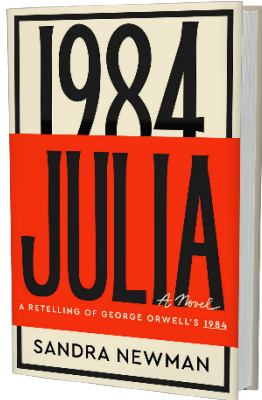




MARINER BOOKS

A PUBLISHING TRADITION SINCE 1832

READING GROUP GUIDE



JULIA by Sandra Newman

An October 2023 Mariner Books Hardcover

9780063265332

An imaginative, feminist, and brilliantly relevant-to-today retelling of Orwell's *1984*, from the point of view of Winston Smith's lover, Julia, by critically acclaimed novelist Sandra Newman.

Julia Worthing is a mechanic, working in the Fiction Department at the Ministry of Truth. It's 1984, and Britain (now called Airstrip One) has long been absorbed into the larger trans-Atlantic nation of Oceania. Oceania has been at war for as long as anyone can remember, and is ruled by an ultra-totalitarian Party, whose leader is a quasi-mythical figure called Big Brother. In short, everything about this world is as it is in Orwell's *1984*.

All her life, Julia has known only Oceania, and, until she meets Winston Smith, she has never imagined anything else. She is an ideal citizen: cheerfully cynical, always ready with a bribe, piously repeating every political slogan while believing in nothing. She routinely breaks the rules, but also collaborates with the regime when necessary. Everyone likes Julia.

Then one day she finds herself walking toward Winston Smith in a corridor and impulsively slips him a note, setting in motion the devastating, unforgettable events of the classic story. *Julia* takes us on a surprising journey through Orwell's now-iconic dystopia, with twists that reveal unexpected sides not only to Julia, but to other familiar figures in the 1984 universe. This unique perspective lays bare our own world in haunting and provocative ways, just as the original did almost seventy-five years ago.



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PRAISE FOR *JULIA*

“Offers a female character with a rich inner life. Her Julia is a survivor, more subversive than Winston, adroit at evading control, finding a kind of liberty...A twisty ending in keeping with the original makes this an enjoyable read even to those unfamiliar with *1984*...This *Julia* cannot help but balance out [Orwell’s] blind spots and bring his opus up to date.”

—*The Economist*

“In a [clever] retelling of *1984*, Winston Smith’s lover takes center stage...Book clubs could have great fun reading the two together.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

“Newman delivers a provocative feminist retelling of George Orwell’s *1984*...Julia’s narrative voice is refreshingly fearless as she navigates her way around the Party’s nefarious thought policing, and a wicked plot twist spins the original narrative on its ear. Newman adds a fresh coat of menacing gray to Orwell’s gloomy world.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“This extraordinary novel...should surprise and delight not only devotees of Orwell’s classic, but fans of Newman’s own daring, disquieting, and emotionally affecting oeuvre.”

—J. Robert Lennon, author of *Subdivision* and *Broken River*

“If you thought you knew Julia, as *1984*’s Manic Pixie Dream Girl, be warned. In Sandra Newman’s compelling retelling, Julia has both a conniving agency as well as an escalating and tragic fragmentation. Oceania, Newman insists, has a whole other layer of dystopian horror for its women.”

—Darcey Steinke, author of *Sister Golden Hair*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you read *1984*? How familiar were you with the world of *Julia* before reading it? What language and concepts had you heard before?
2. What do you think about Winston and Julia’s relationship? Does Winston really love Julia? Do you think love possible in Oceania?
3. Is Julia to blame for working with the Thought Police, or can we forgive her? If she isn’t to blame, is O’Brien to blame? Who *can* we blame?
4. Place yourself in Oceania. What role do you think you might play? How might you react against, comply with, and cope with the strictures of that society?



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5. Do you see parallels between how we are living now to the world of Orwell's *1984*? If you've read *1984*, does *Julia* introduce different parallels?
6. Do you think surveillance make us safer? What is the difference between a device like Alexa and the telescreens of *1984*? What about closed-circuit television?
7. What do you think gives Julia the strength to flee? Why aren't others (Winston, Ampleforth) able to do the same?
8. What do you think about the portrayal of women in *Julia*? Are women more or less likely to fully subscribe to propaganda than men?