



**Beitrag + Transkript:** [www.npr.org/2019/02/10/692512716/lies-are-illegal-in-the-golden-state-of-ben-winters?t=1551965964856](http://www.npr.org/2019/02/10/692512716/lies-are-illegal-in-the-golden-state-of-ben-winters?t=1551965964856)

**Format:** Podcast (Buchrezension)

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**Sendereihe:** Weekend Sunday Edition

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**Schlagworte:** Fake News / utopia and dystopia / Literatur / Politik und Medien

**Sprachniveau:** Fortgeschritten; Oberstufe (Ende 10. Klasse bis 13. Klasse)

**Sprache:** Amerikanisches Englisch



| Photo: Getty Images

**Inhalt:** Wie würde eine Welt aussehen, in der Lügen strafbar wären? Mit dieser Frage beschäftigt sich Autor Ben Winters in seinem Roman „Golden State“. Inspiriert von der Debatte um „Fake News“ und Kontroversen der Präsidentschaft Trumps entwirft der Roman das Bild einer dystopischen Gesellschaft. Erfahren Sie mehr in diesem Podcast und nutzen Sie unsere effektiven Hörverständnisübungen für Ihren Englischunterricht.



## Pre-listening

1. You have probably come across the expressions “fake news” or “alternative facts”. Get together in pairs and discuss what you think these expressions mean.
2. What is the difference between “dystopian” and “utopian”? Give a short definition of these terms.
3. Vocabulary practice: Read through these words and their definitions. Then fill in the blanks with the correct word. **Please note:** One of the sentences below does not apply.

<b>indisputable</b>	true and cannot be disagreed with or denied
<b>inauguration</b>	a special ceremony at which a new public official or leader is introduced
<b>pandemic</b>	(of a disease) s.th. that spreads over a whole country or the whole world
<b>enforcement</b>	the act of making people obey a particular law or rule
<b>to detect</b>	to discover or notice s.th., especially s.th. that is not easy to see or hear
<b>to track</b>	to find s.o. / s.th. by following the signs and information that they have left
<b>to archive</b>	to put or store a document or other material in an archive
<b>minute</b>	extremely small
<b>self-conscious</b>	nervous or embarrassed about your appearance or what other people think of you

(Definitions are from [www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com))

- a) This institute \_\_\_\_\_ the letters written by George Orwell.
- b) Peter remembers every \_\_\_\_\_ detail of their first meeting.
- c) The police or other law \_\_\_\_\_ organizations prevent or punish crime.
- d) This step counter app \_\_\_\_\_ your daily steps.
- e) It is \_\_\_\_\_ that the earth moves around the sun.
- f) At one point, Steve \_\_\_\_\_ all his valuable belongings in a safe.
- g) This disease is spreading so fast that some people say it is a \_\_\_\_\_.
- h) This antivirus software \_\_\_\_\_ infected files on your computer.
- i) At first, Laura felt \_\_\_\_\_ about her new haircut but now she loves it.
- j) President Trump's \_\_\_\_\_ took place on January 20, 2017.



## Listening

You can find the podcast for this listening comprehension exercise here:  
[www.npr.org/2019/02/10/692512716/lies-are-illegal-in-the-golden-state-of-ben-winters?t=1551965964856](http://www.npr.org/2019/02/10/692512716/lies-are-illegal-in-the-golden-state-of-ben-winters?t=1551965964856)

You are going to listen to a radio program about a new book called “Golden State” by Ben Winters. You will hear the text twice. Read the questions before you start listening. Tick the correct answer or write the answer in the blank space.

**4. What kind of event gave Ben Winters the idea for his book?**

- a) a charity event
- b) a cultural event
- c) a business event
- d) a political event

**5. What made this event problematic?**

- a) discovery of foreign influence
- b) strong reactions on social media
- c) disagreement in the media
- d) mismanagement of federal money

**6. Enter the letter(s) (a, b, c) giving the correct information about the people below:**

- a) White House counselor
- b) White House press secretary
- c) This person used the expression “alternative facts”

Sean Spicer: \_\_\_\_\_ Kellyanne Conway: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. How much information does the podcast give about the reasons why the “Golden State” was destroyed in the novel?**

- a) You get facts and alternative facts.
- b) You get a good explanation.
- c) You get an interpretation.
- d) You get no information.

**8. What is the main difference between the world in Ben Winters’ book, and reality?**

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**9. What is the job of a speculator in Winters' novel?**

- a) to investigate serious crimes
- b) to make predictions about the future
- c) to write articles for national newspapers
- d) to buy and sell goods at a good price

**10. How are speculators characterized? Complete the following passage:**

“ ... there are individuals within the Golden State, a special sort of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ who has \_\_\_\_\_.”

Some Speculators seem to have an almost mystical \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ...

**11. How is Laszlo Ratesic, the protagonist of the book, described? List three pieces of information about him.**

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**12. Which impression do you get of Laszlo Ratesic according to the description given?**

- a) He is annoying.
- b) He is strict.
- c) He is proud.
- d) He is shy.

**13. What is the function of the “elaborate system” that is mentioned?**

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**14. Why is Laszlo Ratesic in a dangerous situation?**

- a) He knows too much.
- b) He has gone to the wrong place.
- c) His partner has let him down.
- d) He has bought something he shouldn't have.

**15. What is the genre of the novel?**

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## 16. What was one of Ben Winters' intentions when he wrote "Golden State"?

- a) to have fun while writing it
- b) to write a mystery novel but not a dystopian novel
- c) to make readers re-think their own reality
- d) to criticize President Trump's administration

## Post-listening

### 17. Would you like to read Ben Winters' book now that you know something about it? Explain your answer.

### 18. Think • Pair • Share

Read tasks **a)** and **b)** below and write down your thoughts on them (keywords will do). Get together with a partner and discuss your points. Adjust your answers and share them with the class.

- a) Imagine lying was illegal in your country. What would the consequences be, and would you consider this to be a dystopian or utopian society? Come up with 3 or 4 points and explain your view.**

You can read this passage from the podcast for some inspiration:

Winters says that if it's against the law to lie, it must also be against the law "to hypothesize, to imagine versions of what might have happened. But when you are trying to solve, for example, a suspicious death, sometimes it is necessary to hypothesize so we can try to follow the leads and crack this case ..."

- b) Think of an example where lying is actually against the law in your country. Explain why lying is prohibited by law in this context.**

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## Answer key

1. • **fake news:** *This is published information that is false and deliberately spread to manipulate people and to mislead them.*  
• **alternative facts:** *This expression seems to be a contradiction in terms. A fact is a truth that is based on clear evidence (e.g. the moon moves around the earth). Therefore, an alternative to a fact cannot be offered.*
2. • **dystopian:** *This term refers to an imaginary concept or place in which everything is extremely bad and unpleasant.*  
• **utopian:** *This term is the opposite of “dystopian”. It refers to an imaginary concept or place in which everything is perfect, often in a way that is unrealistic.*  
(For definitions please see [www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com))
3. **a)** archives • **b)** minute • **c)** enforcement • **d)** tracks • **e)** indisputable • **f)** —  
**g)** pandemic • **h)** detects • **i)** self-conscious • **j)** inauguration
4. **d**
5. **c**
6. Sean Spicer: **b**; Kellyanne Conway: **a, c**
7. **c**
8. Lies are against the law in Winters’ novel.
9. **a**
10. “... there are individuals within the Golden State, a special sort of **law enforcement officer** who has **license to speculate**.” Some Speculators seem to have an almost mystical **ability to detect untruths** ...
11. Three of the following: detective / big guy / red beard / loner / mourns the end of his marriage / self-conscious / embarrassed by his size / likes to eat without being disturbed
12. **d**
13. to track and archive everyone’s life in detail
14. **a**
15. a cross between a mystery novel and dystopian fiction
16. **c**

## 17. Possible answers

(+)

*Yes, I would. I think this mixture of two entertaining genres sounds interesting. I would also like to find out more about what life might be like in a state in which lying was illegal. It would be interesting to see what the consequences would be for people, their ways to communicate and their safety.*

(-)

*No, I wouldn't. The world described in the novel seems much too artificial to me. I don't think that lying will be illegal at any point in the future so this story is too unrealistic for me. It also won't help us deal with our current reality or with, for example, incorrect information that is spread online.*

## 18. Possible answers

- a)
- *People would more and more hide their true thoughts and maybe communicate less and less out of fear that they would be punished by law. Maybe people would communicate less in writing so that there would be less evidence of what they actually said.*
  - *Defining what a lie is would be crucial in such a society and could be misused by people in power. It would be possible that having a different opinion on something could be seen as not speaking the truth and therefore be punished by law.*
  - *Some lies have an important function with regard to communication within a society. Not being truthful can be important for the sake of politeness (e.g. not giving your honest opinion about how you like some food that someone cooked) or for the sake of superficial communication (e.g. not being honest about how you feel in a small talk conversation). If this was considered a punishable lie, then this would considerably change how people communicate.*
  - *If you are not allowed to hypothesize or imagine versions of events, then this would have consequences for crime investigation like Winters says. It would also have consequences for the arts, e.g. the very basis of literature is imagination.*
  - **Conclusion:** *I would consider this to be a dystopian society because the consequences for people, as described above, would be very negative. Such legislation would oppress people rather than improve their lives. At first, a state in which lying is illegal may seem ideal, but if you take a closer look at this supposedly perfect world, you can see that actually the opposite is true.*
- b)
- In Germany and other countries, lying under oath is against the law. The reason is that, for example, if severe crimes need to be solved, the state relies on people saying the truth. To lie in this context, and also to withhold information that would help solve a crime, is therefore punishable by law.*

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**Hinweis:** Mit dem Aktivieren des Links gelangen Sie auf eine fremde Internetseite. Wir weisen darauf hin, dass die Carl Ed. Schünemann KG keinerlei Verantwortung für externe Inhalte und deren Darstellung übernimmt.