

Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Animal Farm

by George Orwell

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Animal Farm

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss and analyze the allegorical significance of characters and events in *Animal Farm*.
2. discuss the use of irony and its effects on the reader throughout the text.
3. trace the development of the character of Napoleon.
4. analyze the character of Boxer as a symbolic depiction of working classes in early twentieth-century Soviet Union.
5. discuss the novel as a critical commentary on the shortcomings and flaws inherent in human nature.
6. discuss the novel as a critical commentary on the dangers of distorted Socialism and Soviet Communism.
7. examine the elements of fable in the text and analyze the advantages of the fable format for conveying social and political criticism.
8. analyze the elements and effects of propaganda.
9. trace the elements of authoritarianism and totalitarianism throughout the text.
10. explain the role of religion in the text and tie it to the role of religion in the Soviet Union.
11. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
12. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
13. offer a close reading of *Animal Farm* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.

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Background Information

The Russian Revolution

The Russian Revolution consisted of two separate revolutions that radically changed the political system and way of life in early-twentieth-century Russia and culminated in the establishment of the Soviet Union, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

The February Revolution of 1917:

In **February 1917**, a popular revolution led to the overthrow of Czar Nicholas II of Russia, who had reigned as the Emperor and Autocrat of Russia since November 1894. A conservative ruler, Czar Nicholas, the last of the Romanov Dynasty, had long been considered inadequate due to the corruption that pervaded his government and his inability to comprehend the changing needs of the Russian economy. Poverty was wide-spread among Russia's working-class. The growth of urban industries and manufacturing enterprises created a new base of urban workers, but these workers were not paid livable wages and worked long hours only to live in dire poverty. Russian workers began to resent Nicholas for his failure to bring the Russian economy up to the standards of other European countries.

Calls for increased economic opportunity and political equality were fueled by Nicholas's empty promises for reform and a growing desire for a more democratic society. When Russia engaged in World War I, its military suffered considerable losses, and additional food shortages ensued. Failing to implement the reforms he had previously promised, Czar Nicholas helplessly witnessed as, on February 23, 1917, Russian workers left factories unattended, abandoned their work stations, and took to the streets in protest. They demanded food and vociferously articulated their criticism of the government. Workers were soon joined by students, dissenting members of the military, teachers, and other Russian citizens who sympathized with their demands. Without the support of either the military or his cabinet members, Czar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate on March 2, 1917. A Provisional Government, designed to lead the way toward a Russian republic, was implemented immediately.

The October Revolution of 1917:

The second stage of the Russian Revolution occurred in **October 1917** when the Bolshevik Party, under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and the workers' soviets (councils), abruptly terminated the authority of the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks claimed to represent the needs and interests of Russia's urban workers and peasants. They promised a redistribution of land to the peasants and a guarantee of democratic liberties, thus championing the socialist ideals formulated by the influential economic philosopher Karl Marx in the late nineteenth century. This precipitated the Russian Civil War that ended in 1921 with the formation of the Soviet Union (USSR).

Lenin argued that these goals could be achieved only if the Provisional Government was replaced and governmental power firmly assigned to the Bolsheviks. After Lenin's death in 1924, Leon Trotsky, an important fighter in the early revolution, and Joseph Stalin engaged in a struggle for power. Trotsky was soon exiled from Russia, allowing Joseph Stalin to take over the Bolshevik party—now called the Communist Party—and to redefine Marx's original socialist ideals. Lenin's and later, Stalin's rule quickly departed from the original socialist and democratic demands of the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet Union devolved into a government-controlled totalitarian state.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Why does George Orwell choose to use animal characters rather than human characters in order to portray his criticism of the Communist regime? Consider the benefits of the fable format.
2. To what extent is Old Major a character who represents the pure origins of Socialism? To what extent is he a character whose ideas and actions already pose problems and promise complications?
3. Examine the idea that history is usually told from the perspective of the winners and explain how it applies to the events of *Animal Farm*, particularly to the Rebellion, the Battle of the Cowshed, the building of the windmill, and other incidents. What are the implications for the study of history?
4. What is the role of religion in *Animal Farm*? How does it change as the text progresses?
5. Discuss the different elements of irony by stating and analyzing specific examples from *Animal Farm*. How does the narrative point of view from which *Animal Farm* is written contribute to the irony?
6. How does the character of Boxer function as an allegorical representation of the Soviet Union's working classes? What criticism, if any, does Orwell express in his characterization of Boxer?
7. Which elements of propaganda are most prevalent in *Animal Farm*? Why would Orwell choose to highlight these?
8. What is the correlation between the manipulation of language and the education of the animals?
9. *Animal Farm* is an allegory portraying the abuse of power and the distortion of Socialism Orwell witnessed in the early-twentieth-century fall of Russia and rise of the Soviet Union. In addition, *Animal Farm* is a satire and a fable illustrating Orwell's criticism of the weaknesses and faults present in human nature. Which weaknesses and faults does Orwell consider to be the most dangerous?
10. How and why does the character of Napoleon evolve over the course of the text?

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Chapter I

1. Why does Major ask the animals to congregate in the barn after Mr. Jones has gone to sleep?

2. According to Major, what is the source of the animals' "misery and slavery"?

3. According to Major, how do most animals on Manor Farm die, and what does their manner of death indicate about Mr. Jones' attitude toward his animals' value?

4. Why does Orwell introduce the term "Comrade" in this first chapter? What two purposes does the introduction of this term serve?

Chapter II

1. Why do the pigs immediately take over the role of organizers and teachers after Major's death?

2. How and why does Napoleon emerge as a character who seems destined to become a leader?

3. What allegorical reference is embedded in the philosophy of Animalism?

4. Why do the other animals not want Mollie to display her ribbons?

5. According to Moses, Sugarcandy Mountain is a place where it is "Sunday seven days a week." What kind of place or idea does the concept of Sugarcandy Mountain describe?

Chapter IV

1. What rumors do Mr. Frederick and Mr. Pilkington spread about Animal Farm?

2. How do the events on Animal Farm affect the animals on neighboring farms?

3. How does Snowball prepare for the attack by Jones and his men?

4. What experience during the Battle of the Cowshed deeply affects Boxer, and how does Snowball attempt to help him?

5. Why is Snowball's explanation that "the only good human being is a dead one" dangerous with regard to the spirit of the Seven Commandments?

6. How does the Battle of the Cowshed ultimately serve to inaugurate a series of rituals that help solidify the growing totalitarian state?

Chapter VIII

1. How does Napoleon solidify his leadership cult in chapter VIII?

2. What does Napoleon's changing attitude toward his two neighbors, Pilkington and Frederick, signify on an allegorical level?

3. How do Frederick's men eventually destroy the windmill?

4. What does Napoleon threaten to do to Frederick if he is captured?

5. Why does Napoleon order the gun to be fired after the attack? What are his underlying motives with regard to his reputation?

Chapter IX

1. Why does Boxer refuse to rest after he splits his hoof?

2. What have the animals been told will happen to them when they can no longer work?

3. What indicates that the retirement plan for the animals is unrealistic and might not be carried through?

4. What propagandistic euphemism does Squealer use to tell the animals that their rations are going to be reduced?

5. Which new privileges for the pigs does Napoleon enact in Chapter IX?

Chapter X

1. What does the last chapter reveal about the new generation of animals that now live on Animal Farm?

2. Which animals are the only ones who do not produce their own food? How do the descriptions of the animals who do not work support Orwell's criticism of the pigs and, ultimately, of Stalin's communism?

3. Why do the pigs invent the slogan "Four legs good, two legs better"?

4. To what do the human neighbors visiting Animal Farm compare the working animals (all animals that are not pigs)? What does their comment reveal about Orwell's attitude toward Stalin's Communism?

5. What prediction does the quarrel between humans and pigs at the end of the novel reveal?
