

**1984** Symbolism

In literature, authors use symbols to represent different qualities or ideas without stating what they mean outright. For example, a beam of sunlight could symbolize hope, while a rain cloud could symbolize incoming danger.

Look for the symbols in this chart in *1984*. Explain the meaning of each symbol, and then answer the question about how these symbols shape the story.

Symbol	What It Means
the telescreens	<i>the sense of constant surveillance; no privacy</i>
Big Brother	
memory holes	
Julia's sash	
the proles	
the paperweight	
Goldstein	

How do these symbols help you understand a central message of the novel?

RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Answer Key

Sample Answer

How do these symbols help you understand a central message of the novel?

Taken together, the telescreens and Big Brother convey how monitored and controlled everyone in Oceania is. Even within the novel, Winston believes Big Brother is a symbol and not an actual person. However, the Party acts as though the telescreens and Big Brother are a source of protection and not control. The proles and the paperweight symbolize that even though the Party wants its members to forget the past, there is still some evidence of how life used to be. The memory holes also symbolize how brazen the Party is in wanting people to forget any information that makes the Party look bad. Julia's sash and Goldstein are both reminders that there is opposition to the Party, both within it and outside it. These symbols all help convey the author's message that, as in all totalitarian societies, even though the Party has full control over Oceania, it still fears the memories and backlash of its people.