

Högskolan Dalarna
Undergraduate Degree Thesis (EN2012)
Supervisor: Carmen Zamorano Llana

The Task Today to Create Good Citizens out of Pupils.
Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* as a Tool in the English Class Room to Teach
the Fundamental Values in the Swedish School Curriculum

HT09
Victoria Holden

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
The Foundation and Influences of <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> : The Defence of Justice and Democracy	2
Analysing <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> with the Swedish School Curriculum	5
Democracy	5
Ability to Adopt a Critical Attitude Towards Information	8
Importance of Language	17
Conclusion	19
Works Cited	22

Introduction

Society can be heading towards a Big Brother society like the one in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Or perhaps it is already here, with all CCT surveillance cameras that can follow you every step and SIGINT that can follow people digitally by wire-tapping conversations on technology devices such as telephones and the Internet. The large increase of CCT surveillance cameras can be seen for example in London, where they are put up in every street corner in the city. Ironically, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is set in Britain known as Airstrip One in the novel. Airstrip One "had been called England or Britain" (*Nineteen Eighty-Four* 34).

Many critics see Orwell as a forerunner regarding his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as portraying modern society. Oliver Marre wrote that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is "[p]robably the definitive novel of the 20th century, a story that remains eternally fresh and contemporary" (Marre 1). As *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published in 1949, this statement of Orwell's ability to foreshadow the future and how society will be organised can very well be in some parts seen as true.

By looking at the direction the world is heading towards, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* feels highly contemporary and relevant to many aspects in today's world, despite the novel's year of publication, 1949. An example that indicates Orwell being ahead of his time is the usage of technology and complicated machinery in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which can be also seen as today's computers. It should be acknowledged that the novel was written well before the time of the use and even the existence of computers.

This essay will deal with the norms and values in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and look at the usefulness of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a tool in the English classroom to teach the fundamental values propounded by Skolverket, the Swedish national Agency for Education. The Swedish school curriculum has democracy as the foundation of the school system, which is the exact opposite of the society represented in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. According to the guidelines provided by Skolverket, schools and teachers have the responsibility to raise pupils as good citizens

in society. The Swedish school curriculum upholds norms and values which can be seen as the exact opposite to the events and society depicted in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This essay will analyse how *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a useful text to teach the norms and values contained in the curriculum of compulsory school system in secondary school in Sweden (also known as Lpo94). The aspects that will be looked at from the Swedish School curriculum are: democracy, the ability to adopt a critical attitude towards information, and the importance of language (in this case, of the English language).

The Foundation and Influences of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: The Defence of Justice and Democracy

Orwell's political views and his inspiration for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is fairly close to the main principles collected in Skolverket's guidelines. Thus, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be seen as a highly relevant novel to use in the class room in order for pupils to learn the main democratic principles, such as democracy, the ability to adopt a critical attitude towards information, and the importance of language.

Moreover, looking at *Nineteen Eighty-Fours* historical context, Orwell's inspiration for the novel was the closed and controlled society of the communist regime. Orwell was not impressed by Soviets' involvement and role in the Second World War, as Ronald Berman notes: "The story is not intelligible without the historical presence of Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky" (95). This shows that Orwell's inspiration regarding Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky and communist regime for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also a kind of strive towards a democratic society. Skolverket's guidelines in the Swedish school curriculum show a lot of emphasis on the importance of teaching pupils democratic values. Thus, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the Swedish school curriculum have the same purpose of making people aware of the importance of democracy.

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been seen as playing an important role of American politics as it "is most often seen as a product of the Cold War, as a starting point, not an ending point, for a

consideration of the idea of totalitarianism in American public culture” (Alpers 25). Victor Sawdon Pritchett considers that Orwell is one of the most bold and honest writers of his time. In his review “The Most Honest Writer Alive”, Pritchett describes *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a “satirical pamphlet” (Pritchett 53). Pritchett also mentions that critics at that time argued that Orwell's prophecy of the future was not necessarily probable. In addition, Pritchett writes that “[p]robability is not a necessary condition of satire, which, in pretending to draw the future, scourges the future” (53). Paul Street has written a review portraying Orwell as “best known for his scathing critique of Stalinist totalitarianism in the dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*” (61). Street also mentions Christopher Hitchens in his text, a writer who wrote a book about George Orwell called *Why Orwell Matters*. Hitchens argues that “Orwell [...] [would] never abandon the causes of justice and democracy that he fought for as a left partisan in the Spanish civil war” (Street 61). This shows us that the Spanish civil war might have been what made the biggest impact on Orwell's political views and his definition of socialism (Street).

Both Street and Hitchens show how Orwell's experience and knowledge about the political situation of totalitarianism influenced *Nineteen Eighty-Four* which is a warning of how a totalitarian society can turn out to be, instead of a society based on democracy. The cause of justice and democracy at schools is one of the fundamental values that are written in the Swedish school curriculum which teachers and other staff at school should pass on to pupils.

Orwell's aim to make people aware of the democratic values goes well before the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In 1937, Orwell wrote the essay report *The Road to Wigan Pier*. This essay can be seen as the basis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and it shows the society Orwell was living in at that time. *The Road to Wigan Pier* depicts the industrial north England before the World War II. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* both show a corrupted society, however, a thing which differ the two texts is that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is fiction and *The Road to Wigan Pier* is based on a valid study. Orwell's essay shows a distressed England. His emphasis is on the aspect of social conditions, with special emphasis on both the poverty and economical crisis in England. An

example illustrating a decaying England can be found in Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*:

in a world in which nobody is free, in which hardly anybody is secure, in which it is almost impossible to be honest and remain alive. For enormous blocks of the English working class the conditions of life are such as I have described and there is no chance of those conditions showing any chance of fundamental improvement [...] And all the while everyone who uses his brain knows that Socialism, as world-system and wholeheartedly applied, is a way out (144).

It was not only Orwell's political views fighting against the society of communists reigns totalitarianism striving for democracy that made his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ground breaking. The fact that Orwell invented a new language which he introduced in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also ground breaking and original. Orwell depicts a society, controlled and manipulated by the power of language. In addition, Orwell came up with new strong terms such as, Newspeak, thoughtcrime, doublethink and one term which is frequently used today, Big Brother (Thomas and Wareing 36). In *Language, Society and Power*, Thomas and Wareing quote Orwell expressing his dislike of the language used by politicians “political language has to consist largely of **euphemism**, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness....Political language – and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists – is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidarity to pure wind” (Thomas and Wareing 38). Orwell shows in this quote his total lack of trust towards politician’s language and his disapproval of politics as a whole.

With influences from the political situations, communism, propaganda and the power of language; *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was born.

Analysing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* With the Swedish School Curriculum

Democracy

A school curriculum contains documents in the form of a syllabus for every school subject with several guidelines and goals to achieve in order for teachers to give fair grades to pupils. It also contains norms and values which both the school and teachers are responsible to pass on to pupils to prepare them for life as mature adults. Both the Swedish and the National curriculum have fundamental values which shall be followed in the school system. According to Skolverket, amongst the fundamental values that are written in the Swedish school curriculum, “democracy forms the basis of the national school” (3). Moreover, it also argues that:

all school activity should be carried out in accordance with fundamental democratic values and that each and everyone working in the school should encourage respect for the intrinsic value of each person as well as for the environment we all share (Chapter 1, §2). The school has the important task of imparting, instilling and forming in pupils those fundamental values on which our society is based. (3)

Both teachers and schools as a whole are faced with the challenge to convey these norms and values into the classroom and everyday life in the school environment. With democracy as the foundational value, teachers and school staff are to teach pupils about ethical values and integrity.

Democracy, ethical values, and integrity are restrained of the society in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where you can commit thoughtcrime. The government does not only control language or behaviour, but they control thoughts as well. Thoughtcrime signifies thoughts which are disapproved by the government. Winston commits thoughtcrime when he writes “DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER” (20) in his diary. As a result, Winston becomes terrified about the Thought Police finding out about his crime. Thought Police are police who are undercover, whose main aim is to catch those who commit thought crime. Moreover, Winston writes in his diary “*Thoughtcrime does not entail death:*

thoughtcrime IS death” (30). As the quote in Winston's diary mentions, committing thoughtcrime could lead to death. Winston's ability to express his own independent thoughts is regarded by that totalitarian governments an inexcusable crime. The totalitarian state excludes individual freedom and freedom of speech, which are at the root of democracy. Orwell's political view is shown in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* regarding thoughtcrime, as he was critical against totalitarianism, wanting to have a democratic society.

Throughout the novel, telescreens are used as a tool to control the individuals and curtail their freedom, with constant surveillance over the people. Both telescreens and thoughtcrime are devices which are used in order for the Party to have total control over the citizens. Winston “thought of the telescreen with its never-sleeping ear. They could spy upon you night and day, but if you kept your head you can still outwit them” (174). The telescreens symbolise total control over the citizens. These telescreens watch every move that everyone makes which goes against integrity and having a democratic base for society.

Nineteen Eighty-Four warns about the dangers implicit in the lack of democracy and the absence of rights for the citizens to have freedom of speech or print. As mentioned earlier the Swedish school curriculum rest on a democratic foundation. Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* works as a warning, presenting the effects on the individual of a society that lacks the values propounded by the Swedish school curriculum.

At the beginning of the novel Winston purchases a diary. Although, opening a diary “was not illegal (nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws), but if detected it was reasonably certain that it would be punished by death, or at least by twenty-five years in forced-labour camp” (*Nineteen Eighty-Four* 8). Winston has a diary regardless of the fact that he knows what can happen to him if someone from the Party knows about him keeping a diary. Winston feels fairly guilty for owning a diary as he “had carried it guilty home in his briefcase. Even with nothing written in it, it was a comprising possession” (8). This illustrates that the citizens have no right to decide what they are allowed to do or what to possess, which goes against the democratic value of freedom. Winston's

diary, in other words, is an attempt to protect him against the totalitarian system.

Winston does not only feel guilty of expressing his thoughts in a diary he also misses his long lost childhood memories that he has been disconnected from. Winston tries to remember and also tries to recall if London had always been a corrupted place to live in as he:

tried to squeeze out some childhood memory that should tell him whether London had always been like this. Were there always these vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions? And the bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air [...] But it was no use, he could not remember: nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit tableaux, occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible. (5)

Winston feels powerless without his memories; without them he cannot be critical of his present. As a result, it makes it harder for Winston to go against the Party. However, Winston knows that there is something peculiar with the society he is living in. This is because he questions and tries to remember his past, and it shows that Winston is questioning the government.

By making citizens forgetting their past and memories, the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* takes away individuals' freedom and freedom of speech by creating a totalitarian society, this differs from the fundamental values and how Swedish schools are meant to be governed. In Sweden there is a saying which is mentioned quite often which is 'en skola för alla'. The quote in English means 'a school for everyone'. The phrase implies that a school should be for everyone, regardless of background, religion, needs etc. This is explicitly pointed out in the curriculum as follows: “[t]he school should take responsibility for ensuring that pupils acquire and develop the knowledge that is necessary for each individual and member of society” (9). As mentioned earlier these values on a democratic basis should prepare our next generation for being worthy members and hard workers in

our society.

Looking more in depth from a school perspective the school should be based on democracy, although a certain dilemma can occur as the school is govern by local government. In result, due to different political and economical situations between one part of Sweden to another the school differs as well. This can go against the saying of 'a school for everyone' ('en skola för alla') due to the varied circumstances from town to town. Thus, one school may not be able to fulfil an equitable education; this aspect is not democratic as the condition alters for the pupils depending on what school they go to. This is perhaps hard driven, but with constant cuts in school funds and less and less teachers per pupil, it can happen that the teachers take on a role to guard and more time is spent on keeping order rather than putting more emphasis on teaching. The danger of teachers taking on a more authority's role in the sense of a guard rather than teachers which can occur unconsciously by the teachers, whereas the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is well aware of their power and authoritarian role in society.

Skolverket is striving for 'a school for everyone' in society, which is a solid base to start from a democratic point of view, the same principle, but saying a 'society for everyone' instead, is nowhere be seen in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This 'society for everyone' is abnormal in the novel, if we look at how society is built by totalitarianism. One explanation is that the society in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is more as a dictatorship and is controlling the citizens rather than the citizens having the chance to be involved in managing the society that they live in.

Ability to Adopt a Critical Attitude towards Information

Another important task for teachers to accomplish is to teach the pupils to look at information in a critical manner. This is necessary in a world where people constantly get news and information from different sources and often influenced by various vested interests. In the Swedish school curriculum it is stated that:

Pupils should be able to keep their bearings in a complex reality where there is a vast flow of information and where the rate of change is rapid. This is why methods of acquiring and using new knowledge and skills are important. It is also necessary for the pupils to develop their ability to examine facts and relationships and appreciate the consequences of the various alternatives facing them. (Skolverket 5).

An analysis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the English classroom can be a useful tool to discuss the consequences of and the ways in which a supreme undemocratic power can control and manipulate the media and send out propaganda to the citizens.

The importance of having a critical attitude towards information is shown in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as the society that is depicted in the novel is manipulated by the media and the government. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the party controls practically every source of information that has been written. In addition, any source of information that is given to the citizens is revised and rewritten. The information is therefore controlled by the Party and Big Brothers and it does not fully correspond with the actual truth. Since the citizens are unaware of how information is processed, they are led to believe that what they are presented with is the objective, unbiased truth. Moreover, it is a crime for individuals to keep hold onto any objects or information of the past. As a result, the past becomes somewhat vague for the people as their past is wiped out by the party and they are left with no evidence to counter the state's version of events. The control of the information by the party makes citizens believe in and trust everything the party tells them.

Nineteen Eighty-Four portrays how the Party manipulates information throughout the novel. An example is when the Party says that Oceania had never had any bond between them and Eurasia. “The party said that Oceania had never been in alliance with Eurasia. He, Winston Smith, knew that Oceania had been in alliance with Eurasia as short a time as four years ago” (37). It also gives a good reason for Winston to question the Party, as he has a sense of them lying to the citizens.

In addition, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* depicts a sly side to the Thought Police towards the citizens as

“few agents of the Thought Police moved always among them, spreading false rumours and marking down and eliminating the few individuals who were judged capable of becoming dangerous; but no attempt was made to indoctrinate them was the ideology of the Party” (74). If there is anyone in this Big Brother society who was going to rebel or in anyway go against the government it was made sure no one would get away with that deed. They would be killed or incarcerated.

Another event in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that shows the manipulation of information is in chapter 4 when Winston goes to his job in the Record Department section of the Ministry of Truth, “Winston's job was to rectify the original figures by making them agree with the later ones” (41). His job shows how official documents can be manipulated without society knowing about it, only for those who work at the department. As described in the novel “the Record Department, after all, was itself only a single branch of the Ministry of Truth, whose primary job was not to reconstruct the past but to supply the citizens of Oceania with newspapers, films, textbooks [...]” (45). However, it is hard to agree with this statement that the purpose of the Ministry of Truth was not to reconstruct the past as Winston's job is to re-write official documents, such as speeches, newspapers and history. This is shown in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as it says that as “soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular number of the *Times* had been assembled and collated, that number would be reprinted, the original copy destroyed, and the corrected copy placed on the files in its stead” (42). The quote illustrates the process of manipulating information in that society. One day at Winston's job, he has an assignment of changing a speech made in December 1983 by Comrade Withers an Inner-Party member. Winston reflects while working, on possible explanations to the reason for the disappearance of Withers:

Winston did not know why Withers had been disgraced. Perhaps it was for corruption or incompetence. Perhaps Big Brother was merely getting rid of a too popular subordinate. Perhaps Withers or someone close to him had been suspected of heretical

tendencies. Or perhaps – what was likeliest of all – the thing had simply happened because purges and vaporization were a necessary part of the mechanics of government (48).

Furthermore, it is said that Withers has been vaporised as the “only real clue lay in the words 'refs unpersons', which indicated that Withers was already dead” (48). Withers is seen as a threat to Big Brother and the Party, which leads to no other solution then to execute him. Instead of Comrade Withers's speech, Winston changes his name and creates a fictitious character by the name of Comrade Ogilvly. The made up character Ogilvly, which is created by the Party is depicted as a hero, a loyal Party member. Having documents, files and other records of Withers being depicted as a loyal Party member and at the same time he is seen as a threat to the Party makes it necessary for the Party and Big Brother to change in his documents. This is a way for the Party and Big Brother to erase Withers from history.

Moreover, a quote that describes the terrifying power of the Party is if “the party could thrust its hand into the past and say of this or that event, it never happened – that surely, was more terrifying than mere torture and death?” (37). In addition, the Party has slogans that indicate that the Party has some kind of involvement with re-writing the past. An example is one of the Party's slogans which is: “Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past” (37). The Party's slogans mislead the people into believing in everything that the Party has to say. As a result, the Party successfully breaks down the people so that they become subservient to the government and Big Brother. Thus, these events at Winston's job show the Party's organisation in action with its calculated propaganda, and revising and re-writing history. Moreover, destroying documents and re-writing of history in order to make it match with new developments and Party interests, makes it impossible for Big Brother to be wrong, because it is said that they can never be wrong.

Winston, the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, shows the reader a critical attitude towards the government and society that he lives in. It is Winston's ability to adopt a critical attitude towards

information that teachers should pass on to their pupils in order to make pupils good citizens in their society. In the first few chapters of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston's critical approach towards the government and the information that is given to him is shown. In addition, Winston shows a yearning for freedom and an urge to rebel against the Party's control. First event that indicates Winston's longing for freedom is when he buys a diary. This does not only indicate the non-democratic society Winston lives in but also a rebellious side to him because of his critical attitude when writing "Down WITH BIG BROTHER" (20) several times in his diary.

Another rebellious act that Winston does against the government is having a sexual relationship with a black-haired girl called Julia. In the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* it is forbidden to have sexual encounter with someone and having thoughts about it. Winston and Julia's relationship does not only show Winston rebelling against the Party but also Julia shows that Winston is not alone in his dislike of the Party, and in his rebellious attitude. For example, when Winston and Julia have their first secret meeting Winston wonders why Julia is attracted to him and she answers "it was something in your face. I thought I'd take a chance. I'm good at spotting people who don't belong. As soon as I saw you I knew you were against *them*" (128). This shows that Winston is not the only one who is critical of the totalitarian government which he lives in, but also his lover Julia.

The Party's total control over the human mind is seen in chapter 7 when the Party mentions that $2 + 2 = 5$: "In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it" (83). This indicates the Party's control over history. This event shows the reader the power of the Party and how they manipulate the citizens. Furthermore, Winston questions "how do we know that two and two make four? Or that the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable? If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind and if the mind itself is controllable— what then?" (84). The Party is thus in total control over the citizens of Oceania. Moreover, it was "inevitable that they should make that claim sooner or later: the logic of their position demanded it. Not

merely the validity of experience, but the very existence of external reality was tacitly denied by their philosophy” (83). It is obvious, in order for the Party to be in full control over the citizens, they have to be able to have control of the information from the past. Hence, the Party having control of the past makes it possible for the Party to maintain its power in the present. Winston writes in his diary that freedom “*is the freedom to say that two plus two makes four. If that is granted, all else follows*” (84). Saying two plus two makes four goes against the dictates of the Party and their attempt to control the whole society. However, towards the end of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, after Winston is tortured in the Ministry of Love, he sits at the Chestnut Tree Café “unconsciously he traced with his fingers in the dust of the table: $2 + 2 = 5$ ” (303). The Party finally controls even the critical Winston; this depicts the powerful domination of totalitarianism. One device that creates totalitarianism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the telescreens.

Regarding the telescreens, their function is not only to have a constant watch over the citizens of Oceania but also to send out constant propaganda and political bulletins through the TV like machines. There is an example in chapter one when Winston gets home from work where the propaganda from the telescreens is illustrated: “the voice from the telescreen was still babbling away about pig-iron and the overfulfilment of the Ninth Three-Year Plan” (4).

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston

thought of the telescreen with its never-sleeping ear. They could spy upon you night and day, but if you kept your head you can still outwit them. With all their cleverness they had never mastered the secret of finding out what another human being was thinking. Perhaps that was less true when you were actually in their hands (174).

The telescreens not only symbolise total psychological control over the citizens. They also represent the totalitarian government's misuse of technology for its own benefit and without

considering what the lack of freedom does to the citizens. As a result of the overflow of constant propaganda from the telescreens, it creates certain chauvinism for Big Brother amongst the people. This devotion to Big Brother makes it easier for Big Brother and the Party to keep on proceeding with their actions of having total control.

The devotion and having faith in Big Brother and controlled media which is shown in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be seen in Swedish society to a certain extent. Having faith in the government can also be seen as a clash between Swedish society and the main principles collected in Skolverket's guidelines, for example the ability to adopt a critical attitude towards information. Kimberly J. Morgan writes that the "trust placed in the state to integrate the private domain into state policies has been far greater in Sweden than in any other western democracy" (77). A good example of a situation in Swedish society today is the issues about the swine flu vaccination. Johan Niklasson claims that Swedish society is controlled by the media. Furthermore, Niklasson mentions the 'Swedish Model' that implies that Swedish citizens blindly believe in everything the state says. Therefore, not a lot of people feel a need to question what the state says. In this case, some people do not feel the urge to question if there are any dangers of taking the Swine flu vaccine jab is or not, this is if the state approves of it. Hence Niklasson states that the 'Swedish Model' does not promote critical thinking. This goes against what Skolverket sets as one of its main aims.

In Niklasson's article about Swedish society having faith in the state, he argues that:

Sweden and its very much controlled media is now showing its true face, implementing tactics worthy of the former Soviet Union and Communist East Germany. The Swedish Socialist system has been praised by many world leaders and is called "The Swedish Model". It is based on payment slavery and full control of all vital functions in society by a political control group. There is no real freedom in Sweden and the people have been so intensely indoctrinated from early years to the extent they think they want this system. This is now used against the population. Faith

in "the state" and authorities is wide spread and few dare to question what the "scientists" say. (Niklasson 1)

In his quote, Niklasson mentions that Swedish media is using propaganda-like techniques from the roots of for example the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's actions are also mentioned as one of Orwell's purposes with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which was to emphasise and criticise the society of communists reigns totalitarianism. Niklasson also implies that the reason of Swedish media using propaganda-like techniques is to scare Swedish citizens about the swine flu so that they take the vaccine.

Niklasson is not the only one that writes an article regarding the 'Swedish Model'. Gwladys Fouché is another journalist that writes an article about the Swedish 'faith in the state'. However, Fouché's article is in the light of citizens paying high taxes in Sweden and not about the swine flu. In Fouché's article, "Where Tax Goes up to 60 per cent, and Everybody's Happy Paying it", Nicholas Aylott, a political scientist at Stockholm's Södertörn University College, argues that "Swedes are very attached to the idea of the state as the People's Home. Everyone in society is under the same roof, everyone will be protected. Sweden is now a more diverse society, but this idea still persists" (Fouché 1).

'The Swedish Model' can therefore create a certain problematic position as one of the teacher's tasks is to create good citizens out of the students, at the same time teach them how to look at information with a critical point of view. However, if pupils have a critical aspect when taking in information, the pupils and also the Swedish curriculum goes against the Swedish model, and having faith in the state.

The situation about Sweden's controlled media which is current at the moment and its model having 'faith in the state' can also be reflected in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. One of the Party's slogan is "Ignorance is strength" (*Nineteen Eighty-Four* 29). The slogan states that the Party's intention is to manipulate the citizens in order for them to maintain power. The people are meant to follow Big

Brother and the government blindly without criticising their values. This is a perfect example of the power of totalitarianism. If the people were not as brainwashed as they are, they could be a strong group that could bring down Big Brother, but instead the citizens do not question Big Brother's values. The citizens devotion to Big Brother and The Party makes them have faith in their government in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In addition, this leads to a conflict between Winston and the state in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Niklasson's argues about 'faith in the state' in the light of Swedish society and Swedish model, having a lack of critical thinking. Thus, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the 'Swedish Model' has no room for critical thinking which goes against Skolverket which wants future generations adapting a critical point of view towards information they may come across.

The 'Swedish Model' clash between the parts of the Swedish curriculum is seen as problematic. This clash can occur because the youth today is parting from the 'Swedish Model' due to their critical approach to information which they are taught at school. This critical thinking by the youth can also lead to a clash between the older generations as the older generations schooling differs from school today. A teacher who was seen as a somewhat dictator knowing what is wrong or right in the past is today seen as a catalyst to inspire pupils to search for new knowledge. There is a lot of emphasis on the pupils to find out their own knowledge, examining it with a critical aspect whereas the teacher is more seen as a mentor. In other words, the older generation may have more faith in the state attitude than the younger generation who is more likely to doubt the state.

As said previously, one of the tasks for the teachers is to instil a critical attitude in the pupils. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* there is no sign of the citizens adopting a critical attitude towards the government, only Winston and his lover, Julia. As a result of the citizen's lack of critical point of view, it becomes easier for the Party to continue manipulating the people. Referring to teaching pupils to think critical towards information that occurs in society, it creates a problematic situation as it goes against what is said to be the 'Swedish Model' (having faith in the state). In result, it can create a clash between younger generations with the older generation (and the 'Swedish Model') as

their school experience differs. Pupils today are taught to adopt a critical attitude towards information, whereas there is a lack of critical thinking regarding the older generations schooling.

Importance of Language

Language in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is an important part of the novel. Newspeak is mentioned which is the official language of Oceania whereas Oldspeak is another name for the English language in Newspeak. Of course, Newspeak is a fictional language created by George Orwell. Newspeak in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is described as “the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year” (55). By compressing the vocabulary there is then no possibility for the people to express their independent abstract thoughts and, therefore, they cannot commit thoughtcrime. Moreover, there is no room for rebellious thoughts in Newspeak which makes it unlikely that the people go against the Party. Thus, Newspeak controls the human minds.

At the end of the novel an appendix is added by Orwell. It is an essay-type text called “The Principle of Newspeak.” Orwell writes that the purpose of Newspeak “was not only to provide a medium of expressions for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees for Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible” (312). Newspeak eliminates certain words “such as *honour, justice, morality, internationalism, democracy, science and religion*” (318), these words “had simply ceased to exist” (318) in order for thoughtcrime not to occur.

Orwell dislikes the techniques that politicians use to convey their message to the people. He once stated that “political language is 'largely the defense of the indefensible ’” (Thomas and Wareing 38). In addition, Orwell thought the majority of politicians were “corrupt confidence swindlers” (Thomas and Wareing 38). He also says that the politicians have a tendency to “sheet cloudy vagueness” (Thomas and Wareing 38) in their way of conveying their messages. Orwell's disapproval of politician's language is shown in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The fact that Newspeak exists, shows the “product of a malign dictatorship” (Thomas and Wareing 37). Hence, Newspeak can be seen as a mind-controlling device, to control the minds of citizens.

Moreover, considering the English syllabus of Compulsory schools in Sweden, English is seen as the “dominant language of communication throughout the world” (Skolverket 1). As English is the dominant language, it is therefore important for the pupils to master the English language in order to have international contacts and communication. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* shows the dangers in limiting the language with their new invented language Newspeak which makes it impossible for the people to communicate, both with each other and outside their country.

Amongst the aims that the pupils should achieve while learning English is that the teachers should “ensure that the pupils develop their ability to use English to communicate in speech and writing” (Skolverket 1). This differs from the novel as the people in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* have a limited way of expressing themselves with limited vocabulary. In addition, while learning a second language it is important for the pupils to have an “awareness of the process involved in learning a language” (Skolverket 2). By reading the course syllabus for the English language, there is a lot of emphasis on communication and the ability to analyse thoughts and information, and that the pupils should “express their own thoughts in English, as well as understand the views and experiences of others” (Skolverket 1). An additional goal for the pupils to achieve is for them to have “a knowledge of everyday life, society and cultural traditions in some countries where English occupies a central position, as well as to make comparisons with their own cultural experiences” (Skolverket 2). Therefore, it is not only learning the English language that is important for the pupils, it is always in what situations they use English as in this instance everyday life and cultural traditions.

The use of language differs between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the Swedish school syllabus for the English language. Looking at second language learners in early childhood, they have the ability to create a wide range of vocabulary. As mentioned in Patsy. M Lightbown's *How Languages are Learned* one of the “most impressive language developments in the early school years is the astonishing growth of vocabulary. Many words are acquired in early childhood, when the repetition of ordinary events and experiences provides frequent exposure to limited number of words”

(Lightbown 9). Looking at second language learners in early childhood in contrast to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the children have bigger access to an increasing big vocabulary whereas in the novel it is the total opposite. The official language of Oceania, Newspeak, narrows down the vocabulary which results into minimum communication. The reason of a narrowed down language is to control the minds of people and that they cannot develop a thought of hatred towards the Party. Speaking of learning English, for example at school, the pupils are encouraged to develop the language in order to communicate and express their thoughts.

Conclusion

Nineteen Eighty-Four has certain elements which can be used as a tool in the English classroom to teach the fundamental values propounded by Skolverket. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a criticism towards the totalitarian government system whereas the norms and values of the Swedish curriculum is based on democracy. Looking back to Orwell's political view, he had a critical attitude towards the society of communist totalitarian regimes and Soviet actions. Thus, this is one of Orwell's influences for his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Telescreens are placed in order for the Party to keep an eye on the people. In addition, the telescreens send out constant propaganda announcements out to the citizens. The telescreens itself represents the total psychological control over the citizens of Oceania. Obviously this differs from the Swedish school curriculum as its foundation is built on democratic values. The society in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not depicted as a democratic society. For example, Winston's possession of a diary could lead to being executed by writing and expressing himself that maybe Big Brother would not approve of.

Another action that Big Brother perhaps will not approve of is the ability to adopt a critical attitude towards information. In the Swedish curriculum there is a certain importance for pupils to adopt a critical attitude towards information that they might come across, especially in today's society where there is “a vast flow of information and where the rate of change is rapid” (Skolverket 5). In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston shows a somewhat critical approach towards the

set government, for instance his possession of a diary and writing “DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER” (20) several times in it. In addition, at Winston's work he witnesses the manipulation of information and re-writing history. The citizens do not know this manipulation of history and as result believes current history that is stated. A good example of a current topic in Sweden is the swine flu vaccine and the 'Swedish Model'. The 'Swedish Model' implies that Swedish citizens have faith in the state and in result believes basically everything the state says instead of thinking critical about the information that is given to citizens.

The people in Oceania shows a fate in the state, as no matter what the Party or Big Brother says, they can never be wrong and this is what Niklasson is saying about the Swedish being controlled by the media. The Party's has total control over all information, and as a result they get total psychosocial and physical control over the people.

One very important aspect of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the language. Having a new invented language called Newspeak, successfully removing the society's former language Oldspeak. The structure of Newspeak makes it near to impossible for the people to express themselves as they would like. Newspeak does this by narrowing down for instance the vocabulary in its language. When it comes to pupils learning English as a second language they are encouraged to expand their vocabulary in consideration of having an opportunity in having international contact with people as English is the dominating language. In addition, the English syllabus of Compulsory schools in Sweden mentions several times how important it is to be able to communicate with each other in English in order to tie international contacts which it good for example future jobs and further studies in higher education.

There are different ways of presenting *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the English classroom. The novel itself is maybe too advanced for the English lessons at secondary school in Sweden. This is because of its somewhat difficult language and the novels long length and it can therefore be difficult to maintain pupils' interest in the book. However, certain themes and elements can be brought up and be discussed to make the pupils aware of certain issues, such as: human rights, the

power of media, and the importance of language and government systems. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does not show the fundamental values that are written in the Swedish school curriculum. The novel is therefore a useful tool to show pupils how society could turn out if the guidelines propounded by Skolverket are not followed.

Overall, to analyse *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with the Swedish school curriculum can be seen as somewhat provocative. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be seen as the total opposite from the Swedish school curriculum which is developed over years in a country of democratic values in generations and a country that has been in peace since 1809. Nevertheless, there are no concrete likenesses between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the Swedish school curriculum more than the consequences that can follow if the teachers do not follow the curriculum properly. One of the schools' tasks is to encourage pupils to develop further studies, expand their knowledge and look at information and society in a critical point of view, whereas in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the Party wants the citizens to be ignorant and not be able to question Big Brother. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can therefore be a useful tool for the teacher to use in the English class room. In addition, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be used in order to teach pupils the fundamental values that are presented by Skolverket such as: democracy, the ability to adopt a critical attitude towards information and the importance of language. Unlike *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, hopefully teachers and other adults will continue to turn out generations of pupils as good citizens in the years to come, and hopefully this is the stated future.

Works Cited

- Alpers, Benjamin L. *Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture*. US: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. Ebrary – Web. Accessed on 5 Oct. 2009.
- Berman, Ronald. *Modernity and Progress : Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Orwell*. USA: University of Alabama Press. 2005. Ebrary – Web. Accessed on 5 Oct. 2009.
- Fouché, Gwladys. “Where Tax Goes up to 60 per cent, and Everybody's Happy Paying it.” *The Guardian*. 16 Nov. 2008. Accessed on 9 Dec. 2009, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2008/nov/16/sweden-tax-burden-welfare>>.
- Lightbown, P., Spada, N. *How Languages are Learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2006.
- Morgan, Kimberly J. *Working Mothers and the Welfare State: Religion and the Politics of Work-Family Policies in Western Europe and The United States*. California: Stanford University Press. 2006. Web. Accessed on 9 Dec. 2009, <http://books.google.se/books?id=fZsibXkO3FwC&pg=PA77&lpg=PA77&dq=swedes+trust+the+state&source=bl&ots=-UiLkQhv4S&sig=7t3y0cfOYn9Ro56309Kma488BYo&hl=sv&ei=gjAhS87rF5Gy-AbIntTCBg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CA0Q6AEwATha#v=onepage&q=&f=false>.
- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London: Penguin Books. 1990.
- Orwell, George. *The Road to Wigan Pier*. New York: Berkley Medallion Books. 1961
- Marre, Oliver. “The Masterpiece that Killed George Orwell.” *The Guardian*. 10 May. 2009. Accessed on 3 Oct. 2009, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/may/10/1984-george-orwell>>.
- Niklasson, Joakim. “Swedish Media Reporting Fake Swine Flu Cases to Scare Population.” *The Flu Case*. 30 Oct. 2009. Accessed on 31 Oct 2009, <http://www.theflucase.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1518%3Aswedish-media-reporting-fake-swine-flu-cases-to-scare-population&catid=41%3Ahighlighted-

[news&Itemid=105&lang=sv>](#)

Pritchett, V S. "The most honest writer alive". *New Statements*. 138 Ebsco. 2009. Elin - Web.

Accessed on 28 Sep. 2009.

Street, Paul. "Hitchens, Orwell, Capitalism, and the Real Threat to Democracy." *The Review of*

Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies. 26 MetaPress. 2004. Elin – Web.

Accessed on 27 Sep. 2009.

Skolverket Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Pre-School Class and the

Leisure-time Centre. Lpo 94. Stockholm: Fritzes. 2006.

Skolverket Syllabus, English, Compulsory School. Lpo94. Stockholm: Fritzes. 2006.

<http://www3.skolverket.se/ki03/front.aspx?sprak=EN&ar=0910&infotyp=23&skolform=11&id=3870&extraId=2087>>

Thomas, L & Wareing, S. *Language, Society and Power*. 2 Ed. London: Routledge. 2004.