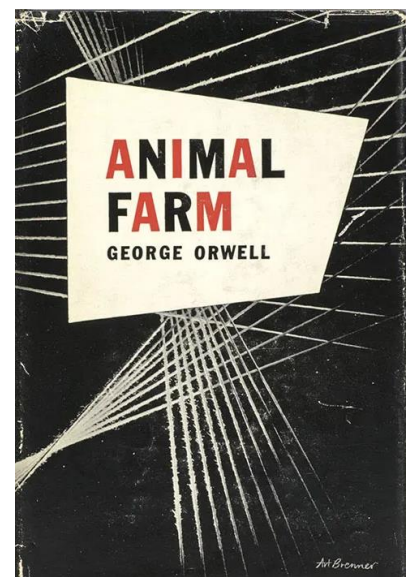


So on Monday and Wednesday I told you about WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, the greatest writer ever. Today I will tell you about another great English writer - GEORGE ORWELL. That's not actually his real name: his real name was ERIC BLAIR. He wrote under the name 'George Orwell' because he was worried that his family would be embarrassed by his first book, *DOWN AND OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON*, which was about what it was like to live with not very much money in Paris and London. Orwell did in fact have plenty of money. He was born into a very nice family, in 1903, and ended up going to the famous public school ETON. But Orwell wanted to know what it was like to live without all the privileges that he enjoyed, and so he dressed as a tramp and spent time sleeping in places for the homeless - and once tried to get himself locked up by the police over Christmas to see what it was like to spend time in jail. He wrote about his experiences in his first book, and then he wrote a follow-up book, called *THE ROAD TO WIGAN PIER*, about the condition of working class people in the North of England. That book was written in 1936, and as soon as it was finished, Orwell travelled to Spain, where the SPANISH CIVIL WAR had broken out.



The two sides in the Spanish civil war were the REPUBLICANS and the NATIONALISTS. The Republicans were left-wing, the Nationalists were right-wing. Orwell was pretty left-wing himself and so he was on the side of the Republicans, and he wanted to fight for them. But once he got to Spain, he discovered that the Republicans were made up of lots of different groups, and were fighting among themselves. And Orwell was disgusted at the lies which the COMMUNIST Republicans told about other Republicans, to try and get more power in the Republican movement. Orwell discovered the most important fact about himself - that, for him, the TRUTH mattered more than anything. As a result, Orwell became completely independent. He condemned the Communists in Russia and the Nazis in Germany, and he condemned them for exactly the same reason: they were all a pack of liars, who were happy to sell out the truth for power. After his time in Spain, all of Orwell's writings were dedicated to defending the truth from its enemies, at all cost.

Orwell's devotion to truth led him, first, to write *ANIMAL FARM*, which was published in 1945. This was a fable about the reality of the RUSSIAN REVOLUTION (which I mentioned to you on June 15). It tells the story of the animals on a farm who are so angry at the way they are treated by the farmer that they turn on him and drive him and his family out of the farm, and take it over themselves. The animals on the farm end up being led by two pigs, SNOWBALL and NAPOLEON, while most of the work on the farm is done by BOXER, a big carthorse. Snowball and Napoleon represent two of the leaders of the Russian Revolution - Snowball represents LEON TROTSKY (pronounced 'Trot - skee') and Napoleon represents JOSEPH STALIN. Boxer represents the Russian working classes.



Initially, the revolution goes well. The animals paint some rules on a big barn, including 'ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL' and 'FOUR LEGS GOOD, TWO LEGS BAD'. But Napoleon soon wants to be the only animal in charge, and he drives Snowball out of the farm. (In real life, Stalin drove Trotsky away from Russia, and Trotsky ended up in Mexico - which I was telling you about yesterday! But even that didn't make Stalin happy, and he sent someone to Mexico to kill Trotsky - and Trotsky was killed on 21 August 1940.)

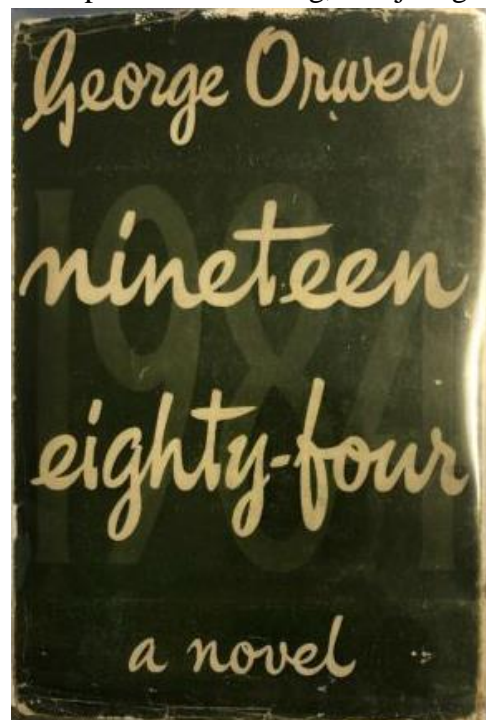
The pigs, led by Napoleon, gradually take over - Boxer is worked to death, and the pigs start walking around on two legs, to be more like human beings. The slogans that inspired the revolution are changed: 'ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL' becomes 'ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL, BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS' and 'FOUR LEGS GOOD, TWO LEGS BAD' becomes 'FOUR LEGS GOOD, TWO LEGS BETTER'. The story does not have a happy ending - in the end, the other animals cannot tell the difference between the pigs and human beings, and they realise they are back where they started: they are still being taken advantage of by their rulers. They have just swapped one set of rulers for another.

You could easily read the book, but if you'd rather watch a film instead, here is a full-length animated film of Animal Farm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXkicQRl6vg>

Orwell followed up that book - which was a huge, worldwide success - with his most famous essay, *POLITICS AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE*, which is about how politicians make our language worse because they use language that tries to stop us from thinking, and just go along with whatever they want us to do. I hope you read that essay one day - though you are too young for it at the moment. And then Orwell started work on his masterpiece *NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR*. While *Animal Farm* was about Russia, *Nineteen Eighty Four* is about the future of Britain.

In the future, Britain is renamed 'AIRSTRIP ONE' and is part of an empire called OCEANIA, which is constantly at war - but who it is at war with changes without any explanation. At first it is fighting EURASIA, and EASTASIA is helping Oceania. And then overnight, Oceania is fighting Eastasia, and Eurasia is helping Oceania. Britain is controlled by THE PARTY, which is led by BIG BROTHER - and everyone has to attend meetings where they are told what Big Brother wants of them. And they are constantly reminded 'BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU'. The hero of the book, WINSTON SMITH, works in a government department, changing old newspapers to make sure that the stories in them fit The Party's stories about what happened in the past. This is because 'WHOEVER CONTROLS THE PAST, CONTROLS THE FUTURE'. Eventually, Winston rebels but The Party is onto him, and he is arrested and handed over to a man called O'BRIEN, who tortures him to make him accept that whatever The Party says is true - even if that means accepting that '2 + 2 = 5'.



Winston is eventually broken by the torture and is released back into the community, as he is no longer a threat. In the last chapter (spoiler alert!) he is sitting in his usual cafe, and he idly traces out with his finger in the dust on his table '2 + 2 = 5'. The last two sentences in the book are 'He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.' The first sentence of the book is also one of the best first sentences of a book ever written: 'It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.' Which immediately tells you how everything in the society you are going to read about is a lie. When I told you about RICHARD BURTON (on May 4), I gave you a clip from one of his last films, which was the filmed version of Nineteen Eighty Four, with Burton playing O'Brien. Here is the clip again (but you have to turn the volume up loud because Burton is whispering everything he says):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoLLgzdPkss&t=34s>

Orwell finished Nineteen Eighty Four in 1948 - he just flipped the 48 round to 84 to get the title of the book. It was to be his last, and greatest achievement - he died in 1950, knowing that Nineteen Eighty Four was another huge worldwide success, just like Animal Farm. He might have hoped that the success of the book would ensure that the future he described would never happen. And, indeed, when 1984 came around, the then Prime Minister MARGARET THATCHER gave a speech saying that Orwell had been a bad prophet, and that Britain had never been more free in 1984. And an up and coming computer company APPLE, led by a visionary computer expert called STEVE JOBS, used imagery from Nineteen Eighty Four to advertise their new MACINTOSH computer, boasting that it would usher in new freedoms into the world.:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtvjbmoDx-I>

But in fact the computer revolution has brought us closer than ever before to Orwell's vision of the future - where all information is controlled by a very few people, and where you can lose your job and your livelihood if you say the 'wrong' thing, or are even suspected of thinking the 'wrong' things. The truth is under as much pressure today as it was in Orwell's time - and it is under the most pressure from those who claim the loudest to be the guardians of the truth and show the most interest in controlling what you are allowed to know. But whatever happens, never lose your grip on the truth - never give up on your freedom to think for yourself, and say what you think, whatever the cost. Be fearless in defence of the truth, wherever it may be found, just like Orwell was.