

Article

Echoes of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: Is Our Education System Becoming More Controlling?

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Abstract

*In an era marked by heightened surveillance and control, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has regained global relevance, particularly in its critique of totalitarian regimes and their impact on education. This paper explores the parallels between Orwell's dystopian vision and contemporary education systems, questioning whether totalitarian frameworks can foster 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. Orwell's Oceania exemplifies an education system designed for indoctrination, suppressing independent thought through tools like Newspeak and Doublethink, while modern education aims to empower individuals with adaptability and innovation. The study contrasts these opposing paradigms, highlighting how excessive control, standardized testing, and restricted information access in today's schools may inadvertently mirror Orwellian mechanisms, stifling the very skills needed for a dynamic world. By analysing the flaws in both systems, the paper underscores the importance of resisting educational practices that prioritize conformity over intellectual growth. Ultimately, it calls for reforms to ensure education remains a tool for enlightenment rather than control, preparing students to navigate and shape an interconnected, rapidly evolving society.*

Keywords: 21st-century skills, George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Education system, Totalitarianism

Introduction

Published in 1948, at the midpoint of the century, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* remains remarkably pertinent, evident in the widespread integration of its concepts and terms like *Big Brother*, *Newspeak*, and *Doublethink* into our language. Its timing and themes reflect concerns about totalitarian regimes and the misuse of power, making its insights particularly resonant in the context of post-World War II geopolitical tensions. *Big Brother* refers to the intrusive surveillance and control of a totalitarian regime, representing any form of excessive governmental oversight. *Newspeak* describes a controlled language designed to limit freedom of thought and expression, relevant to discussions on censorship and manipulation of information. *Doublethink* represents the ability to hold two contradictory beliefs simultaneously, relevant to debates on cognitive dissonance and propaganda. These terms have entered popular discourse to describe real-world issues related to government surveillance, language manipulation, and contradictory policies or beliefs. Furthermore, the author's name has been transformed into an adjective, *Orwellian*, frequently invoked in contemporary discussions about privacy and state intervention. The term "*Orwellian*" has become an adjective used to describe scenarios or policies that reflect Orwell's vision of a dystopian, oppressive society characterized by surveillance, censorship, and totalitarian control. It's frequently used in contemporary discussions about privacy, state intervention, and abuses of power. For example, debates about the extent of government surveillance or data privacy often invoke the term "*Orwellian*" to describe overly intrusive or authoritarian practices. The fact that Orwell's concepts and the term "*Orwellian*"

remain pertinent indicates how *Nineteen Eighty-Four* addresses timeless concerns about personal freedom, governmental authority, and societal manipulation. The novel's ability to provide a framework for understanding and critiquing modern issues underscores its enduring impact and relevance.

Due to the rapid advancements in military and security technologies, the strategies employed in propaganda, and the profound influence of the media on individuals, we have evolved into a society where constant surveillance by states, intrusion into our thoughts by the media, and the looming threats of war and terrorism have become pervasive concerns. Technological progress in the military and security fields has enhanced the capabilities of states to monitor and control their populations. Modern surveillance systems, including sophisticated data collection and analysis tools, have made it easier for governments to track individuals' activities and behaviours on an unprecedented scale. Advances in technology have also improved the effectiveness of propaganda. With the ability to target specific audiences through digital platforms, states and organizations can manipulate public perception more efficiently. Propaganda can shape opinions, spread misinformation, and influence behaviour, contributing to a controlled narrative that supports particular agendas. The media plays a crucial role in shaping how people think and perceive the world. With the rise of digital media, including social networks and online news, the media's reach and impact have grown significantly. This influence can lead to the shaping of public opinions, often through biased or selective reporting, which can affect individual beliefs and societal norms. The combination of advanced technology and effective propaganda has led to a state of constant surveillance, where governments are capable of monitoring their citizens more closely. This surveillance can infringe on personal privacy and freedoms, creating an environment where individuals feel continually watched.

In contemporary times, the cultivation and expression of individual thoughts face discouragement and, in some cases, outright prohibition. The notion of thoughtcrime has found acceptance in numerous societies, where the endurance of such regimes is thought to hinge on the compliance of their citizens. Individuals are compelled to conform to the laws set by the ruling government and adhere to the prescribed thoughts. In many contemporary societies, especially those under authoritarian rule, there is a deliberate effort to suppress and discourage independent thinking. This means that people who express or hold thoughts that deviate from the norm or challenge the status quo may face restrictions or punishment. This can manifest in various ways, including censorship, legal penalties, or social ostracism. The concept of "thoughtcrime" originates from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where it refers to the criminalization of thoughts that oppose or challenge the ruling party. In many societies, especially those with totalitarian tendencies, there is an acceptance of this concept. This means that not only actions but also thoughts that are deemed contrary to the government's ideology can be punished. The regime's goal is to control not just behaviour but also the very thoughts of its citizens. The survival and stability of such regimes depend on the compliance of their citizens. By ensuring that people not only follow laws but also think in alignment with the government's prescribed ideology, these regimes maintain control. Compliance is enforced through various means such as propaganda, surveillance, and punitive measures against dissent.

Today, in many democratic countries, citizens experience surveillance, control, and pressure in different fields. With the increasing surveillance of students, it is true to say that Big Brother is watching our classrooms. Both the students and teachers are being monitored, books are banned, movements are tracked and recorded, and some websites are blocked on no reasonable grounds. In this article, our main aim is to explore how these concepts affect education systems in the world by drawing a parallel with the portrayal of education in Oceania as imagined by Orwell years ago. The paper will reveal how some educational practices contradict the development of 21st-century skills.

Literature Review

The intersection of totalitarianism and education has been extensively explored through the lens of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with scholars examining its implications for modern pedagogical practices. Orwell's dystopia depicts education as a tool for state control, where indoctrination replaces critical inquiry (Orwell, 2004). This aligns with broader critiques of authoritarian education systems, which prioritize obedience over creativity (Apple, 2019). Recent studies highlight how standardized testing and rigid curricula may inadvertently mirror Orwellian mechanisms, narrowing intellectual freedom (Ravitch, 2016).

Conversely, 21st-century education frameworks emphasize skills like collaboration, digital literacy, and adaptability (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009). Pellegrino and Hilton (2012) categorize these competencies into cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains, arguing they are essential for navigating a globalized world. However, Trilling and Fadel (2009) caution that systemic inequalities often hinder equitable access to such skills, perpetuating disparities akin to Orwell's stratified Oceania.

The tension between control and empowerment in education is further complicated by technology. While digital tools offer transformative potential (Jenkins, 2009), their misuse for surveillance echoes Orwell's telescreens (Zuboff, 2019). This review synthesizes these perspectives, positioning *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a cautionary tale against educational systems that sacrifice critical thinking for conformity.

At the heart of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) lies the fundamental conflict between education's potential to emancipate versus its capacity to oppress - a dichotomy that offers valuable insights when analyzing similarities between Orwell's dystopian vision in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and modern schooling systems. Freire's critique of the "banking model" of education - where knowledge is deposited into passive students by authoritarian teachers - resonates with Orwell's portrayal of Oceania's indoctrination apparatus. In both frameworks, education serves to reproduce hegemony: Freire's oppressed are conditioned to accept their marginalization, just as Orwell's citizens internalize Party dogma through Newspeak and Doublethink (Freire, 1970; Orwell, 2004). Recent scholarship has expanded this dialogue, with scholars like Giroux (2020) arguing that neoliberal education reforms, with their emphasis on standardized testing and workforce readiness, echo Freire's "banking" logic while approximating Orwell's suppression of critical thought.

Freire's emphasis on *praxis*—reflective action toward liberation—offers a counterpoint to Orwell's bleak vision. Where *Nineteen Eighty-Four* depicts a system that annihilates curiosity (e.g., "There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life"; Orwell, 2004, p. 266), Freire posits education as a space for critical consciousness, where learners interrogate power structures (Freire, 1970). Empirical studies in critical pedagogy demonstrate how student-led inquiry and participatory curricula can resist Orwellian control. For example, Mitra's (2020) research on self-organized learning environments (SOLEs) shows how minimally invasive education fosters autonomy, subverting top-down models reminiscent of Oceania's Ministry of Truth.

However, Freirean optimism is tempered by contemporary challenges. Zuboff's (2019) concept of "surveillance capitalism" reveals how digital platforms in schools—from proctoring software to behaviour-tracking apps—enact what Foucault (1977) termed "disciplinary power," merging Orwell's telescreens with Freire's fear of dehumanization. In China, "patriotic education" campaigns (Xu, 2021) and in the U.S., legislative bans on "divisive concepts" (Pizmony-Levy, 2023) exemplify Freire's warning that education can be weaponized to enforce ideological conformity, much like the Party's rewriting of history in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Education

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be seen as a dystopian narrative depicting a society on the brink of collapse. The story unfolds in Oceania, where the ruling government, led by Big Brother, wields absolute power. The Party's motto, "War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength," pervades the society, and ubiquitous signs proclaim, "Big Brother is watching you." The Thought Police, with their covert agents, surveil the populace, encouraging people to abandon notions of justice, freedom, reality, emotion, imagination, and ideals. The oppressive world systematically erases all historical traces, employing a propaganda mechanism to recondition the thoughts of its citizens.

In the narrative, the constant presence of Big Brother's images and voice served as a means to coerce citizens into adhering to cultural norms. Any divergence in thought by a citizen was met with punishment and a coercive reprogramming to align with the government's perspectives. The regime allowed no space for independent thinking or criticism; even contemplation was deemed criminal. The Thought Police, tasked with identifying and penalizing unspoken doubts and beliefs contrary to Party views, symbolized the authoritative might of a motivated government. Orwell's novel serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the perils of a manipulative and domineering governing body.

The book illustrates how a totalitarian government can wield control over society through the manipulation and deployment of coercive language. In this dystopian setting, the populace's thoughts are shaped through manipulation and intimidation. Central to the ruling government's regime are the notions of violence, loyalty, control, and power.

Orwell acknowledged uncertainty about the actual emergence of the society he depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, yet he expressed a belief that a similar one might

likely arise. In contemporary times, individuals are under constant surveillance through satellites, cameras, and phone eavesdropping. Advanced technical devices in parked cars outside residences even enable the monitoring and recording of private conversations within homes. Such conversations can be exposed to the public through media outlets. Additionally, some individuals face the manipulation of their electronic devices with the insertion of illegal documents, compelling them to prove their innocence and avoid unjust accusations.

In 1948, against the backdrop of the recently concluded and deadliest war in history, where over one hundred million soldiers were involved and nearly fifty million people lost their lives, George Orwell penned the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Having observed the actions of formidable dictators such as Hitler and Stalin, Orwell aimed to critique all totalitarian regimes. While some interpret the novel as a critique specifically directed at Stalin's Soviet Regime, Orwell underscored that the grim circumstances depicted could apply to any totalitarian regime.

Looking specifically at the education in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, we can argue that it serves as a tool for social control and manipulation by the totalitarian regime. The Party in the novel uses education as a means to shape and control the thoughts and beliefs of the citizens. "The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life but power, pure power." (Orwell, 2004, 263) This quote reveals the Party's obsession with power. It explicitly declares that the Party's sole purpose is to maintain and increase its power. This is not a means to an end, such as the betterment of society or the pursuit of knowledge. Power itself is the ultimate goal.

The Ministry of Truth was responsible for news, entertainment, education, and the fine arts (Orwell, 2004, 27). The education system is designed to indoctrinate citizens with the Party's ideology, ensuring loyalty and conformity. The education system is a tool for indoctrinating citizens with the ideology of the Party, promoting unquestioning loyalty to Big Brother. "Big Brother is infallible and all-powerful. Every success, every achievement, every victory, every scientific discovery, all knowledge, all wisdom, all happiness, all virtue, are held to issue directly from his leadership and inspiration" (Orwell, 2004, 212). Children were systematically trained to act as spies. The totalitarian regime would exploit the innocence and trust of children to maintain its grip on power. The Party systematically transforms children into spies, eroding familial bonds and fostering a climate of fear and paranoia. By turning children against their parents and each other, the Party creates a society where everyone is isolated and afraid, making it easier to control the population and prevent any form of rebellion.

History is rewritten, and information is manipulated to align with the Party's narrative. Additionally, the Party introduces Newspeak, a language designed to eliminate words that could be used for subversive thoughts. By controlling language, the Party aims to control thought itself. The education system actively promotes the use of Newspeak to limit the range of expressible ideas. Furthermore, education in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* promotes the concept of doublethink, the ability to hold two contradictory beliefs simultaneously. This is a mechanism for citizens to accept and internalize contradictory information without questioning the Party's authority. In this sense, education encourages citizens to accept and internalize

contradictory information without questioning the Party's authority. This intellectual contradiction is a means of maintaining control over thought.

The education system is designed to suppress independent thought and creativity, ensuring that citizens conform to Party ideology without questioning it. "There will be no art, no literature, no science. When we are omnipotent, we shall have no more need of science. There will be no distinction between beauty and ugliness. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. All competing pleasures will be destroyed." (Orwell, 2004, 266) The Party aims to suppress all forms of creative and intellectual expression. Art, literature, and science are seen as threats because they encourage independent thought, curiosity, and the exploration of truth. In a totalitarian regime, these pursuits could foster dissent or challenge the Party's authority. By eradicating them, the Party ensures that all knowledge and cultural expression serve its own purposes, thus maintaining control over the populace. The idea that science will become unnecessary when the Party achieves omnipotence suggests that once the Party has complete control, it will no longer need scientific progress or inquiry. The regime's ultimate goal is to achieve absolute power, where all aspects of society and human life are entirely regulated by the Party's ideology. In such a world, scientific exploration would be redundant because the Party's authority would be unquestioned and unchallenged. The regime seeks to eliminate distinctions between beauty and ugliness, and to suppress curiosity and enjoyment. This is because such distinctions and emotions can lead to personal preferences and individual thinking, which could undermine the uniformity and control desired by the Party. By removing these elements, the Party aims to create a society where everyone is equally dull and compliant, without personal desires or aspirations. The Party will destroy all forms of pleasure or enjoyment that could compete with or distract from their imposed ideologies. In doing so, the Party ensures that the only source of satisfaction comes from adherence to its doctrines, thereby consolidating its control over the people's lives and thoughts.

The Party sought to undermine science because a society accustomed to reasoning is essential for the establishment of a scientific community. When either of these elements is diminished – science or the population's capacity for logical thinking – the other suffers as a consequence. Consequently, by eradicating science, the critical thinking process and technological progress are also eradicated. In *Newspeak*, the new language of 1984, there exists no term for science. The empirical method, which formed the basis of all scientific achievements in the past, contradicts the Party's core principles. Books are authored by machines, and empirical inquiry is only promoted for purposes of war and police surveillance. (de Oliveira Moraes, 2021)

Critical thinking and individual intellectual pursuits are actively discouraged. The focus is on unquestioning acceptance of Party dogma. Any deviation from the prescribed ideology is considered thoughtcrime. The Thought Police and other instruments of control are used to enforce ideological conformity. Citizens are not only monitored physically but are also subjected to psychological manipulation through fear and surveillance. Education reinforces the isolation of individuals. Children are encouraged to report any deviations in thought or behaviour, even if they involve their own parents. This fosters an environment of constant surveillance and distrust. The primary purpose of education in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not

enlightenment or personal development but the maintenance of political power. It serves to create a docile and obedient population that unquestioningly follows the Party's directives.

Overall, education in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a tool for maintaining the Party's control over the minds of the citizens, ensuring conformity and suppressing dissent. It reflects the dystopian theme of using education not for enlightenment or personal development but as a means of social manipulation and power consolidation. It is a tool of the authoritarian regime, utilized to control not only the information available to citizens but also their thoughts and beliefs. The manipulation of language, historical narratives, and the suppression of individuality all contribute to the Party's goal of absolute power and control.

Skills for the 21st Century Classroom

Recognition of the fact that investments in education can benefit society as a whole, improve national wealth, and bolster the stability of families, neighbourhoods, and communities gave way to the idea that current educational policies and practices must be revised to ensure that all children acquire knowledge and skills that can be applied across different contexts. To modernize current educational policies and practices aimed at fostering the development of transferable knowledge and skills in all children, business leaders, educational organizations, and researchers are advocating for new education policies focused on cultivating broad, transferable skills and knowledge, commonly known as 21st-century skills. To begin outlining 21st-century skills, the committee initially categorized competence into three domains: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. These domains reflect different aspects of human thought and expand upon earlier attempts to categorize and structure human behaviour (Pellegrino and Hilton, 2012).

The objectives of education in the 21st century are aligned with the evolving demands and complexities of our rapidly changing world. Progressing into this century, the primary focus of education is to equip individuals with the essential skills, knowledge, and mindset required for success in a dynamic and interconnected global society. The 21st-century education aims to prepare students for a rapidly changing world that's vastly different from what the previous generation experienced. It emphasizes how well young people can apply their knowledge and skills to address real-life problems, rather than just measuring how thoroughly they've learned a particular school curriculum (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009).

One major aim of 21st-century education is to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Emphasis is placed on developing critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and creativity. Students are encouraged to analyse information, think independently, and approach challenges with innovative solutions. Instead of rote memorization, education today emphasizes analytical thinking, allowing students to evaluate information, solve problems creatively, and adapt to new situations. Another aim is to foster collaboration and communication. Teamwork is a major emphasis. Students learn to work effectively with others, communicate their ideas clearly, and collaborate on projects. Effective communication is crucial in the 21st century. Education aims to develop students'

ability to express themselves clearly and confidently through various media, including written, verbal, and digital communication. Communication is crucial in preparing students to be not just lifelong learners, but also active members of a broader community, with a voice and a sense of responsibility towards others. Young people need to be skilled in exchanging, critiquing, and presenting information and ideas to engage in and positively impact the digital culture (Ananiadou and Claro, 2009). With the increasing interconnectedness of the world, collaboration and teamwork have become essential skills. Education aims to foster a collaborative mindset, helping students work effectively with diverse groups of people and appreciate different perspectives.

Another aim is to equip students with digital literacy. Technology is pervasive, so students need to be adept at using it for research, communication, and creation. This includes information literacy, media literacy, and responsible online behaviour. As technology continues to play a central role in our lives, education focuses on developing digital literacy. This includes the ability to use technology proficiently, evaluate online information critically, and navigate digital platforms responsibly. People should now possess specific skills, competencies, and learning attitudes that enable them to thrive in today's complex and fast-evolving digital world. Skills like innovative design and creativity are particularly valued in the modern workforce. 21st-century education aims to promote lifelong learning. The pace of change is relentless, so the ability to learn independently and adapt to new knowledge is crucial. Furthermore, the concept of education has expanded beyond the traditional classroom setting. Lifelong learning is encouraged, with an emphasis on continuous skill development and the ability to acquire new knowledge throughout one's life. Building global citizens is another aim of 21st-century education. The world is more interconnected than ever. Education cultivates an understanding of different cultures, global issues, and the ability to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Globalization has made cultural competence an essential skill. Education aims to promote understanding and respect for diverse cultures, fostering a global perspective and preparing students to navigate an interconnected world. The ability to collaborate effectively and creatively with team members and peers, despite cultural and stylistic differences, is a crucial life skill for the 21st century. Recognizing and adapting to these differences and leveraging them to generate more innovative ideas and solutions will become increasingly significant as the century progresses (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, 80).

Another aim of 21st-century education is to create ethical and social responsibility to build global citizens. Education aims to instill a sense of ethical responsibility and social consciousness. Students are encouraged to consider the impact of their actions on a local and global scale and to contribute positively to their communities. The world is more interconnected than ever. Education cultivates an understanding of different cultures, global issues, and the ability to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Embracing different cultures will bring together adaptable and flexible students who can keep up with the rapid pace of change in the 21st century. Education aims to equip individuals with the ability to adapt to new situations and learn continuously. The capacity to adapt, such as by adopting

an entirely new perspective on a problem, can transform unexpected challenges into opportunities. This flexibility often leads to inventive solutions and genuine innovations that address the 21st-century need for novel ideas and approaches (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, 76). The pace of change is relentless, so the ability to learn independently and adapt to new knowledge is crucial. This involves developing a growth mindset and a willingness to embrace change. Whether individuals pursue entrepreneurship or not, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset encourages creativity, risk-taking, and an ability to identify and seize opportunities.

The 21st-century education recognizes the importance of social-emotional skills like empathy, self-awareness, and resilience. These skills are essential for navigating complex social situations, managing emotions, and building healthy relationships. Another issue is environmental awareness. Given the increasing importance of environmental sustainability, education aims to promote environmental awareness and a sense of responsibility towards the planet. This includes understanding the impact of human activities on the environment and developing sustainable practices.

In summary, 21st-century education seeks to go beyond traditional academic knowledge and rote memorization. It aims to prepare individuals for the complexities of the modern world, emphasizing skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, adaptability, and a global perspective. Overall, 21st-century education aims to create well-rounded individuals who can think critically, collaborate effectively, solve problems creatively, and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Critical Thinking vs. Doublethink: A Clash of Educational Aims

The 21st-century skills and education in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* present stark differences, reflecting the evolving goals and priorities in education over time. Comparing the 21st Century Skills with Educational Realities in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the first point is critical thinking. Modern education emphasizes critical thinking skills, encouraging students to analyse information, evaluate sources, and develop independent thought. This is in contrast to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where critical thinking is suppressed in favour of Party ideology. The focus of the 21st-century education empowers individuals to think critically, solve problems creatively, and collaborate effectively, while the education in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* controls and manipulates individuals, suppressing independent thought and critical analysis.

The content of education in the 21st century is varied and adaptable, emphasizing critical thinking skills and the ability to learn new things, while *Nineteen Eighty-Four* pictures an education that is static and rigidly controlled, promoting unquestioning obedience to the Party and its ideology. 21st-century education aims to develop skills such as communication, collaboration, digital literacy, and lifelong learning. Contemporary education values collaborative skills, fostering teamwork and communication. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* suggests that education discourages communicative and collaborative skills and prioritizes blind obedience, unquestioning acceptance of information, and isolation. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, individualism is discouraged, and citizens are isolated from one another to prevent

collective resistance. The 21st-century education often incorporates technology to enhance learning. It embraces technology as a learning tool, fostering digital literacy and responsible online behaviour. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, technology is used for surveillance and control, suppressing personal freedoms rather than promoting educational advancement. Technology is used for surveillance and control, with limited access for students. Modern education encourages creativity and innovation, aiming to prepare students for a rapidly changing world. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, creativity is stifled, and conformity is enforced to maintain societal control.

In brief, 21st-century education prioritizes critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability, aiming to prepare individuals for a complex and rapidly changing world. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, education serves the oppressive goals of the Party, stifling independent thought and individual expression to maintain control over the population. The 21st-century education aims to develop well-rounded, adaptable individuals who can thrive in a complex world. However, the overall goal of the education in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is to create docile, unquestioning citizens who serve the totalitarian regime. In essence, 21st-century education aims to empower individuals, while the education system in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* aims to control them.

Conclusion

How *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Exposes the Flaws in the Current Education System

Is Contemporary Education Delivering on the Promises of the 21st Century? The effectiveness of today's educational systems in preparing students for 21st-century skills is a complex and often debated topic. In theory, many modern educational systems recognize the importance of fostering critical thinking skills. There is an increased emphasis on teaching students how to analyse information, solve problems, and think independently. Education today often incorporates technology, helping students develop digital literacy and adaptability, essential skills in the 21st century's tech-driven world. There is a growing recognition of the value of collaborative learning. Many educational institutions encourage teamwork and communication skills, which are vital for success in various professional settings. Some educational systems are incorporating strategies to nurture creativity and innovation, acknowledging the need for individuals to think creatively in the face of complex challenges.

However, in practice, the encouragement for critical thinking is prevented by standardization and testing. Critics argue that the prevalence of standardized testing in many educational systems limits the development of skills like critical thinking and creativity. Teaching to the test can prioritize rote memorization over deep understanding. Another problem is related to the curriculum relevance. Some argue that traditional curricula may not always align with the skills needed in the 21st century. There is a call for more relevant and practical learning experiences that mirror real-world challenges. Additionally, rapid changes in technology and the job market require individuals to be adaptable. Some educational systems may struggle to keep pace with these changes, leaving students without the skills needed for emerging fields. Also, looking at the education facilities in different countries or in

schools in the same country, one might see the inequality in access. Disparities in access to quality education, technology, and resources contribute to inequality. Not all students have equal opportunities to develop 21st-century skills, potentially perpetuating social and economic gaps.

We can argue that Orwell exposes the flaws in our current education system in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. We can not claim that our entire education system is like that of Oceania. However, Orwell's dystopia does illuminate some potential shortcomings in contemporary education. Orwell shows a picture of an education system in which the Party controls history and information, suppressing critical analysis. This is achieved through "Newspeak," a language that limits thought and expression. Standardization in testing might become a potential flaw in our system. Standardized testing can emphasize rote memorization and discourage independent thinking if not implemented thoughtfully. Another flaw in the education in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is prioritizing obedience, which might be a potential flaw in our education if obedience is prioritized over collaboration. In Orwell's novel, individuality is crushed. Children are encouraged to inform on their own parents, fostering isolation and obedience. Today, while collaboration is valued, some schools might struggle to create a truly inclusive environment where diverse voices are heard and respected. In Oceania, there is limited access to information. Knowledge is tightly controlled. Citizens have limited access to information that contradicts the Party's agenda. Even today, digital literacy gaps and unequal access to technology can disadvantage some students. Misinformation online also presents a challenge.

Nineteen Eighty-Four reminds us of the importance of fostering critical thinking and independent learning. It highlights the dangers of a one-size-fits-all approach and the need for education to embrace diverse perspectives. The novel emphasizes the importance of information access and responsible digital citizenship. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* demonstrates the dangers of a society where independent thought is suppressed and critical thinking is discouraged. The novel's oppressive regime manipulates and controls information to prevent people from questioning or challenging the status quo. This underscores the importance of fostering critical thinking skills and encouraging independent learning in educational systems. By promoting these skills, individuals are better equipped to analyse information, question assumptions, and resist manipulation. The novel critiques a uniform approach to education and thought control, as seen in the Party's efforts to make everyone conform to a single, rigid ideology. This "one-size-fits-all" approach stifles creativity and individuality. In contrast, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* suggests that education should be flexible and inclusive, allowing for diverse perspectives and encouraging students to explore different viewpoints. This diversity in education helps prevent the kind of intellectual conformity that the Party imposes.

In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Oceania is ruled by a ruthless leader with absolute power who tries to control every aspect of people's lives, both in public and private. This is a nightmarish vision of totalitarianism, where the government is both strict (limiting citizens' say) and forceful (imposing its beliefs on everyone through all institutions). It epitomizes a form of governance where the state exercises vast control over its citizens, shaping their beliefs and demanding absolute loyalty to the government. One particularly fascinating element of education under such

totalitarian regimes is its role as a mechanism to mold the minds of the populace from a young age. Children are taught exclusively according to the state's directives, leading to a highly partial and inefficient system. Despite its flaws, those in power endorse this educational strategy, placing indoctrination above fostering intellectual growth.

Just like totalitarian regimes try to control everything, many schools around the world are against students using social media freely. But students, like people living under those regimes, find ways to break the rules and use social media secretly. Schools think they're protecting students, but by ignoring how important social media is in their lives, they're just creating a false sense of security. Most contemporary education systems don't go to the extremes of Oceania. However, by recognizing these potential flaws, we can work towards a future where education empowers individuals to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, and responsible citizens in a complex world.

In conclusion, while many educational systems are making efforts to align with 21st-century skills, challenges exist. Striking a balance between traditional knowledge and the skills needed for the modern world, addressing issues of access and inequality, and continually adapting to a changing landscape are crucial for ensuring that learners are well-prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

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