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Episode #158

George Orwell

14th May, 2021

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:11] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge and today we are going to be talking about the amazing life, and work, of George Orwell.

[00:00:29] You probably know him as the author of Animal Farm and 1984.

[00:00:35] But, although these are the two books that he is most famous for, they only formed a very small part of his fantastically interesting life.

[00:00:44] So, in this episode you'll learn about who he really was, what motivated him, how he thought about writing, and how he became one of the most important, if not the most important people to have ever picked up a pen and written in English.



George Orwell

[00:01:01] Before we get right into today's episode, I want to remind you that you can become a member of Leonardo English and follow along with the subtitles, the transcript and its key vocabulary over on the website, which is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:01:16] Membership of Leonardo English gives you access to all of our learning materials, all of our bonus episodes, so that's more than 150 different episodes now, as well as two new ones every week, plus access to our awesome private community where we do live events, challenges, and much, much more.

[00:01:35] Our community now has members from over 50 countries, and it's my mission to make it the most interesting place for curious minds like you to improve their English.

[00:01:46] So, if that is of interest, - and I can't see a reason why it wouldn't be - then the place to go to is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:01:55] Ok then, George Orwell.

[00:01:59] Now is the right time for you to be learning about this great man for three reasons.

[00:02:04] Firstly, he lived such an interesting, [varied¹](#), curious life, that it's always the right time to learn about George Orwell.

¹ containing a lot of changes



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[00:02:13] Secondly, because he is probably best remembered for his criticisms of [totalitarianism](#)², and the past decade has seen a rise in exactly the sort of authoritarian [regimes](#)³ that Orwell warned us against.

[00:02:28] Thirdly, because he is an absolute master of the English language, and there is a huge amount that anyone, native and non-native English speaker, can learn from him.

[00:02:40] And I said there were three reasons, but actually there are four, a bonus one, if you are Spanish.

[00:02:46] And that's because Orwell spent some of his [formative](#)⁴ years fighting in the Spanish Civil War, so part of our story will take place in Spain.

[00:02:57] But first, let's begin our story in London.

[00:03:01] If you stand outside the offices of the British Broadcasting Corporation – better known as the BBC – in London, you will see the statue of a tall, [messy](#)⁵, [unheroic](#)⁶ man who has clearly not spent much time or money [worrying](#)⁷ about his clothes.

² a political system in which those in power have complete control

³ systems of ruling or governing

⁴ relating to the time when someone starts to develop his personality

⁵ not looking well, untidy and unpleasant

⁶ not having the characteristics of a hero

⁷ thinking, troubling his mind with



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[00:03:19] Cigarette in hand, he is leaning forward as if to address you.

[00:03:25] Behind him, **engraved**⁸ into the stone, written into the stone, is one of his most famous sayings: “If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.”

[00:03:40] Underneath his feet, **carved**⁹ into the stone below, is his name - George Orwell.

[00:03:46] George Orwell worked at the BBC for only two years, during the Second World War.

[00:03:52] Strangely enough, he worked in the **Propaganda**¹⁰ department in Room 101.

[00:03:57] He didn't like it much and was quite glad to leave.

[00:04:01] In fact, he was positively **uncomplimentary**¹¹ about the BBC.

[00:04:06] He commented later that perhaps his presence meant that he kept the **propaganda** “slightly less disgusting than it might otherwise have been” and that he

⁸ cut on the surface of stone

⁹ cut on the surface of stone

¹⁰ ideas or information, not totally true, that are spread to harm a person or a group, usually for political reasons

¹¹ expressing negative opinions



George Orwell

felt he was “just an orange that was being **trod on**¹² by a very dirty boot”, an orange that was being stepped on by a very dirty shoe.

[00:04:25] These comments show two of Orwell’s most important **traits**¹³ or characteristics: honesty and a genius with language.

[00:04:34] Instead of being full of **compliments**¹⁴ about the BBC, a **national treasure**¹⁵, he was honest, and true.

[00:04:42] And in terms of the language, the image of an orange being stepped on by a very dirty boot is so **vivid**¹⁶ that you immediately imagine it and understand what Orwell means.

[00:04:56] In spite of his **rudeness**¹⁷ about the BBC, when it moved to new offices in 2016 and wanted to have a statue of someone who would represent the **core**¹⁸ values of

¹² stepped or walked on

¹³ characteristics

¹⁴ positive words about somebody, usually to show respect or approval

¹⁵ something which a country is very proud of

¹⁶ clear, lively and detailed

¹⁷ lack of manners, bad behaviour

¹⁸ the basic, most important



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the organisation – which are [impartiality](#)¹⁹, honesty, [integrity](#)²⁰ and public service – there was no real contest as to whose statue should stand for those values.

[00:05:22] The London-based newspaper, The Financial Times, spoke for many newspapers, both in the UK and elsewhere, when it said that Orwell is “the true [patron saint](#) of our profession”, the [patron saint](#)²¹ of journalism.

[00:05:37] A further [compliment](#)²² given to Orwell is that he is one of the very few writers in the world whose name has provided an adjective that has its own meaning: “[Orwellian](#)²³“ is used to describe something particularly [sinister](#)²⁴ and [nasty](#)²⁵, especially when it is destructive of the [welfare](#)²⁶ of a free and open society.

[00:06:00] As we will see later, this adjective and references to Orwell’s most famous books, Animal Farm and 1984, are used, both by people aiming to defend freedoms and

¹⁹ equal treatment of all sides or rivals, fairness

²⁰ the quality of being honest and loyal to your beliefs

²¹ someone who is special and respected by a group of people

²² something positive said about somebody, usually to show respect or approval

²³ similar to or influenced by George Orwell's writings

²⁴ bad or evil

²⁵ unpleasant, very bad

²⁶ the happiness, health and good fortune of a society



also, **cynically**²⁷, by those with **authoritarian**²⁸ **tendencies**²⁹ who are **seeking**³⁰ to limit others' freedoms.

[00:06:20] It's interesting that one of the other small group of writers whose name is used as an adjective is Franz Kafka; the word Kafkaesque is used to describe situations where **bureaucracy**³¹ and **officialdom**³² are so deliberately **complex**³³ that they **frustrate**³⁴ and anger the very people that they should be trying to help.

[00:06:43] In the same way that George Orwell's name has developed a **broader**³⁵ meaning, his two most famous books, 1984 and Animal Farm, have established themselves in the imaginations and language of people around the world to such an

²⁷ in a way that concerns only their own interests

²⁸ showing a lack of interest in the wishes of others

²⁹ actions or behaviours that they are more likely to do or have

³⁰ trying

³¹ a system for controlling and organising a country or company

³² the officials in an government who are usually slow and not effective

³³ not simple, complicated

³⁴ annoy and disappoint

³⁵ wider



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extent that many people who have never read the books use the language and ideas of the books [unknowingly](#)³⁶, so completely have their ideas [soaked](#)³⁷ into their culture.

[00:07:11] Born in 1903, George Orwell had a [privileged](#)³⁸, but difficult, start to his life.

[00:07:17] He was British, but born in India, which was still a British [colony](#)³⁹ at the time.

[00:07:23] His family was upper middle class, they were at the top of society socially, but weren't rich compared to others of a similar social class.

[00:07:34] Orwell won a [scholarship](#)⁴⁰ to an English [boarding school](#)⁴¹.

[00:07:38] And although he didn't know that his parents were paying reduced fees, that they were paying less money for his education than the other parents, he felt out of place, he felt poor compared to his classmates.

[00:07:52] He was a gifted student, and won a [scholarship](#) to Britain's most famous private school, Eton, where he would have received one of the best educations in the country.

³⁶ without knowing

³⁷ extremely wet (used here to show how deeply his ideas have affected them)

³⁸ with certain advantages

³⁹ a country controlled by another one

⁴⁰ a payment made to support a student's education

⁴¹ a school where students live and study



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[00:08:03] He decided not to go to university but went out to India in order to work for the British Civil Service as part of the imperial police in Burma, in modern day Myanmar.

[00:08:16] This experience, seeing the [injustices](#)⁴² and [institutional](#)⁴³ [cruelty](#)⁴⁴ of the British Empire close up, was highly [formative](#) for the young, impressionable man.

[00:08:29] It generated two of his most powerful [essays](#)⁴⁵ – The Hanging and Shooting an Elephant.

[00:08:35] These short works are written with his characteristic clarity and [vividness](#)⁴⁶ of English.

[00:08:41] As you can imagine, I would definitely recommend you to read them - they are excellent, and very [accessible](#)⁴⁷.

⁴² unfair situations

⁴³ relating to an organised authority

⁴⁴ very upsetting and strict behaviour

⁴⁵ short pieces of writing on a matter

⁴⁶ the quality of being very clear, lively, powerful

⁴⁷ able to be reached



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[00:08:48] Although Orwell had come from an upper class and well educated background, he didn't feel that this was real, he didn't feel that his life [thus far](#)⁴⁸ was how normal people lived in the real world.

[00:09:02] For the majority of his early life, he wouldn't really have come into contact with anyone from a lower social class.

[00:09:09] Because he wanted to find out more about how ordinary people lived, he went and lived and worked amongst some of the poorest people in society – initially in Paris and then in London.

[00:09:22] He [chronicled](#)⁴⁹ these adventures in the first full-length book that he published, Down and Out in Paris and London, in 1933.

[00:09:31] A “Down and Out” is someone who doesn't have any money, but you can also be “down and out”, meaning without money. So, Down and out is both a noun and an adjective.

[00:09:43] Some of the descriptions in these books are so [colourful](#)⁵⁰, they are so [vivid](#) and powerful that you need a strong stomach to read them.

⁴⁸ until that moment

⁴⁹ recorded in detail

⁵⁰ lively and detailed



George Orwell

[00:09:53] In particular, I recommend the famous description in Down and Out in Paris and London of how a French chef and waiter treat an expensive [steak](#)⁵¹ that is about to be served in a [high-end](#)⁵², very expensive Parisian restaurant.

[00:10:09] It ends with the sentence, “Roughly speaking, the more one pays for food, the more [sweat](#)⁵³ and [spittle](#)⁵⁴ one is obliged to eat with it.”

[00:10:20] If you like to eat [steak](#) and sometimes eat in an expensive restaurant, I promise that you will never look at a [steak](#) in quite the same way again.

[00:10:29] At this point in his life, he was still a struggling author, with not much published and little income, he wasn't making much money.

[00:10:37] It was the next major event in his life that was to mark him forever as a political writer.

[00:10:44] From early in the 1920s it was clear that fascism was on the rise in Europe, with Mussolini's takeover of power in Italy, and the rise of Nazism in Germany.

[00:10:56] For young, idealistic people like Orwell, there was a clear choice between fascism and communism.

⁵¹ a flat piece of meat

⁵² very expensive

⁵³ the clear liquid coming out of the skin

⁵⁴ watery liquid located in the mouth



[00:11:03] For those who described themselves as in the political centre or on the liberal side, communism was the only **viable**⁵⁵ way of opposing fascism.

[00:11:15] The Spanish Civil War, which broke out in 1936, became like an international **crusade**⁵⁶ for left-leaning writers and thinkers of the time.

[00:11:26] Orwell, like his fellow writer, the American Ernest Hemingway, headed south to join the anti-Franco forces, the Republicans, in their fight against Franco's fascists.

[00:11:38] It was not just his experience fighting at the front and being wounded with a bullet through his neck that **influenced**⁵⁷ him so greatly, but it was perhaps above all his experience seeing the **in-fighting**⁵⁸ that occurred in Barcelona that affected his **subsequent**⁵⁹ world view.

[00:11:56] What he **witnessed**⁶⁰ was a **bitter**⁶¹ and bloody fight on the streets of Barcelona between the group that he was part of, which had been formed out of Spanish working-class people and was known as the Militia, and the Soviet-**backed**⁶²

⁵⁵ able to succeed

⁵⁶ a movement for political change

⁵⁷ affected

⁵⁸ hidden conflict or fighting within an organisation

⁵⁹ following

⁶⁰ saw an event happening

⁶¹ full of anger

⁶² supported



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communists; they were **backed** by the Communist USSR and were acting on Moscow's orders to destroy any other leftist groups - and certainly not campaign for democracy.

[00:12:22] Orwell, together with his recently married wife Eileen, therefore had to **flee**⁶³ Spain, they had to run away from Spain, because his life was **under threat**⁶⁴ from people he thought were on the same side, the Communists.

[00:12:37] He wrote later that since his experience in the Spanish Civil War, everything he had written afterwards had been “against **totalitarianism**”.

[00:12:47] It is in this **traumatic**⁶⁵ experience that the seeds of his most famous and influential books lie.

[00:12:55] Animal Farm, a brilliant **fable**⁶⁶ or **parable**⁶⁷, was written in 1944 when the Western Allies, notably the USA and Britain, were in an unlikely **alliance**⁶⁸ with the USSR against the Nazis; it was therefore **vital**⁶⁹ not to offend the USSR's brutal leader, Joseph Stalin.

⁶³ escape danger by running away

⁶⁴ in danger

⁶⁵ causing extreme emotional pain and shock

⁶⁶ a short fictional story

⁶⁷ a simple story that carries a message about what is right or wrong

⁶⁸ a group of countries that have agreed to work together towards a common goal

⁶⁹ very important or necessary



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[00:13:18] Orwell [dramatised](#)⁷⁰ the rise of [totalitarianism](#) in the Russian state through the brilliant [device](#)⁷¹ of showing animals taking over power from humans on a farm.

[00:13:30] Most significantly, the pigs abandon their early [idealism](#)⁷² and ideas of equality; they [re-shape](#)⁷³ the truth of their political movement and [eliminate](#)⁷⁴ their opponents in order to keep absolute power to themselves.

[00:13:45] You might remember the quote from Animal Farm where the pigs declare that “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”.

[00:13:55] Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the [delicacy](#)⁷⁵ and importance of the political situation, Orwell had difficulty getting his book published.

[00:14:05] It was, after all, telling an uncomfortable truth about the USSR, just at a time when that uncomfortable truth was [inconvenient](#)⁷⁶ to Britain.

[00:14:15] When Animal Farm was finally published in 1945, the Cold War [as the struggle between the West and the USSR came to be known] was becoming a reality.

⁷⁰ presented in a form that can be performed

⁷¹ plan, method

⁷² the belief that your ideas can be achieved

⁷³ shape or form differently

⁷⁴ remove, destroy

⁷⁵ sensitivity

⁷⁶ causing problems



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[00:14:26] The book, a clear [critique](#)⁷⁷ of Soviet [totalitarianism](#), quickly became a bestseller, and it has remained as relevant now as it was 76 years ago.

[00:14:38] Further personal tragedy struck Orwell at this stage in his life when, shortly after he and his wife Eileen had adopted a baby son, Eileen died.

[00:14:49] His natural [instinct](#)⁷⁸ always was to go to the heart of things - to go where world events were being shaped.

[00:14:56] It was this reporter's [instinct](#) which had taken him to Spain in 1936 and also, against all of the advice, to live in central London when the Blitz - or German bombing - was at its height.

[00:15:10] Now, in 1945 he went to witness the events [unfolding](#)⁷⁹ as the Nazi [regime](#)⁸⁰ fell, and he saw the awful destruction and misery of a ruined Germany.

[00:15:22] The final phase in his life had Scotland as its [backdrop](#)⁸¹.

⁷⁷ negative judgement

⁷⁸ the way he naturally acted, without having to think about it

⁷⁹ developing

⁸⁰ a period of rule

⁸¹ setting, background



George Orwell

[00:15:28] Orwell had developed [tuberculosis](#)⁸² – or T.B. as it was then known – and it was starting to reach a life-threatening stage.

[00:15:37] He knew he was dying but he had a book inside him that he knew he had to write before he died.

[00:15:45] Therefore in 1947 he moved to a [desolate](#)⁸³, [barely inhabited](#)⁸⁴ island off the West coast of Scotland called Jura, which he had bought with the money he had made from Animal Farm.

[00:15:59] There, with a [housekeeper](#)⁸⁵ and his little son, Richard, he set out to write his most famous book, 1984.

[00:16:07] Much of it was written from his bed as he was [incapacitated](#)⁸⁶ by his illness, as he was unable to move, given how much he was suffering.

[00:16:17] 1984 is an incredibly powerful book as it is, but when you realise that there was this man lying in bed, knowing he was dying and needing to get this final book written, it takes on an entirely new type of meaning.

⁸² a serious infectious disease

⁸³ empty and unpleasant

⁸⁴ with very few people living in

⁸⁵ a person who manages the chores of a house

⁸⁶ without strength, weak and ill



George Orwell

[00:16:34] How can one possibly [sum up](#)⁸⁷ the impact of this powerful work of literature?

[00:16:40] Well, some facts are a helpful start.

[00:16:43] 1984 is one of the highest selling political fiction books of all time.

[00:16:49] Its popularity was strong from the start after its publication in 1949; after all, it provided a [timely](#)⁸⁸ warning about what was evident in the world then.

[00:17:01] The USSR's [ruthless](#)⁸⁹ occupation of Eastern Europe was under way and nuclear [armaments](#)⁹⁰ had added an additional, [apocalyptic](#)⁹¹ element to the possibility of another war.

[00:17:13] [Fast forward](#)⁹² to the last 20 years or so, as [complacency](#)⁹³ about the strength of Western-style style democracy has been shaken by the rise of [populism](#)⁹⁴

⁸⁷ give a brief summary

⁸⁸ at the best possible moment

⁸⁹ cruel, with no sensitivities

⁹⁰ weapons

⁹¹ catastrophic, disastrous

⁹² moving speedily forward in time

⁹³ unreasonable self satisfaction

⁹⁴ a political practice which tries to satisfy the people



and [autocratic](#)⁹⁵ regimes, 1984's [relevance](#)⁹⁶ to our own times has become yet more clear.

[00:17:31] There have been dramatic [spikes](#)⁹⁷, [sharp](#)⁹⁸ increases, in sales of the book after troubling world events, such as the bombing of the Twin Towers in New York in 2001 and the Wikileaks scandal in 2013.

[00:17:47] Most recently the Trump presidency, with its [deliberate](#)⁹⁹ spread of [misinformation](#)¹⁰⁰ and the attack on mainstream media as “fake news” has led many new readers to 1984, and for it to be continued to be quoted as a point of reference.

[00:18:05] You may well remember the [controversy](#)¹⁰¹ on the day after President Trump's inauguration in January 2017; when his advisor, Kellyanne Conway, used the expression “alternative facts”.

⁹⁵ that is being governed by a single person or a small group that has unlimited power

⁹⁶ connection

⁹⁷ big increases

⁹⁸ sudden and significant

⁹⁹ intentional or planned

¹⁰⁰ wrong information

¹⁰¹ disagreement or argument about something



George Orwell

[00:18:18] In January of 2021 the [storming](#)¹⁰² of the Washington Capitol building caused another increase, pushing the novel once again to the top of the Amazon bestseller list.

[00:18:31] I mentioned earlier that 1984 has also been used by the [opponents](#)¹⁰³ of free speech, by exactly the kind of people that Orwell was criticising in 1984.

[00:18:43] Firstly, during the American 2016 presidential campaign there was a meme, an image shared around the Internet, with the words “The People Will Believe What the Media Tells Them They Believe”, and these were [attributed](#)¹⁰⁴ to George Orwell.

[00:18:59] This meme was shared tens of thousands of times, and seen by tens if not hundreds of millions of people, who shared it to express the idea that the mainstream media is out to [trick](#)¹⁰⁵ the people.

[00:19:14] But George Orwell never said or wrote this.

[00:19:18] The entire thing was created by a Russian [troll farm](#)¹⁰⁶ – i.e. an organisation designed to send out [misinformation](#) on social media.

¹⁰² sudden forceful movement against a place

¹⁰³ people who disagree or fight over something

¹⁰⁴ thought to have been said by

¹⁰⁵ make them believe that something is not true, deceive

¹⁰⁶ an organisation designed to spread false news



[00:19:27] There is something [frighteningly](#) Orwellian about such [cynical](#)¹⁰⁷ [misinformation](#) and [nasty](#) use of his name.

[00:19:35] As Timothy Snyder, the Professor of History at Yale University wrote: “To understand Putin, read Orwell.”

[00:19:43] My second example is less [sophisticated](#)¹⁰⁸ perhaps, but shows how 1984 is used by almost anyone, including people who may well have never read the book, to try to put forward their point.

[00:19:56] Shortly after Trump was [banned](#)¹⁰⁹ from the social media platform, Twitter, in January of 2021, his son, Donald Trump Junior tweeted: “We are living in Orwell’s 1984. Free-speech no longer exists in America...”

[00:20:13] Now, this is not a comment on whether it was right or wrong to remove Trump from social media networks, but rather a comment on the fact that Donald Junior is complaining about the fact that his father doesn’t have a way to [spread](#)¹¹⁰ alternative facts, and likening the modern world to the one in Orwell’s [cult](#)¹¹¹ novel.

¹⁰⁷ concerned only with their own interests

¹⁰⁸ complicated

¹⁰⁹ not allowed to use

¹¹⁰ share

¹¹¹ a thing that is popular among a particular group of society



[00:20:33] I think that you will have now understood the ability that Orwell still has to reach into the minds of the powerful and [the influential](#)¹¹².

[00:20:42] He is a common reference point and has become one of the most [fruitful](#)¹¹³ sources of powerful, easily understood [metaphors](#)¹¹⁴ or images for the worst [tendencies](#) of the modern world.

[00:20:55] “Don’t let it happen. It depends on you,” is one of his final thoughts.

[00:21:00] But there are also plenty of other reasons for reading his work.

[00:21:04] Mainly, he is just a fantastic writer, and a master of the English language.

[00:21:09] There is an entire episode on this, episode 38, to be precise, where you can learn about his 5 Rules for Effective Writing, so I’d advise you to listen to that one for a detailed explanation on Orwell’s thoughts about how to write.

[00:21:23] Let's start with a couple of examples.

[00:21:23] The most important point for me is about how one should always use simple language, when possible.

¹¹² the ones who have important influence on society

¹¹³ producing good results

¹¹⁴ expressions that describe something by referring to something that has similar characteristics



George Orwell

[00:21:33] Orwell says “Political language.....is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of [solidity](#)¹¹⁵ to pure wind.”

[00:21:46] He hated seeing people use overly complicated language as a way of [twisting](#)¹¹⁶ a message, and was always a great supporter of simple, clear, simple words.

[00:21:58] I’m always reminded of Orwell whenever I see terrible videos on social media, on Instagram and things, of English teachers saying things like “Don’t say go up, say [elevate](#)¹¹⁷”, or "don't say people, say inhabitants".

[00:22:14] It’s just complete [rubbish](#)¹¹⁸, if you follow this sort of advice you’ll end up talking like a [robotic](#)¹¹⁹ dictionary, and Orwell would be [turning in his grave](#)¹²⁰ if he could see it.

[00:22:26] So, don’t do it.

[00:22:28] Finally, I’ll leave you with three [curiosities](#)¹²¹ about the great man, three weird facts.

¹¹⁵ the state of being firm and not empty or hollow

¹¹⁶ changing the meaning of

¹¹⁷ raise, go up

¹¹⁸ nonsense, worthless talk

¹¹⁹ acting like a robot, automated

¹²⁰ feeling anger (used for people who are dead)

¹²¹ weird facts



George Orwell

[00:22:35] Firstly, as you may know, George Orwell wasn't his real name. He was born with the name Eric Blair.

[00:22:43] George Orwell was his [pen name](#)¹²².

[00:22:46] He took inspiration from the name of the king for the first name and from the name of a local river for his second.

[00:22:53] Secondly, the [script](#)¹²³ of Animal Farm was very nearly lost when Orwell's house was destroyed by a German bomb.

[00:23:02] The [anxious](#)¹²⁴ author had to [dig](#)¹²⁵ in the [rubble](#)¹²⁶, to [dig](#) through the fallen bricks, in order to [retrieve](#)¹²⁷ it.

[00:23:10] And finally, as Orwell approached death with [tuberculosis](#) he asked three different young women to marry him, wanting [companionship](#)¹²⁸ and saying that they

¹²² a name used by a writer on his books instead of his own

¹²³ the written text of a play

¹²⁴ worried, nervous

¹²⁵ search by removing pieces of stone, dirt etc.

¹²⁶ waste pieces of stone, brick etc.

¹²⁷ find

¹²⁸ a feeling of fellowship, friendship, company



George Orwell

had an excellent chance of shortly becoming rich **widows¹²⁹** on the **proceeds¹³⁰** of his highly successful books.

[00:23:28] The third one, Sonia Bronwell, accepted him.

[00:23:32] He is said to have worn a **lilac-coloured¹³¹** smoking jacket as he lay in the bed where he would die three months later.

[00:23:39] Orwell was a man of huge talent, and who knows what he might have given us had he lived a longer life.

[00:23:47] His writing is **timeless¹³²**, it is as appropriate now as it was in 1948, and I'm sure that people will still be talking about Orwell in hundreds of years time.

[00:23:58] Like any great writer, the themes that Orwell chooses are universal.

[00:24:04] We learn through universal human truths, through ideas and subjects that every single person can relate to.

[00:24:11] Joy, food, love, desire, humour, language, and of course, animals.

¹²⁹ women whose husbands are dead

¹³⁰ money earned from an activity

¹³¹ having the colour of lilac tree blossoms, a kind of purple

¹³² not affected by the passage of time



George Orwell

[00:24:18] I'll just leave you with one of my favourite [thought-provoking](#)¹³³ quotes from Nineteen Eighty Four, which comes from the evil character, Big Brother.

[00:24:28] And that's "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past."

[00:24:38] OK then, that is it for today's episode on George Orwell, or should I say, Eric Blair.

[00:24:45] I hope it's been an interesting one, that you've learnt something new, and that the next time someone says that a situation is Orwellian or makes a reference to Animal Farm, well, you'll know a little bit more about the man behind it all.

[00:24:59] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:25:03] For the members among you, you can head right into our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:25:12] And as a final reminder for those of you that aren't yet members, if you enjoyed this episode, and you are wondering where to get all of our bonus episodes, plus the transcripts, subtitles, and key vocabulary, then the place to go to for that is leonardoenglish.com.

¹³³ causing people to think seriously about something



English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #158

George Orwell

[00:25:29] I am on a mission to make Leonardo English the most interesting way of improving your English, and I would love for you to join me, and curious minds from more than 50 different countries, on that journey.

[00:25:41] The place you can go to for all of that is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:25:46] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:25:51] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]



Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Varied	containing a lot of changes
Totalitarianism	a political system in which those in power have complete control
Regimes	systems of ruling or governing
Formative	relating to the time when someone starts to develop his personality
Messy	not looking well, untidy and unpleasant
Unheroic	not having the characteristics of a hero
Worrying	thinking, troubling his mind with
Engraved	cut on the surface of stone
Carved	cut on the surface of stone
Propaganda	ideas or information, not totally true, that are spread to harm a person or a group, usually for political reasons
Uncomplimentary	expressing negative opinions
Trod on	stepped or walked on



George Orwell

Traits	characteristics
Compliments	positive words about somebody, usually to show respect or approval
National treasure	something which a country is very proud of
Vivid	clear, lively and detailed
Rudeness	lack of manners, bad behaviour
Core	the basic, most important
Impartiality	equal treatment of all sides or rivals, fairness
Integrity	the quality of being honest and loyal to your beliefs
Patron saint	someone who is special and respected by a group of people
Compliment	something positive said about somebody, usually to show respect or approval
Orwellian	similar to or influenced by George Orwell's writings
Sinister	bad or evil
Nasty	unpleasant, very bad
Welfare	the happiness, health and good fortune of a society
Cynically	in a way that concerns only their own interests



Authoritarian	showing a lack of interest in the wishes of others
Tendencies	actions or behaviours that they are more likely to do or have
Seeking	trying
Bureaucracy	a system for controlling and organising a country or company
Officialdom	the officials in an government who are usually slow and not effective
Complex	not simple, complicated
Frustrate	annoy and disappoint
Broader	wider
Unknowingly	without knowing
Soaked	extremely wet (used here to show how deeply his ideas have affected them)
Privileged	with certain advantages
Colony	a country controlled by another one
Scholarship	a payment made to support a student's education
Boarding school	a school where students live and study
Injustices	unfair situations



Institutional	relating to an organised authority
Cruelty	very upsetting and strict behaviour
Essays	short pieces of writing on a matter
Vividness	the quality of being very clear, lively, powerful
Accessible	able to be reached
Thus far	until that moment
Chronicled	recorded in detail
Colourful	lively and detailed
Steak	a flat piece of meat
High-end	very expensive
Sweat	the clear liquid coming out of the skin
Spittle	watery liquid located in the mouth
Viable	able to succeed
Crusade	a movement for political change
Influenced	affected



In-fighting	hidden conflict or fighting within an organisation
Subsequent	following
Witnessed	saw an event happening
Bitter	full of anger
Backed	supported
Flee	escape danger by running away
Under threat	in danger
Traumatic	causing extreme emotional pain and shock
Fable	a short fictional story
Parable	a simple story that carries a message about what is right or wrong
Alliance	a group of countries that have agreed to work together towards a common goal
Vital	very important or necessary
Dramatised	presented in a form that can be performed
Device	plan, method
Idealism	the belief that your ideas can be achieved



Re-shape	shape or form differently
Eliminate	remove, destroy
Delicacy	sensitivity
Inconvenient	causing problems
Critique	negative judgement
Instinct	the way he naturally acted, without having to think about it
Unfolding	developing
Regime	a period of rule
Backdrop	setting, background
Tuberculosis	a serious infectious disease
Desolate	empty and unpleasant
Barely inhabited	with very few people living in
Housekeeper	a person who manages the chores of a house
Incapacitated	without strength, weak and ill
Sum up	give a brief summary



Timely	at the best possible moment
Ruthless	cruel, with no sensitivities
Armaments	weapons
Apocalyptic	catastrophic, disastrous
Fast forward	moving speedily forward in time
Complacency	unreasonable self satisfaction
Populism	a political practice which tries to satisfy the people
Autocratic	that is being governed by a single person or a small group that has unlimited power
Relevance	connection
Spikes	big increases
Sharp	sudden and significant
Deliberate	intentional or planned
Misinformation	wrong information
Controversy	disagreement or argument about something
Storming	sudden forceful movement against a place



Opponents	people who disagree or fight over something
Attributed	thought to have been said by
Trick	make them believe that something is not true, deceive
Troll farm	an organisation designed to spread false news
Frighteningly	in a way that causes fear
Cynical	concerned only with their own interests
Sophisticated	complicated
Banned	not allowed to use
Spread	share
Cult	a thing that is popular among a particular group of society
The influential	the ones who have important influence on society
Fruitful	producing good results
Metaphors	expressions that describe something by referring to something that has similar characteristics
Solidity	the state of being firm and not empty or hollow
Twisting	changing the meaning of



Elevate	raise, go up
Rubbish	nonsense, worthless talk
Robotic	acting like a robot, automated
Turning in his grave	feeling anger (used for people who are dead)
Curiosities	weird facts
Pen name	a name used by a writer on his books instead of his own
Script	the written text of a play
Anxious	worried, nervous
Dig	search by removing pieces of stone, dirt etc.
Rubble	waste pieces of stone, brick etc.
Retrieve	find
Companionship	a feeling of fellowship, friendship, company
Widows	women whose husbands are dead
Proceeds	money earned from an activity
Lilac-coloured	having the colour of lilac tree blossoms, a kind of purple



Timeless not affected by the passage of time

Thought-provoking causing people to think seriously about something

We'd love to get your feedback on this podcast.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum community.leonardoenglish.com

