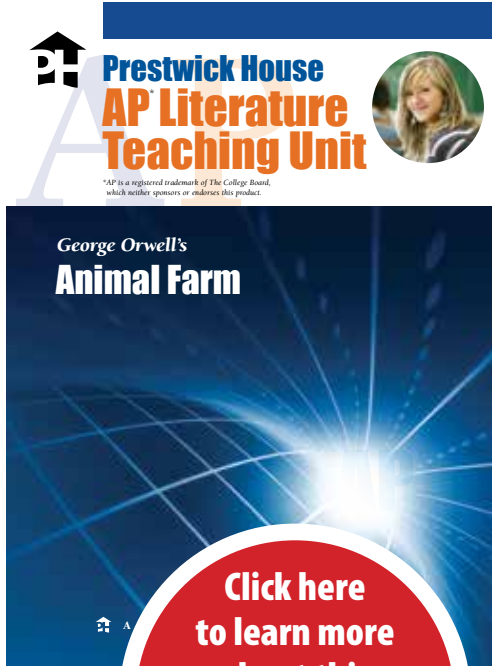




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Teaching Unit

Animal Farm

by George Orwell

Written by Eva Richardson



Prestwick House

Item No. 302227

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.

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

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?

Animal Farm

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 III

1. What differentiates the work the pigs complete during hay harvest from the work the other animals complete?

2. How successful is the animals' first harvest after the Rebellion?

3. Are all animals required to work the same hours and complete the same kind of work, or work that is equally difficult and exhausting?

4. In addition to the pigs, which other animal does not actually seem to complete any substantial physical labor and why?

5. What allegorical significance does the fact that Napoleon and Snowball disagree during the animals' meetings carry?

Chapter V

1. Mollie's disappearance not only indicates her desire to receive special treatment at the hands of human beings, but also functions as a reminder of the dangers of forced obedience and the requirement of conformity. Explain how her disappearance forms part of Orwell's criticism of the emerging totalitarian structure of Animal Farm.

2. In the growing dispute between Snowball and Napoleon, how does Snowball hope to gain the trust and support of the other animals? What is Napoleon's tactic?

3. What are Snowball's ideas for defending Animal Farm against possible human attacks? What are Napoleon's ideas?

4. Why does Snowball so fervently advocate the building of the windmill?

Chapter VII

1. Why is the following sentence from paragraph two in Chapter VII ironic: “Out of spite, the human beings pretended not to believe that it was Snowball who had destroyed the windmill”?

2. How does the reader learn that the pigs know the windmill was destroyed in the storm because of poor planning?

3. Why is it so important for the animals to conceal their starvation from the human beings?

4. Why do the hens start a rebellion?

5. After calling Snowball a traitor and claiming that he was in league with Mr. Jones from the beginning, the pigs have a difficult time convincing the other animals—particularly Boxer—of the validity of their sudden claims about Snowball’s treacherous behavior at the Battle of the Cowshed. How are the pigs eventually able to convince Boxer, and what do they claim in order to ensure no further questions will be asked? Consider common propaganda techniques.

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?
