

George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

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Please Silence Cell Phones

Learning Objectives

- Analyze the critique of human nature in Orwell's *Animal Farm*
- Identify correspondences between the political structure of *Animal Farm* and the former Soviet Union
- Observe parallels to the Cold War in the relationship of *Animal Farm* to the outside, human society
- Analyze the relevance and importance of *Animal Farm* as a social commentary on America

Eric Blair (1903-1950)

- Born in India; scholarship student
- Worked as MP in Burma
- Quit government service to become a writer
- Lived among poor and wrote about it
- Miners; gave up on Capitalism; supported Democratic Socialism
- Covered the Spanish civil war; Watched rise of Fascism and Totalitarian States
- Animal Farm 1945
- *1984*, 1949

USSR (1922-1991)

- Cold War: 1945-1991
- Communist—based on theories of Karl Marx
- Totalitarian: Communist party controlled all aspects of life: religion, economy, society, press, military
- Factionalism: Trotsky vs. Stalin
- Five Year Plans: Collective Farms and Industrial Modernization

Fairy Tale

- What are the features of the Fairy Tale?
- Simple characters—contrasting qualities
- Simple Plot
- Setting: court, countryside, fantasy world
- Magic
- Moral Lesson
- Does Good always Triumph?
- The best Fairy Tales do not have a simple moral: they show the world as it is

Allegory and Main Characters

- Old Major: Karl Marx
- Two Leaders: Snowball (Trotsky) and Napoleon (Stalin)
- Horse, Boxer: Workers
- Squealer: State Propaganda/Media
- Sheep: party loyalists
- Dogs: State Police
- Moses: Tame Raven—Religion
- Donkey, Benjamin (Skeptic)

Hobbesian State of nature

- Old Major: "Comrades...Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty."

Man as Capitalist Exploiter

- “Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough... Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself. Our labor tills the soil, our dung fertilizes it, and yet there is not one of us that owns more than his bare skin.”

Ideal of Social Unity

- Clover the horse protecting ducklings
- Old Major's Dream
- Song: "Beasts of England"
- Liberation and Bounty

Religion

- Tame Raven, Moses
- Mysterious country called Sugarcandy Mountain, where animals go when they die
- After the revolution he is expelled, but he will come back near the end, a sign that the revolution has gone full circle

Seven Commandments

- Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy
- Whatever goes upon four legs or has wings, is a friend
- No animal shall wear clothes
- No animal shall sleep in a bed
- No animal shall drink alcohol
- No animal shall kill any other animal
- All animals are Equal

Change in 7 Commandments

- As the pigs become powerful, they become more and more human
- Commandments are secretly changed
- No animal shall sleep in a bed, *with blankets*
- No animal shall drink alcohol *to excess*
- No animal shall kill any other animal *without cause*
- Finally: All animals are equal, *but some are more equal*

Factional Division

- Snowball and Napoleon argue
- Plan to build a Windmill (industrial modernization)
- Dogs appear and attack Snowball, driving him away
- Later the Windmill is presented as Snowball's own idea
- Snowball is used as a scapegoat for everything that goes wrong

Total Social control

- After Snowball, General Meetings end—a committee of pigs would make decisions
- “Four young porkers uttered shrill squeals of disapproval...but suddenly the dogs sitting round Napoleon let out deep, menacing growls, and the pigs fell silent and sat down again. Then the sheep broke out into a tremendous bleating of “Four legs are good, two legs are bad!”...which put an end to any discussion.”

Fear and Lies

- Snowball is denounced as a Traitor
- Squealer: "Bravery is not enough. Loyalty and obedience are more important. And as to the battle of the cowshed, I believe the time will come when we shall find that Snowball's part in it was much exaggerated. Discipline, comrades, iron discipline!... One false step and our enemies would be upon us. Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones back?"

Purgings

- Snowball accused of being a secret agent of Farmer Jones
- Four pigs attacked by dogs
- Confess to being in league with Snowball
- Others confess and all are murdered
- The next day the 7th commandment--No animal shall kill another animal is changed

Animal Farm becomes Manor Farm

- Pigs make beer
- Pigs wear ribbons
- Pigs sleep in house and in beds
- Pigs get most of the food
- Eggs get sold
- Boxer gets sent to the Knacker rather than the retirement field
- Pigs and Humans play cards together

Orwell in Retrospect

- Most contemporary critics are quick to say that Orwell's vision did not come true; Democratic Capitalism won the Cold War
- What lessons can we draw from *Animal Farm* and *1984* in analyzing our society?

Summary

- Animal Farm is a Fairy Tale story about Human Nature
- Humans are violent, aggressive, selfish, and manipulative in this world view
- The object of his satire was the USSR, where the Russian Revolution and Communism did not lead to the social equality dreamed of by Marx
- While Totalitarianism is on the decline, the use of Fear, Propaganda, and Police (Dogs) to control people (sheep) in a democracy is a Cautionary Tale
- The lesson is still meaningful today: Media, Courts, Free Speech and Dissent, Equality/Inequality