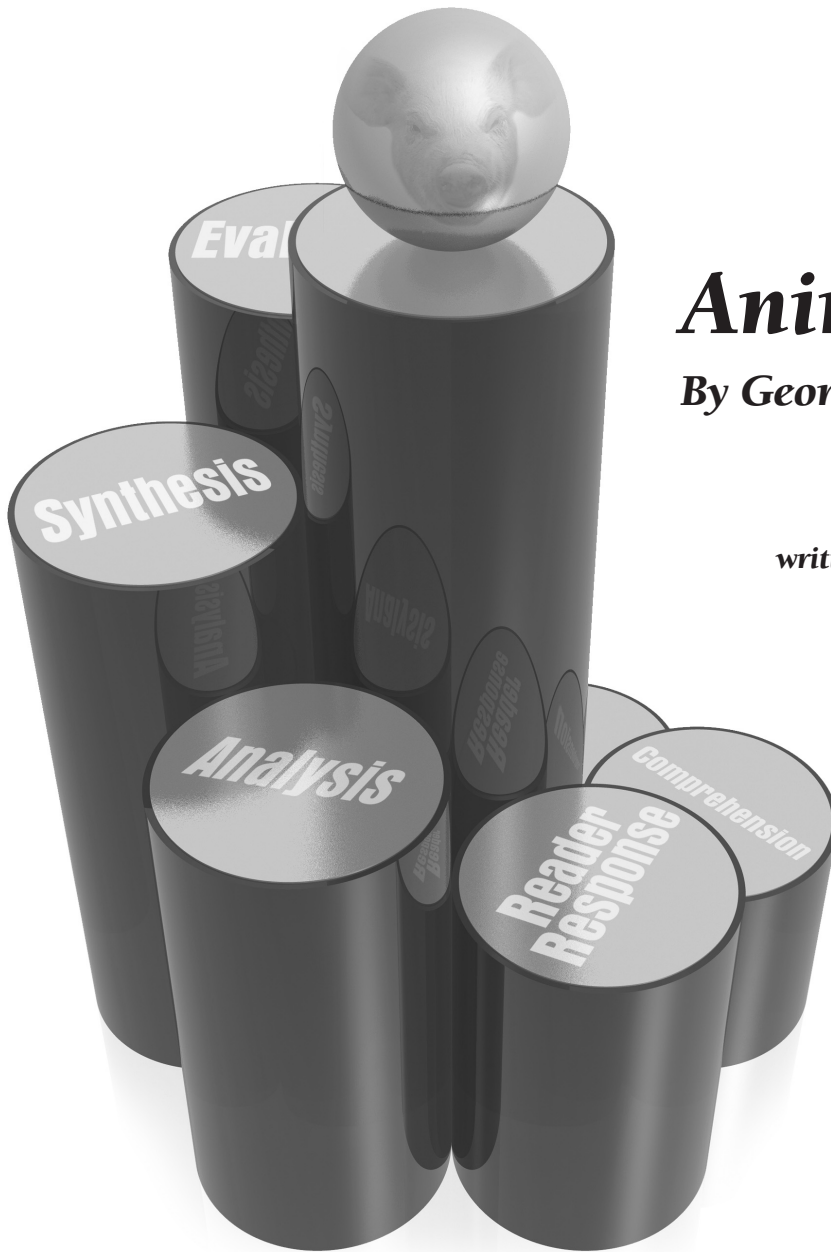


Using
Bloom's Taxonomy to
Explore Literature

Levels of Understanding



Animal Farm

By George Orwell

written by Rhonda Carwell



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Introduction to Levels of Understanding

FOR MANY STUDENTS, studying literature is like being lost in an alien universe, filled with hidden symbols, structures, and meanings that only a scholar can uncover. Without a teacher's direction, students lack the skills and confidence to evaluate a work of literature on their own, and instead, will frequently turn to resources such as the Internet for guidance. As a result, they assume another writer's views instead of developing their own.

Levels of Understanding breaks down complex questions students will encounter into smaller parts, showing the steps a critical reader should take in order to develop a sound evaluation of a text. Each section of the guide contains five types of questions representative of Bloom's learning domains—starting with the most basic and foundational skill, knowledge and comprehension, and gradually building to the highest skill, evaluation. All the way, reluctant students are provided with the scaffolding they need to advance from one level of understanding to the next.

The five types of questions, again, representative of Bloom's domains, are as follows:

- **Comprehension**—will ask the most basic questions to ascertain the students' fundamental understanding of the text: plot facts, character identification, etc.
- **Reader Response**—will ask the students to “respond” to the text by relating it to personal experience or by presenting an opinion on a character or event.
- **Analysis**—will require students to study how various techniques and literary or theatrical devices (diction, symbolism, imagery, metaphors, asides, soliloquies etc.) function in the text. Analysis questions do not ask the student to merely identify or define a literary, theatrical, or rhetorical device.
- **Synthesis**—will bridge the gap between the analysis and evaluation questions, requiring students to look at other scenes in the text and draw conclusions about themes, motifs, or a writer's style. Often, a synthesis question will require the student to draw on prior knowledge—what has been learned in class or through research—and/or information from sources other than the literary title being studied in order to arrive at a satisfactory answer.
- **Evaluation**—will ask the student to make a qualitative judgment on the text and determine whether a particular aspect of it is effective or ineffective.

Other books may list Bloom's taxonomy, define the terms, and offer a general example or two. *Levels of Understanding*, however, provides the teacher with the title-specific questions to allow you to effectively bring Bloom into your classroom.

In addition, unlike other available products that claim to address Bloom's “higher order thinking skills,” *Levels of Understanding* does not teach students how to answer questions about a particular text, but instead, helps them develop skills to evaluate literature critically and without guidance. These are skills that will not only help students prepare for standardized tests like the Advanced Placement Language and Literature exams, the SATs, and the ACTs, but will also give students the self-assurance to develop and articulate a personal view—a skill that will be highly advantageous to them in college.

This product, however, is not geared toward upper-level students only, but is a versatile guide that can be used for students of all ability levels—remedial through honors. The teacher may customize the product to fit the class's objectives and goals, determining which questions the students will answer. Additionally, the guide is entirely reproducible, and each major division begins on a new page, so you may use *Levels of Understanding* for the whole work of literature or only a specific section. ♡



How to Use this Unit

EACH *Levels of Understanding: Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Explore Literature* unit is intended to be a deep and rich component of your literature program, whether your goal is to prepare your students for a large-scale assessment like the AP Literature exam or to challenge your students to read carefully and to think deeply about what they have read.

The questions in this guide are designed to be flexible and meet your needs. They can be used as

- homework questions when students read the text independently.
- in-class reading check questions and “bell-ringer” journal entries.
- class discussion questions and prompts.
- focus questions for pre-writing and essay planning.
- review and study questions for assessment.

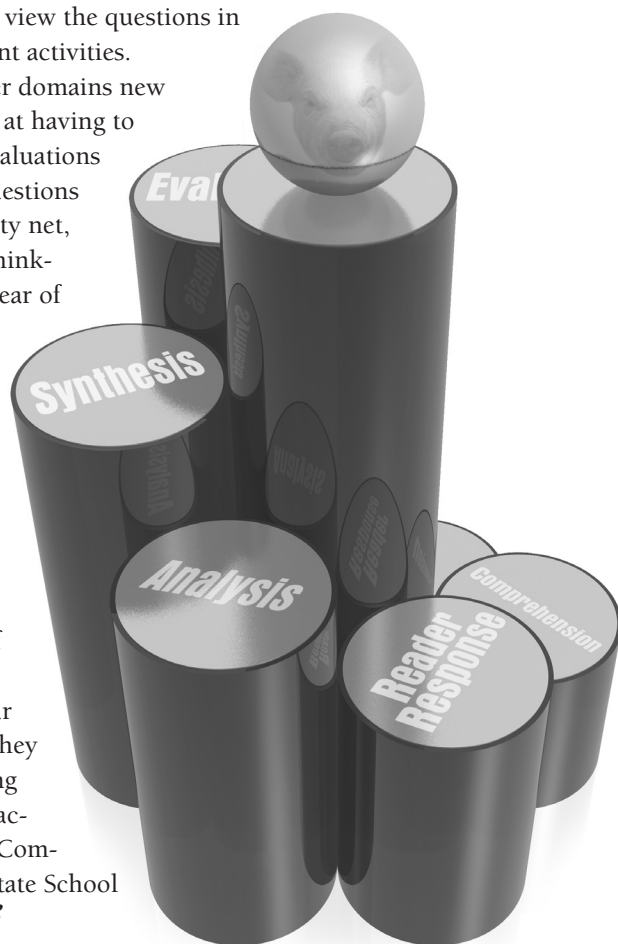
While the Teacher's Guide contains an answer key, you will find that the higher-order questions (especially synthesis and evaluation) have model answers that represent more than one possible response. It would be inappropriate to penalize a student whose well-reasoned and supportable answer did not match the “correct” answer in the guide.

For this reason, we strongly recommend that you view the questions in this guide as learning activities and not as assessment activities.

Many of your students are likely to find the higher domains new and perhaps intimidating. Others might be alarmed at having to support their reader-response reactions and their evaluations with an accurate comprehension of the text. The questions in this guide should act as both scaffolding and safety net, guiding your students through a new reading and thinking process and allowing them to practice without fear of “failure.”

The writing prompts, however, provide rich assessment and evaluation opportunities. Every prompt is designed to invite your students to operate in one of the higher order domains, thus giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their ability, and giving you the opportunity to evaluate their progress.

Whether you use *Levels of Understanding: Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Explore Literature* as the core of your literature curriculum or as a supplement, the guide and writing prompts are designed to help your students attain a deep understanding of the works they read. Ideally, they will gain the type of understanding demanded by Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and most state standards, including the Common Core State Standards of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. 🍷



Introduction to *Animal Farm*

Author Biography

“Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.”

– George Orwell, 1984

THE WORK ERIC BLAIR, who achieved literary fame under the *nom de plume* George Orwell, is characterized by the wit and cleverness with which he attacks social injustice and the dangers of all forms of totalitarian government.

Orwell was born into what he described as a “lower upper middle class family.” He was an indifferent student, but his parents were fiercely determined to see their son educated. He remained in school until he was to enter University. Lacking the money to continue his formal education, Orwell used some family connections and joined the Indian Imperial Police. While serving as an officer, Orwell began to see the ill effects of colonialism on indigenous peoples. His ideas about people’s right to govern themselves began to form. After a serious illness, Orwell resigned from the police and declared his intent to become a writer. Back in England, he went on “exploratory expeditions,” during which he witnessed the squalid conditions of the poor in London.

He began to achieve a reputation as a writer while also teaching at a boys school, and later, at college. Another illness ended his academic career, and he worked in a bookstore where he continued his examination of the social and economic conditions of workers in England.

Orwell followed the events of the Spanish Civil War closely, eventually deciding that he needed to fight on the Republican side of the Revolution. While in Spain, he aligned himself with the Workers Party for Marxist Unification to support the fight against fascism. Orwell did see some actual

fighting in his military service in Spain but was shot in the throat and forced to resign. Eventually, pro-Soviet communists in Spain declared POUM a Trotskyist organization, opposed to the ideas of Communism and Socialism. Many of the organization’s leaders, including Orwell, were forced into hiding. He wrote *Animal Farm* between 1943 and 1944, remembering the Stalin-like Communist purges he had escaped in Spain.

Orwell was an admitted socialist; he fought in Spain for the socialist cause. Unlike many socialists, however, when the horrors of Stalin’s reign in Russia came to light, he did not abandon Socialism but the Soviet Union. Considering Lenin and Stalin to be mere dictators, he began to write and speak against totalitarianism. His views eventually developed into an anarchistic theory, believing that all government was evil and that the punishments for crime nearly always did more harm than the crime itself.

As a writer, Orwell recognized the power of his work stating, “For some years past I have managed to make the capitalist class pay me several pounds a week for writing books against capitalism. But I do not delude myself that this state of affairs is going to last forever ... the only regime, which in the long run, will dare to permit freedom of speech is a socialist regime. If Fascism triumphs, I am finished as a writer—that is to say, finished in my only effective capacity. That of itself would be sufficient reason for joining a Socialist party.”

In writing *Animal Farm*, Orwell did not intend to parody the Communist Revolution in Russia or to warn his world against the dangers of Socialism or Communism. Instead, it was his intent to expose the dangers of absolute power and the dangerous effects of ignorance and absolute trust in those who make the rules.

Ultimately, he is warning against the dangers of not questioning the government in power. 🐷

Publication History of *Animal Farm*

WHILE THE SECOND WORLD WAR was raging in Europe, Orwell found it impossible to find a publisher for the book he had titled *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story* because it was feared the book’s publication would endanger the tenuous alliance between Britain and the United States and the Soviet Union. Because the Soviet Union was one of the allies fighting against Nazi Germany anti-Soviet literature was essentially taboo in every publishing house Orwell approached. This included his regular publisher, Gollancz. Faber and Faber, on whose board the poet T. S. Eliot sat, also rejected it.

In a July 13, 1944 letter to Orwell, Eliot praised the novel

as a “distinguished piece of writing” that was “very skillfully handled.” However, Eliot continued, he and the other directors had “no conviction” that the view of Communism espoused in *Animal Farm* was “the right point of view from which to criticize the political situation at the present time.” In other words, Eliot continued, the directors did not have the “conviction that this is the thing that needs saying at this moment.” Expressing his own disagreement with Orwell’s “Trotskyite” view, Eliot argued, “your pigs are ... the best qualified to run the farm—in fact, there couldn’t have been an *Animal Farm* at all without them: so that what was needed ... was not more Communism but more public-spirited pigs.”

Levels of Understanding:

Using Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains
to explore George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

Writing Prompts

Chapter 1: Analysis, Synthesis

In a well-organized and supported essay, discuss the extent to which *Animal Farm* is established as an allegorical fable in this first chapter. Analyze the techniques Orwell uses to convey the allegorical nature of the novel.

Chapter 2: Reader Response, Analysis

The writing of the Seven Commandments on the wall of the barn is ostensibly a means of formalizing the principles and communicating them in an understandable manner to the animals. Write a well-reasoned and supported essay in which you argue whether or not the painting of the Commandments is likely to prove an effective means of meeting the action's goals.

Chapter 3: Analysis, Synthesis

Drawing from the entire novel up to this point for your support, analyze the relationship that Orwell suggests in *Animal Farm* between leadership and privilege. Do not merely provide a summary of the plot.

Chapter 4: Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation

Choose either Snowball, Boxer, or Mollie and write a thoughtful, well-supported essay in which you compare his or her role and character before and after the Battle of the Cowshed. Be certain to use specific illustrations from the text to support your thesis.

Chapter 5: Analysis, Synthesis

Consider Napoleon's and Snowball's respective characters and roles in the *Animal Farm* society. Write a well-reasoned and supported essay in which you predict what the frequent and intensifying conflicts between the two pigs might foreshadow for future plot and theme development. Be certain to support all of your speculations with evidence from the text.

Chapter 6: Analysis, Synthesis

Write a thorough, well-reasoned, and supported essay in which you analyze the role of propaganda in the success of the pigs' assuming and maintaining power on *Animal Farm*.

Chapter 7: Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation

Progressively through the novel, the pigs take on human characteristics, evidenced in their behavior, lifestyle,

and even eventually their appearance. Write a well-supported essay in which you analyze Orwell's purpose in incorporating this metamorphosis in his portrayal of the pigs' rise to power. Include an examination of the necessity and effectiveness of this device.

Chapter 8: Reader Response, Analysis

Much is revealed about the pigs through their behavior towards others and descriptions of their lifestyle. However, the fact that the working animals accept the pigs' edicts and behavior and do nothing to express disapproval or dissent says something about them. In an organized essay, examine the workers in light of their reactions to the events that affect their lives. Use the text to support your thesis.

Chapter 9: Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluate

Irony, especially verbal irony, tends to be one of George Orwell's most common literary devices. Examine the text up to this point and note the incidences of irony, the types of irony used, and the apparent purpose of the irony in each incidence. Then write a well-reasoned and supported essay in which you analyze the overall contribution of irony to the overall impact of *Animal Farm*. To what extent does Orwell's use of irony enhance the novel's emotional and intellectual effect on the reader?

Chapter 10: Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation

Write a thoughtful, well-organized essay in which you analyze *Animal Farm* as an allegorical animal fable. Do not merely provide a list of characters, events, and allegorical correspondences. Pay special attention to the effectiveness of the allegory in presenting and supporting Orwell's views to his reader.

Whole Book Writing Prompt

George Orwell's allegorical novel, *Animal Farm*, can be read as a satirical commentary on the political environment of the times in which it was written. Write a thorough and well-supported essay in which you infer Orwell's views about the key issues portrayed in the novel: Socialism, totalitarian governments, and the means by which oppressors rise to power. 🐷



Levels of Understanding:
*Using Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains
 to explore George Orwell's*

Animal Farm

CHAPTER 1

Comprehension

1. Why are all the farm animals willing to listen to Old Major?

2. What attributes does Major possess that make him a worthy advisor to the animals for the future?

3. In what way does Boxer command respect despite being described as “somewhat stupid”?

4. What term does Major use to address the animals and unite them?

5. What does Major tell the farm animals in his speech?

6. What rules does Major establish to be followed by all animals following the rebellion from man's rule?

Animal Farm

CHAPTER 2

Comprehension

1. Why do the pigs become organizers of the Revolution?

2. What is Animalism?

3. Why don't all of the animals support the ideas of Animalism?

4. What is the ultimate impetus for the rebellion?

5. Who seizes control of farm by assuming leadership? How?

Reader Response

1. Are the pigs the best leaders for the Revolution? Why or why not?

Animal Farm

CHAPTER 3

Comprehension

1. What is the role of the pigs on the farm? How does their role distinguish them from the other animals?

2. What benefits of the freedom do the animals quickly realize?

3. In what ways does Boxer become the most admired worker of Animal Farm?

4. What key differences between Napoleon's and Snowball's theories about the operation of the farm become apparent?

5. By what methods do the pigs begin to manipulate the other animals?

Reader Response

1. Is the phrase "worthless parasitical human beings" an accurate description or an exaggeration?

Animal Farm

CHAPTER 4

Comprehension

1. Identify and describe Mr. Pilkington and Mr. Frederick.

2. How do Pilkington and Frederick attempt to control the spread of news about the success of Animal Farm?

3. When and why does Mr. Jones reappear in the story?

4. What honors are bestowed on the animals who fought bravely in the Battle of Cowshed?

Reader Response

1. Which of the two farmers would the animals prefer, Pilkington or Frederick? Why?

2. Are the farmers justified in their fear of Animal Farm?

Animal Farm

CHAPTER 5

Comprehension

1. How does Napoleon react to Snowball's ideas for the future of the farm?

2. Who is the only animal to not take sides in the windmill debate? Why?

3. How does the dogs' behavior suggest a strong similarity between Napoleon and Mr. Jones?

4. How does Napoleon dissuade opposition to his views?

Reader Response

1. Is Mollie's behavior a surprise? Why or why not?

2. Which pig is correct in his approach to the defense of the farm? Why?
