

Animal farm by george orwell: literary analysis essay

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



George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is often discussed as an allegorical story having the features of the fable and satire. The significance of the novella's title is in its satirical nature. An animal farm is traditionally discussed as a place where animals are bred by humans. The farms are usually named after the owner. However, *Animal Farm* is rather different. It is a place where animals are owners of the properties (Orwell 6). While referring to the meaning and significance of the phrase which is used for the title of the novella, it is important to emphasize the opposition between animals and humans as well as their differences.

The name "Animal Farm" is chosen by the characters in order to accentuate the meaning of this specific place where animals can rule instead of humans and without being exploited by them. However, the ownership of the farm by animals is a rather provocative idea. While focusing on the fact that the purpose of the novella is to present the political regime in the Soviet Union before World War II, it is possible to state that the title is significant because it stresses on the inhuman nature of Joseph Stalin's regime.

Providing the title for the work, Orwell seems to ask the questions about the differences in the regime of the Soviet Union and irrational rule of animals at the farm. The satirical title is significant because the reader also starts asking questions about the political and social meaning of the work's message and ideas. Using the metaphor in the title, Orwell draws the readers' attention to the Animal Revolution as his allegory to demonstrate the results of the Russian Revolution of 1917. That is why, the title is significant to represent the double meaning of the story and stimulate the

readers' interpretation of the literal and allegorical aspects of the title's meaning.

The major themes represented in the novella are the leadership and power in the Soviet Union, corruption, inequality, the role of an individual in the society, exploitation, and control. In his novella, Orwell discusses the power in the Soviet Union as unlimited and focused in the hands of the elite, as it is typical for the totalitarian governments. These leaders are allegorically described in the characters of pigs which are powerful, but selfish, brutal, and vicious.

The theme of corruption is discussed with the help of stating that the absolute power makes people corrupted or depraved because of receiving the unlimited resources. Thus, those pigs which were the leaders of the Animal Revolution betrayed their ideals and principles and chose to live in Manor's house because of the convenience and extreme desire to satisfy their needs while ignoring the needs of the other working animals.

These animals chose to follow the principle "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others" (Orwell 112). Thus, Orwell also discusses the themes of inequality and the role of an individual in the society. In spite of the fact that the Animal Revolution was declared to be organized for the welfare of all animals, only the leaders received the real benefits. The same situation was observed in the Soviet Union. The social stratification and the division into rich and poor were not overcome, but these problems were hidden now.

The other significant themes discussed in the fable are exploitation and control supported by the leaders of the revolution. The pigs were satisfied with the work of hard-working animals, but any differences in the views could result in violent punishment. This allegory represents how Stalin chose to resolve the problems with dissenters. Thus, the institution of control in the Soviet Union was People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, and the guarantee of the pig's control was dogs which were used to persecute dissenters.

The first passage that attracts the reader's attention is Major's speech about the role of a man in the world. Thus, Major states in his speech, " Man is the only creature that consumes without producing...Yet he is lord of all the animals" (Orwell 6). Major notes that a man makes animals work, but he does not care about them and only " prevent them from starving" (Orwell 6). Major persuades the animals that they are better than men, and they have to rebel while focusing on the threats of exploitation. This statement reflects the Socialists' arguments declared during the Revolution period. However, the significance of the passage is in the fact that the pigs forget about their statements and ideals while receiving some power, and they begin to exploit the others.

In Chapter 3, the principles of the Socialists' attitude to work and the belief of the poor men in the better future are reflected. The horse Boxer becomes the inspiration for each animal at the farm because he follows the principle " I will work harder!" (Orwell 25). This principle is actively followed by lower

class animals, but it is also used by the pigs to exploit workers. The ideology prevents these animals from seeing the real situation at Animal Farm.

The expulsion of Snowball with the help of dogs can be discussed as the important allegorical description of the struggle between Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky observed in the Soviet Union. Napoleon used any means to realize his goals. Thus, he even used dogs to fear Snowball and other animals, “ there was a terrible baying sound outside, and nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars came bounding into the barn. They dashed straight for Snowball, who only sprang from his place just in time to escape their snapping jaws” (Orwell 48). Napoleon could not support his leadership with the other resources, and he used violence to state his high social position. This moment is symbolic to represent the deterioration of any Socialist principles declared at Animal Farm.

The next significant passage is about judging Snowball as a scapegoat. This moment is important to describe the reality of Animal Farm and make the reader think about the Soviet Union. Snowball was accused of any crime at the farm only because he did not support Napoleon. Thus, “ If a window was broken or a drain was blocked up, someone was certain to say that Snowball had come in the night and done it” (Orwell 66). This situation is the first step in persecution of ‘ suspicious’ animals who were killed because of possible relations with Snowball. Thus, the authorities used all the cruel methods to justify and support their regime while violating the basic principles of their ideologies.

The setting of the novella is imaginary Manor Farm located in England. This place becomes the communal territories owned by the animals after the Animal Revolution. The time period associated with the described events is not stated clearly. Animal Farm becomes the place where animals live according to the principles of Animalism and equality of all the animals. These equal animals have the only enemy in men who previously exploited them (Orwell 4).

Concentrating on the allegorical meaning of the novella, it is possible to note that the setting of the story is the Soviet Union after the period of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and during the rule of Joseph Stalin. The setting can be considered as affecting the plot significantly because all the described events occur at Animal Farm where animals try to develop the communal way of life. This farm becomes the place where the pigs win the people and receive the power.

It is possible to state that the story could be told in a different setting, but the features of the fable can be lost because the main distinctive feature of the novella is its allegorical character. While putting the characters of the novella in the real-life setting, it is possible to discuss the moments from the history of the Soviet Union without using any allegories and metaphors in order to accentuate the dramatic features of the regime. That is why, this story about the corrupted leaders and exploited workers presented in a different setting can be discussed as ineffective to reveal the author's main idea.

The main characters of the novella are Napoleon, Snowball, Boxer, Squealer, and Old Major. The character of Napoleon is based on the personality of Joseph Stalin. This ambitious pig tries to become a leader at Animal Farm after the death of Old Major. Napoleon uses all the means to achieve the goal, and these means are mostly persuasive speeches and unlimited violence. As a result, Napoleon can be described as a political tyrant.

The character of Snowball is based on the personality of Leon Trotsky, the main rival of Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union. Snowball is an idealist, and he also wants to become a leader at Animal Farm, but he fails because of avoiding the use of extremely violent means and because of basing only on clear reasoning. That is why, Napoleon makes Snowball to become a scapegoat in order to receive the opportunity to cope with the smart competitor.

Boxer is a cart-horse who represents the working class at Animal Farm. Boxer works hard in order to contribute to the farm's intensive development. He is loyal, strong, naïve, and dedicated to the ideals of Animalism. Boxer can be discussed as motivated by the belief in the better future and achievements of the working animals.

Squealer is a pig who develops the active propaganda at Animal Farm in order to support Napoleon's ideas and personality (Orwell 20). This pig speaks in a language that is understandable for other animals, and he is motivated by possible Napoleon's appraisal.

Old Major is an old pig whose character is written basing on the personalities of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. Old Major is rather wise, and he is focused on finding better ways for living at farm while avoiding the exploitation of the animals as the lower class (Orwell 3-4).

The character to whom it is possible to relate oneself is Boxer. This cart-horse is the appropriate choice because he discusses the hard work as the only way to build the better future, and he tries to inspire the others to do their best to create something good.

The novella is based on the description of the problematic relationships between Napoleon and Snowball. These pigs are rivals in their fight for leadership at Animal Farm. In spite of the fact that both Napoleon and Snowball orient to receiving the unlimited leadership and influence, the methods which they use to complete the goals are different. That is why, Napoleon who uses violence and fear becomes more powerful than Snowball who uses reasoning. Although Napoleon and Snowball start applying the ideals of Animalism to the regime at Animal Farm as a team, they need more leadership after the death of Old Major. These relations are typical for the ruling class where the fight for power is not only extreme but also prolonged.

The other type of relationships is described with references to workers Boxer and Benjamin. Orwell describes these animals' relations the following way, "the two of them usually spent their Sundays together in the small paddock beyond the orchard, grazing side by side and never speaking" (Orwell 4). The horse and the donkey represent different visions and attitudes to the world

and situation, but they live to support each other. Boxer can be described as more enthusiastic and positive while discussing the ideals of Animalism. Benjamin is more passive in spite of the fact that he understands the real situation at Animal Farm. Benjamin chooses not to do anything to fight cruelty of Napoleon's regime. Thus, this character represents the visions of the majority in the Soviet Union.

The narrative point used in Animal Farm is third-person, and this point of view can be discussed as impersonal and omniscient because Orwell is not presented as a character in the work. First, it seems that the narrator's perspective is limited, but then it can be found that readers know more than animals which are discussed in the story. Thus, the anonymous narrator not only retells the actions of the animals, but he also presents the motives and thoughts of such characters as Napoleon, Squealer, Boxer, and Benjamin (Orwell 3-14). As a result, this perspective can affect the way according to which the story is told and understood by the reader. The used approach helps accentuate the differences observed in the pigs' words and their actions toward horses and other animals who work hard to support the commune.

The narrator can also be described as detached, and there are more opportunities for the author to present and develop the allegorical meaning of the novella while focusing on the real motivation of such characters as Napoleon and Squealer while comparing their words, thoughts, and actions with the activities of the other animals at the farm (Orwell 58-64). This point of view is effective to be used in the allegorical novella because the reader

can understand all the hidden meanings of the described activities and words while referring to the narrator's ironical remarks and hints. That is why, the choice of the perspective is rather appropriate to address the idea or message of this satirical story.

The ending of the novella can be discussed as appropriate to represent the result of corruption of the ideals and principles developed at Animal Farm. Thus, animals betrayed their ideals because of the benefits of working with their human enemies. However, the last scene demonstrates that animals and men have many features in common because of their focus on cheating, exploiting, and expanding only their own properties. The quarrel between animals' leaders and people observed by the other animals through windows of the house reveals that "the creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which" (Orwell 118). Thus, Orwell effectively stresses on how tyrants can use the ideals against the lower classes and support their power with the methods used by the previous leaders.

Animal Farm should be recommended for reading to others because this allegorical novella is helpful to understand the nature of the totalitarian regimes which can be based on the effective ideals. Furthermore, the novella is interesting to help readers become detached from the historical reality associated with the Russian Revolution and look at the events from the other perspective. The satirical anti-utopian story makes the reader think about the true nature of many things observed in different types of the society. In his work, Orwell effectively discussed the threats of the totalitarian regimes

which can be corrupted because of the aspects of the human nature. That is why, the novella can be actively recommended to the readers to look at the political events from the perspective of the satirical fable.

Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1990. Print.