

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Animal Farm

by George Orwell

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Animal Farm

Introduction

George Orwell, whose real name was Eric Blair, was a middle-class boy who wound up in an upper-class school, Eton, on a scholarship. There, first hand, he learned of rank, privilege and discrimination.

Graduating from Eton, but unable to attend college, he went into the British civil service and became a policeman in India. There, his compassion for the underdog and hatred for the exploiter became more intense. Quitting his job, he went to Paris and London and eked out a meager living. Frequently he was homeless and got by as best he could. All of these experiences intensified his sympathies for the exploited masses and turned him towards socialism.

Because of his beliefs, Orwell went to Spain in 1936 to fight for socialism; it was a bitter experience because he found that many of his socialist comrades were killed, not by the enemy but by the friends of socialism, the communists. As a result, Orwell, while no less a fighter for the exploited masses, became a strong anti-communist because he thought the communists were betraying socialism. It was from this perspective that Orwell wrote *Animal Farm*.

His goal was, he tells us, “to expose the Soviet myth [that communism in the U.S.S.R. was the savior of the exploited masses] in a story that could be easily understood by almost anyone.”

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION:

1. It was inspired by the ideas of philosopher Karl Marx who believed:
 - The great masses of people were poor and kept poor by the exploiters, the capitalists.
 - The capitalists, while few in number, had the money and power; they took advantage of the masses of people, called the “working class” or “proletariat.”
 - A revolution was necessary if the oppressed were to throw off the yoke of the oppressor (the rich owners).
 - When the revolution was successful, there would be a classless society in which everyone would be equal because there would be no more owners (capitalists) and no more exploited masses. The workers themselves would own the factories in which they worked.
2. In 1917, the first revolution against the Czar in Russia took place. The new government was democratic but bourgeois (middle class).

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Objectives

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

1. identify the irony that arises from what the animals (and narrator) believe to be the truth and what the reader knows is the truth.
2. define satire, state what the objects of the satire are in the book, and discuss the ways in which the targets are ridiculed.
3. state how this story functions as a
 - *fable* – a story that has a moral, with animals representing human qualities;
 - *satire* – an attack on totalitarianism;
 - *allegory* – a symbolic representation of The Russian Revolution of 1917.
4. discuss Orwell's style, particularly the way he tells a very sad story in a light manner.
5. discuss Orwell's belief that language is perverted in society to serve political ends and provide examples to support answers.
6. identify, define and give examples of the following:
 - the big lie
 - scapegoating
 - rewriting history.
7. define three basic techniques of satire and give examples from the book for each.
 - parody
 - caricature
 - irony
8. write an essay explaining Orwell's point of view of capitalism, communism, and totalitarianism.
9. explain the term "cult of personality" and describe how it applies to the events in this story.
10. consider all that happens in the book, including Benjamin's comments, and discuss the points Orwell is making about the Russian revolution in particular and all revolutions in general.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Orwell is interested in how language is perverted to manipulate and control a population. Point out at least three examples of when this change in the meaning of words occurs in *Animal Farm*.
2. Tyrants will sometimes use one or more of the following techniques to manipulate their citizens: scapegoating, the big lie, rewriting history. State when or how these techniques were used by Napoleon and if possible relate them to other historical situations with which you are familiar.
3. Identify who or what group of people the animals are meant to represent. Support each answer:
 - The pigs
 - The dogs
 - The sheep
 - The horses, particularly Boxer
 - The raven
 - Old Major
 - Napoleon
 - Benjamin
 - Frederick
 - Pilkington
 - Snowball
4. Trace the political allegory in this book by listing the comment or events in the book and then relating each to a comment or incident in Russian history.
5. One of the biggest ironies in this book is the way in which Old Major's dream becomes prophetic. Reread that speech in Chapter One and identify which things come to pass.
6. Discuss the role of the narrator in this book and comment on how the narrator is the cause of the irony.
7. Fables usually end with a moral, a lesson to be learned. Write a moral for this story.
8. At times, this is a sad story because it is about dreams—dreams born and dreams dashed. Point out appropriate passages from the book that demonstrate how *Animal Farm* treats dreams.

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Chapter I

Vocabulary

cud – partly digested food
foal – colt
knacker – horse slaughterer
mangel-wurzel – beet
tush – tusk

1. The animals act as animals do (e.g., cows chewing their cuds); because they think and speak, they also seem to represent *types of humans*. What type of people do Boxer, Mollie, and the cat appear to represent?

- Boxer
- Mollie
- The cat

2. Keeping in mind the Russian revolution, whom do the animals collectively represent? Again thinking of the allegory, what person does Old Major represent?

3. Specifically, whom might Mr. Jones represent? More generally, whom might he represent?

4. After the battle, why is Boxer upset? What does Snowball tell him?

5. What implication may be drawn from these two points of view?

6. What aspects of human militarism are mocked toward the end of this chapter?

Chapter VII

Vocabulary

capitulated – gave up
clamps – brick enclosure
countenance – facial expression
gilded – colored golden
infanticide – baby killing
pervading – filling
spinney – woods
stupefied – astonished

1. Napoleon (and at this point he seems to be living up to his namesake), is growing more distant and is not seen in public very often. How does he deal with the rebellion of the hens?

2. Why did the hens rebel?

3. What is ironic about this situation?
