

# Critical Insights: Nineteen Eighty-Four

“Published near the midpoint of the twentieth century, when an exhausted world looked eagerly to the future, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* perhaps did not offer the most optimistic view of things to come. **This volume in the *Critical Insights* series looks both within and without the novel at its influences, themes, and ultimate relevance as the touchstone of dystopian fiction.**

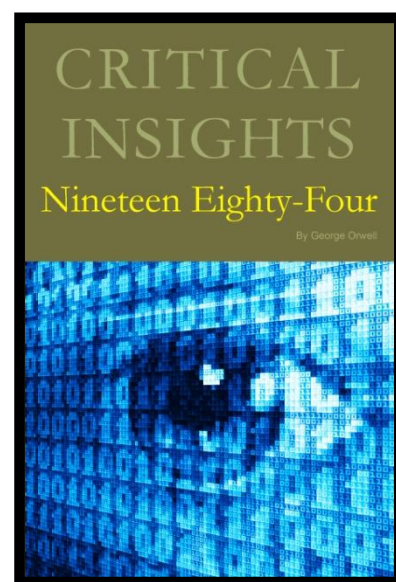
Two opening chapters give a general overview of the novel’s literary impact and a brief biographical sketch of its author, George Orwell. The three essays in the Critical Contexts section provide a **good foundation for understanding the novel in its time and place.** Bradley W. Hart examines the vitriolic political landscape of Britain in the two decades enveloping World War II while Tony Burns writes on the scholarship surrounding the *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in its role as dystopian novel forebear.

The eleven essays in the Critical Readings section build from Gregory Claeys’ discussion of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as it relates to the concept of nationalism to Donald Morris’ piece on the role of privacy in both utopian and dystopian societies. In his essay “*Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1984,” Jackson Ayres takes the inevitable but important look at Orwell’s views as updated for the late 1970s and early 1980s. And with “Not Death, but Annihilation: Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the Catastrophe of Englishness” Erik Jaccard moves beyond the dystopian label to look at the novel as an English “catastrophe” novel whereby it examines English social decay.

The closing resources section includes a chronology of George Orwell’s life, a listing of his major works, a bibliography, notes on contributors, and an index.

**Recommended for high school and college libraries.”**  
—ARBA Staff Reviewer

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