By E-learning
Contact : +228 79 83 62 19

ANIMAL FARM BY GEORGE ORWELL

FULL SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Old Major, a prize-winning boar, gathers the animals of the Manor Farm for a meeting in the big barn. He tells them of a dream he has had in which all animals live together with no human beings to oppress or control them. He tells the animals that they must work toward such a paradise and teaches them a song called “Beasts of England,” in which his dream vision is lyrically described. The animals greet Major’s vision with great enthusiasm. When he dies only three nights after the meeting, three younger pigs—Snowball, Napoleon, and Squealer—formulate his main principles into a philosophy called Animalism. Late one night, the animals manage to defeat the farmer Mr. Jones in a battle, running him off the land. They rename the property Animal Farm and dedicate themselves to achieving Major’s dream. The cart-horse Boxer devotes himself to the cause with particular zeal, committing his great strength to the prosperity of the farm and adopting as a personal maxim the affirmation “I will work harder.”

At first, Animal Farm prospers. Snowball works at teaching the animals to read, and Napoleon takes a group of young puppies to educate them in the principles of Animalism. When Mr. Jones reappears to take back his farm, the animals defeat him again, in what comes to be known as the Battle of the Cowshed, and take the farmer’s abandoned gun as a token of their victory. As time passes, however, Napoleon and Snowball increasingly quibble over the future of the farm, and they begin to struggle with each other for power and influence among the other animals. Snowball concocts a scheme to build an electricity-generating windmill, but Napoleon solidly opposes the plan. At the meeting to vote on whether to take up the project, Snowball gives a passionate speech.

Although Napoleon gives only a brief retort, he then makes a strange noise, and nine attack dogs—the puppies that Napoleon had confiscated in order to “educate”—burst into the barn and chase Snowball from the farm. Napoleon assumes leadership of Animal Farm and declares that there will be no more meetings. From that point on, he asserts, the pigs alone will make all of the decisions—for the good of every animal.

Napoleon now quickly changes his mind about the windmill, and the animals, especially Boxer, devote their efforts to completing it. One day, after a storm, the animals find the windmill toppled. The human farmers in the area declare smugly that the animals made the walls too thin, but Napoleon claims that Snowball returned to the farm to sabotage the windmill. He stages a great purge, during which various animals who have allegedly participated in Snowball’s great conspiracy—meaning any animal who opposes Napoleon’s uncontested leadership—meet instant death at the teeth of the attack dogs. With his leadership unquestioned (Boxer has taken up a second maxim, “Napoleon is always right”), Napoleon begins expanding his powers, rewriting history to make Snowball a villain. Napoleon also begins to act more and more like a human being—sleeping in a bed, drinking whisky, and engaging in trade with neighboring farmers. The original Animalist principles strictly forbade such activities, but Squealer, Napoleon’s propagandist, justifies every action to the other animals, convincing them that Napoleon is a great leader and is making things better for everyone—despite the fact that the common animals are cold, hungry, and overworked.

Mr. Frederick, a neighboring farmer, cheats Napoleon in the purchase of some timber and then attacks the farm and dynamites the windmill, which had been rebuilt at great expense. After the demolition of the windmill, a pitched battle ensues, during which Boxer receives major wounds. The animals rout the

farmers, but Boxer's injuries weaken him. When he later falls while working on the windmill, he senses that his time has nearly come. One day, Boxer is nowhere to be found. According to Squealer, Boxer has died in peace after having been taken to the hospital, praising the Rebellion with his last breath. In actuality, Napoleon has sold his most loyal and long-suffering worker to a glue maker in order to get money for whisky.

Years pass on Animal Farm, and the pigs become more and more like human beings—walking upright, carrying whips, and wearing clothes. Eventually, the seven principles of Animalism, known as the Seven Commandments and inscribed on the side of the barn, become reduced to a single principle reading "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

Napoleon entertains a human farmer named Mr. Pilkington_at a dinner and declares his intent to ally himself with the human farmers against the laboring classes of both the human and animal communities. He also changes the name of Animal Farm back to the Manor Farm, claiming that this title is the "correct" one. Looking in at the party of elites through the farmhouse window, the common animals can no longer tell which are the pigs and which are the human beings.

CHARACTER LIST

Napoleon

The pig who emerges as the leader of Animal Farm after the Rebellion. Based on Joseph Stalin, Napoleon uses military force (his nine loyal attack dogs) to intimidate the other animals and consolidate his power. In his supreme craftiness, Napoleon proves more treacherous than his counterpart, Snowball.

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF NAPOLEON

From the very beginning of the novella, Napoleon emerges as an utterly corrupt opportunist. Though always present at the early meetings of the new state,

Napoleon never makes a single contribution to the revolution—not to the formulation of its ideology, not to the bloody struggle that it necessitates, not to the new society's initial attempts to establish itself. He never shows interest in the strength of Animal Farm itself, only in the strength of his power over it. Thus, the only project he undertakes with enthusiasm is the training of a litter of puppies. He doesn't educate them for their own good or for the good of all, however, but rather for his own good: they become his own private army or secret police, a violent means by which he imposes his will on others. Although he is most directly modeled on the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, Napoleon represents, in a more general sense, the political tyrants that have emerged throughout human history and with particular frequency during the twentieth century. His namesake is not any communist leader but the early-nineteenth-century French general Napoleon, who betrayed the democratic principles on which he rode to power, arguably becoming as great a despot as the aristocrats whom he supplanted. It is a testament to Orwell's acute political intelligence and to the universality of his fable that Napoleon can easily stand for any of the great dictators and political schemers in world history, even those who arose after *Animal Farm* was written. In the behavior of Napoleon and his henchmen, one can detect the lying and bullying tactics of totalitarian leaders such as Josip Tito, Mao Tse-tung, Pol Pot, Augusto Pinochet, and Slobodan Milosevic treated in sharply critical terms.

Snowball

The pig who challenges Napoleon for control of Animal Farm after the Rebellion. Based on Leon Trotsky, Snowball is intelligent, passionate, eloquent, and less subtle and devious than his counterpart, Napoleon. Snowball seems to win the loyalty of the other animals and cement his power.

By E-learning
Contact : +228 79 83 62 19

Boxer

The cart-horse whose incredible strength, dedication, and loyalty play a key role in the early prosperity of Animal Farm and the later completion of the windmill. Quick to help but rather slow-witted, Boxer shows much devotion to Animal Farm's ideals but little ability to think about them independently. He naïvely trusts the pigs to make all his decisions for him. His two mottoes are "I will work harder" and "Napoleon is always right."

Squealer

The pig who spreads Napoleon's propaganda among the other animals. Squealer justifies the pigs' monopolization of resources and spreads false statistics pointing to the farm's success. Orwell uses Squealer to explore the ways in which those in power often use rhetoric and language to twist the truth and gain and maintain social and political control.

Old Major

The prize-winning boar whose vision of a socialist utopia serves as the inspiration for the Rebellion. Three days after describing the vision and teaching the animals the song "Beasts of England," Major dies, leaving Snowball and Napoleon to struggle for control of his legacy. Orwell based Major on both the German political economist Karl Marx and the Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Ilych Lenin.

Clover

A good-hearted female cart-horse and Boxer's close friend. Clover often suspects the pigs of violating one or another of the Seven Commandments, but she repeatedly blames herself for misremembering the commandments.

Moses

The tame raven who spreads stories of Sugarcandy Mountain, the paradise to which animals supposedly go when they die. Moses plays only a small role in

Animal Farm, but Orwell uses him to explore how communism exploits religion as something with which to pacify the oppressed.

Mollie

The vain, flighty mare who pulls Mr. Jones's carriage. Mollie craves the attention of human beings and loves being groomed and pampered. She has a difficult time with her new life on Animal Farm, as she misses wearing ribbons in her mane and eating sugar cubes. She represents the petit bourgeoisie that fled from Russia a few years after the Russian Revolution.

Benjamin

The long-lived donkey who refuses to feel inspired by the Rebellion. Benjamin firmly believes that life will remain unpleasant no matter who is in charge. Of all of the animals on the farm, he alone comprehends the changes that take place, but he seems either unwilling or unable to oppose the pigs.

Muriel

The white goat who reads the Seven Commandments to Clover whenever Clover suspects the pigs of violating their prohibitions.

Mr. Jones

The often drunk farmer who runs the Manor Farm before the animals stage their Rebellion and establish Animal Farm. Mr. Jones is an unkind master who indulges himself while his animals lack food; he thus represents Tsar Nicholas II, whom the Russian Revolution ousted.

Mr. Frederick

The tough, shrewd operator of Pinchfield, a neighboring farm. Based on Adolf Hitler, the ruler of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, Mr. Frederick proves an untrustworthy neighbor.

By E-learning
Contact : +228 79 83 62 19

Mr. Pilkington

The easygoing gentleman farmer who runs Foxwood, a neighboring farm. Mr. Frederick's bitter enemy, Mr. Pilkington represents the capitalist governments of England and the United States.

Mr. Whymper

The human solicitor whom Napoleon hires to represent Animal Farm in human society. Mr. Whymper's entry into the Animal Farm community initiates contact between Animal Farm and human society, alarming the common animals.

Jessie and Bluebell

Two dogs, each of whom gives birth early in the novel. Napoleon takes the puppies in order to "educate" them.

Minimus

The poet pig who writes verse about Napoleon and pens the banal patriotic song "Animal Farm, Animal Farm" to replace the earlier idealistic hymn "Beasts of England," which Old Major passes on to the others.

Questions & Answers on some topics in the novel

Why is Animal Farm an allegory ?

An allegory is a story in which the events and characters stand for something besides themselves. The characters and events of *Animal Farm* represent the real people and events of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* because he wanted to tell the true story of the Russian Revolution in a way anyone could understand, even if they didn't know all the historical details. However, *Animal Farm* is not only an allegory of Russian history. The novella also makes a broader argument about political power and oppression in general.

What is Animalism ?

By E-learning
Contact : +228 79 83 62 19

Napoleon, Snowball and Squealer develop Old Major's idea that animals have a right to freedom and equality into "a complete system of thought" (Chapter 2) which they call Animalism. The central beliefs of Animalism are expressed in the Seven Commandments, painted on the wall of the big barn. However, as the pigs seize more and more power, they change the Commandments painted on the barn, until Animalism is reduced to a single principle which is virtually the opposite of Old Major's original idea: "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others" (Chapter 10).

How does Napoleon seize power ?

Napoleon trains a litter of puppies to be loyal to him: when they are fully grown, he uses the dogs to chase Snowball, his main rival, off the farm. Napoleon justifies his takeover by telling the other animals that Snowball was a traitor secretly working for the human farmers. Squealer makes confusing and manipulative arguments to convince most of the animals that Napoleon is telling the truth, while fear of Napoleon's dogs keeps any doubters from speaking out.

What does Boxer represent ?

Within *Animal Farm*'s allegory of Soviet history, Boxer represents the Russian working class. Boxer does most of the work on the farm, and his strength and size give him a great deal of power. However, he is illiterate and trusting, which makes it easy for the pigs to trick him into submitting to their leadership. Orwell believed that something similar had happened to the Russian working class during the Soviet Revolution: the workers were powerful, and did all the work in the Soviet Union, but they were tricked and betrayed by Russian intellectuals.

How does Mr. Frederick trick Napoleon ?

Mr. Frederick agrees to pay a high price for Animal Farm's timber, and encourages Napoleon to insult Mr. Pilkington. Knowing that the animals are not familiar with money, Frederick pays for the timber in forged banknotes. When the forgery is discovered, Frederick attacks Animal Farm and destroys the windmill. The insulted Mr. Pilkington refuses to help the animals defend their farm. This sequence of events roughly parallels the relations between Stalin's Soviet Union (Napoleon), Nazi Germany (Frederick), and the United Kingdom (Pilkington) during the Second World War.

Why does Mollie leave Animal Farm ?

Mollie leaves Animal Farm because she has never fully embraced its new way of life, and she instead prefers the benefits of being owned by humans. Of all the animals, Mollie has not risen to the demands of Animalism. She sneaks sugar and ribbons, shirks her duties, shows up late to work, and maintains contact with humans. After she leaves Animal Farm, the pigeons see her in town, pulling a dogcart while a human strokes her nose and feeds her sugar. These details show that Mollie chooses to sacrifice her liberty for comfort.

Why does Snowball want to build a windmill ?

Snowball wants to build a windmill so it can power a machine to create electricity on the farm. Electricity will improve the animals' comfort by supplying light and heat in their stalls. The electricity also will be used to power numerous machines that can perform the work the animals must do, providing them with more leisure time. With the windmill in operation, all the animals will have more time to relax and to "improve their minds with reading and conversation."

What is Snowball's role at the Battle of the Cowshed ?

Snowball is a hero at the Battle of the Cowshed, bravely leading the animals' defensive operations to decisive victory over Mr. Jones, who tries to retake the

farm. Employing what he learned from a book on war campaigns, Snowball launches a series of sham attacks designed to lull the farmers into thinking they've won, which end with the farmers running for their lives. After Snowball flees the farm, however, Napoleon and Squealer slowly distort this history. Squealer questions Snowball's role and motives, suggests Snowball was a traitor, and eventually states that Snowball "had been openly fighting on Jones's side" and "had actually been the leader of the human forces[.]"

Does Snowball ever return to Animal Farm after Napoleon's dogs chase him away ?

Snowball never appears to return to Animal Farm. Squealer, however, claims that Snowball sneaks back onto the farm to commit sabotage. For example, when the first windmill falls down, Squealer claims that Snowball "has crept here under cover of night and destroyed our work of nearly a year." Within a short time, "[w]henever anything went wrong [on the farm] it became usual to attribute it to Snowball." In actuality, no one ever sees Snowball again once he leaves the farm.

Why do the animals confess to being traitors ?

While Orwell doesn't explain why the animals confess to crimes they didn't commit, readers can infer that the four pigs who are the first to be executed are terrified of the dogs and believe that if they do as Napoleon asks, he will spare their lives—after all, the Commandments stipulate that no animal should harm another. More puzzling might be the hens and the sheep's confessions since they have seen exactly how Napoleon treats so-called traitors. However, the hens are among the least intelligent animals, so they may lack capacity to process the events. Similarly, the sheep have already proved themselves to be followers with little ability to think or question for themselves.

By E-learning
Contact : +228 79 83 62 19

Why does Napoleon blame Snowball for everything that goes wrong on the farm ?

Napoleon, aided by Squealer, uses Snowball as a scapegoat, which means that when something goes wrong, he blames Snowball. As Snowball is not present, Snowball can't defend himself and reveal falsehoods in the accusations, essentially creating a situation in which all of Napoleon's statements regarding Snowball are simply accepted as truth. This tactic means that Napoleon does not need to take responsibility for mistakes and misdeeds, and it also allows him to continue to receive the animals' support and respect even when calamity occurs, as when the windmill collapses. Further, by casting Snowball in the role of the enemy, Napoleon ensures that his rival will never be able to return to the farm and challenge his leadership.

How is the windmill destroyed ?

The windmill is actually destroyed and rebuilt several times throughout the course of *Animal Farm*. The first windmill collapses in a storm, and the second windmill is blown up during the Battle of the Windmill. After the first windmill is destroyed, which Napoleon blames on Snowball's sabotage, the animals begin reconstruction and make the walls much thicker. After the second windmill is fully built, Frederick attacks Animal Farm and takes down the structure with blasting powder. Undeterred, the animals begin rebuilding the windmill the next day.

Why does Napoleon change the Seven Commandments ?

Over time, Napoleon changes all of the Seven Commandments, which were created to keep the animals humble and on equal footing, to allow the pigs to enjoy prohibited privileges and comforts. For instance, when the pigs move into the farmhouse, Napoleon amends the commandment about not sleeping in a bed to read, "No animal shall sleep in a bed *with sheets*." Napoleon changes

other commandments as well so the pigs can wear clothes, drink alcohol, and even kill other animals. By the end of the book, the original commandments have been reduced to one statement that encapsulates the authoritarian nature of the farm: “ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS.”

What does Boxer’s death represent ?

Boxer’s death represents the exploitation of the working classes as well as the death of the idealism that led to the establishment of Animal Farm. Before his death, Boxer is Napoleon’s most loyal supporter, abusing his body in service to the farm and the windmill. Once he weakens and is no longer useful, the pigs don’t reward him with the promised peaceful retirement but sell him to a glue factory. Ironically, this fate is what Old Major predicted for Boxer under Mr. Jones’s ownership: “You, Boxer, the very day that those great muscles of yours lose their power, Jones will sell you to the knacker, who will cut your throat and boil you down for the foxhounds.” Instead of bringing about equality among animals, Napoleon has created a society in which the pigs have taken the place of the humans in their corruption and self-interest.

How does Squealer manipulate the animals so the pigs can better control them ?

A persuasive speaker, Squealer uses language to make the other animals disbelieve what they have seen with their own eyes and to believe the lies he tells them. Sometimes Squealer encourages the animals to question their own recollections, such as when Napoleon violates the prohibition against trade: “Is it written down anywhere?” Squealer asks, causing the animals to be certain they are mistaken. Squealer explains why actions that appear to benefit the pigs actually help all the animals. When the pigs move into the farmhouse despite an earlier ban, he declares, “It was absolutely necessary . . . that the

pigs, who were the brains of the farm, should have a quiet place to work in." Squealer's disingenuous and manipulative speech succeeds in making the animals distrust their own experiences.

Themes

The Corruption of Socialist Ideals in the Soviet Union

Animal Farm is most famous in the West as a stinging critique of the history and rhetoric of the Russian Revolution. Retelling the story of the emergence and development of Soviet communism in the form of an animal fable, *Animal Farm* allegorizes the rise to power of the dictator Joseph Stalin. In the novella, the overthrow of the human oppressor Mr. Jones by a democratic coalition of animals quickly gives way to the consolidation of power among the pigs. Much like the Soviet intelligentsia, the pigs establish themselves as the ruling class in the new society. The struggle for preeminence between Leon Trotsky and Stalin emerges in the rivalry between the pigs Snowball and Napoleon. In both the historical and fictional cases, the idealistic but politically less powerful figure (Trotsky and Snowball) is expelled from the revolutionary state by the malicious and violent usurper of power (Stalin and Napoleon). The purges and show trials with which Stalin eliminated his enemies and solidified his political base find expression in *Animal Farm* as the false confessions and executions of animals whom Napoleon distrusts following the collapse of the windmill. Stalin's tyrannical rule and eventual abandonment of the founding principles of the Russian Revolution are represented by the pigs' turn to violent government and the adoption of human traits and behaviors, the trappings of their original oppressors. Although Orwell believed strongly in socialist ideals, he felt that the Soviet Union realized these ideals in a terribly perverse form. His novella creates its most powerful ironies in the moments in which Orwell depicts the corruption of Animalist ideals by those in power. For *Animal Farm* serves not so

much to condemn tyranny or despotism as to indict the horrifying hypocrisy of tyrannies that base themselves on, and owe their initial power to, ideologies of liberation and equality. The gradual disintegration and perversion of the Seven Commandments illustrates this hypocrisy with vivid force, as do Squealer's elaborate philosophical justifications for the pigs' blatantly unprincipled actions. Thus, the novella critiques the violence of the Stalinist regime against the human beings it ruled, and also points to Soviet communism's violence against human logic, language, and ideals.

The Societal Tendency Toward Class Stratification

Animal Farm offers commentary on the development of class tyranny and the human tendency to maintain and reestablish class structures even in societies that allegedly stand for total equality. The novella illustrates how classes that are initially unified in the face of a common enemy, as the animals are against the humans, may become internally divided when that enemy is eliminated. The expulsion of Mr. Jones creates a power vacuum, and it is only so long before the next oppressor assumes totalitarian control.

The natural division between intellectual and physical labor quickly comes to express itself as a new set of class divisions, with the "brainworkers" (as the pigs claim to be) using their superior intelligence to manipulate society to their own benefit. Orwell never clarifies in *Animal Farm* whether this negative state of affairs constitutes an inherent aspect of society or merely an outcome contingent on the integrity of a society's intelligentsia. In either case, the novella points to the force of this tendency toward class stratification in many communities and the threat that it poses to democracy and freedom.

The Danger of a Naïve Working Class

One of the novella's most impressive accomplishments is its portrayal not just of the figures in power but also of the oppressed people themselves. *Animal*

Farm is not told from the perspective of any particular character, though occasionally it does slip into Clover's consciousness. Rather, the story is told from the perspective of the common animals as a whole. Gullible, loyal, and hardworking, these animals give Orwell a chance to sketch how situations of oppression arise not only from the motives and tactics of the oppressors but also from the naïveté of the oppressed, who are not necessarily in a position to be better educated or informed. When presented with a dilemma, Boxer prefers not to puzzle out the implications of various possible actions but instead to repeat to himself, "Napoleon is always right." *Animal Farm* demonstrates how the inability or unwillingness to question authority condemns the working class to suffer the full extent of the ruling class's oppression.

The Abuse of Language as Instrumental to the Abuse of Power

One of Orwell's central concerns, both in *Animal Farm* and in *1984*, is the way in which language can be manipulated as an instrument of control. In *Animal Farm*, the pigs gradually twist and distort a rhetoric of socialist revolution to justify their behavior and to keep the other animals in the dark. The animals heartily embrace Major's visionary ideal of socialism, but after Major dies, the pigs gradually twist the meaning of his words. As a result, the other animals seem unable to oppose the pigs without also opposing the ideals of the Rebellion. By the end of the novella, after Squealer's repeated reconfigurations of the Seven Commandments in order to decriminalize the pigs' treacheries, the main principle of the farm can be openly stated as "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." This outrageous abuse of the word "equal" and of the ideal of equality in general typifies the pigs' method, which becomes increasingly audacious as the novel progresses. Orwell's sophisticated exposure of this abuse of language remains one of the most

compelling and enduring features of *Animal Farm*, worthy of close study even after we have decoded its allegorical characters and events.

Corruption

Animal Farm demonstrates the idea that power always corrupts. The novella's heavy use of foreshadowing, especially in the opening chapter, creates the sense that the events of the story are unavoidable. Not only is Napoleon's rise to power inevitable, the novella strongly suggests that any other possible ruler would have been just as bad as Napoleon. Although Napoleon is more power-hungry than Snowball, plenty of evidence exists to suggest that Snowball would have been just as corrupt a ruler. Before his expulsion, Snowball goes along with the pigs' theft of milk and apples, and the disastrous windmill is his idea. Even Old Major is not incorruptible. Despite his belief that "all animals are equal," (Chapter 1) he lectures the other animals from a raised platform, suggesting he may actually view himself as above the other animals on the farm. In the novel's final image the pigs become indistinguishable from human farmers, which hammers home the idea that power inevitably has the same effect on anyone who wields it.

The Failure of Intellect

Animal Farm is deeply skeptical about the value of intellectual activity. The pigs are identified as the most intelligent animals, but their intelligence rarely produces anything of value. Instead, the pigs use their intelligence to manipulate and abuse the other animals. The novella identifies several other ways in which intelligence fails to be useful or good. Benjamin is literate, but he refuses to read, suggesting that intelligence is worthless without the moral sense to engage in politics and the courage to act. The dogs are nearly as literate as the pigs, but they are "not interested in reading anything except the Seven Commandments" (Chapter 3). The dogs' use of their intelligence

suggests that intellect is useless—even harmful—when it is combined with a personality that prefers to obey orders rather than question them.

The Exploitation of Animals by Humans

As well as being an allegory of the ways human exploit and oppress one another, *Animal Farm* also makes a more literal argument: humans exploit and oppress animals. While the animals' rebellion is mostly comic in tone, it ends on a serious and touching note, when the animals "wipe out the last traces of Jones's hated reign. The harness-room at the end of the stables was broken open; the bits, the nose-rings, the dog-chains, the cruel knives with which Mr. Jones had been used to castrate the pigs and lambs, were all flung down the well" (Chapter 2).

The novella also suggests that there is a real connection, as well as an allegorical one, between the exploitation of animals and the exploitation of human workers. Mr. Pilkington jokes to Napoleon: "If you have your lower animals to contend with […] we have our lower classes!" (Chapter 10). From the point of view of the ruling class, animals and workers are the same.

Symbols

Animal Farm

Animal Farm, known at the beginning and the end of the novel as the Manor Farm, symbolizes Russia and the Soviet Union under Communist Party rule. But more generally, Animal Farm stands for any human society, be it capitalist, socialist, fascist, or communist. It possesses the internal structure of a nation, with a government (the pigs), a police force or army (the dogs), a working class (the other animals), and state holidays and rituals. Its location amid a number of hostile neighboring farms supports its symbolism as a political entity with diplomatic concerns.

By E-learning
Contact : +228 79 83 62 19

The Barn

The barn at Animal Farm, on whose outside walls the pigs paint the Seven Commandments and, later, their revisions, represents the collective memory of a modern nation. The many scenes in which the ruling-class pigs alter the principles of Animalism and in which the working-class animals puzzle over but accept these changes represent the way an institution in power can revise a community's concept of history to bolster its control. If the working class believes history to lie on the side of their oppressors, they are less likely to question oppressive practices. Moreover, the oppressors, by revising their nation's conception of its origins and development, gain control of the nation's very identity, and the oppressed soon come to depend upon the authorities for their communal sense of self.

The Windmill

The great windmill symbolizes the pigs' manipulation of the other animals for their own gain. Despite the immediacy of the need for food and warmth, the pigs exploit Boxer and the other common animals by making them undertake backbreaking labor to build the windmill, which will ultimately earn the pigs more money and thus increase their power. The pigs' declaration that Snowball is responsible for the windmill's first collapse constitutes psychological manipulation, as it prevents the common animals from doubting the pigs' abilities and unites them against a supposed enemy. The ultimate conversion of the windmill to commercial use is one more sign of the pigs' betrayal of their fellow animals. From an allegorical point of view, the windmill represents the enormous modernization projects undertaken in Soviet Russia after the Russian Revolution.

Explained quotes from the novella

"Four legs good, two legs bad."

This phrase, which occurs in Chapter III, constitutes Snowball's condensation of the Seven Commandments of Animalism, which themselves serve as abridgments of Old Major's stirring speech on the need for animal unity in the face of human oppression. The phrase instances one of the novel's many moments of propagandizing, which Orwell portrays as one example of how the elite class abuses language to control the lower classes. Although the slogan seems to help the animals achieve their goal at first, enabling them to clarify in their minds the principles that they support, it soon becomes a meaningless sound bleated by the sheep ("two legs baa-d"), serving no purpose other than to drown out dissenting opinion. By the end of the novel, as the propagandistic needs of the leadership change, the pigs alter the chant to the similar-sounding but completely antithetical "Four legs good, two legs better."

"Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland,

Beasts of every land and clime,

Hearken to my joyful tiding,

Of the golden future time."

These lines from Chapter I constitute the first verse of the song that Old Major hears in his dream and which he teaches to the rest of the animals during the fateful meeting in the barn. Like the communist anthem "Internationale," on which it is based, "Beasts of England" stirs the emotions of the animals and fires their revolutionary idealism. As it spreads rapidly across the region, the song gives the beasts both courage and solace on many occasions. The lofty optimism of the words "golden future time," which appear in the last verse as well, serves to keep the animals focused on the Rebellion's goals so that they will ignore the suffering along the way.

Later, however, once Napoleon has cemented his control over the farm, the song's revolutionary nature becomes a liability. Squealer chastises the animals for singing it, noting that the song was the song of the Rebellion. Now that the Rebellion is over and a new regime has gained power, Squealer fears the power of such idealistic, future-directed lyrics. Wanting to discourage the animals' capacities for hope and vision, he orders Minimus to write a replacement for "Beasts of England" that praises Napoleon and emphasizes loyalty to the state over the purity of Animalist ideology.

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

The ultimate example of the pigs' systematic abuse of logic and language to control their underlings, this final reduction of the Seven Commandments, which appears in Chapter X, clothes utterly senseless content in a seemingly plausible linguistic form. Although the first clause implies that all animals are equal to one another, it does not state this claim overtly. Thus, it is possible to misread the word "equal" as a relative term rather than an absolute one, meaning that there can be different degrees of "equal"-ness, just as there can be different degrees of colorfulness, for example (more colorful, less colorful). Once such a misreading has taken place, it becomes no more absurd to say "more equal" than to say "more colorful." By small, almost imperceptible steps like these, the core ideals of Animal Farm—and any human nation—gradually become corrupted.

The revision of the original phrase also points to the specific form of corruption on Animal Farm. The initial, unmodified phrase makes reference to all animals, its message extending to the entire world of animals without distinction. Similarly, Old Major expresses ideals that posit the dignity of all, the comradeship of all, the inclusion of all in voting and decision-making, so that no

one group or individual will oppress another. The revised phrase, however, mentions an “all,” but only in order to differentiate a “some” from that “all,” to specify the uniqueness, the elite nature, and the chosen status of that “some.” The pigs clearly envision themselves as this privileged “some”; under their totalitarian regime, the working animals exist only to serve the larger glory of the leadership, to provide the rulers with food and comfort, and to support their luxurious and exclusive lifestyle.

George Orwell and Animal Farm Background

George Orwell was the pen name of Eric Blair, a British political novelist and essayist whose pointed criticisms of political oppression propelled him into prominence toward the middle of the twentieth century. Born in 1903 to British colonists in Bengal, India, Orwell received his education at a series of private schools, including Eton, an elite school in England. His painful experiences with snobbishness and social elitism at Eton, as well as his intimate familiarity with the reality of British imperialism in India, made him deeply suspicious of the entrenched class system in English society. As a young man, Orwell became a socialist, speaking openly against the excesses of governments east and west and fighting briefly for the socialist cause during the Spanish Civil War, which lasted from 1936 to 1939.

Unlike many British socialists in the 1930s and 1940s, Orwell was not enamored of the Soviet Union and its policies, nor did he consider the Soviet Union a positive representation of the possibilities of socialist society. He could not turn a blind eye to the cruelties and hypocrisies of Soviet Communist Party, which had overturned the semifeudal system of the tsars only to replace it with the dictatorial reign of Joseph Stalin. Orwell became a sharp critic of both capitalism and communism, and is remembered chiefly as an advocate of

freedom and a committed opponent of communist oppression. His two greatest anti-totalitarian novels—*Animal Farm* and *1984*—form the basis of his reputation. Orwell died in 1950, only a year after completing *1984,* which many consider his masterpiece.

A dystopian novel, *1984* attacks the idea of totalitarian communism (a political system in which one ruling party plans and controls the collective social action of a state) by painting a terrifying picture of a world in which personal freedom is nonexistent. *Animal Farm,* written in 1945, deals with similar themes but in a shorter and somewhat simpler format. A “fairy story” in the style of Aesop’s fables, it uses animals on an English farm to tell the history of Soviet communism. Certain animals are based directly on Communist Party leaders: the pigs Napoleon and Snowball, for example, are figurations of Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky, respectively. Orwell uses the form of the fable for a number of aesthetic and political reasons. To better understand these, it is helpful to know at least the rudiments of Soviet history under Communist Party rule, beginning with the October Revolution of 1917.

In February 1917, Tsar Nicholas II, the monarch of Russia, abdicated and the socialist Alexander Kerensky became premier. At the end of October (November 7 on current calendars), Kerensky was ousted, and Vladimir Lenin, the architect of the Russian Revolution, became chief commissar. Almost immediately, as wars raged on virtually every Russian front, Lenin’s chief allies began jockeying for power in the newly formed state; the most influential included Joseph Stalin, Leon Trotsky, Gregory Zinoviev, and Lev Kamenev. Trotsky and Stalin emerged as the most likely heirs to Lenin’s vast power. Trotsky was a popular and charismatic leader, famous for his impassioned speeches, while the taciturn Stalin preferred to consolidate his power behind the scenes.

By E-learning
Contact : +228 79 83 62 19

After Lenin’s death in 1924, Stalin orchestrated an alliance against Trotsky that included himself, Zinoviev, and Kaminev. In the following years, Stalin succeeded in becoming the unquestioned dictator of the Soviet Union and had Trotsky expelled first from Moscow, then from the Communist Party, and finally from Russia altogether in 1936. Trotsky fled to Mexico, where he was assassinated on Stalin’s orders in 1940.

In 1934, Stalin’s ally Serge Kirov was assassinated in Leningrad, prompting Stalin to commence his infamous purges of the Communist Party. Holding “show trials”—trials whose outcomes he and his allies had already decided—Stalin had his opponents officially denounced as participants in Trotskyist or anti-Stalinist conspiracies and therefore as “enemies of the people,” an appellation that guaranteed their immediate execution.

As the Soviet government’s economic planning faltered and failed, Russia suffered under a surge of violence, fear, and starvation. Stalin used his former opponent as a tool to placate the wretched populace. Trotsky became a common national enemy and thus a source of negative unity. He was a frightening specter used to conjure horrifying eventualities, in comparison with which the current misery paled. Additionally, by associating his enemies with Trotsky’s name, Stalin could ensure their immediate and automatic elimination from the Communist Party.

These and many other developments in Soviet history before 1945 have direct parallels in *Animal Farm:* Napoleon ousts Snowball from the farm and, after the windmill collapses, uses Snowball in his purges just as Stalin used Trotsky. Similarly, Napoleon becomes a dictator, while Snowball is never heard from again. Orwell was inspired to write *Animal Farm* in part by his experiences in a Trotskyist group during the Spanish Civil War, and Snowball certainly receives a more sympathetic portrayal than Napoleon.

But though *Animal Farm* was written as an attack on a specific government, its general themes of oppression, suffering, and injustice have far broader application; modern readers have come to see Orwell's book as a powerful attack on any political, rhetorical, or military power that seeks to control human beings unjustly.

Russian society in the early twentieth century was bipolar: a tiny minority controlled most of the country's wealth, while the vast majority of the country's inhabitants were impoverished and oppressed peasants. Communism arose in Russia when the nation's workers and peasants, assisted by a class of concerned intellectuals known as the intelligentsia, rebelled against and overwhelmed the wealthy and powerful class of capitalists and aristocrats. They hoped to establish a socialist utopia based on the principles of the German economic and political philosopher Karl Marx.

In *Das Kapital (Capital),* Marx advanced an economically deterministic interpretation of human history, arguing that society would naturally evolve—from a monarchy and aristocracy, to capitalism, and then on to communism, a system under which all property would be held in common. The dignity of the poor workers oppressed by capitalism would be restored, and all people would live as equals. Marx followed this sober and scholarly work with *The Communist Manifesto,* an impassioned call to action that urged, "Workers of the world, unite!"

In the Russia of 1917, it appeared that Marx's dreams were to become reality. After a politically complicated civil war, Tsar Nicholas II, the monarch of Russia, was forced to abdicate the throne that his family had held for three centuries. Vladimir Ilych Lenin, a Russian intellectual revolutionary, seized power in the name of the Communist Party. The new regime took land and industry from private control and put them under government supervision.

This centralization of economic systems constituted the first steps in restoring Russia to the prosperity it had known before World War I and in modernizing the nation’s primitive infrastructure, including bringing electricity to the countryside. After Lenin died in 1924, Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky jockeyed for control of the newly formed Soviet Union. Stalin, a crafty and manipulative politician, soon banished Trotsky, an idealistic proponent of international communism. Stalin then began to consolidate his power with brutal intensity, killing or imprisoning his perceived political enemies and overseeing the purge of approximately twenty million Soviet citizens.