ANIMAL FARM

BY GEORGE ORWELL

Name:________________________________________
**DIRECTIONS:** Circle True or False for each of the following statements. Then, write a few sentences for each of the two questions at the bottom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All humans are equal</td>
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<td>2. Usually the best and brightest people are leaders.</td>
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<td>3. A dictator can control <strong>everything</strong> in a country.</td>
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<td>4. The government usually does what's best for the most people.</td>
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<td>5. People who cannot read are easily controlled.</td>
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<td>6. People always have the ability to make their own choices.</td>
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<td>7. What freedoms do we take for granted in the United States? Do you think we have too much freedom?</td>
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<td>8. What freedoms do you think we don't need in the U.S.? Which ones would you be willing to give up if you had to?</td>
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Meet George Orwell (1903-1950)

Liberty is telling people what they do not want to hear.

--George Orwell

In the years since the publication of Animal Farm and 1984, both of which conjure visions of modern government's dangerous power, critics have studied and analyzed George Orwell's personal life. Orwell was a man who had a reputation for standing apart and even making a virtue of his detachment. This "outsider" position often led him to oppose the crowd.

Orwell began life as Eric Arthur Blair (George Orwell was a pen name he adopted later for its "manly, English, country-sounding ring.") He spent his early years in India as a lonely boy who liked to make up stories and talk with imaginary companions. He began to "write" before he even knew how, dictating poems to his mother, and perhaps saw this outlet as an alternative to the human relationships he found so difficult. Refuge in words and ideas became increasingly important when Orwell's parents sent him, at age eight, to boarding school in England. Because he had a scholarship, he was teased and humiliated frequently.

Later, instead of going on to university, he decided to take a job in Burma with the Indian Imperial Police. At odds with British colonial rule, Orwell said he "theoretically - and secretly, or course ... was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British."

Returning to England to recover from a bout of the chronic lung illness that plagued him all his life, Orwell began his writing career in earnest. He chose to live in poverty because he felt guilty for the job he had done in Burma - for having been a part of an oppressive government. He saw poverty as a way to understand the problems of the oppressed and helpless by becoming one of them.

Orwell's beliefs about politics were affected by his experiences fighting in the Spanish Civil War. He viewed socialists, communists, and fascists as repressive and self-serving. Orwell patriotically supported England during World War II, but remained skeptical of governments and their willingness to forsake ideals in favor of power.

With each book or essay, Orwell solidified his role as the outsider willing to question any group's ideology. Orwell spoke his mind with Animal Farm, in which he criticized the Soviet Union despite its role as a World War II ally of Great Britain. At first, no one would publish the novel, but when Animal Farm finally appeared in 1945, it was a success.

In explaining how he came to write Animal Farm, Orwell says he once saw a little boy whipping a horse:

It struck me that if only such animals became aware of their strength we should have no power over them, and that men exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the [worker].

Orwell said it was the first book in which he consciously tried to blend artistic and political goals. Two things that influenced Orwell to write Animal Farm were his hatred for injustice and
political lying. He desired a society in which separate classes would not exist. Orwell’s final novel, *1984*, continued that effort with a grim portrayal of a world totally under government control.

**Introducing the Novel**

On the publication of *Animal Farm* in 1945, George Orwell discovered with horror that booksellers were placing his novel on children’s shelves. According to his housekeeper, he began traveling from bookstore to bookstore requesting that the book be shelved with adult works. This dual identity – as children’s story and adult satire – has stayed with Orwell’s novel for more than fifty years.

*Animal Farm* tells the story of Farmer Jones’s animals who rise up in rebellion and take over the farm. Tired of being exploited solely for human gain, the animals – who have human characteristics such as the power of speech – vow to create a new and more just society.

Though the novel reads like a fairy story, and Orwell subtitles it as just that, it is also a satire containing a message about world politics and especially the former Soviet Union in particular. Since the Bolshevik revolutions of the early 1900s, the former Soviet Union had captured the attention of the world with its socialist experiment. Stalin’s form of government had some supporters in Britain and the United States, but Orwell was against this system.

In a satire, the writer attacks a serious issue by presenting it in a ridiculous light or otherwise poking fun at it. Orwell uses satire to expose what he saw as the myth of Soviet socialism. Thus, the novel tells a story that people of all ages can understand, but it also tells us a second story – that of the real-life Revolution. Many critics have matched in great detail the story’s characters to historical persons – for example, linking the power struggle between Napoleon and Snowball to the historical feuding between Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky for control of the Soviet Union. Critics also believe that Old Major represents Karl Marx, who dies before realizing his dream. Other comparisons include Moses and the Russian Orthodox church, Boxer and Clover as workers, the sheep as the general public, Squealer as Stalin’s government news agency, the dogs as Stalin’s military police, and Farmer Jones as Czar Nicholas II. The farm’s neighbors, Pilkington and Frederick, are said to represent Great Britain and Germany, while Mollie suggests the old Russian aristocracy, which resists change.

A tremendous success when published, *Animal Farm* has since become part of school curriculums and popular literary culture. Readers and critics alike have enjoyed its imaginative premise and the engaging charm of its animal characters. Orwell’s straightforward language draws readers into the farm’s world, while the witty underlying satire invites serious analysis.

*Animal Farm* is more than a fairy story. It is a commentary on the relevance of independent thought, truth, and justice.
The Time and Place

An allegory is a narrative that can be read on more than one level. Critics often consider Animal Farm to be an allegory of the Russian Revolution. In the early 1900s, Russia’s Czar Nicholas II faced an increasingly discontented populace. Freed from feudal serfdom in 1861, many Russian peasants were struggling to survive under an oppressive government. By 1917, amidst the tremendous suffering of World War I, a revolution began. In two major battles, the Czar’s government was overthrown and replaced by the Bolshevik leadership of Vladimir Lenin. When Lenin died in 1924, his former colleagues Leon Trotsky, hero of the early Revolution, and Joseph Stalin, head of the Communist Party, struggled for power. Stalin won the battle, and he deported Trotsky into permanent exile.

Once in power, Stalin began, with despotic urgency and exalted nationalism, to move the Soviet Union into the modern industrial age. His government seized land in order to create collective farms. Stalin’s Five Year Plan was an attempt to modernize Soviet industry. To counter resistance (many peasants refused to give up their land), Stalin used vicious military tactics. Rigged trials led to executions of an estimated 20 million government officials and ordinary citizens. The government controlled the flow and content of information to the people, and all but outlawed churches.

Taken from Animal Farm Study Guide, The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
Animal Farm Characters

Old Major - Karl Marx, the visionary who believed there could be a better society

Farmer Jones - Czar Nicholas II

Boxer/Clover - the downtrodden working class. They gain nothing from their labors, but make others comfortable. They are expendable when no longer of use to those in power.

Napoleon - Joseph Stalin, motivated by greed, a secret plotter, a despotic ruler

Snowball - Leon Trotsky, the planner and tactician

Mollie - Russian aristocrat

Benjamin - pessimistic skeptic, a survivor

Moses - organized religion, especially the Russian Orthodox church. Marx considered religion the "opiate of the people" and therefore tolerated it.

Squealer - the propagandist, Stalin’s government news agency

Farmer Pilkington - Churchill’s England

Farmer Frederick - Hitler’s Germany

Animalism - Marxism

Animal Uprising - Russian revolution of 1917

Windmill - some of Stalin’s Five Year plans for industrialization; represents hope for a streamlined farming society

Jones’s farmhouse - the Kremlin, seat of Soviet government

Slaughter of other animals by Napoleon’s dogs - bloody Moscow purge trials of 1930’s
Reader's Journal

Answer each chapter's questions in your literature journal. Be sure to use complete sentences.

Chapter One

1. Identify and describe briefly the following animals: Boxer, Clover, Old Major, Benjamin.
2. According to Old Major, why is the life of the animals so miserable, even though “the soil is fertile, the land is good,” etc.?
3. How is man different from all other creatures?
4. What solution does Old Major offer to relieve the misery of the animals?
5. What are the things Old Major said no animal should ever do?
6. What is your personal response to the chapter? For instance, what did you think while you were reading? Do you think the animals had a legitimate complaint? What are the problems you foresee if Old Major’s advice is followed?

Chapter Two

1. Which animals emerge as leaders in Chapter Two?
2. Moses, the tame raven, has been said to represent the influences of religion on individuals. Explain how this parallel might be drawn in Chapter Two.
3. Which animals seem to be most loyal and hardworking? Give evidence to support your answer.
4. Which animals seem most opposed to the idea of revolution? Support your answer with evidence from the chapter.
5. When the Revolution does come, it is almost an accident, with none of the animals really expecting it. Explain.
6. How are the Seven Commandments similar to Old Major’s ideas? Are there any differences?
7. How does the incident with the milk at the end of the chapter present an unsettling overtone to an otherwise positive atmosphere?
8. If you had been an animal on the farm what kind of animal do you think you would have been? Do you think you would have been a leader or a follower?

9. What is your personal response to Chapter Two?

**Chapter Three**

1. The one animal that seems most skeptical of the Revolution is Benjamin. The other animals don't always understand his "cryptic" remarks. What do you think he means when he says, "Donkeys live a long time. None of you has ever seen a dead donkey."

2. In this chapter, certain items, places, events, etc. are beginning to be used as patriotic symbols. What are they? What is the importance of such symbols to a government?

3. Not all of the animals are eager to learn to read. Some of them cannot learn, and some of the refuse to learn. Do you think this could prove to be a problem for Animal Farm later in the novel? If you think so, explain, giving several examples of what could happen as a result. If you do not think so, defend your answer.

4. Even though all the pigs are thought of as leaders, there are some rather striking differences between the individual pigs. Explain what they are.

5. Name and explain two developments that are revealed late in Chapter Three that could have negative consequences for the farm. What could happen as a result?

6. If you were an animal on the farm at this time, what would you be feeling? Would you be glad about the Revolution, or would you feel somewhat anxious about governing yourself?

7. What are your personal response, thoughts, observations about Chapter Three?

**Chapter Four**

1. It has been said that Orwell intended for the neighboring farms to represent countries. Based on what you have learned, if Animal Farm represents Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution, what countries would Foxwood and Pinchfield represent? Defend your answers.
2. Describe briefly the plans Snowball makes to defend the animals from attack. How important was Snowball to the battle? Explain.
3. More symbols and ceremonies are introduced after the battle. What are they?
4. What is your personal response to Chapter Four?

Chapter Five
1. Explain briefly the details which lead up to Mollie’s disappearance. Would you call her a traitor? Why or why not?
2. Discuss briefly the conflict between Napoleon and Snowball. Would you say this conflict is caused by different personalities, different leadership styles, different ideology, or something else? Explain.
3. Describe briefly the meeting at the end of Chapter Five. If Napoleon had not set the dogs loose, do you think Snowball would have persuaded all the animals to his point of view? Why or why not?
4. What changes does Napoleon immediately make after overthrowing Snowball to reinforce his power? What historical parallels can you think of?
5. How does Squealer promote Napoleon’s interests? How does he “rewrite history” in his explanation that the windmill be built after all?
6. How do you explain the animals’ acceptance of the new version of events? What factors probably made them willing to believe Squealer?
7. What is your personal response to Chapter Five?

Chapter Six
1. In Chapter Six, one of the “unalterable laws” is altered. Which one? Why? How?
2. What is the irony of the comment “all that year the animals worked like slaves”?
3. There is apparently a redefinition of the word "voluntary" in Chapter Six. Explain.
4. How is Napoleon using Snowball as a scapegoat? Who is actually to blame for the problems of the farm? Explain.
5. What is your personal response to Chapter Six?
Chapter Seven

1. When the animals are nearly starving, Napoleon thinks it is necessary to conceal their difficulties from the humans. Why? How does he do this?

2. Describe the rebellion of the hens. How does Napoleon quell the uprising?

3. Explain some possible reasons for Napoleon’s accusations that Snowball was sneaking into the farm at night. Was he telling the truth, or was he using Snowball as a scapegoat?

4. Describe the scene in which Boxer expresses doubts about what he is being told about Snowball’s treachery. How does Squealer convince him otherwise?

5. Stalin was well-known for his “purges,” where he eliminated individuals who disagreed with him. How are the events in Chapter Seven similar to one of those purges? What effect do these events have on the morale of the animals?

6. How do you explain the fact that some of the animals in this scene are obviously confessing to “crimes” that they did not, in fact, commit?

7. What is your personal response to Chapter Seven?

Chapter Eight

1. Napoleon is isolating himself more and more from the other animals. How is he doing this? How would this be a good way to maintain control?

2. Gradually, a “personality mystique” develops around Napoleon. He is considered virtually infallible by the other animals. How does he manage to maintain this opinion? Is such a “mystique” necessary for the success of any dictator? Explain.

3. Revisionism continues in this chapter in regard to Snowball. Explain.

4. Explain the propaganda movement directed against Frederick and Pinchfield. Do you think any of it has any basis in fact? Why does it work so effectively?

5. How does Napoleon explain the sale of timber to Frederick? What is the attitude of the animals toward the sale?
6. What are the major differences between the Battle of the Windmill and the Battle of the Cowshed?

7. What is the tone of this chapter? What is your mood as you read it?

8. What is your personal response to Chapter Eight?

Chapter Nine

1. What plans were made early in the establishment of Animal Farm regarding the retirement of animals who were too old to work?

2. Explain the increase in ceremonies, processions, speeches, etc. at this time. Why, when there is less to celebrate, does Napoleon insist on more of these meaningless activities?

3. When Moses suddenly returns, Napoleon allows him to stay. Why? Could it have anything to do with Marx’s comment that “religion is the opiate of the people”? Explain.

4. Instead of being sent to retirement, Boxer is sent to the knackers, which we would call the “glue factory.” How does Squealer explain Boxer’s death? Do you have any explanation as to why the animals would believe Squealer instead of their own eyes?

5. What is your personal response to Chapter Nine?

Chapter Ten

1. The final chapter shows that virtually everything the animals have worked for has been for nothing. In what ways has Napoleon become another “Jones”?

2. How does Napoleon bring about the final changes that cancel everything gained by the Revolution?

3. Explain the irony of the praise the humans have for the way Napoleon has managed Animal Farm.

4. Lord Acton is quoted as saying, "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Some commentators cite this comment as the theme of Animal Farm. Do you agree? Why would it be appropriate? (or why not?)
### Themes

Record examples from the plot that support the following themes.

| Freedom and individual dignity must be guarded very carefully. | Language is a powerful tool; used improperly, it can enslave and confuse us. |
| Weakness can be dominated by strength, fear, and trickery. | Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. |
| Hope and vision must be kept alive (or we might live like the animals of Manor Farm). | Any other theme you observe. |