



Power, Ideology, and Betrayal in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

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Abstract:

George Orwell's Animal Farm (1945) is a political allegory that critiques the corruption of revolutionary ideals and the mechanics of totalitarian power. Using a seemingly simple fable about animals overthrowing human control, Orwell exposes how language, ideology, and propaganda are manipulated to establish and sustain authoritarian rule. This paper examines Animal Farm as an allegory of the Russian Revolution and Stalinist regime, focusing on themes of power, class hierarchy, propaganda, and the betrayal of egalitarian ideals. Through close textual analysis, the study argues that Orwell presents power not merely as political domination but as control over language, memory, and historical truth.

Keywords: *George Orwell, Animal Farm, Allegory, Totalitarianism, Propaganda, Power*

Introduction:

George Orwell occupies a central place in twentieth-century political literature due to his sustained critique of authoritarianism and ideological manipulation. *Animal Farm*, first published in 1945, emerged in the aftermath of World War II, when the disillusionment with totalitarian regimes—particularly Stalinist Soviet Union—was intensifying. Though written in the form of a beast fable, the novel addresses complex political realities, making it accessible while retaining intellectual depth. The novel narrates the rebellion of farm animals against their human owner, Mr. Jones, in pursuit of equality and freedom. However, the revolution gradually degenerates into tyranny under the pigs, especially Napoleon. This transformation mirrors the historical trajectory of the Russian Revolution of 1917, where the promise of a classless society was replaced by authoritarian control. This paper explores how *Animal Farm* critiques the abuse of power, the manipulation of ideology, and the role of propaganda in sustaining oppressive systems.

Animal Farm as Political Allegory:

Allegory is the central structural device of *Animal Farm*. Each character and event corresponds to historical figures and developments of the Russian Revolution. Mr. Jones represents Tsar Nicholas II, whose incompetence and neglect provoke revolution. Old Major combines elements of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, articulating the revolutionary ideology that inspires the animals. Napoleon and Snowball symbolize Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky respectively, while the dogs function as the secret police. Orwell's allegory is not a simplistic one-to-one mapping but a broader critique of revolutionary politics. By presenting history through animals, Orwell defamiliarizes political events, encouraging readers to examine power relations more critically. The fable form underscores the universality of oppression and warns that tyranny can emerge in any context if power remains unchecked.

The Corruption of Revolutionary Ideals:

At the heart of *Animal Farm* lies the betrayal of the original revolutionary principles. Old Major's vision is rooted in equality, collective ownership, and freedom from exploitation. These ideals are codified in the Seven Commandments, most notably: "All animals are equal." Initially, the farm appears to function cooperatively, with animals working for common benefit. However, the pigs gradually appropriate privileges, justifying them as necessities for leadership. The commandment of equality is slowly eroded, culminating in its infamous revision: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." This paradox exposes how ideology can be distorted to legitimize inequality. Orwell demonstrates that revolutions fail not necessarily because ideals are flawed, but because those in power manipulate them for personal gain.

Power and Class Hierarchy:

Although the revolution seeks to abolish hierarchy, *Animal Farm* reveals how new class structures emerge almost immediately. The pigs assume intellectual superiority, while the other animals—particularly the horses Boxer and Clover—represent the exploited working class. Boxer's maxims, "I will work harder" and "Napoleon is always right," illustrate blind loyalty and uncritical obedience. Boxer's tragic fate highlights the cruelty of authoritarian regimes toward their most devoted supporters. Despite his tireless labor, he is ultimately sold to the knacker when he becomes physically useless. This episode underscores Orwell's argument that totalitarian systems exploit the masses while discarding them once they cease to serve the interests of the ruling elite.

Language, Propaganda, and Control:

One of Orwell's most significant insights in *Animal Farm* is the role of language in maintaining power. Squealer, Napoleon's spokesperson, exemplifies propaganda through rhetorical manipulation, distortion of facts, and emotional appeal. He convinces the animals that the pigs' privileges are essential for the farm's survival, often invoking fear of Mr. Jones's return. The systematic alteration of the Seven Commandments symbolizes the control of historical memory. As the animals gradually forget the original rules, the pigs rewrite them to suit their actions. Orwell suggests that when language is corrupted, truth becomes malleable, enabling authoritarian control. This theme anticipates Orwell's later exploration of linguistic domination in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Violence and Fear as Instruments of Rule:

Alongside propaganda, Napoleon relies on violence and intimidation to consolidate power. The trained dogs serve as enforcers, silencing dissent and executing animals accused of treason. Public confessions and executions mirror Stalin's purges, illustrating how terror becomes a routine mechanism of governance.

Fear prevents collective resistance, as animals internalize the belief that disobedience will result in punishment. Orwell emphasizes that totalitarian regimes do not rely solely on force but on the psychological submission of the populace, achieved through a combination of fear, misinformation, and exhaustion.

The Role of the Masses:

The passive acceptance of oppression by the majority of animals is crucial to the pigs' dominance. Characters like the sheep, who mindlessly repeat slogans, represent unthinking conformity. Their chants drown out reasoned debate, reducing political discourse to empty

repetition. Orwell does not absolve the masses of responsibility; rather, he presents their ignorance and apathy as enabling factors. *Animal Farm* thus serves as a cautionary tale, warning readers that freedom requires vigilance, education, and critical thought.

Conclusion:

Animal Farm remains a powerful political text because of its clarity, symbolism, and enduring relevance. Orwell exposes how revolutions can betray their founding ideals when power becomes concentrated in the hands of a few. Through allegory, he critiques not only Stalinism but all forms of authoritarianism that manipulate ideology, language, and fear.

The novel's final scene, where animals can no longer distinguish pigs from humans,

encapsulates Orwell's central message: without accountability and collective awareness, new rulers may become indistinguishable from the old oppressors. As a political allegory, *Animal Farm* continues to warn readers about the fragility of freedom and the dangers of unexamined power.

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