

Background & Historical Information- Animal Farm by George Orwell



Key Terms:

1. Allegory
2. Satire
3. Communism
4. Czar Nicholas II
5. Karl Marx
6. Joseph Stalin
7. Russian Revolution of 1917

Novel Structure

To convey his political message, Orwell employs the literary forms of allegory, satire, and fable.

- An **allegory** is a story that can be read on two distinct levels. Characters and events in an allegory represent something else, and are used by the writer to convey a moral or philosophical message. Many of the characters in *Animal Farm* represent political leaders of the Russian Revolution. As an **allegory** the story presents the Russian Revolution, the early Soviet Union, and attempts by the Western Allies to overthrow it.
- **Satire** uses ridicule to make certain people, events, or institutions appear foolish. Surprising ironic reversals enhances the satiric nature of the novel. Orwell makes extensive use of dramatic, verbal, and situational irony.
- **Fables** are brief, often humorous, tales that present a moral or message. As in the familiar Aesop's Fables, the characters in the *Animal Farm* are animals whose thought and behaviors mirror those of human beings. Orwell satirizes political machinations and human responses to them. By using animals as characters, Orwell creates a detachment that allows the readers to see the issues in a new light.

Russian Revolution of 1917:

The **Russian Revolution of 1917** was a political movement in Russia that climaxed in 1917 with the overthrow of the Provisional Government as a result of **communism**. **Communism** is when the government controls everything, and everything is equally distributed to the people. Overall, it is a dictatorship. However, the people of Russia did not feel as if they were being treated fairly, thus a **revolution** erupted.

General Causes of the Revolution:

- The economic causes of the Russian Revolution were based largely on Czar Nicholas's mismanagement and decision to go to war with Japan.
- Over fifteen million men joined the army, which left an insufficient number of workers in the factories and on the farms.
- The result was widespread shortages of food and materials. Factory workers had to endure terrible working conditions, including twelve to fourteen hour days and low wages.
- Many riots and strikes for better conditions and higher wages broke out. Although some factories agreed to the requests for higher wages, wartime inflation nullified the increase. There was one protest to which Czar Nicholas responded with violence; in response, industrial workers went on strike and effectively paralyzed the railway and transportation networks.

- **Overall, Nicholas's failure to solve his country's economic suffering and communism's promise to do just that comprised the core of the Revolution.**

Russian Leaders that various animals in the novel represent:

- **Czar Nicholas II**- When Czar Nicholas II began his reign in 1894, Russia was buzzing with ideas of a new government. The peasants grew tired of the labor imposed on them, and the discontentment among factory workers also increased. Czar II ruled at a time that would have been challenging for anyone. **Unfortunately, he was not a strong ruler.** He refused to institute the reforms desired by the people. He made the disastrous decision to go to war with Japan, thus Russia suffered humiliating defeats. The result? The Russian Revolution of 1917.
- **Karl Marx**- Marx and his associate, Frederick Engels, were both active in various revolutionary groups and together worked out the theory and tactics of Communism, thus Marx “invented” Communism. He died before the Revolution began.
- **Leon Trotsky**- In 1905 Trotsky returned to Russia, where he participated in the first Russian Revolution. However, He and several other individuals were soon arrested, and after a trial, they were deported.
- **Joseph Stalin**- Stalin gained control of the Soviet Union shortly after Trotsky was deported. He disliked and opposed Trotsky’s beliefs. Stalin was known to be a horrible public speaker who did not follow Marx’s ideas on Communism. Also, he would literally kill for power. People became scared of him and his beliefs, so as a result, they followed his ideas out of fright.

Big Picture:

- **The Russian Revolution was supposed to fix problems from Czar Nicholas II;**
- **People wanted Communism, but feared those in power would corrupt the idea;**
- **In order for Communism to work, there must be a revolution...much like this one.**

Animal Farm:

- **Conflict:** The narrative is driven by the **external conflict** between the animals, such as the disagreements between Napoleon and Snowball, between the animals and the humans, and between the animals and the elements. **Internal conflict** is minimal; in fact, one of Orwell’s points is the lack of internal conflict among the animals whose doubts and disillusionments are so easily smoothed over by Squealer. The practical lesson of the fable is most clearly illustrated by external struggles.
- **Allegory:** Critics see Animal Farm as an allegory of the corruption and abuse of power founding all totalitarian regimes and specifically in Russia, which endured totalitarianism under the czars and, later, under Joseph Stalin, who was in power in Russia when the novel was written. **The allegory is neither an exact nor a chronological representation of people or events; however, parallels can be drawn between characters and historical figures/events/institutions. See below:**
 - **Mr. Jones**, Czar Nicholas II
 - **old Major**, Karl Marx or Marxist thought; also Vladimir Lenin
 - **Napoleon**, Joseph Stalin/ Leninist thought
 - **the pigs**, the Bolsheviks
 - **Snowball**, Leon Trotsky
 - **Mollie**, the White Russians

- **the Rebellion**, the (the opposition to the October Revolution Bolsheviks or Reds)
- **the farmhouse**, the Kremlin
- **Mr. Frederick**, Germany
- **Mr. Pilkington**, Britain
- **Squealer**, *Pravada*, the official newspaper of Communist propaganda.
- **Boxer**, the loyal workers, also known as the proletariat
- **“Beasts of England,”** “L’Internationale”
- **the wild animals**, Russian peasants
- **Moses**, the Russian Orthodox Church
- **hoof and horn flag**, hammer and sickle flag of the Soviet Union

Characters: The dimensions of the animal characters are developed to the point necessary for them to convey their allegorical function. **Old Major**, a prize Middle White boar, is the visionary whose dream incites the rebellion. The major protagonists are a pig triumvirate: **Napoleon** is a huge Berkshire boar who eventually bests another boar, **Snowball**, to become dictator. **Squealer** is a porker who handles propaganda first for the rebellion, then for the regime. Other significant characters are:

- **Boxer**, a huge horse, loyal
- **Clover**, a matronly mare and plow horse
- **Muriel**, a goat
- **Benjamin**, a stubborn donkey
- **Moses**, a raven
- **Mollie**, a silly white mare
- **Mr. Whymper**, a solicitor (lawyer)
- **Mr. Jones**, the farm’s original owner
- **Mr. Frederick and Mr. Pilkington**, the owners of the adjoining farms.

Themes:

- **The corrupting nature of power:** In *Animal Farm*, Orwell shows how both the leaders and the followers of a society can act in ways that destroy freedom and equality. Corruption through power reaches its zenith when Napoleon becomes a tyrant more oppressive than Mr. Jones.
- **The oppressed tightening the noose of oppression:** Orwell illustrates the limiting of individual freedom through the ignorance, inertia, or misplaced loyalty of the animals. This is exemplified by Boxer who blindly proclaims “If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right.”

The Assignments

❖ Assignment #1: ANIMAL FARM- Dialectical Journals

Keep a dialectical journal about the following characters in Animal Farm. Find at least 6 quotes (1 for each character) that characterize them and explain what that reveals about how the animal fits into the Animal Farm society. Include page numbers. Characters: Napoleon, Snowball, Mollie, Boxer, Clover, Squealer

Example of dialectical journal entry...DO NOT use this example!

Character	Quote	What it reveals about them
Boxer	“an enormous beast, nearly 18 hands high... strong as any two ordinary horses put together... He was not of first-rate intelligence... respected for his tremendous powers of work” (26).	Boxer was determined and diligent, yet was not intelligent enough to question logic

***Please use the above template when composing your dialectical journals.

❖ Assignment #2: Nonfiction component to be completed **AFTER** reading the novel

1. Go to <https://greatspeeches.wordpress.com/category/twentieth-century-speeches/leon-trotsky/>
2. Print this speech out.
3. Read the speech and take notes in the margins anytime you see a parallel to Trotsky's words vs. the words in Animal Farm/ Snowball's words.
4. Be prepared to lead a DISCUSSION on this speech in class the week we return to school!
5. In order to receive credit, you **MUST** participate in the class discussion!

❖ Assignment #3: Animal Farm Thematic **CLOSE** Reading Exercise

Themes

Totalitarianism

Revolution

Corruption

Class Warfare

Language as Power (rhetorical strategies)

Task: You will be required to find a legitimate, **non-fiction** article that is contemporary for ANY THREE of the aforementioned themes. You will CLOSE READ each article, identifying the components of a SOAPSTone (attached), and provide explanations. Additionally, in the analysis components of the graphic organizer, you need to further explain the thematic connections as they relate to *Animal Farm*. You will also be required to locate and define at least FIVE unfamiliar words presented in the EACH article you read. Be prepared to utilize each SOAPSTone analysis in order to discuss with peers.

**Overall, what is to be handed in on the *first day of school*,
Wednesday, August 23rd, 2017?**

- ❖ Dialectical journal
 - ❖ Trotsky's speech with notes in margins (*you will show this to me*)
 - ❖ Thematic Close Reading Exercise
- ❖ All students will write a 5 paragraph essay in class on Friday,
8/25/17. See below for possible essay topics.

Possible Topics for In-class Essay:

1. Propaganda
2. Ignorance
3. Corruption
4. Allegory

Additional Information:

- Link Crew leaders are expected to hand in their summer assignment to their teacher on Tuesday, August 22nd, 2017.
- Students must bring a printed copy of their work to turn in at the beginning of class. No time will be given in class to print or send via email. These assignments will be considered LATE if not turned in at the start of class.
- **Plagiarism of any kind will automatically result in a ZERO for the assignment grade!**

Point value:

- Dialectical journals= 30 points (5 pts. per quote)
- Trotsky's speech with notes/participation in discussion= 10 points
- Close Read Thematic Exercise= 30 points (10 pts. per SOAPSTone analysis)
- In-class essay on 8/25/17= 40 points