

## Of Pigs and Men: A Literary Analysis of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*

*"What is history, but a fable agreed upon?"* – Napoleon Bonaparte.

In 1945, Eric Arthur Blair, better known under his pseudonym George Orwell, published *Animal Farm*, a satire political allegory about the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Soviet Union's formative years. The story follows a group of animals that live on the 'Manor Farm,' which is run by the harsh farmer Mr. Jones. The farm is united against the humans by Old Major, the wisest and oldest of the animals, who explains to them how unfair the reality of their lives are in comparison to humans. After his demise, the animals set up their own civilization lead by Snowball and others, based on democratic ideals after driving the humans out on 'the Rebellion'. Animals are supposed to obey Animalism's Seven Commandments and treat others equally. The pigs, especially Napoleon – on the other hand, have total control over Animal Farm's government, thus the peace will be temporary. The Seven Commandments of Animalism weaken with time through the pigs' tactics. Animals lose their rights and are powerless to oppose the pigs' rule, and the principles on which Animal Farm is based, gradually lost their significance, and the pigs have become indistinguishable from the human rulers they deposed. Orwell made it clear in *Animal Farm* that words and rhetoric may be far more powerful social control tools than violence and may cause more harm overall.

The gift of literacy elevates one's status quo. After successfully evicting the humans from the farm, the pigs were revealed to be the smartest of the animals:

*"The pigs now revealed that during the past three months they had taught themselves to read and write."* (Orwell, Chapter 2)

The animals may have received help from such knowledge, but the pigs ruled over the cognitively inferior. Their leadership and philosophy were based on the animals' willingness to embrace animalism's dogma without inquiry. Orwell used it as a symbol for the illiterate peasants of the Russian Revolution, who were readily influenced by their government owing to their lack of information and critical thinking.

*"It was always the pigs who put forward the resolutions. The other animals understood how to vote but could never think of any resolutions of their own."* (Orwell, Chapter 3)

The pigs' ability to read and write helped them to stay in power without resistance in a culture that only knows how to mindlessly obey and follow without questions. Although *Animal Farm* is written in the style of a fable, Orwell seeks to show the importance of language in molding human minds and cognition by limiting and structuring the ideas that individuals try to express (Soriano, 2010).

However, to preserve their dominance among all animals, the pigs exploited this ability to use it to intimidate others. The government in *Animal Farm* gives the language a frightening structure, therefore language has been used more for intimidation than for ordinary communication (Hossain, 2017). For example, when the ration of milk and ripe apples were discovered to be in possession of the pigs, Squealer – whom Napoleon uses for his propaganda – said:

*“It is for your sake that we drink the milk and eat those apples. Do you know what would happen if we, pigs, failed in our duty? Jones would come back!”* (Squealer, Chapter 3)

Through his fake persuasive language, Squealer can control the animals' thinking. When the pigs are confronted with a protest from the animals, Squealer invents a proper justification. But due to the lack of proper education, no animal could oppose from the ruling of the pigs. They had the opportunity to gain experience, but they were part of a system that did not respect education.

In addition, the animals' ignorance was taken advantage by the pigs to alter their memories. This was particularly clear when Snowball was evicted albeit his efforts to build a democratic and progressive farm for all the animals, he was later painted as a 'traitor' and 'had always been':

*Now when Squealer described the scene so graphically, it seemed to the animals that they did remember it. At any rate, they remembered that at the critical moment of the battle Snowball had turned to flee. But Boxer was still a little uneasy.*

*“I do not believe that Snowball was a traitor at the beginning,” he said finally. “What he has done since is different. But I believe that at the Battle of the Cowshed he was a good comrade.”*  
*“Our Leader, Comrade Napoleon,” announced Squealer, speaking very slowly and firmly, “has*

*stated categorically —categorically, comrade — that Snowball was Jones’s agent from the very beginning — yes, and from long before the Rebellion was ever thought of.”*

The pigs also went on to change the Seven Commandments to fit their needs. For example, because the pigs drank alcohol every day, they changed the decree from “No animal shall drink alcohol” to “No animal shall drink alcohol TO EXCESS” and told animals that remembered the old one that they were "remembering things incorrectly" because they were illiterate. Orwell explains that language has the power in politics to hide the truth and deceive the public (Berkes, 2000).

Ultimately, Orwell's *Animal Farm* illustrates how illiteracy and language take over society. The peasant and working classes remained uneducated and easier to manage and manipulate due to a poor education system. With this, the ruling class can easily rewrite the history to paint themselves as the victors of the battles. As a result, future generations may fail to remember the true heroes and portray them as the story's villains. The novel also explores how the world Old Major promised for the animals was never realized since the pigs never intended to provide them with such luxuries. Finally, in the last section of *Animal Farm*, pigs depict the one thing they despise — humans. *Animal Farm* was written by George Orwell to explain the real story of the Russian Revolution in a way that anybody could comprehend, even if they were unfamiliar with all the historical specifics. Orwell contends that language may be used for more dangerous goals, such as social manipulation and control, and that such speech is often considerably more potent than state-sanctioned violence or the fear of physical force. The novel, on the other hand, is not only an allegory of Russian history. Hence, the novel conveys a larger point about governmental authority and injustice in general by using characters — that were consistently compared — of pigs and men.

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