

Challenge 9 Reading Club: Animal Farm



Name: _____

Context & Author Profile

George Orwell (Eric Arthur Blair)

The Context: *Animal Farm* was published in 1945. It is an allegory for the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent rise of Joseph Stalin. Orwell was a democratic socialist who was deeply critical of totalitarianism (a system where the state has total control over every aspect of life).

Key Terms to Master:

1. **Allegory:** A story that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.
2. **Propaganda:** Biased or misleading information used to promote a political cause or point of view.
3. **Tyranny:** Cruel and oppressive government or rule.
4. **Anthropomorphism:** The attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to animals.

Part 2: Cast of Characters

Character	Real-world Allegory	Key Traits & Motivations
Old Major	Karl Marx / Vladimir Lenin	The visionary; provides the catalyst for the rebellion with his dream of "Beasts of England."
Napoleon	Joseph Stalin	The "fierce-looking" Berkshire boar; uses terror (the dogs) and manipulation to seize power.
Snowball	Leon Trotsky	The intellectual; idealistic and inventive. He is eventually scapegoated and exiled.
Squealer	The Soviet Press (Pravda)	The manipulator; uses language to "turn black into white" and justify Napoleon's crimes.

Boxer	The Working Class (Proletariat)	The "faithful disciple"; incredibly strong but lacks the critical thinking to see through lies.
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Lesson 1: Social Injustice

Focus: The unfairness of the "Natural Order" and the lack of a voice for the working class.

1. Old Major claims that "no animal in England is free." Why was the society of Manor Farm so resistant to the idea of animals owning their own labour?
2. Is it a social injustice that the pigs "buy" their superior status simply because they can read and write?
3. How does the book show that the Seven Commandments protect the clever (pigs) more than the strong (horses)?
4. In the story, the "lower" animals are treated as tools rather than living beings. Who is responsible for this attitude—the humans or the pigs?
5. The Big Idea: If a farm has the resources to build a windmill but its workers are starving, is that society "broken"?

Evaluation Task:

A student, having read *Animal Farm*, said: "The story shows that the world is designed to protect those with 'intellect' and punish those with 'strength.' It seems that a worker's life is worth nothing unless they can control the narrative." To what extent do you agree? Consider the treatment of Boxer versus the pigs and Orwell's use of the Seven Commandments.

Independent Learning Essay:

- The Question: "Does a society's justice depend on the education of its citizens?"
- Additional Reading: [The British Library: Orwell and Politics](#)

Lesson 2: The Corruption of Idealism

Focus: How "perfect" systems fail when individuals seek personal gain.

1. Old Major's dream was based on equality. At what point does the dream become a nightmare?
2. Was the first act of corruption (stealing the milk) a small mistake or the death of the revolution?
3. Why are the animals so willing to accept "explanations" for inequality early on?
4. Is it possible for a leader to remain "equal" to those they lead, or does power naturally corrupt?
5. The Big Idea: If the goal of the rebellion was freedom, why did it result in stricter rules?

Evaluation Task:

A student said: "The pigs didn't start out evil; they simply realised that nobody would stop them. The failure of Animal Farm isn't Napoleon's fault, but the fault of the animals who let him take the milk." To what extent do you agree? Evaluate the responsibility of the "passive" animals in the rise of the pigs.

Independent Learning Essay:

- The Question: "Is a 'perfect' society actually possible, or is human (or animal) nature inherently selfish?"
- Additional Reading: [Orwell's Preface to Animal Farm](#)

Lesson 3: Language as a Weapon

Focus: The role of Propaganda and the "re-writing" of history.

1. Squealer claims that "Snowball was in league with Jones from the start." How does control over the past allow Napoleon to control the future?
2. Why is Squealer able to "turn black into white"? What specific rhetorical tricks does he use?
3. If the animals cannot remember the truth, does the truth even exist?
4. Why do the pigs change the Commandments in secret rather than openly announcing new laws?
5. The Big Idea: Can you have a just society if the language used by the government is designed to confuse the people?

Evaluation Task:

A student said: "In *Animal Farm*, the most dangerous character isn't Napoleon with his dogs, but Squealer with his words. Without the lies, the violence would never have been accepted." To what extent do you agree? Compare the power of physical terror (the dogs) with the power of linguistic manipulation (Squealer).

Independent Learning Essay:

- The Question: "In the age of 'Fake News,' are Orwell's warnings about propaganda more relevant today than in 1945?"
- Additional Reading: [The New Yorker: Why Orwell Matters](#)

Lesson 4: The Exploitation of the Vulnerable

Focus: Boxer and the betrayal of the working class.

1. Boxer's maxims are "I will work harder" and "Napoleon is always right." Why is this blind loyalty the pigs' greatest weapon?
2. Why is Boxer's death the most emotional turning point in the book?
3. How does the pigs' treatment of Boxer's body (selling him to the knacker) mirror the humans' treatment of animals?
4. Is Boxer's lack of intelligence an excuse for his exploitation, or a tragedy?
5. The Big Idea: Is it a moral failure of a society if its most hard-working members are the least rewarded?

Evaluation Task:

A student said: "Boxer represents the heart of the farm, and his death represents the death of hope. His fate proves that the pigs never cared about 'Animalism,' only about profit." To what extent do you agree? Discuss how Boxer's fate critiques the exploitation of the proletariat.

Independent Learning Essay:

- The Question: "Should a society be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members?"
- Additional Reading: [UN Human Rights: The Right to Work and Fair Conditions](#)

Lesson 5: Terror and Totalitarianism

Focus: The shift from "persuasion" to "force" through the dogs.

1. Why does Napoleon need the dogs to maintain "equality"?
2. Does the "Trial of the Traitors" mirror the lack of a safety net for those who question authority?
3. How does the presence of the dogs change the atmosphere of the Sunday meetings?
4. Why do the animals continue to work even after they see their friends executed?
5. The Big Idea: If a government rules through fear, can it ever truly be "legitimate"?

Evaluation Task:

A student said: "The dogs represent the end of the dream. Once Napoleon used violence to exile Snowball, the farm stopped being a community and became a prison." To what extent do you agree? Analyze the structural shift in the novella once the dogs are introduced.

Independent Learning Essay:

- The Question: "Is violence a necessary tool for maintaining order, or is it always the mark of a failed government?"
- Additional Reading: [Amnesty International: Modern Day Totalitarianism](#)

Lesson 6: The Cyclical Nature of Tyranny

Focus: The transformation of pigs into humans.

1. Why does the rebellion end exactly where it started (with the pigs acting like Jones)?
2. Why is it significant that the pigs end up looking exactly like the humans they originally rebelled against?
3. Does the ending suggest that all revolutions are destined to fail?
4. What does Benjamin's cynical perspective tell us about the cycle of history?
5. The Big Idea: Can a society ever truly change, or will there always be a hierarchy with someone at the top?

Evaluation Task:

A student said: "The ending of *Animal Farm* is the most depressing in literature because it suggests that humans—and pigs—will always seek

to oppress each other. There is no escape from the cycle." To what extent do you agree? Evaluate Orwell's pessimistic conclusion.

Independent Learning Essay:

- The Question: "Is 'Social Injustice' an inevitable part of the human condition, or can we break the cycle?"
- Additional Reading: [The Guardian: Why Animal Farm is Still Relevant](#)

Vocabulary & Contextual Reading

- Benevolent (Old Major's appearance)
- Cynical (Benjamin the donkey's attitude)
- Apathy (The initial attitude of the animals)
- Pre-eminent (The position of the pigs)
- Maxim (The simplified version of the laws)

Find these words in the text and use them in your own analytical paragraph:

- Benevolent (Old Major's appearance)
- Cynical (Benjamin the donkey's attitude)
- Apathy (The initial attitude of the animals)
- Pre-eminent (The position of the pigs)
- Maxim (The simplified version of the laws)