



Introduction

Thoughtcrime is an online role-playing game that I designed for use in secondary literature classes studying the novel *1984* by George Orwell. Played in a text-based virtual world that attempts to replicate the totalitarian regime of Big Brother, *Thoughtcrime* pits players against each other in a subtle struggle for survival. *Thoughtcrime* may be played with small or large classes, from school or home computers. Played over the Web in real time, a game of *Thoughtcrime* may begin at school but extend well beyond school hours. The game is played in the [Literary Worlds enCore MOO](#), a text-based immersive environment that hosts a large number of literary simulations.

Teachers

Teachers interested in using Thoughtcrime in their own classrooms should first contact Robert Rozema (rozemar@gvsu.edu), a Professor of English at Grand Valley State University and designer of the game. Please do so at least two weeks prior to the date you intend to play the game, since setup and orientation both take time. To get started, you should do the following:

- Check to make sure your school can access the Literary Worlds MOO. If your school firewall or filters prevents you from accessing this site, please contact your school IT administrator.
- Read the Rules of Play (below)
- Setup the game inside the Literary Worlds MOO ([Thoughtcrime Introduction video](#)).
- Consider showing the [Thoughtcrime Trailer](#) to generate interest.
- When your students have oriented themselves and are ready to play, type the MOO command *start counter*.
- All necessary role sheets are included below.

More Resources

- My co-authored book, *Literature and the Web: Reading and Responding with New Technologies* (Heinemann, 2008), also has a chapter about Thoughtcrime.

RULES OF PLAY

Getting Started

Thoughtcrime is literary game, meant to be played before or while reading 1984 by George Orwell. When used in this fashion, *Thoughtcrime*:

- Motivates students to read the novel through interactive and competitive game play.
- Introduces the dystopian setting of the novel by allowing students to explore virtual representations of its key locations.
- Helps students connect to characters by role-playing as Party Members, Thought Police, or members of the Brotherhood.
- Guides students to anticipate the major themes of the novel, including its critique of totalitarian government and the inherent tension between social order and individual freedom.
- Acquaints students with specific language and ideas of the novel, including thoughtcrime, telescreen, Big Brother, newspeak, and more.
- Provides subject matter for writing before reading.
- Offers a starting point for discussions of reading strategies, as students compare the experiences of playing *Thoughtcrime* to reading *1984*.
- Serves as a reference point during the reading of the text, as students compare their experiences in the game to the experiences of the characters.

The MOO Environment

Thoughtcrime is played at Literary Worlds MOO. A MOO is a browser-based environment somewhat like a chat. Each user has a login and password, and can talk to other players simply by typing. Unlike a chat room, however, a MOO has a permanent architecture, with multiple interconnected rooms that players can explore, and in some cases, create. The Literary Worlds MOO also features a graphic interface very similar to a Web browser, so users can view images and icons in addition to text. But most importantly, the MOO environment is infinitely adaptable. Programmers fluent in MOO code can change how the environment and its inhabitants function. This last feature allows for the creation of games like *Thoughtcrime*.

Before play begins, the Manager (teacher) and players (students) should know how to do the following tasks within the MOO environment:

Manager

- Login (Username: Manager; password 1984)
- Setup the game (MOO command *setup counter*)
- Start game play (MOO command *start counter*)
- Check progress of game (MOO command *score counter*)
- Read notes (MOO command *scan note reader*)
- End the game (MOO command *end counter*)

Players

- Login (see Player Names and Passwords)
- Talk to other players
- Move from room to room
- Use the following commands: take, drop, hand, look, @describe

Both the Manager and the players should spend time learning these tasks prior to beginning game play. For the purpose of MOO orientation, the Manager may distribute character names and passwords without revealing the allegiance of the players.

Additional commands for each player class (Brotherhood, Thought Police, and Party Member) are described on the game role sheets, which should be distributed only when players and game manager are comfortable with the above tasks.

Playing *Thoughtcrime*

The Game Space

Within the MOO, the playing space of the game is divided into eight locations based on key settings from the novel. They are as follows: Victory Square, Ministry of Love, Canteen, Chestnut Tree Café, Proletariat Quarter, Weeks' Junk Shop, Victory Mansions, and Ministry of Love.

Each of the eight spaces can be classified as safe (no telescreen), partially safe (telescreen with private table), or unsafe (telescreen). Memory holes may be used to dispose of incriminating evidence, such as a note. Note that not all spaces are linked together, forcing traffic movement through the centrally located Victory Square.

Object of the Game

In the setup process, *Thoughtcrime* players are divided into three character classes: Thought Police, Brotherhood, and Party Members. Each character class has a slightly different objective:

- Thought Police must vaporize all members of the Brotherhood and preventing the Brotherhood from recruiting new members.
- Members of the Brotherhood must recruit Party Members to their cause, while avoiding vaporization at the hands of the Thought Police.
- Party Members must join the Brotherhood or enter the ranks of the Thought Police, depending on who they believe is winning the game.

Gameplay

Prior to play, the game manager uses the counter to establish the number of players in each character class. The game is successful when the Thought Police—Party Member—Brotherhood ratio is approximately 1 to 6 to 1. In a class of 24, there should be 3

Thought Police, 18 Party Members, and 3 Brotherhood. In addition, the Brotherhood recruitment goal should be approximately 1/3 the total player population, or 8 in the above example.

The game begins when the Manager starts the game counter, which keeps track of character allegiances and game events (MOO command *start counter*). A game event occurs when a character successfully executes a command specific to his character class (see below), thereby changing the Thought Police to Party Member to Brotherhood ratio. Gameplay occurs as players move through the playing space, gathering and acting on information from each other.

Because *Thoughtcrime* is played in an online and real time environment, there are no individual turns or limits to playing time. A game begun in class may extend well beyond classroom hours, as players login to the game from different locations. Nor do all characters need to be present to play: two Thought Police, for example, might meet secretly to plot the vaporization of a member of the Brotherhood.

Character MOO Commands

Thought Police

Monitor telescreen

Listen in on conversations, but risk revealing identity

Vaporize player

Eliminate brotherhood players, but risk revealing identity or accidentally vaporizing other Thought Police

Party Members

Betray Brotherhood

Give up suspected Thoughtcriminals to the Thought Police, but risk losing the game if Brotherhood is victorious

Write notes

Communicate with others without being overheard by telescreen, but risk being caught with incriminating note

Brotherhood

Recruit Party Member

Add members to your cause, but risk revealing your identity or accidentally recruiting Thought Police

Write notes

Communicate with others without being overheard by telescreen, but risk being caught with incriminating note

Vaporize

Only the Thought Police may vaporize a player. When a player is vaporized, he or she becomes an unperson. In gameplay, the vaporized player is transported to the Ministry of Love, where he or she chooses a new identity for the remainder of the game. A vaporized player can no longer win the game, but may still influence its outcome by continuing to interact with other players.

Recruiting

Only the Brotherhood may recruit a player. Party Members who accept recruitment are added to the ranks of the Brotherhood and gain the ability to recruit others.

Betraying

Only Party Members may betray a member of the Brotherhood. Party Members who successfully betray a member of the Brotherhood become Thought Police and gain the ability to vaporize others.

Ending *Thoughtcrime*

The game is ended automatically when any of the following occur

- All Brotherhood are eliminated by Thought Police
- Brotherhood reaches its recruitment goal
- Thought Police eliminate themselves

In addition, the Manager may end the game at any time with the MOO command *end counter*.

Winners and Losers

Players in the character class that has achieved its goals win the game; correspondingly, players in the character class that fails to achieve its goals are losers. Party Members who have remained neutral are neither winners nor losers. The game counter announces the conclusion of the game and the game winners. It also emails the logs from each room to the Manager.



BROTHERHOOD ROLE SHEET

Character Name

Password

You are a member of the Brotherhood, a covert revolutionary movement dedicated to overthrowing Big Brother. While it is impossible to know the exact number or the identities of Brotherhood members, you do know that the revolution you seek can only happen when a majority of Party Members join your cause.

Objectives

To win this game, you must:

- Work with others in the Brotherhood to recruit Party Members. If you recruit a majority of the population, you will win the game.
- Avoid being vaporized by the Thought Police. If the Thought Police vaporize all of the Brotherhood, you lose the game.

Strategies

Rely on your own observations to seek out willing recruits. Use written notes to avoid being detected by the telescreens. Pay attention to Party Members. Some may betray you to guarantee their own survival.

Actions

Recruit a new member: To recruit the player Jones to the Underground, *recruit Jones* when you're in the same room. Jones will then accept or decline your offer. Trying to recruit a member of the Thought Police will result in instant vaporization.

Write a note: Paper may be found in a junk shop in the Proletariat Quarter. Take the paper from the box by typing *take paper1 from box*. To write the message "join the revolution" on the paper, type *write join the revolution on paper1*. To give the paper to a character named Jones, type *hand paper1 to Jones* when you're in the same room. To read it, type *read paper1*. To dispose of the paper, find a memory hole and type *put paper1 in memory hole1*.



PARTY MEMBER ROLE SHEET

Character Name

Password

You are a Party Member, a citizen of Oceania living under the totalitarian rule of Big Brother. You work in a Party-operated factory, live in a Party-owned apartment, drink Party coffee, eat Party rations, and volunteer your free time to promote the Party. Most of all, you try to avoid Thoughtcrime—unorthodox behaviors or ideas that could be perceived as disloyal to Big Brother. And with telescreens all over Oceania, you know Big Brother is watching . . .

Objectives

To survive in this game, you must do one of the following:

- **Join the Brotherhood:** If enough Party Members join the movement, Big Brother will be toppled, and you will win the game. But joining the Brotherhood may get you vaporized, and all vaporized players lose the game.
- **Betray Thoughtcriminals.** Revealing the name of a suspected Brotherhood member will automatically make you a member of the Thought Police. But if the Brotherhood recruits enough members and your allegiance is to the Thought Police, you will lose the game.
- **Lie low and hope for the best.** If you remain non-committal, you will avoid vaporization and survive until the end of the game. Of course, survivors are not counted among the winners or the losers.

Actions

Betray a member of the Brotherhood: To betray a suspected Thoughtcriminal, type *betray Jones to Smith*, where Jones is the Thoughtcriminal and Smith is the member of the Thought Police. For this MOO command to work successfully, you, Jones, and Smith must be in the same room.

Join Brotherhood: There is no way for Party Members to apply for recruitment to the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood will come to you. Be ready.

Write a note: Paper may be found in a junk shop in the Proletariat Quarter. Take the paper from the box by typing *take paper1 from box*. To write the message “join the revolution” on the paper, type *write join the revolution on paper1*. To give the paper to a character named Jones, type *hand paper1 to Jones* when you’re in the same room. To read it, type *read paper1*. To dispose of the paper, find a memory hole and type *put paper1 in memory hole1*.



THOUGHT POLICE

Character Name

Password

You are a member of the Thought Police, the elite secret organization that enforces the rule of Big Brother government by exposing and silencing Thoughtcriminals—those whose unorthodox ideas or behaviors pose a threat to the Party.

Objectives

To win this game, you and the other members of the Thought Police must:

- Eliminate all members of the Brotherhood movement as quickly as possible
- Prevent the Brotherhood movement from recruiting new members. If the Brotherhood recruits enough members, a revolution will occur and Big Brother will be ousted from power.

Strategies

Rely on your own observations to discover Thoughtcriminals. Use listening devices to monitor conversations secretly. Pay attention to Party Members. Some may be willing to betray their fellow citizens in order to guarantee their own survival.

Actions

Use a telescreen: To monitor telescreen1, go to Victory Square and type *monitor telescreen1*. You will now hear everything that is said in Victory Square, even when you leave it. To turn off the telescreen, type *ignore telescreen1*. Be wary: turning the telescreen on and off may blow your cover.

Vaporize Thoughtcriminals: To vaporize the Thoughtcriminal Jones, type *vaporize Jones* when you are in the same room. Trying to vaporize innocent Party Members may put you in jeopardy. Remember, Big Brother is watching you, too.

Character Name, Object Number, Password

Mercer 780 player1
Minter 789 player2
Fuller 790 player3
Smith 792 player4
O'Brien 793 player5
Syme 794 player6
Goldstein 795 player7
Parsons 796 player8
Tillotson 797 player9
Ampleforth 798 player10
Withers 799 player11
Olgilvy 800 player12
Jones 801 player13
Aaronson 802 player14
Rutherford 803 player15
Charrington 804 player16
Martin 805 player17
Bumstead 806 player18
Blair 807 player19
Napolean 808 player20
Marx 809 player21
Adams 810 player22
Huxley 811 player23
Montag 812 player24
Ford 813 player25
Churchill 814 player26
Crowne 815 player27
White 816 player28
Lovelace 817 player29
Fairfax 818 player30
Rochester 819 player31
Chamberlain 820 player32
Grey 821 player33
Thatcher 822 player34
Conrad 823 player35
Bigelow 824 player36
Hoover 825 player37
Foster 826 player38
Archer 827 player39
Tanner 828 player40
Wallace 829 player41
Mansfield 830 player42
James 831 player43

Breckenridge 832 player44

Cromwell 833 player45

Bosworth 834 player46

Daniels 835 player47

Lowry 836 player48