



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Animal Farm

George Orwell



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Animal Farm

George Orwell

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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About the Author

Although George Orwell requested that no biography be written about him, most of his work is autobiographical and grew out of his experiences. From his writings and the reminiscences of his friends, enough information has been gathered to help the reader understand Orwell and therefore his writings.

He was born Eric High Blair in India in 1903, the middle child of a minor government official. At eight, he was sent to an expensive prep school in England, but he was accepted at a reduced tuition rate, and this caused him to be treated as a sort of "charity case" by his snobbish peers. This marked his life with a constant sense of failure, and a conviction that the rich and strong made the world's rules. These feelings caused him to identify with the underdog and sympathize with victims of poverty. He won a scholarship at Eton, and did well there, but rather than attending a university after graduation he joined the Indian Imperial Police. He doubted the merits of imperialism, which made his job in Burma unpleasant. He resigned after five years and went to Paris to write. During this time (1927-1932), he wrote *Burmese Days*, *The Clergyman's Daughter*, *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying*, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, and *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

In 1936, Orwell went to Spain to write newspaper articles about the Spanish Civil War, but instead he joined the anti-Franco militia, backed by Trotsky-ite Communists. He was wounded severely, and was discharged from the hospital just in time to escape from the country. The Communists had outlawed the militia in which Orwell had served. Disillusioned with Communism, Orwell concluded that all revolutions fail because those who attain power are corrupted by it, a theme that permeated his writing.

When he returned to England, Orwell and his wife lived in a small village where they kept chickens, geese, and goats, and grew vegetables and fruits. His friends recall that he had a great sense of responsibility for the well-being of animals, and was especially fond of horses. It may be that Orwell saw in nature the only truly "Utopian state" possible, and that he felt 20th-century man's move away from the land was a mistake.

Orwell's health prevented him from serving in the second world war, but he joined the Home Guard and worked for the BBC. During this time the British Ministry of Information sent out a directive to BBC news broadcasters to play up the virtues of Bolshevism. (Russia was an Allied power during the war.)

Animal Farm was written during the closing years of the war, and was finally published in 1945. It had been rejected by four publishers because of its theme. Publication of the book was timely, because it was just at this point that the true aims and methods of the Russian Communists were beginning to come to light.

Parallels between *Animal Farm* and Actual Historical Events and Characters

1. Old MajorMarxism (Lenin)
2. JonesCzar Nicholas II
3. MosesOrganized Religion (Russian Orthodox Church)
4. Animal RebellionRussian Revolution of 1917
5. NapoleonStalin
6. SnowballTrotsky
7. SquealerPravda
8. Napoleon's dogsSecret Police
9. Foxwood Farm (Pilkington)England (Churchill)
10. Pinchfield Farm (Frederick)Germany (Hitler)
11. Battle of the CowshedAnti-Revolutionary Invasion of Russia
12. Battle of the WindmillBattle of Stalingrad (German Invasion of Russia during World War II)
13. Final scene (meeting of men and pigs).....Teheran Conference
14. Animals other than pigs and dogs.....the proletariat
15. Building of the windmillfive-year plan
16. Old Major's skullLenin's body
17. Chasing away Jonesdisposal of Czar and family
18. Animal FarmRussia/ USSR
19. Confessions and executions.....blood purges of 1936-38
20. Selling of the woodNazi-Soviet pact
21. Pigeons sent to incite other rebellions.....Communist Internationale
22. Four porkers reject Napoleon's ideas.....White Russians
23. Mollie the cart horsethe bourgeoisie
24. Mr. Whymper (broker)foreign agents of the Comintern
25. Napoleon takes over the farm.....Stalin becomes a dictator
26. Hoof and horn on flaghammer and sickle

Questions for Discussion and Writing

Vocabulary and Activities

[NOTE: Answers to starred (*) questions require critical thinking or other higher-level skills. Since these tend to be open-ended, answers are not always provided.]

Chapter One

1. Who owns Manor Farm? (*Mr. Jones*) What problem does he have? (*alcoholism*)
2. Who is Old Major? (*the oldest Middle White Boar on the farm*)
3. Why does Old Major assemble the animals? (*to talk to them about a rebellion*)
- * 4. Describe life on the farm for the animals. How is this type of life similar to that led by farm laborers who work on someone else's land? (*exploitation*)
- * 5. To what does Old Major point to show that there are opportunities for the animals to run the farm on their own? (*fertile soil and a good climate; the animals produce everything anyway; only Jones is non-productive*)
6. List the ideals outlined by Old Major that should prevail after the rebellion.
(*Animals should not come to resemble man; not adopt his vices; never live in houses, sleep in beds, or wear clothes; never drink alcohol, smoke tobacco, touch money, or engage in trade; never tyrannize other animals; never kill other animals.*)
- * 7. Reread the words of the "Beasts of England" song. Which things do the animals want to vanish? Which things do they see as an important part of the utopia to come?
8. What broke up the meeting? (*Farmer Jones heard noises and fired his gun at the barn.*)
- * 9. What political idea in Russian history does Old Major represent? (*Marxist-Leninist philosophy*)
- * 10. To what political figure in Russian history does Jones correspond? (*Czar Nicholas II*)

Vocabulary

scullery (15)
enmity (21)

mincing (17)

tyranny (20)

dissentients (21)

Writing Assignment

Translate Old Major's speech into human terms. If *Lenin* had been speaking to a gathering of human farm workers, what would he have said?

Attribute Web

The attribute web below will help you gather clues the author provides about a character in the novel. Fill in the blanks with words and phrases which tell how the character acts and looks, as well as what the character says and what others say about him or her.

The diagram is an attribute web with a central circle containing a horizontal line. Four lines radiate from the circle to four rectangular boxes arranged in a square pattern. Each box has a title and four numbered lines for notes.

- Acts**
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____
- Feels**
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____
- Looks**
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____
- Says**
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____

-
6. What does Benjamin read to Clover? (*All of the original commandments are gone. They have been replaced by one that reads, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."*)
- * 7. The meeting between humans and pigs at the end of the chapter represents what? (*the Teheran Conference*) What does the quarrel over the two aces stand for? (*the beginning of the Cold War*)
- * 8. Discuss the final irony at the end of the novel.
9. What does the ending have to say regarding Orwell's attitude toward both Communism and Capitalism? Does either system treat its "lower classes" well in the novel?

Vocabulary

morose (117)

taciturn (117)

filial (118)

imperishable (120)

deputation (123)

eminent (124)

Writing Assignment

According to Napoleon "the truest happiness" is "working hard and living frugally." Why was it important that the animals believe this? Do you feel his idea has any merit?

Activities

1. Have the students update their timelines and Propaganda Logs.
2. Orwell believed that decency is the most important quality human beings can possess, but that decency can function only in a classless society. He also felt that a corrupt leader imposes lack of decency on a political system. Discuss with the students how *Animal Farm* expressed these beliefs, and how they apply to today's world.
3. Formulate with the students the statements Orwell's novel makes about society in general and Communism in particular. Suggestions are listed below. Invite the students to debate these statements and write additional ones.
 - Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.
 - Anarchy is intolerable, but when there is rule there will be power.
 - All revolutions are doomed to fail.
 - Education and clear thinking of the masses can prevent absolute rule.