The Lasting Importance of 1984's Message in Schools

One of the most discussed and controversial novels ever written, *1984*, is a powerful political fiction written by George Orwell in 1949 in response to totalitarianism in the Soviet Union and Germany. With strong themes of the abuse of power, surveillance, and loss of self-identity, the novel has ironically faced decades of restrictions and bans. What's concerning is that the book warns readers to be cautious of those in power and how that power is exercised, a message that remains highly relevant today. It's important for highschoolers and young adults to study this novel, as this generation will soon become responsible for shaping the future. It is crucial they are aware of the risks, outcomes, and warning signs of silencing opposing views. George Orwell's *1984* should not be banned, most importantly in schools, because it highlights the dangers of governmental censorship, surveillance, and manipulation while teaching readers to recognize corruption in their own political environment.

It is imperative that 1984 is available in schools, because it reveals the effects of excessive governmental indoctrination, surveillance, and lack of independent thinking on society. INGSOC, the ruling party, maintains its power by eliminating individual identity and rewriting history while erasing the past. O'Brien, a powerful leader in the Party, explains to main character Winston: "Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else"(Orwell 144). O'Brien is insinuating that the Party determines reality because they control what's in the human mind- something they achieve through endless altering, gaslighting and inculcating. Moreover, the Party uses its own people, in their heavily indoctrinated state, to report suspicious behavior and essentially extend the eyes of the party. Along with suspicious neighbors, telescreens and tiny microphones keep a watchful eye on everyone, and as Winston puts it, "You had to live - did

live, from habit that became instinct - in the assumption that every sound was overheard" (Orwell 2). As the Party strips people of their liberties, they are turned into government-serving machines. Orwell creates an unrecognizable society - one that perpetuates fear, hatred, and manipulation - to reflect the suffocating effects of unchecked power. Through Winston's experiences, readers see how the longing for freedom becomes futile under such oppression. As a result of this, Orwell places a great emphasis on the endless cycle of hopelessness that emerges within totalitarian societies. As this dystopia contrasts so heavily with the modern world, it exemplifies the importance of preserving free speech, having access to accurate information, and the ability to think for yourself. Altogether, it encourages readers to work to preserve their freedoms, and it should be known to those who are the future of our societies and government.

Some argue that *1984* contains a pro-communist message, or that the book promotes animosity towards the government; however, the historical context and Orwell's purpose suggest otherwise. Orwell himself stood as a democratic socialist and wrote *1984* to showcase the perverted form of socialism that emerges under totalitarian rule. In the book, for example, INGSOC ironically stands for English Socialism, but in reality, INGSOC operates as a merciless dictatorship unrecognizable to socialist principles. The party utilizes propaganda, censorship, and absolute control to maintain power. In fact, Orwell aimed to critique Joseph Stalin's totalitarian and communist regime, which can explain why *1984* has been banned in the Soviet Union, China and other places where communism thrives. While not being against communism directly, *1984* condemns any system of government with unrestricted power, which includes communism as it exists today. Furthermore, *1984* does not promote blind hatred toward the government; rather, it promotes standing against corruption and fighting for the common good - an important message to be taught in schools.

In a time where the balance of power remains fragile, it is essential to keep younger generations informed about its consequences. *1984* does a striking job of showing how excessive power alters the past, determines the present, and shapes the future. Winston's story leaves readers more aware of the hardships and manipulation that occurs under oppressive regimes. They learn to appreciate and value their freedoms more, as well as fight to keep them. *1984* has stood the test of time, continuing to shape minds and empower people to fight for better, and its message deserves to be passed down to our future leaders.

Bibliography

Clendenin, Carson. “Why George Orwell Wrote 1984 | Study.com.” *Study.com*, 2020, study.com/academy/lesson/why-george-orwell-wrote-1984.html.

sparknotes. “SparkNotes: 1984: Why Orwell Wrote 1984.” *Sparknotes.com*, 2019, www.sparknotes.com/lit/1984/context/historical/why-orwell-wrote-1984/.