

## Book Discussion Notes –Animal Farm – George Orwell

1. YLBC – Opening and business
2. Narration – \_\_\_\_\_
3. Author Review – George Orwell - \_\_\_\_\_
4. Discuss Toy, item from home that reminds you of book
5. Each person say “I like \_\_\_\_\_ because” (each character)

### Discussion:

Question	Answer
<b>Title</b>	<b>Animal Farm</b>
<b>Author</b>	George Orwell - Eric Arthur Blair
<b>Year Written</b>	1943-44 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Setting – Time</b>	It is fair to assume, however, that Orwell means the fable to be contemporaneous with the object of its satire, the Russian Revolution (1917–1945). It is important to remember that this period represented the recent past and present at the time of writing and that Orwell understands the significance of the story’s action to be immediate and ongoing rather than historical <sup>1</sup>
<b>Setting – Place</b>	An imaginary farm in England <sup>1</sup>

### Characters:

Question	Answer
<b>Protagonist(s)</b> – Leading character, hero, or heroine of a drama or other literary work who traditionally, undergoes some sort of change (pushing something forward). –	Napoleon, pushing forward taking over <sup>2</sup>
<b>Adjectives to describe Protagonist(s)</b>	Pig, Represents Stalin – mean, sneaky, clever, cruel, consolidates his power, eliminates his enemies, and turns the farm into a self-serving dictatorship. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Antagonist</b> - An antagonist is one that contents with or opposes another, adversary or opponent, the villain. The antagonist of a story is the character that provides an obstacle for the protagonist.	Snowball – challenges Napoleon for control of Manor Farm <sup>2</sup>
<b>Adjectives to describe Antagonist(s)</b>	Pig , Represents Trotsky, brave, caring, smart <sup>2</sup>

### Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, Resolution

Question7	Answer
<b>Conflict (Man vs. Man, Man vs. Nature, Man vs. God, Man vs. Himself, Man vs. Society)</b>	There are a number of conflicts in <i>Animal Farm</i> —the animals versus Mr. Jones, Snowball versus Napoleon, the common animals versus the pigs, Animal Farm versus the neighboring humans—but all of them are expressions of the underlying tension between the exploited and exploiting classes and between the lofty ideals and harsh realities of socialism. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Rising action</b> - During rising action, the basic internal conflict is complicated by the introduction of related secondary conflicts, including various obstacles that frustrate the protagonist's attempt to reach his goal. Secondary conflicts can include adversaries of lesser importance than the story’s antagonist, who may work	The animals throw off their human oppressors and establish a socialist state called Animal Farm; the pigs, being the most intelligent animals in the group, take control of the planning and government of the farm; Snowball and Napoleon engage in ideological disputes and compete for power <sup>1</sup>

with the antagonist or separately, by and for themselves or actions unknown, and also the conflict.	
<b>Falling action (Emotional Climax)</b> - The falling action is that part of the story in which the main part (the climax) has finished and you're heading to the resolution.	Squealer emerges to justify Napoleon's actions with skillful but duplicitous reinterpretations of Animalist principles; Napoleon continues to consolidate his power, eliminating his enemies and reinforcing his status as supreme leader; the common animals continue to obey the pigs, hoping for a better future. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Climax</b> - The third act is that of the climax, or turning point, which marks a change, for the better or the worse, in the protagonist's affairs. If the story is a comedy, things will have gone badly for the protagonist up to this point; now, the tide, so to speak, will turn, and things will begin to go well for him or her. If the story is a tragedy, the opposite state of affairs will ensue, with things going from good to bad for the protagonist. Simply put, this is where the main part happens or the most dramatic part.	In Chapter V, Napoleon runs Snowball off the farm with his trained pack of dogs and declares that the power to make decisions for the farm will be exercised solely by the pigs <sup>1</sup>
<b>Resolution</b> - comprises events between the falling action and the actual ending scene of the drama or narrative and thus serves as the conclusion of the story.	
<b>Meaning of the Title</b>	
<b>Major Themes</b>	The corruption of socialist ideals in the Soviet Union; the societal tendency toward class stratification; the danger of a naïve working class; the abuse of language as instrumental to the abuse of power
<b>Minor Themes</b>	

**Other Characters (these are the main, there are others):**

Who	Adjectives
Boxer	<b>Horse – represents the workers, Loyal, hard working, faithful</b>
Squealer	<b>Pig, Sneaky, cowardly, dishonest,</b>
Old Major	The prize-winning boar whose vision of a socialist utopia serves as the inspiration for the Rebellion. Three days after describing the vision and teaching the animals the song "Beasts of England," Major dies, leaving Snowball and Napoleon to struggle for control of his legacy. Orwell based Major on both the German political economist Karl Marx and the Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Ilych Lenin <sup>1</sup>
Clover	A good-hearted female cart-horse and Boxer's close friend. Clover often suspects the pigs of violating one or another of the Seven Commandments, but she repeatedly blames herself for misremembering the commandments <sup>1</sup>
Moses	Raven – represents the Church, tame, promises a great afterlife (sugar candy mountain) Orwell uses him to explore how communism exploits religion as something with which to pacify the oppressed
Molly	The vain, flighty mare who pulls Mr. Jones's carriage. Mollie craves the attention of human beings and loves being groomed and pampered. She has a difficult time with her new life on

	Animal Farm, as she misses wearing ribbons in her mane and eating sugar cubes. She represents the petit bourgeoisie that fled from Russia a few years after the Russian Revolution <sup>1</sup>
Benjamin	Donkey - represents smart people, Smart - long-lived donkey who refuses to feel inspired by the Rebellion. Benjamin firmly believes that life will remain unpleasant no matter who is in charge. Of all of the animals on the farm, he alone comprehends the changes that take place, but he seems either unwilling or unable to oppose the pigs. <sup>1</sup>
Muriel	The white goat who reads the Seven Commandments to Clover whenever Clover suspects the pigs of violating their prohibitions <sup>1</sup>
Mr. Jones	The often drunk farmer who runs the Manor Farm before the animals stage their Rebellion and establish Animal Farm. Mr. Jones is an unkind master who indulges himself while his animals lack food; he thus represents Tsar Nicholas II, whom the Russian Revolution ousted <sup>1</sup>
Mr. Frederick	The tough, shrewd operator of Pinchfield, a neighboring farm. Based on Adolf Hitler, the ruler of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, Mr. Frederick proves an untrustworthy neighbor <sup>1</sup>
Mr. Pilkington	The easygoing gentleman farmer who runs Foxwood, a neighboring farm. Mr. Frederick's bitter enemy, Mr. Pilkington represents the capitalist governments of England and the United State <sup>1</sup>
Mr. Whymper	human solicitor whom Napoleon hires to represent Animal Farm in human society. Mr. Whymper's entry into the Animal Farm community initiates contact between Animal Farm and human society, alarming the common animals <sup>1</sup>
Jessie & Bluebell	Two dogs, each of whom gives birth early in the novel. Napoleon takes the puppies in order to "educate" them. <sup>1</sup>
Minimus	The poet pig who writes verse about Napoleon and pens the banal patriotic song "Animal Farm, Animal Farm" to replace the earlier idealistic hymn "Beasts of England," which Old Major passes on to the others <sup>1</sup>

## The Characters

- Which character do you identify with?
- Which do you *admire* or *dislike*?
- Who in this book would you most *like* to meet? What would you ask—or say?

## The Story, the Plot and Your Experience

- Is the *plot well developed*? Is it believable?
- Does the book *remind you of someone*—or something—in your own life?

## Title, Themes, Style and Symbolism

- How does the title *relate to the book*? Can you pick out a passage that's profound or interesting—or perhaps sums up the central issue of the book?

## The Ending

- Did you *expect the ending* or did it *surprise* you?
- Was the ending *satisfying*? If you could *rewrite the ending*, would you?
- What ending would you have chosen for the story?

## Do You Want to Read More?

- What is the *future of the characters' lives*?

### Questions for thought:

- Why does the author use different animals and not make them all pigs? It makes the story funny and more interesting
- This story is an allegory, what is an allegory? the expression by means of **symbolic** fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence. <sup>4</sup> In this case, a re-telling of an historical event and persons, through animals (Russia 1917)
- What is Orwell's point in writing this book, what question is he trying to answer? There were animals that could have stopped this takeover and injustice. Benjamin was smart and knew what was going on. He could have told Boxer and Boxer was big enough that the dogs were afraid of him. They could have stopped it, but they did not. It asks the age old question, "who is really at fault, the ones in control or the ones who failed to stop them?"

### Are there any quotes that resonated with you?

- Ch 3 – "The pigs did not actually work, but they directed and supervised the others."
- Ch 6 – "The advantage of only having to feed themselves, and not having to support five extravagant human beings as well, was so great that it would have taken a lot of failures to outweigh it."
- Ch 9 – "Once again all rations were reduced except those of the pigs and dogs."
- Ch 9 – "But doubtless it had been worse in the old days. They were glad to believe so. Besides, in those days they had been slaves and now they were free, and that made all the difference, as Squealer did not fail to point out."
- Ch 9 – "But if there were hardships to be borne, they were partly offset by the fact that life nowadays had a greater dignity than it had had before. There were more songs, more speeches, more processions."
- Ch 10 – "... hunger, hardship, and disappointment being, so he said, the unalterable law of life." Old Benjamin
- Chapter 10 - "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

### Did you find any foreshadowing?

Chapter 3 – Napoleon taking the pups under his wing in order to educate them. He kept them in seclusion

Chapter 5 – "It had come to be accepted that the pigs, who were manifestly cleverer than the other animals, should decide all the questions of farm policy."

The pigs' eventual abuse of power is foreshadowed at several points in the novel. <sup>1</sup>

At the end of Chapter II, immediately after the establishment of the supposedly egalitarian Animal Farm, the extra milk taken from the cows disappears, and the text implies that Napoleon has drunk it himself. <sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the dogs' attack on Boxer during Napoleon's purges, in Chapter VII, foreshadows the pigs' eventual betrayal of the loyal cart-horse <sup>1</sup>

### Did you find any interesting phrases?

George Orwell<sup>3</sup>

**Date of Birth:** 25 June 1903, Motihari, Bihar, British India [now India]

**Date of Death:** 21 January 1950, London, England, UK (tuberculosis)

**Birth Name:** Eric Arthur Blair

### **Mini Biography**

Born the son of an Opium Agent in Bengal, Eric Blair was educated in England (Eton 1921). He joined the British Imperial Police in Burma, serving until 1927. He then travelled around England and Europe, doing various odd jobs to support his writing. By 1935 he had adopted the 'pen-name' of 'George Orwell' and had written his first novels. He married in 1936. In 1937, he and his wife fought against the Fascists in the Spanish Civil War. He produced some 3000 pages of essays and newspaper articles as well as several books and programs for the BBC.

IMDb Mini Biography By: Steve Crook <steve@brainstorm.co.uk>

### **Spouse**

Sonia Brownell (13 October 1949 - 21 January 1950) (his death)

Eileen Maud O'Shaughnessy' (9 June 1936 - 29 March 1945) (her death) 1 adopted son

### **Trivia**

One adopted son, Richard Horatio.

He provided the British government a list of people he suspected to be Communist sympathizers in the late 40s. He singled out Charlie Chaplin, actor Michael Redgrave and novelist J.B. Priestley

Wrote Animal Farm after his experiences during the Spanish Civil War, in which he fought alongside Trotskyite troops in the Republican (Loyalist) forces. At this time (1936-1939), Stalin was deep instigating the Great Purge in the Soviet Union, and so any followers of Trotsky were suspect. He barely escaped from Spain with his life, and ever after was a committed foe of Communism, particularly Stalinism. Animal Farm is a barely-disguised metaphor for Stalin's propaganda-laced Soviet Russia, as well as his later novel 1984.

### **Personal Quotes**

Political language ... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable...

Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows.

One must choose between God and Man, and all "radicals" and "progressives", from the mildest liberal to the most extreme anarchist, have in effect chosen Man.

One defeats a fanatic precisely by not being a fanatic oneself, but on the contrary by using one's intelligence.

If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.

No one, at any rate no English writer, has written better about childhood than Dickens.

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**Sources:**

- 1 SparkNotes Editors. "SparkNote on Animal Farm." SparkNotes.com. SparkNotes LLC. 2007. Web. 7 Mar. 2013..
- 2 Deconstructing Penguins, Copyright 2005, Lawrence Goldstone and Nancy Goldstone
- 3 Bio - <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000567/bio>
- 4 Miriam Webster.com