

# THE SINGING REVOLUTION



**Subjects:** History / English Language Arts

## **Totalitarianism in George Orwell's *1984* and in Estonia**

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### **Aim / Essential Question**

How did the Soviets dominate Estonia and control the Estonian people?

### **Overview**

George Orwell, in his novel *1984*, described very well the shape totalitarian governments would take in the wake of World War II. In *1984*, Big Brother employed various means to crush the individual and dominate the society at large. This lesson compares the techniques Big Brother used in *1984* with the techniques used by Stalin and the Soviets on the Estonians during and after World War II.

### **Materials and Technology**

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 1 and 2)  
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Copies of the graphic organizer  
(below)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

**Lesson Time:** One 50-minute class period.

### **Objectives**

Students will:

- Identify totalitarian techniques of acquiring and maintaining power.
- Compare and contrast the use of totalitarian techniques in Orwell's *1984* with the use of totalitarian techniques in Estonia under the Soviets.
- Connect the use of totalitarian techniques to a current situation somewhere in the world.

### **Instruction:**

**Opening:** Bell Ringer / Do Now

Write a one paragraph response to the following question: To improve order at this school, which of the following actions do you think would be effective? Elaborate.

- Surveillance
- Spying
- Propaganda
- Terror
- Torture

### **Activities**

1. Have students read their responses to the opening question. Four or five responses are sufficient.
2. Discussion question: Which of the above measures are acceptable, and which are not?
3. Discussion question: What limits the school's ability to use more extreme measures, like torture?

4. Distribute the graphic organizer, which includes a definition of totalitarianism and a list of totalitarian techniques found in Orwell's *1984*. On the handout, students are to cite specific examples from Orwell's text of the use of totalitarian techniques.
5. View chapters 1 and 2, (18:05 minutes) of *The Singing Revolution*. As the students view the film, they are to note on the graphic organizer specific examples of totalitarian techniques from the documentary.
6. After viewing the film, allow the students a few minutes to complete the graphic organizer.
7. Students respond aloud with examples of the use of totalitarian techniques from the documentary.
8. Discussion questions:
  - Why did the Soviets use these techniques?
  - What was the ultimate goal?
  - Did the techniques work for the Soviets?
  - How were they effective or ineffective?

### **Closing Activity**

Write a paragraph in response to the following question: Under Stalin, the Soviets successfully dominated Estonia, but nearly four decades after his death the Soviet regime broke down. What problems do you think a totalitarian government like the Soviet regime would face in the long term? What challenges might arise over time in reaction to totalitarianism?

### **Homework**

Research a totalitarian regime that exists somewhere in the world today. Describe in depth, but not more than one page, the totalitarian techniques the government of this country practices on its people.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

### Comparison Chart: *1984* and *The Singing Revolution*

**Totalitarianism:** When a government, often controlled by a dictator or faction, recognizes no limits to its authority and seeks to maintain control over the lives of its citizens.

**Directions:** A totalitarian government maintains total control through various techniques. Identify three techniques. For each technique, cite an example of it being used in the novel *1984* by George Orwell and in the documentary film *The Singing Revolution*.

	Example from <i>1984</i>	Example from <i>TSR</i>
<b>Totalitarian Technique 1</b>		
<b>Totalitarian Technique 2</b>		
<b>Totalitarian Technique 3</b>		

**Concluding question:** How are these techniques effective for maintaining control?