

"animal farm" by george orwell: analysis

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Animal Farm, by George Orwell, was first published in 1945. Propaganda and the abuse of power are prevalent themes in the satirical novel, accentuated by the deliberate use of carefully selected language techniques. This essay will illustrate how a wide range of language techniques can be used to support a theme that runs through every aspect of the story and leaves a lasting impression on the reader.

Context is essential in understanding the underlying elements in the book. The book was written in 1945 and reflects the events leading up to the Stalin era before the Second World War. Setting is important in this novel as it relates to the themes in the book. Animal Farm is a story where animals are personified to resemble the Russian Revolution and the rise of Stalin. Parody is found in this mocking imitation of real-life people as some of the animals are based on Communist Party leaders: the pigs Napoleon and Snowball, for example, represent Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky. Animal Farm is a political satire where Orwell criticizes socialism and capitalism in a humorous way. Propaganda and the abuse of power are issues that are most often associated with politics.

The characters play a vital role in revealing the hidden themes in the story. They are the ones who drive the action and who the reader connects with. From the passage, it is clear that Napoleon is the animal in charge and the one with the most power. This is revealed in his title as ‘Leader’ as well as the interaction between Squealer and Boxer. Boxer’s reply; “If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right” highlights the power imbalance in the relationship between the animals. It relates to both the themes of abuse of power and propaganda, as in his position of power, Napoleon’s word is

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accepted as an unquestionable truth. It also reveals how propaganda has worked into brainwashing the animals into believing this truth. Squealers' reply of, " That is the true spirit, comrade", relates to the theme of propaganda as it reinforces the idea that everything Napoleon does or says is in the right. Napoleon's power (and abuse thereof) can also be found in the act of awarding himself medals of "'Animal Hero, First Class' and ' Animal Hero, Second Class'". A portion of his power comes from the fact that he controls the dogs. This relates to the theme of abuse of power as he uses the dogs (that only he can control) to capture the pigs. The other animals are at a disadvantage as he is the only one with a " weapon", and he uses that weapon as a means to control them with fear. Both the dialogue and actions of the characters are essential in informing the reader of the position of each character and how they relate to others.

While it is important to look at these as a whole, even more is revealed by looking at the hidden message that these contain. The text is a collection of individual words, that when combined, create a certain meaning, but it is also important to look at those words individually as they often carry connotative meanings that might change the overall meaning of the text. Certain words stand out more than others to the reader as they are emphasised by the writer. ' Comrade' is a word in the passage that immediately draws the attention of the reader. ' Comrade' is a term used to refer to a companion or fellow soldier, and is often used as a term of address by socialists or communists. It is repeated three times by Squealer in the passage (emphasising the term); once when addressing his fellow farm animals and twice when referring to Napoleon. The word ' comrade' is

capitalised as a title when referring to Napoleon. This capitalisation indicates a distinction between Napoleon and the other animals and puts him in a position of power. In the first sentence, he is referred to as “ Our Leader, Comrade Napoleon”. ‘ Leader’ is also capitalised as a title and not merely refers to a position.

From the very first sentence, a distinction in power is established to the reader. ‘ Categorically’ is another word repeated in the first sentence that immediately draws attention. When something is stated categorically it is done so directly and without ambiguity, like a command. It is also important to note that “ categorically, comrade” is placed between dashes and indicates an interjection. The writer does this to mimic natural speech and for emphasis. ‘ Categorically’ relates here to the theme of abuse of power. It is being implied here that what is being stated cannot be contradicted or denied. This is an abuse of power as it stops the questioning of that power. ‘ Categorically’ can also be tied to the theme of propaganda as propaganda is delivered as fact, and therefore beyond questioning. The language used by the animals is simple but ‘ categorically’ is a more complicated term. The choice of this particular word relates to the theme of propaganda as the use of this more complicated word gives weight to the importance of the speaker and the message. Propaganda is biased information used to influence the audience, such as when Squealer states that “ Snowball was Jones’s agent from the very beginning”. This information is not supported by any evidence but is still relayed to the audience as fact for the purpose of influencing that audience.

Propaganda often appeals to emotions and so not just the message but the deliverance is important. Squealer speaks very “ slowly and firmly” and uses interjections (“- categorically, comrade” and “- yes”) for emphasis. These interjections also serve the purpose of making the announcement seem more like a conversation and less command-like. It gives the appearance of unity; that they are all united against the enemy: Snowball and Jones. Later Squealer ‘ cried’ “ that is the true spirit, comrade!” The writer uses words and punctuation to show the reader how the information is delivered with emotion and change in volume. He does this so the reader might recognise these techniques. It relates to the theme of propaganda as this is how propaganda is often delivered. The term ‘ comrade’ is also tied in with the theme of propaganda. Propaganda does not work well in isolation and so establishing a group mentality is important. Referring to everyone as ‘ comrade’ has the dual effect of establishing a group identity and placing the person of authority in that group, and therefore, “ one of us”. Just as it is possible to make the reader “ hear”, it is possible to create an image within the mind of the reader. Imagery is a powerful technique used by writers to convey meaning. Imagery is created with the emergence of Napoleon from the house “ wearing both his medals...with his nine huge dogs frisking round him”. The idea of a pig wearing medals brings to mind a caricature that is both humorous and grotesque.

The writer also creates imagery in his description of the reaction of the animals after Napoleon emerged from the house: they “ cowered silently” and had “ shivers down [their] spines”. This imagery evokes strong emotions and relates to the theme of abuse of power as the other animals are

overwhelmed with fear at the sight of the one in power. More imagery is created as the dogs “ seized four of the pigs by the ear and dragged them, squealing with pain and terror, to Napoleon’s feet”. This relates to the theme of abuse of power as force is used as a controlling technique by the one in charge. While some of these words create powerful images, they also evoke feeling by sounding like they do in reality. Onomatopoeia can be found in ‘ cried’, ‘ growls’, ‘ whimper’ and ‘ squealing’ – all words with negative connotative meaning – that relates to the theme of abuse of power as these are either aggressive or fearful sounds. Alliteration can be found with the repetition of the initial /s/ sounds in “ stood sternly surveying”.

The /s/ sound has a connotative meaning that suggests a snake-like quality that implies slyness and danger. This relates to the theme of abuse of power as those that do so usually embody sly and cunning qualities. A skilled writer uses language and language techniques with purpose and careful consideration. Orwell employed language techniques to challenge the reader to think. He wrote a novel that told a story that went far deeper than the words on the pages, and he made that happen with the use of humour and several other language techniques. With the use of words that carry different connotative meanings, punctuation, tone, sound and imagery; the themes of propaganda and the abuse of power are woven expertly into all parts of his writing and highlighted to leave a lasting impression. The setting is also vital in understanding the themes and overall message of the novel. By personifying these animals Orwell gives a warning against tyranny, oppression and propaganda.