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ANIMAL FARM BY GEORGES ORWELL

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INTRODUCTION

Animal Farm was first published in 1945 as a political allegory of the Russian Revolution, particularly directed at Stalin's Russia. As a result of the pro-Russian atmosphere, Orwell had a hard time finding a publisher for Animal Farm. Although Orwell aims his satire at totalitarianism in all of its guises, those being communist, fascist and capitalist, "Animal Farm" owes its structure largely to the events of the Russian Revolution as they unfolded between 1917 and 1944, when Orwell was writing the novel. Much of what happens symbolically parallels specific developments into the history of Russian communism, and several of the animal characters are based on real participants in the Russian Revolution. Due to the universal relevance of the novel's themes, the reader does not need to possess an encyclopedic knowledge of Marxist Leninism or Russian history in order to appreciate Orwell's satire of them. An acquaintance with certain facts from Russia's past, however, serves as useful in a deeper, more profound understanding of his criticism. Animal Farm most definitely resembles the Russian Revolution and the rise of Stalin; it is more meaningfully an anatomy of all political revolutions, where the revolutionary ideals of justice, equality, and fraternity shatter in the event. Orwell paints a grim picture of the political 20th century, a time he believed marked the end of the very concept of human freedom.

1-Structure of the novel

Animal Farm follows a conventional narrative structure. Its events are told in a chronological order by the narrator. Once Boxer has been taken to his death in Chapter 9, the pace of the story rapidly increases. The placing of the speech at the start of the novel means that the reader shares the animals' enthusiasm for the vision of the future and becomes more disappointed as the novel progresses and we see those ideals being destroyed, we are told for example that the animals work like 'slaves'. The recurrent appearance of the menacing dogs also ensures that the reader never forgets the terror and violence that underpins Napoleon's rule. In a similar way, the repeated breaking of the Commandments and the animals' continual checking of the wall makes clear to the reader, the gradual distortion of Major's ideals until we reach the shocking climax which is signified by the whips. Their presence shows that all pretext of following the Commandments is abandoned by the pigs, in favor of open terror and oppression.

The structure of Animal Farm helps to clarify the theme of the betrayed revolution by showing the reader in several stages, through the repetition of certain key images and phrases.

2-Summary of the different chapters

Chapter I: Twelve-year-old Major, Manor Farm's prize-winning boar, calls a meeting of all of the animals to talk about the difficulty of their lives under man's rule. He reveals his dream and prophesies a future rebellion of animals against man, teaching the animals a song called "Beasts of England."

Chapter II: Major dies, but the other animals, led by two young boars named Snowball and Napoleon, keep the idea of a future rebellion against man alive. On Midsummer's Eve, Mr. Jones becomes too drunk to feed or care for the animals, and the hired hands forget about them, as well. The animals break into the grain bins. When Mr. Jones and the hired hands appear, the animals attack and drive them off the farm. The animals are now in control of Manor Farm. They change its name to *Animal Farm* and establish their own rules for behavior, which are painted on the wall of the barn.

Chapter III: The farm animals, supervised by the pigs, harvest the crops with better results than ever before. Sundays are established as days of rest, for meetings, and for singing "Beasts of England." Having already taught themselves to read and write, the pigs attempt to teach these skills to other animals. Committees such as the Clean Tails League for the cows are set up, but none is successful. Since most of the animals cannot learn to read or to memorize the seven commandments, the commandments are reduced to one simple maxim: "Four legs good, two legs bad." Napoleon takes nine puppies for private instruction, and the pigs are now the only ones allowed to eat the apples and drink the milk produced on the farm. The pigs force the other animals to accept this by reminding them of the threat of Mr. Jones's return.

Chapter IV: The song "Beasts of England" is now being hummed and sung over half of the county, although no other farms have joined the Rebellion. Armed with a shotgun, Mr. Jones and several men from town attempt to recapture the farm, but Snowball leads the animals in successfully defending it. Medals for bravery are awarded to Snowball, Boxer, and the one sheep killed in the battle. Mr. Jones's gun is set up at the foot of the flagpole, and it will be fired on the anniversaries of the Rebellion and the newly renamed Battle of the Cowshed.

Chapter V: Mollie, the horse, is seen consorting with humans who have petted her and given her sugar and ribbons. When Clover the draft horse confronts her, Mollie abandons *Animal Farm* and the Rebellion. Meanwhile, Snowball wants

the animals to build a windmill that will provide electricity, heat, and running water in each stall, but Napoleon disagrees with the idea and urinates on Snowball's diagrams. When Snowball tries to present his idea to the animals at their weekly meeting, Napoleon reveals the nine dogs he has trained as guard/attack dogs, and the dogs drive Snowball from the farm. When some animals protest, the sheep drown them out by bleating, "Four legs good, two legs bad," and the dogs' growl menacingly. Napoleon soon tells the animals they are going to build the windmill and that it has always been his idea. With the aid of three growling dogs, Squealer convinces the animals to believe this.

Chapter VI- Although they are working a 60-hour week, including Sunday afternoons, the animals are happy during the next year. They believe they are working for themselves, despite being threatened with half rations if they do not work on Sunday. Because of construction on the windmill, some crops are not planted on time, and the harvest is not nearly as good as last year's. The animals devise a way to break up the stone they need for the windmill. Boxer gets up earlier to work harder. The need for seeds and other supplies causes the pigs to begin trading with other farms, first selling a load of hay, but warning the hens that their eggs may have to be sold as well. Mr. Whymper, a solicitor living in Willingdon, serves as intermediary. Squealer assures the animals that no resolution had ever been made forbidding trade with humans.

The pigs move into the farmhouse and begin sleeping in the beds. The fourth commandment now says, "No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets." With the dogs' aid and the threat of Jones's return, Squealer convinces the animals that the rule had always referred to sheets. When the half-built windmill blows down during a storm, Napoleon accuses Snowball of destroying it and orders the animals to begin rebuilding it.

Chapter VII: Always cold and usually hungry, the animals labor to rebuild the windmill over the long, hard winter. Napoleon rarely leaves the farmhouse. Squealer makes all his announcements and informs the hens they must produce eggs to sell so that grain can be bought for the animals to eat. The rebellious hens, led by three pullets, go on strike, laying their eggs from the rafters so that they smash on the floor. Napoleon starves them into submission, and nine hens die before the rebellion is over. Anything that goes wrong on the farm is blamed on Snowball. Squealer again counts on the growling dogs and Boxer's belief that whatever Napoleon says is right to persuade the animals that Snowball had always been in league with Jones and was a traitor at the Battle of the Cowshed. He warns them that there may be other animal traitors in their ranks. A few days later Napoleon calls a meeting in which the dogs attack the four pigs who had

earlier protested Snowball's guilt. Under pressure they confess to spying for Snowball, and the dogs quickly tear out their throats. The hen ringleaders of the strike confess, as do several other animals, and all are promptly killed.

When the shocked animals gather together for comfort and sing "Beasts of England," Squealer silences them and states that the song has been abolished; it is unnecessary now that the Rebellion has been achieved. When some attempt to protest, the sheep's bleats drown them out until discussion time has passed.

Chapter VIII: When some of the animals think to check the commandments, they find that the sixth now reads, "No animal shall kill any other animal without cause." They accept the deaths as perfectly reasonable in light of the rule. Though the animals are working harder than ever, they wonder if they are any better off than they were under Mr. Jones, yet Squealer quotes figures that seemingly support his statements that production has increased. Now when Napoleon appears, he is attended by the dogs and a black cockerel who marches in front and crows before Napoleon speaks. Napoleon has his own apartment, eats from the best china, has two dogs to wait on him, and orders that the gun be fired on his birthday.

The windmill is finally finished. Napoleon sells a stack of lumber to Frederick and insists on being paid in five-pound notes. After the lumber is carted away, the pigs discover that the money is counterfeit. Frederick and his men then attack *Animal Farm*. Armed with rifles, the men force the animals to flee. Only Benjamin realizes they are going to blow up the windmill. When it is destroyed, the animals throw caution to the wind and attack Frederick's men, who kill several of the animals and wound the others. After the animals chase the men off the farm, Napoleon orders that Jones's rifle be fired in a victory celebration. The injured Boxer questions the victory, but Squealer assures him that they have won back their farm and will rebuild the windmill. In celebration the animals are given extra food.

The pigs discover a case of whiskey and get very drunk. The next day, a hungover Squealer announces that Napoleon is dying. When Napoleon recovers, he sends for books on brewing and distilling, and orders that the field originally designated as the grazing plot for retired animals be plowed up and planted with barley. The fifth commandment now reads, "No animals shall drink alcohol to excess."

Chapter IX: Although Boxer was injured in the battle, he still works as hard as ever on rebuilding the windmill. The animals are colder and hungrier than last winter, but Squealer again recites statistics to assure them that even with a "readjustment" of rations, they are still much better off than when Jones ran the farm. Since most of the animals cannot remember what life under Jones was like,

they believe him. Thirty-one baby pigs now wear green ribbons on their tails on Sundays and are taught by Napoleon, who has plans to build a schoolhouse. The pigs, fatter than ever, have learned to brew beer and receive a daily ration of it. Once a week the animals participate in a Spontaneous Demonstration to celebrate the struggles and triumphs of *Animal Farm*, which helps them forget their hunger and misery.

The farm is declared a Republic and Napoleon (the only candidate) is elected President. Moses, the raven, returns with his tales of Sugarcandy Mountain and is allowed to stay. Hardworking Boxer finally collapses. He believes he and Benjamin now will be allowed to retire; however, the wagon that comes to take him to the hospital actually belongs to the horse slaughterer. When Benjamin convinces the others of Boxer's danger, it is too late: Boxer is too feeble to break out of the wagon on his own.

Several days later, Squealer announces that Boxer has died in the hospital and has been buried in town. He reassures the animals that he was there right at the end and that Boxer died saying, "Napoleon is always right." He explains away the wagon and assures the animals that a memorial banquet will be held for Boxer. On the day of the celebration, a case of whiskey is delivered to the pigs, who have somehow found money to pay for it.

Chapter X: Over the years most of the animals who took part in the Rebellion have died, leaving only Clover, Benjamin, Moses, and several of the pigs. None of the animals has ever been allowed to retire. Many animals have been born who have little knowledge of the Rebellion, and those bought by the Farm have never heard of it at all. The farm flourishes. The windmill is used to grind corn, and another is being built. The animals have been told they don't need the hot and cold water and electric lights they thought they would have once the windmill was built. Napoleon tells them "the truest happiness... lay in working hard and living frugally." There are many more pigs and dogs, and even though they do not produce food, their appetites are hearty. The overworked animals often suffer from hunger and cold; however, they never lose sight of the truth that they are members of *Animal Farm*, the only farm owned and run by animals. They still hope and believe in Major's Republic of the Animals, when all of England will be free of mankind. Squealer takes the sheep away and teaches them a new slogan. To the horror of the other animals, the pigs begin to walk on two legs, and the sheep drown out their protests with their newly learned slogan, "Four legs good, two legs better." There is only one commandment now: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." The pigs dress in the Jones's clothing, and nearby farmers come for a tour of the farm. The farmers comment favorably on the fact that the animals work longer hours and are fed less than

their own animals. Napoleon announces that he is abolishing several practices at the farm such as the use of the "Comrade," Sunday marches, and the horn and hoof symbols on the flag. The farm will resume its original name: The Manor Farm. As the animals peek in the farmhouse windows, to their amazement they can no longer tell who are the pigs and who are the humans.

3-Themes

3-1-POWER CORRUPTS.

The novel can also be taken as a more general attack on the search of power and the way in which corrupt figures gain and manipulate power for their own purposes. Animal farm is a satire on political power. Lord Acton observed that: 'power corrupts but absolute power corrupts absolutely.' As the pigs gain power, it accordingly becomes harder and harder for them to resist the temptations of enjoying an easier life for themselves, especially as the other animals are presented as being too naive to prevent themselves from being manipulated. Napoleon is driven by power and slowly descends into tyranny. He is driven by power and throughout the novel all he does is plan how to take it.

-We see this first when in Chapter 2, he takes control of the food. His removal of the puppies to 'educate' them results in the creation of his own secret police. Napoleon uses the dogs to terrify the animals into obedience. Neither Squealer nor Napoleon is seen without their dogs that growl menacingly whenever the animals ask difficult questions.

-The abolition of debates and elections removes a valuable way for the animals to express their opinions. Napoleon sees voting as irrelevant and he easily suppresses it. This directly violates the principle commandment that 'all animals are equal;'

-The bloodbath in the barn and the subsequent executions remind us of the most effective way of maintaining power and that is terror. This use of murder and intimidation to keep control of absolute power goes completely against the ideas of revolution, 'No animal shall kill another animal.'

-The careful management of all sources of information also achieves power. Napoleon uses Squealer's ability to 'turn black into white' to brainwash the animals into accepting his decisions and actions. We see this when Squealer defends Napoleon's decision to build the windmill in Chapter 5 and the way, which throughout the novel we see him, praise Napoleon's wisdom, kindness and judgment.

-In addition, history is rewritten to produce a more satisfactory account of the past for the dictator. Squealer completely misrepresents Snowball's actions during the "Battle of the Cowshed" and glorifies Napoleon's supposed bravery when we know that he was a coward. The animals are therefore reliant upon their

own memories, which, as a result of Squealer's persuasion become less and less reliable.

Napoleon's farm clearly resembles a totalitarian state; his power over them is absolute. In this way, Orwell is identifying the way in which Stalin came to power in the Soviet Union but also showing the ways in which any dictator gains and maintains power. Orwell seems to suggest that revolutions fail because their leaders, once in power, use the power for their own ends. As they control all the sources of information, which they do through propaganda, they fool the public into trusting them. Any opponents are ruthlessly eliminated in a public way in order to terrorize the others to obey them and in this way; they become corrupt, viscous tyrants.

3-2-Inequality

‘‘All animals are equal but some are more equal than others.’’

In Major's speech we are presented with a utopia, which is a perfect society, but we see that putting such a society into practice is harder. The opposite of a utopian society is a dystopian one and *Animal Farm* clearly proves itself to be the latter. The idea of equality is in itself difficult. Right from the start when watching Major's speech the animals were seated in a hierarchy with the pigs sitting at the front. The fact that they are the most intelligent of the animals helps the gain power. The pigs are the only ones who can read and write fluently and once they have gained power, the temptations to exploit the less intelligent animals are obvious. We also witness the dogs having to be prevented from attacking the rats. Napoleon and the rest of the pigs take advantage of the faith the other animals have in them. Animals like Boxer perform all the difficult tasks whilst the pigs carry out the less demanding task of organizing and managing the work. At the start of the novel we are presented with a society in which equality would be difficult to attain, but equality becomes even less likely once Napoleon seizes power. The abolition of debates and elections removes a valuable way for the animals to express their opinions.

3-3-Language and Power

Orwell was concerned about the relationship between language and power. He believed that totalitarianism was achieved by telling people exactly what to think and this was achieved through effective use of language and propaganda. Snowball simplifies Major's ideas into slogans, in an effort to make the less intelligent animals understand the principles of Animalism. For example Major's statement that ‘‘Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy’’ is reduced to ‘‘Four legs good, two legs bad.’’ This simplification can lead to a loss of meaning and become dangerous when sheep bleat it to drown any opposition to Napoleon in the meeting.

3-3-1-Propaganda is the deliberate and organized spread of information to make sure that people unquestioningly believe what you want them to believe.

This is basically a method of convincing others of the truth of your arguments.

-**Squealer** is the hypocritical and articulate propagandist. We are told that he can ‘turn black to white’ and that he has a ‘shrill voice’ and ‘twinkling eyes’, which are his assets that he manipulates for his propaganda. He and the general persuasiveness of his character are crucial to Napoleon’s success. He is responsible for the devious alterations of the commandments. He invents statistics to convince the animals that the pigs should have the apples.

3-3-2-Rhetorical Questions: A question that does not require an answer but is used to try and emphasize a particular point. One does not have to think for oneself, and so in other words you submit to someone else’s authority: ‘Surely Comrades you don’t want Jones back?’

3-3-3- Pinpointing The Enemy: Trying to identify an enemy, in this case trying to make the animals believe that Snowball is the enemy so that they can turn to Napoleon and consider him the most suitable. An example being that they blame Snowball for everything including the destruction of the windmill and even the loss of the keys to the shed.

3-3-4- Lying: An example being when Snowball says that the only reason the pigs eat the apples and drink the milk is for the animal’s benefit as they contain substances vital for brainwork: ‘Many of us actually dislike milk and apples.’

3-3-4- Selection: This is selecting out of a mass of facts, the ones suitable for his purposes.

3-3-5-Assertion: The making of bold statements to defend a case.

3-3-6-Repetition: By repeating a statement often enough it will eventually become accepted by the audience. Such as the continuous repetition of the rhetorical question: ‘Surely Comrades you don’t want to see Jones back’. These are the typical propagandist methods used. Snowball had some additional ones:

-The use of difficult intellectual words that the animals cannot understand so that they can do nothing but agree.

-He gives the animals meaningless statistics to convince them that life is better than it used to be.

-While he is delivering the speeches to the animals he has the dogs menacing in the background which bark and show their teeth if any animal disagrees. The sheep are also present which burst in and bleat "Four legs good, two legs bad" if anyone attempts to disagree.

4) Education and Learning

The pigs are clearly the most intelligent animals on the farm and soon take control of the running of the farm. They are able to do so as they have taught

themselves to read and write and therefore they have the knowledge in order to attain the power.

AFTER READING THE NOVEL Orwell's *Animal Farm*

The richest exploration of the novel comes after it has been read. While some of the following activities may be required of all students, individual involvement with the novel will be enhanced if students are allowed to choose from among the suggested activities or ones that they propose themselves. Also, students should be encouraged to pursue activities that invite more personal involvement, such as the dramatic and arts/crafts options.

Discussion and/or Written Questions

- (1) Compare/contrast students' written expectation of what would happen after Chapter II with what actually happened. These comparison/contrasts can be made either orally or in a written assignment.
- (2) After doing research on the Russian Revolution, point out similarities between real events and people and those in the novel. As a variation, do the same with any subsequent rebellion around the world since 1917.
- (3) Explain how *Animal Farm* can be seen as a fable even though it does not have a moral stated at the end. Provide a moral of your own and explain it in terms of the novel.
- (4) Remember Orwell's subtitle is "A Fairy Story." Explain how the novel fits this subtitle, citing supporting details.
- (5) Give examples of peer pressure as used in the novel, paying close attention to Boxer and the sheep.
- (6) Speculate on why Orwell made the reader sympathize with all of the animals except the pigs, who are the most intelligent beasts and the closest to humans of any of the animals.
- (7) Look at the list of good leadership qualities made at the beginning of the novel. How do the pigs fit this list? Were there any attributes that the pigs lacked? Did they have some that were not on the list? Write a paper explaining how the pigs do and/or do not qualify as good leaders. Use specific examples.
- (8) Discuss the importance of education as it evolves during the course of the novel. At the same time, address the distinctions that may be made between education and indoctrination.
- (9) Clover saw many changes on the farm after the first mention of the Rebellion at the meeting with Major. How does her character change? What/who is she meant to represent? What is she thinking as she sees her husband carted off to his death? Put yourself in her mind and write an explanation of major events from her point of view.

- (10) Write a continuation of the novel beginning at the point where the novel ends. Could a new revolutionary leader appear? Might Benjamin decide to take a more active role? When and how might the society fail?
- (11) Explore Mr. Whymper's possible motives for helping the pigs. Consider how he benefits, what problems he faces with both the pigs and the humans, and whether he will continue to benefit from working with the pigs.
- (12) Trace the defamation of Snowball's character from the planning of the windmill to the end of the book. Give specific examples.
- (13) Explain why an "enemy" or scapegoat is necessary for the animals. Why does the "enemy" have to change? If there were no "enemy," what would that mean for any society, including that of *Animal Farm*?
- (14) Why did Woodhouse in his introduction to *Animal Farm* compare the writing of this novel to the development of the atomic bomb?
- (15) Watch the movie version of *Animal Farm*. How effective are the cartoon characters? How does the movie version differ from the book? What would account for the differences?
- (16) Read *Lord of the Flies* and compare/contrast the characters, situations, governments that evolve, and the endings of both novels.
- (17) Look at the names of the characters. Why did Orwell use the names he did? How do the names fit the characters?
- (18) Write a dialogue between Snowball and Napoleon as it might have happened over the need for a windmill. Try to be consistent with the characters as they are presented in the book. Then perform this exchange for the class.