



“I think they were taken aback by how fresh and how true to our lives today it strangely is.”

Written in 1948, and published the following year, “1984” depicted a chilling future world in which a totalitarian state controls people’s thoughts and actions, suppressing any dissent.

This rigidly-controlled society features a so-called “ministry of truth” that distorts reality, with the ever-watchful eyes of “Big Brother” keeping tabs on citizens’ behaviour.

The novel introduced other terms that have endured in the lexicon, including “double-think”, which means “the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them”, according to Orwell.

For Jean Seaton, director of the Orwell Foundation, which promotes the work of the writer who died in 1950 aged 46, and administers various awards, his masterpiece was “very prescient”.

She noted the book’s description of “two minutes hate” — in which citizens watch a daily film inciting them to hate enemies of the state — as comparable to online hate-mobs today.

Over the seven decades since its publication, “1984” has remained omnipresent on the social landscape, and even seen periodic spikes in sales.

In 2017 it enjoyed a boom in popularity after one of US President Donald Trump’s advisors used the term “alternative facts”, a phrase used in the book.

In Britain, sales that year increased by an eye-popping 165 percent, publisher Penguin Books told AFP.

The novel also saw a marked increase in purchases in 2013, after the revelations of mass state spying by US whistleblower Edward Snowden.

Callanan, who has been teaching for 30 years, said today’s teenagers are not “frightened of it in a way that maybe previous generations were”.

“But in the past couple of years with the rise of Trump, there is now significant minorities of students that are very concerned about the way the world is going — and of course truth is the big thing,” he added.

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