk quickly so that people cannot hear you clearly or understand you

She was nervous and started to gabble.

get on used to talk or ask about how well somebody is doing in a particular situation

How's your painting getting on?

be on the tip of your tongue if a word or name is on the tip of your tongue, you are sure that you know it but you cannot remember it

Oh, I've forgotten the name of the film ... it's on the tip of my tongue.

be written in / on someone's face be very obvious to other people from the expression on somebody's face

He had seen terrible things - it was written in his face.

Orwellian language: Practice

Add the correct words to complete the sentences.:

- 1 In the Soviet Union many dissidents were imprisoned for _____
- 2 How are you _____ with the leaflet design?
- 3 Politicians often use _____ to deliberately mislead voters.
- 4 I've forgotten the name of the restaurant we went to in Paris ... it's on the tip of my _____.
- 5 I can't stand him - he's always _____ about women, cars, and football.
- 6 With surveillance cameras all over the city, it's difficult to escape the watch of _____.
- 7 Referring to ordinary working-class folk as _____ is disrespectful and offensive.
- 8 I could tell that his team had lost the match - it was written in his _____.