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## DOCUMENT A

**George ORWELL, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, chapter 5, 1949 – Edition Penguin Books, Great Britain, 1983, pp.48-50**

'How is the Dictionary getting on?' said Winston, raising his voice to overcome the noise.

'Slowly,' said Syme. 'I'm on the adjectives. It's fascinating.'

5 He had brightened up immediately at the mention of Newspeak. He pushed his pannikin aside, took up his hunk of bread in one delicate hand and his cheese in the other, and leaned across the table so as to be able to speak without shouting.

'The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition,' he said. 'We're getting the language into its final shape – the shape it's going to have when nobody speaks anything else. When we've finished with it, people like you will have to learn it all over again. You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words – scores of them, hundreds of  
10 them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050.'

He bit hungrily into his bread and swallowed a couple of mouthfuls, then continued speaking, with a sort of pedant's passion. His thin dark face had become animated, his eyes had lost their mocking expression and grown almost dreamy.

15 'It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. Of course the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn't only the synonyms; there are also the antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take "good", for instance. If you have a word like "good", what need is there for a word like "bad"? "Ungood" will do just as well –  
20 better, because it's an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of "good", what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like "excellent" and "splendid" and all the rest of them? "Plusgood" covers the meaning, or "doubleplusgood" if you want something stronger still. Of course we use those forms already, but in the final version of Newspeak there'll be nothing else. In the end the whole notion of goodness and badness will be  
25 covered by only six words – in reality, only one word. Don't you see the beauty of that, Winston? It was B.B.'s idea originally, of course,' he added as an afterthought.

A sort of vapid eagerness flitted across Winston's face at the mention of Big Brother. Nevertheless Syme immediately detected a certain lack of enthusiasm.

30 'You haven't a real appreciation of Newspeak, Winston,' he said almost sadly. 'Even when you write it you're still thinking in Oldspeak. I've read some of those pieces that you write in *The Times* occasionally. They're good enough, but they're translations. In your heart you'd prefer to stick to Oldspeak, with all its vagueness and its useless shades of meaning. You don't grasp the beauty of the destruction of words. Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?'

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35 Winston did know that, of course. He smiled, sympathetically he hoped, not trusting himself to speak. Syme bit off another fragment of the dark-coloured bread, chewed it briefly, and went on:

40 'Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed, will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten. Already, in the Eleventh Edition, we're not far from that point. But the process will still be continuing long after you and I are dead. Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there's no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. But in the end there won't be any need even for that. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak,' he added with a sort of mystical satisfaction. 'Has it ever occurred to you, Winston, that by the year 2050, at the very latest, not a single human being will be alive who could understand such a conversation as we are having now?'

45 'Except –' began Winston doubtfully, and he stopped.

50 It had been on the tip of his tongue to say 'Except the proles,' but he checked himself, not feeling fully certain that this remark was not in some way unorthodox. Syme, however, had divined what he was about to say.

55 'The proles are not human beings,' he said carelessly. 'By 2050 – earlier, probably – all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron – they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but exactly changed into something contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like "freedom is slavery" when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will *be* no thought, as we understand it now. 60 Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.'

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## DOCUMENT B

John ADAMS, *To the President of Congress, September 5, 1780* – The Works of John ADAMS,  
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2105>

### TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

Amsterdam,  
5 September, 1780 –

Sir,—

5 As eloquence is cultivated with more care in free republics than in other governments, it has  
been found by constant experience that such republics have produced the greatest purity,  
copiousness, and perfection of language. It is not to be disputed that the form of government  
has an influence upon language, and language in its turn influences not only the form of  
government, but the temper, the sentiments, and manners of the people. The admirable  
10 models which have been transmitted through the world, and continued down to these days, so  
as to form an essential part of the education of mankind from generation to generation, by  
those two ancient towns, Athens and Rome, would be sufficient, without any other argument,  
to show the United States the importance to their liberty, prosperity, and glory, of an early  
attention to the subject of eloquence and language.

15 Most of the nations of Europe have thought it necessary to establish by public authority  
institutions for fixing and improving their proper languages. I need not mention the academies  
in France, Spain, and Italy, their learned labors, nor their great success. But it is very  
remarkable, that although many learned and ingenious men in England have from age to age  
projected similar institutions for correcting and improving the English tongue, yet the  
government have never found time to interpose in any manner; so that to this day there is no  
20 grammar nor dictionary extant of the English language which has the least public authority;  
and it is only very lately, that a tolerable dictionary has been published, even by a private  
person, and there is not yet a passable grammar enterprised by any individual.

25 The honor of forming the first public institution for refining, correcting, improving, and  
ascertaining the English language, I hope is reserved for congress; they have every motive  
that can possibly influence a public assembly to undertake it. It will have a happy effect upon  
the union of the States to have a public standard for all persons in every part of the continent  
to appeal to, both for the signification and pronounciation of the language. The constitutions of  
all the States in the Union are so democratical that eloquence will become the instrument for  
recommending men to their fellow-citizens, and the principal means of advancement through  
30 the various ranks and offices of society.

In the last century Latin, was the universal language of Europe. Correspondence among the  
learned, and indeed among merchants and men of business, and the conversation of strangers  
and travellers, was generally carried on in that dead language. In the present century, Latin

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35 has been generally laid aside, and French has been substituted in its place, but has not yet  
become universally established, and, according to present appearances, it is not probable that  
it will. English is destined to be in the next and succeeding centuries more generally the  
language of the world than Latin was in the last or French is in the present age. The reason of  
this is obvious, because the increasing population in America, and their universal connection  
and correspondence with all nations will, aided by the influence of England in the world,  
40 whether great or small, force their language into general use, in spite of all the obstacles that  
may be thrown in their way, if any such there should be.

It is not necessary to enlarge further, to show the motives which the people of America have  
to turn their thoughts early to this subject; they will naturally occur to congress in a much  
greater detail than I have time to hint at. I would therefore submit to the consideration of  
45 congress the expediency and policy of erecting by their authority a society under the name of  
“the American Academy for refining, improving, and ascertaining the English Language.”  
The authority of congress is necessary to give such a society reputation, influence, and  
authority through all the States and with other nations. The number of members of which it  
shall consist, the manner of appointing those members, whether each State shall have a certain  
50 number of members and the power of appointing them, or whether congress shall appoint  
them, whether after the first appointment the society itself shall fill up vacancies, these and  
other questions will easily be determined by congress.

It will be necessary that the society should have a library consisting of a complete collection  
of all writings concerning languages of every sort, ancient and modern. They must have some  
55 officers and some other expenses which will make some small funds indispensably necessary.  
Upon a recommendation from congress, there is no doubt but the legislature of every State in  
the confederation would readily pass a law making such a society a body politic, enable it to  
sue and be sued, and to hold an estate, real or personal, of a limited value in that State. I have  
the honor to submit these hints to the consideration of congress, and to be, &c.

60 John Adams.

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## DOCUMENT C

**Brian DETTMER, *Tower of Babble*, 2011** – altered books  
18" x 10-1/2" x 10-1/2"

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/briandettmer/5909113307/>

