



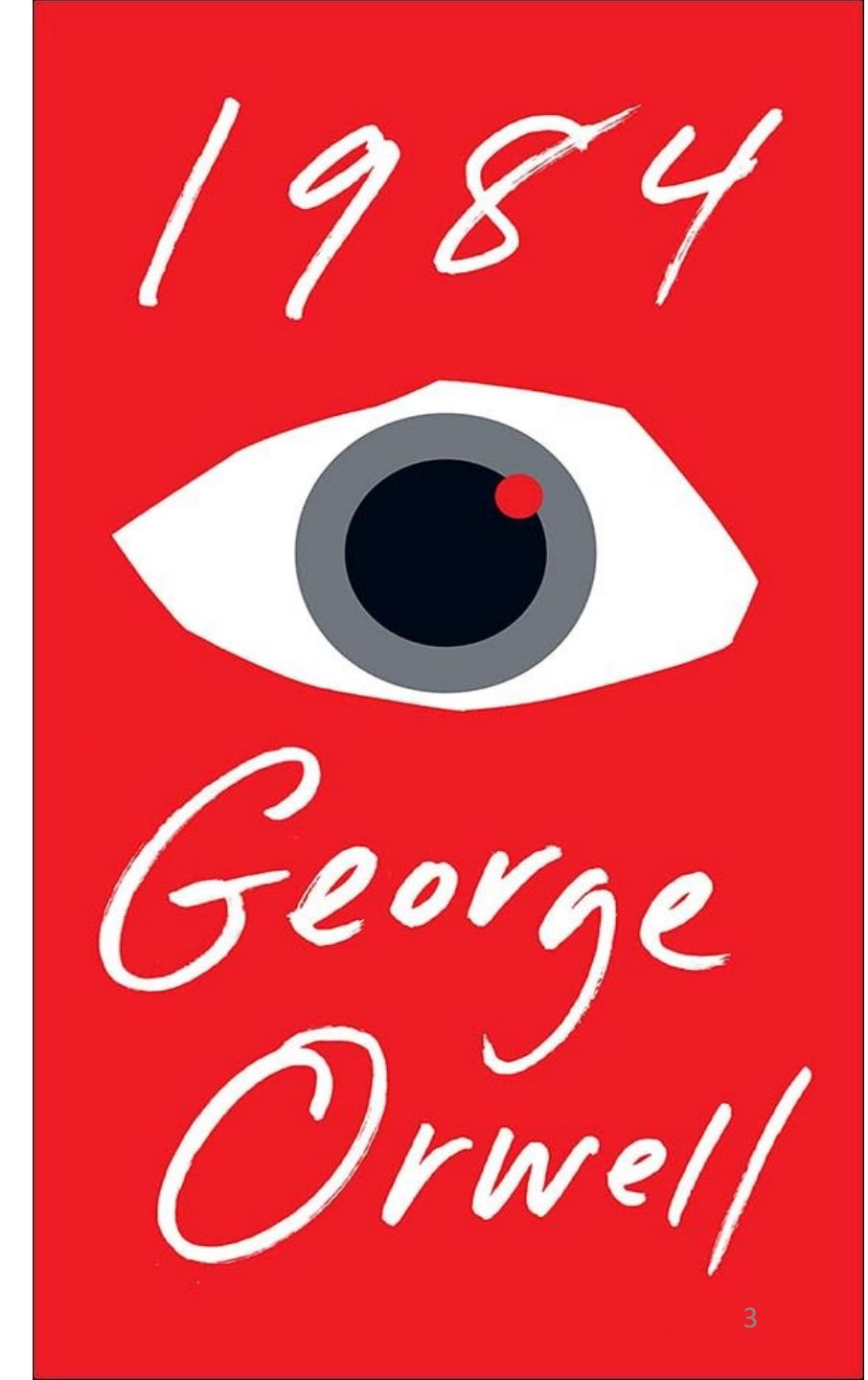
“Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory,
the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless.
If you want a picture of the future,
imagine a boot stamping on a human face—for ever.”

SECTION I: BACKGROUND

- FACT SHEET
- SPECULATIVE FICTION
- GEORGE ORWELL
- HISTORICAL CONTEXT
- TOTALITARIANISM

FACT SHEET:

- Author: George Orwell
- Year of publication: 1949
- Country: United Kingdom
- Genres: Speculative fiction
Dystopia fiction
- Point of view: 3rd person, limited
- Setting: Airstrip One (England)
within the super-state of Oceania



SPECULATIVE FICTION:

1984 is speculative fiction.

SPECULATIVE FICTION:

A super-genre that includes science fiction, fantasy, supernatural fiction, alternate histories, utopian fiction, dystopian fiction, and even superhero stories.

Speculative fiction asks, “What if...?”

- What if psychokinesis was real?
- What if one corporation ruled the world?
- What if sharks became as intelligent as humans?
- What if zombies were the good guys?



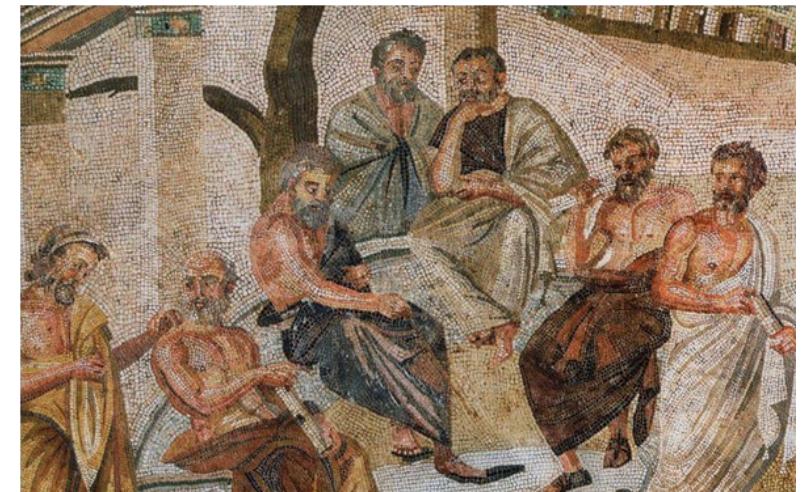
SPECULATIVE FICTION: UTOPIAS

- The term refers to a perfect human society (hypothetical)
- Sir Thomas More's work *Utopia* published in 1516
- Utopia means "no place" (Greek)
- More wrote about an imaginary society to explore the problems that he saw in his real society.



SPECULATIVE FICTION: UTOPIAS

- Moral
- Social
- Ecological
- Economic
- Religious
- Technological
- Feminist



SPECULATIVE FICTION: DYSTOPIA

Dystopia is the opposite of a utopia.

Dystopia: an imagined state or society in which there is incredible suffering or injustice, typically one that is totalitarian or post-apocalyptic. (Merriam-Webster)

Dystopian stories often imagine that good intentions led to terrible consequences. Striving for utopia might result in a horrific dystopia.



SPECULATIVE FICTION: DYSTOPIA



GEORGE ORWELL

1903: Eric Arthur Blair (George Orwell) is born in Motihari, British India.

1911: His family moves to England following the death of his father.

1922: Orwell begins his studies at Eton College.

1928: Orwell works as a colonial police officer in Burma (Myanmar).

1933: Orwell resigns from the colonial police and returns to England.

1936: Orwell publishes *Down and Out in Paris and London* which documents his experiences of poverty and homelessness (Thorpe).

1936-1937: Orwell fights in the Spanish Civil War.

1939: Orwell's novel *Coming Up for Air* is published.

1945: Orwell's novella *Animal Farm* is published to wide acclaim.

1948: Orwell's writes *1984*.

1950: George Orwell dies of tuberculosis at the age of 46.



GEORGE ORWELL

Key influences:

The Colonial Police →  Imperialism

Poverty and
homelessness (his own) →  Capitalism

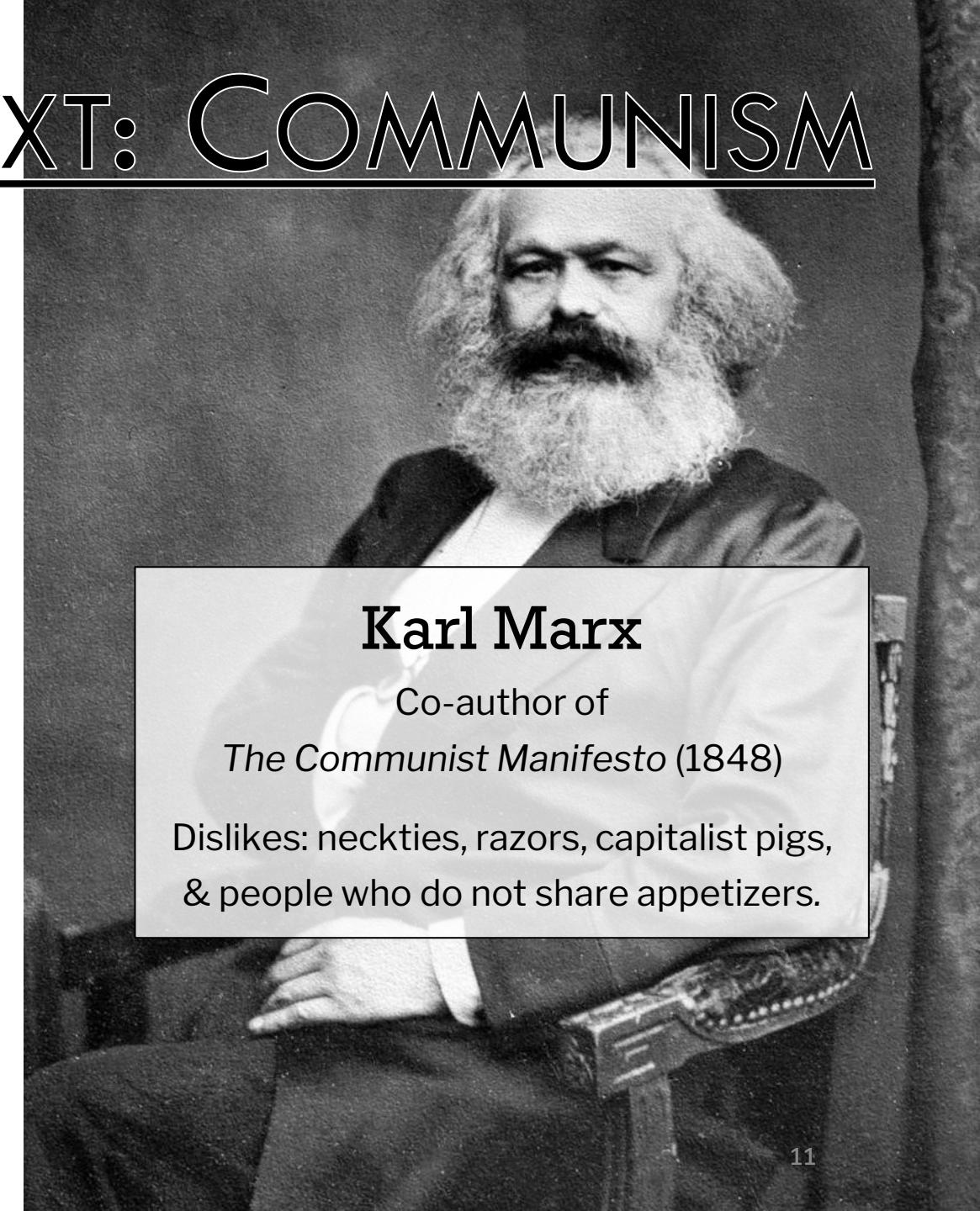
The rise of dictators
(Mussolini, Hitler, et al.) →  Fascism

The Spanish Civil War →  Soviet Communism



HISTORICAL CONTEXT: COMMUNISM

Communism is a political and economic system that opposes capitalism and advocates for a classless system in which the means of production are owned by everyone equally and where private wealth is nonexistent.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT: COMMUNISM

Communism moves from theory to practice.

1917 - Discontent with the Tsar and Russian involvement in World War I leads to mass protests and worker strikes. Tsar Nicholas II abdicates.

1917 - The Bolshevik Party overthrows the provisional government and establishes Soviet rule under Vladimir Lenin's leadership.

1917-1922 - Civil War: The Bolsheviks face opposition from various anti-communist factions, known as the White Army.

1922 - Formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and others (Klein 3).

1924 - Lenin dies and Joseph Stalin ascends.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT: FASCISM

People online like to call other people fascists.

What exactly does that mean?

Fascism: An authoritarian political ideology characterized by dictatorial power, extreme nationalism, suppression of dissent, and often, the promotion of racial or ethnic superiority. It emphasizes strict control of society through single-party rule.

(“Origins of Fascism”)



Hitler Youth Rally, 1934

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: FASCISM

1919: Italian Fascist Party founded by Benito Mussolini .

1922: Mussolini's March on Rome leads to his appointment as Prime Minister.

1924: Hitler writes *Mein Kampf* outlining Nazi ideology .

1920s: The Arrow Cross Party rises in Hungary (Janjua 11)

1925: Establishment of the Austrian Nazi Party.

1926: Military coup leads to dictatorship in Portugal, marking the beginning of the Estado Novo regime.

1929: The Great Depression begins.

1933: Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany following the collapse of the Weimar Republic.

1936: Spanish Civil War begins with the Nationalist faction supported by fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT: SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Republican forces fought the Nationalist rebels from 1936-1939. It became a proxy war between ideologies, with the Republicans supported by leftist and democratic forces (including the USSR) and the Nationalists receiving aid from fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

Review of Soviet artillery used to equip the Republican People's Army in Spain.



German officer from the Condor Legion instructing Nationalist infantry soldiers, Ávila, 1939.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT: SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Orwell, a socialist, went to Spain to fight for the Republican cause, believing in its promise of democracy and social justice. He was disillusioned by the actions of the Soviet-backed Communist Party of Spain and its suppression of other leftist groups. Orwell witnessed systematic deceptions, betrayals, and the purges of Trotskyists, anarchists, and independent socialists. ("Return from Spain")

Orwell left the war in May of 1937 after being shot in the neck. His experiences in Spain deeply influenced his writing.

Orwell (the tallest figure) and his wife Eileen Blair (kneeling) with their unit.



Image source: Encyclopedia Britannica

TOTALITARIANISM:

Totalitarianism is a political system characterized by centralized control by a government that seeks to regulate and control all aspects of public and private life. Individual freedoms are severely restricted, dissent is suppressed, and the state exercises total control over the economy, politics, culture, society, and expression.

Orwell was concerned with totalitarianism on the left and the right.

Members of the Chinese Communist Party celebrate Stalin's birthday (1949).



Image Source: Library of Congress

SECTION 2: STORY PREVIEW

- CONTENT WARNING
- SETTING
- CHARACTERS
- POINT OF VIEW
- THEME SUBJECTS

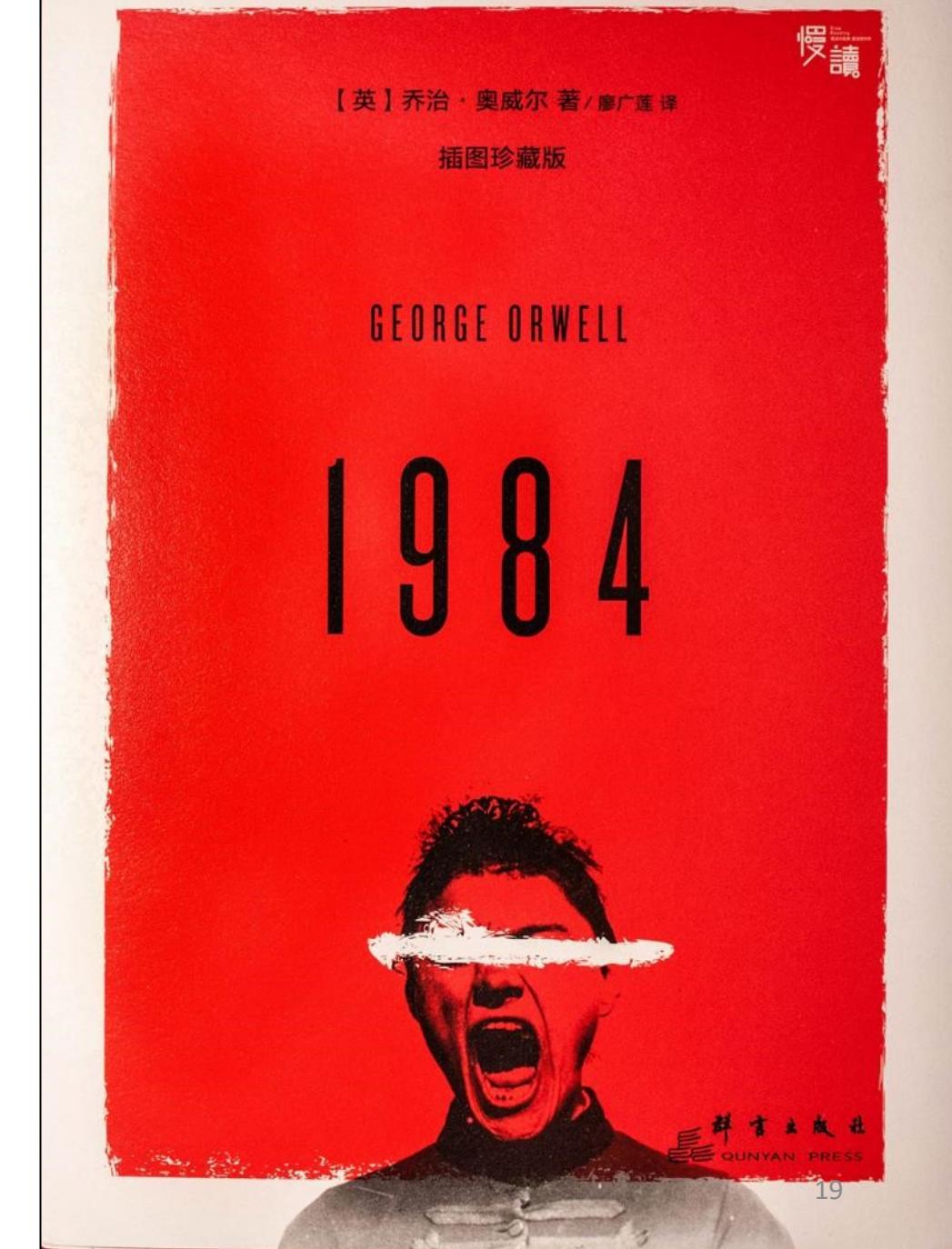
CONTENT WARNING!

1984 includes:

- Violence / torture / suffering
- Death
- Sexual encounters
- Sexual assault (imagined)
- Misogyny and sexism
- Strong language
- Hopelessness /despair

Disclaimer: Exploring literature is not an endorsement of the ideas presented or the author as a person.

The classroom is a place to offer points of view and consider the points of views of others. Discussions should be supportive, considerate, constructive, and respectful.



SETTING:

The main character believes it is the year 1984, but he is not sure.

He lives in an apartment building in London, Airstrip One (what used to be called England) within Oceania, one of the three intercontinental super-states.

Oceania is controlled absolutely by “the Party” under the leadership of a figure known as Big Brother.

The society is strictly divided into three groups: The Inner Party, the Outer Party, and the Proles.



Promotional stills, from 1984, Virgin Films (1984)

CHARACTERS:

WINSTON SMITH

A middle-aged man who works at the Ministry of Truth

JULIA

A young woman who perfectly personifies the Party ideal

O'BRIEN

A member of the Inner Party and Winston's boss

BIG BROTHER

The omni-present leader of the Party and Oceania

EMMANUAL GOLDSTEIN

The mysterious leader of the resistance movement

POINT OF VIEW:

- Third-person, limited point of view
- The narrator is not present or personally involved.
- Past tense
- Narration is limited to knowing the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist, Winston Smith.



PROTAGONIST: The main character with whom you are meant to connect.

THEME SUBJECTS: 1984 includes messages about...

- Surveillance / privacy
- Freedom of speech
- Love / intimacy
- Motherhood
- Revolution
- Economics
- Power
- Nationalism
- Natural beauty
- War
- Psychological manipulation
- Social class / hierarchy
- History / memory / records
- Propaganda
- Censorship
- Language / doublethink
- Doctrine / ideology
- Truth / reality
- Totalitarianism
- Betrayal
- Torture / suffering
- Intelligence
- Appearances
- Critical thinking
- Resistance / compliance
- Individuality / conformity
- Government

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SECTION 3: LEARNING GOALS

Reading Schedule

Literature Study Preview

- Historical Context & Propaganda
- Character Arc
- Structural Devices
- Symbolism

READING SCHEDULE:

Reading	Assignment	Due date:
#1	Part 1: Chapters I-IV	
#2	Part 1: Chapters V-VIII	
#3	Part 2: Chapters I-VII	
#4	Part 2: Chapters VIII-X	
#5	Part 3: Chapters I-VI	

NOTE: A dash (-) means through, not stop.

LIT. STUDY: PROPAGANDA

To understand the historical context of the novel, we will study the ideological conflicts of the early Cold War.

Propaganda from the era provides insight into the animosity developing between capitalist nations and communist nations.

PROPAGANDA: information of a biased (one-sided) or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.

“Choose communism for terror and slavery.”
(Dutch, 1950s)



LIT. STUDY: CHARACTER ARC

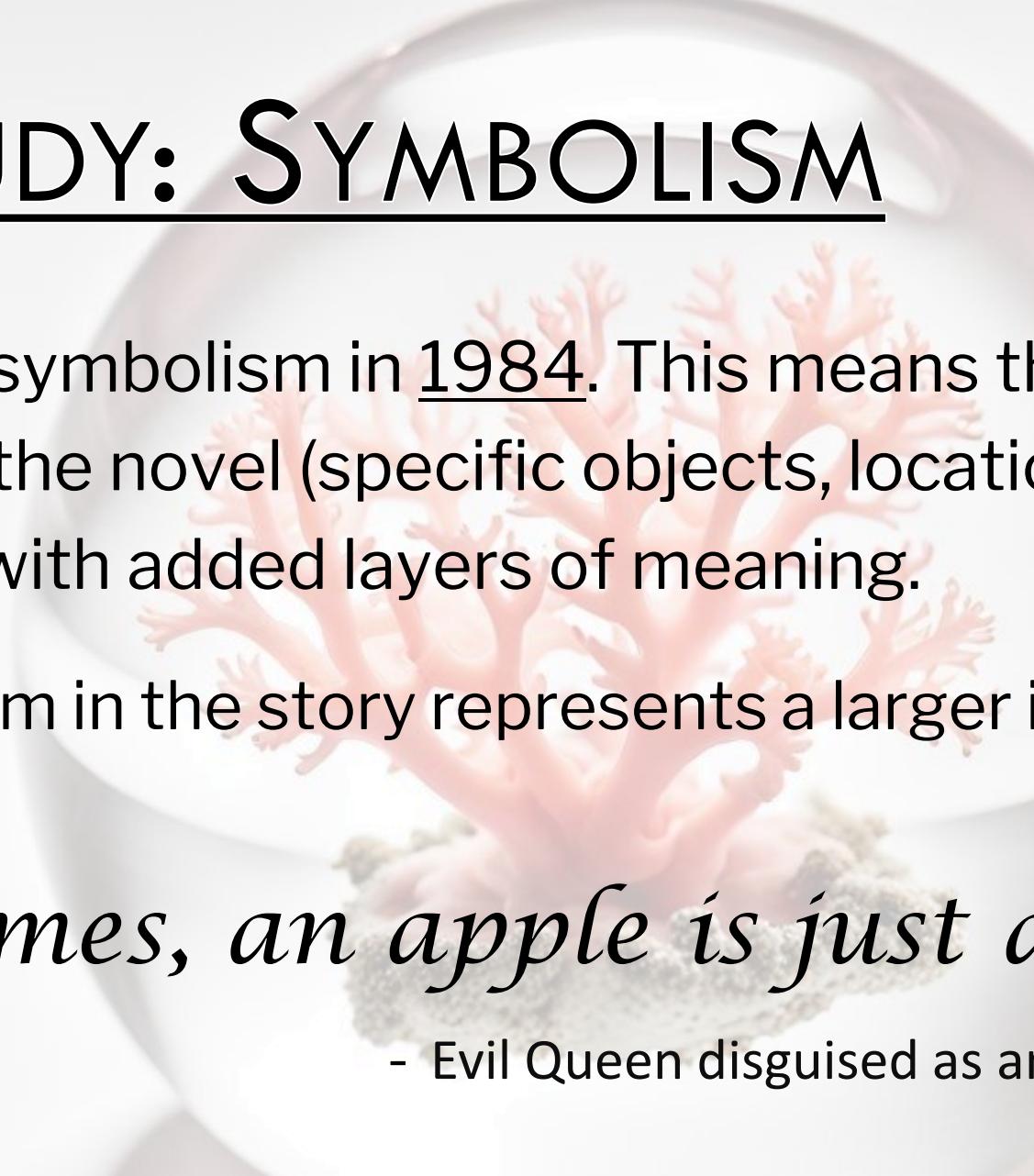
- A dynamic character changes over the course of the story.
- The personal journey is called the character arc.



LIT. STUDY: STRUCTURAL DEVICES

Watch for how Orwell uses structural devices like **foreshadowing**, **pacing**, and **ambiguity** to create effects like suspense and surprise.

LIT. STUDY: SYMBOLISM



Orwell uses symbolism in 1984. This means that several elements in the novel (specific objects, locations, phrases, etc.) are imbued with added layers of meaning.

Not every item in the story represents a larger idea, but some do.

“Sometimes, an apple is just an apple.”

- Evil Queen disguised as an old peddler

CLOSING TAKEAWAYS:

- 1984 is an example of **speculative fiction** (dystopia).
- The **historical context** (Europe in 1949) informs our understanding of the novel and its themes (messages).
- The novel is a compelling narrative, but it is also a political message about the **threat of totalitarianism**.
- Everything from the character arc to the symbolism to the suspense combine to develop the **theme** (message).

This presentation comes from...

