

Who Am I?

I was born on the 25th of June, 1903, in Motihari (eastern India) and died on the 21st January 1950 in London.

My father was a colonial civil servant in India but my mother took my older sister and I 'home' to England about a year after my birth. I did not enjoy especially good health as a child but I was **clever**, and despite my family's modest station, I attended good schools. I once described my family as '*lower-middle-upper class*', meaning that my parents felt as if they belonged to the ruling class and were only held back by a genuine lack of money.

Nonetheless, my first school was St Cyprian's School – 1911 to 1917 – and I hated it! The experience was my first exposure to England's class system and perhaps this shaped my life in ways I did not appreciate at the time. Later, I received academic scholarships to Wellington College in Berkshire, and then Eton, where I completed my studies in 1921. Most of my school reports pointed to casual intellectual rigor, which is fair because I spent much of my time dreaming and creating fictional stories in my mind. I had few friends.

As I said, I suffered poor health (mostly bronchitis) and, having found 'education' and its values challenging, I returned to India and enlisted in the Imperial Police Force in 1922. After five years in Burma, I understood the nature of the imperialism I served - a political and economic practice whereby a nation increases its power by gaining control or ownership of other territories - and rejected it. I resigned, returned to England, and decided that I would be a writer!

Alas, I struggled to launch my writing career and took a number of menial jobs to make ends meet, including washing dishes in Paris, but my first novel, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) – was a promise of things to come. My novel was a brutal account of the lives of the working poor and transient class, and to avoid embarrassing my family, I wrote under a pseudonym.

Burmese Days was published in 1934 and offered a dark assessment of British colonialism and reflected my sincere and unapologetic interest in political matters.

In 1936, I married Eileen O'Shaughnessy and we went to Spain to fight against General Francisco Franco's dictatorship in the Spanish Civil War. There, I was hit in the throat and arm by a sniper's bullet and was unable to speak for several weeks. I was indicted on charges of treason and but not before we were able to escape and return to England. My next novel, *Homage to Catalonia*, covers these dark days and was published in 1938, and in the same year, I was diagnosed with tuberculosis, and at that time there was no effective cure. My days were numbered.

During WW2, I spent time working as a literary critic and radio announcer at the BBC. I was deeply saddened by the war and completely disillusioned with Russia's betrayal of her own people and Stalin's cruel tyranny.

My subsequent novel, which is an allegory of Stalin's dictatorship, was published in 1945. I won't divulge the title but, according to some readers, one of its most memorable quotes is:

"The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which."

With this novel's success, I became increasingly well-known and set about writing my best-known work. Confined to my bed for long periods of time, I was determined to present the final draft to my publisher before my death, which I only just managed to do. My editor, Sonia Brownell, remained by my side in these last days and we married in October 1949. I left my entire estate to her and she built a career from my legacy.

I was only 46 years of age but have left an indelible mark on English literature and political discourse.

Some well-known quotes from various works:

- *'In a time of deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act.'*
- *'The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.'*
- *'Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing.'*
- *"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."*
- *"War is peace.
Freedom is slavery.
Ignorance is strength."*
- *"It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen."*
- *"Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."*

I am...



George Orwell, but I was born, Eric Arthur Blair.