
Symbolism, Satire, and Other Literary Devices in Animal Farm, a Novel by George Orwell

Many literary authors use a number of literary devices in their writings. Some of the most common are devices such as similes, symbolism, satire, and alliteration. Many writers try to express their own ideas through their writing in hopes that others will one day read their thoughts and ideas and contemplate them. For example, in George Orwell's novella, *Animal Farm*, Orwell uses a combination of symbolism, satire, and other literary devices. In his book, Orwell uses animals to represent prominent figures during the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia during 1917.

To really understand the symbolism behind *Animal Farm* and its characters, you must first understand the timeline of the Bolshevik Revolution. In 1917, Russia was a Tsarist autocracy, meaning there was a king like figure called a Tsar who ran everything. His name was Emperor Nicholas II. In February of 1917, members of the imperial parliament, the Duma, assumed control of the country. There was also an October revolution in which the Bolsheviks lead an armed insurgence to overthrow the Duma. The Bolsheviks started their own federal government, practicing a soviet democracy. The main characters from this time period were Leon Trotsky, Joseph Stalin, Karl Marx, Nicholas II, Rasputin, Adolf Hitler, and Alexandra. Nicholas II was the old Tsar who was overthrown. Leon Trotsky was one of the leaders, rivaling other leaders such as Joseph Stalin. Trotsky founded the ideology of Trotskyism, which was opposing Stalinism. He remained in Russia and as an influential leader until he was run out by Stalin. Joseph Stalin became a political leader of Communist Russia for many years. Karl Marx is known as the father of Marxism, the foundation for the political ideology of Communism. He was also one of the main writers in *The Communist Manifesto*, where most of the ideology of Communism can be found. Alexandra was the wife of Nicholas II. Adolf Hitler was the leader of Germany around this time period, and is infamous for his political ideas and actions. Many famous and infamous leaders arose around this time period, and Orwell draws light to the actions these leaders.

Old Major is one of the first characters we are introduced to. He is an older pig who will soon die. He calls a meeting one night to speak to all of the animals of the farm. All animals respect him, because it is stated that all animals are willing to lose a few hours of sleep to hear him speak. (Orwell, 4) Old Major tells them about his dream in which all animals are freed from their captivity and no longer slaves to their human masters. He tells them that all animals are equal, which becomes the foundation for the ideology that will start amongst the animals, known as Animalism. He talks about a song, which sung of animals being free. Old Major then states that

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a rebellion must occur so that the animals can be freed. Old Major is usually compared to Karl Marx, the founder of Marxism, which is the base foundation for Communism. Many similar ideas are shared between Marx as well as Old Major. Marx believed that all men are equal, just as Old Major did with animals. Old Major is where the entirety of the rebellion started.

One of the main leaders in the book is a pig named Napoleon. Even though his name resembles that of Napoleon Bonaparte, he is thought to resemble Joseph Stalin in his actions. Napoleon, soon after the rebellion, started addressing those around him as comrades. A comrade is a person in which you travel with or fight alongside with. This was also how many addressed Joseph Stalin, as Comrade Stalin. Napoleon also was very tactful, a skill Stalin was known for. Napoleon would study military tactics used by others and try to implement the successful ones in his own battles. Both Napoleon and Stalin both saw use in brute force. Napoleon, after a litter of puppies are born to Jessie and Bluebell, takes the litter for him to raise. The dogs are then transformed into the equivalent of body guards for Napoleon and other pigs. This is similar to the excessive force used by Stalin in battle. Stalin was known for favoring a strong military. The Foreign Language Publishing House in Moscow published in 1950 a paper about Stalin and the Soviet Armed Forces. In the paper, it states, "Stalin is the creator of the advanced, Soviet military science." (Nikolai Bulganin, 1) Both Stalin and Napoleon saw the power of a strong military, so they put forth the efforts to grow their military. Napoleon had the dogs to guard him, Stalin had his military. They were to forcefully enforce the laws so that no one would rise up against, or in some cases, speak against, the wishes of the leaders.

But it was at this moment Napoleon stood up and, casting a peculiar sidelong look at Snowball, uttered a high-pitched whimper of a kind no one had ever heard him utter before. At this there was a terrible baying sound outside, and nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars came bounding into the bar. They dashed straight for Snowball, who only sprang from his place just in time to escape their snapping jaws.

In this scenario, Napoleon used his dogs to run out Snowball, who was in opposition to Napoleon. Other sources, such as History.com, states that Joseph Stalin had banished other potential leaders from Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as was the case with Leon Trotsky. In other places in the book, it is evident that Napoleon abuses this force, such as with the slaughter of the "guilty" animals that supposedly conspired with Snowball. Napoleon is a near mirror image of Stalin and his beliefs.

One of the most influential characters in the book Animal Farm is another pig named Snowball. Snowball is an influential leader, and had the potential to do great things. He helped found the idea of Animalism, which was founded on the idea that all animals are equal. He is also very smart, as is seen when he is designing the windmill for the farm.

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His imagination had now run far beyond chaff-cutters and turnip-slicers. Electricity, he said, could operate threshing machines, ploughs, harrows, rollers, and reapers and binders, besides supplying every stall with its own electric light, hot and cold water, and an electric heater. (Orwell, 52)

Snowball's creativity and intelligence can be shown throughout the plans he has for helping make every animal's job easier. He was in favor of three day work weeks instead of six day work weeks so that the animals were not pushed as hard. In the book, Snowball is usually portrayed as siding more with equality amongst all animals instead of special privileges. About half way through the book, Snowball is run out by Napoleon's dogs. Snowball is usually compared to Leon Trotsky. As stated in a previous paragraph, Trotsky was run out of the USSR because his idea of Trotskyism opposed that of Stalinism. He was seen as a potential threat to Stalin, so Stalin decided to run him out of the country. After Snowball is run out of the Animal Farm, nothing definitive is ever said about where he went. He is used mainly as a scapegoat for Napoleon whenever something goes wrong. Such was the case with the windmill.

"Comrades," he said quietly, "do you know who is responsible for this? Do you know the enemy who has come in the night and overthrown our windmill? SNOWBALL!" he suddenly roared in a voice of thunder. "Snowball has done this thing!"

Even though it was explicitly stated that the time period was November, when the strong winds come up from the south-west, and that there was a strong storm the night before, Napoleon still blames Snowball for the windmill that was now in ruins. Snowball is used as a scapegoat throughout the rest of the book so that Napoleon can do whatever he pleases to and have someone else to blame for its consequences.

As the book progresses, there are nine dogs that start playing a significant role in the book and its representation of the Bolshevik Revolution. These are dogs born by Jessie and Bluebell. When they are young puppies, they are taken away by Napoleon so that he can train them. He tells the other animals that he is focused on the education of the young, so he uses that as a reason to train the dogs in private. When the dogs come back, they have been trained as body guards. On page 53, it was stated that "At this there was a terrible baying sound outside, and nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars came bounding into the bar." (Orwell, 53) The puppies were no longer innocent puppies, but large dogs that were to act as Napoleons own private military officers. Under Stalin, there was what was referred to as the Red Army. Public Broadcasting Services states in their archives of Russian history, it discusses the leading officers in the military units. PBS states, in regards to these officers, "While they mostly remained loyal to the Soviets, political officers, called "advisors" were attached to all units. They watched over the reliability of the officers and provided propaganda." (PBS) The dogs could be considered similar in how they were taught. These dogs were to provide propaganda, in this

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case fear tactics of what would happen if someone was to oppose Napoleon, to keep all the units, or animals, in line with their jobs. These dogs were terrifying to the other animals. And Napoleon would use these dogs in any scenario he saw as needed. When others spoke to oppose him, he used the dogs to quietly threaten the safety of those animals. Joseph Stalin uses similar tactics for enforcing laws and his own ways in Russia. He was known for using his military guards as potential silencers of anyone who made noise against him. The nine dogs in Animal Farm were representative of the military force used by Stalin.

After the animals have successfully rebelled from the Jones', the pigs establish an idea called Animalism. To simplify such an advanced idea, they shortened it down to seven commandments. They are as follows:

1. 1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy
2. 2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend
3. 3. No animal shall wear clothes
4. 4. No animal shall sleep in a bed
5. 5. No animal shall drink alcohol
6. 6. No animal shall kill any other animal
7. 7. All animals are equal (Orwell, 24-25)

They are referred to in the book as the seven commandments. These are the rules to live by according to the leaders, because if the people are to live by these rules, everything will work out. It cannot go without noticing that in the Bible, there is a set of Ten Commandments that are rules that work in a similar way. It is possible that there was a reference made to the Bible. As well, there was a raven named Moses in the story. Moses would come to the animals after a hard day's work and talk to them about Sugarcandy Mountain "where it was Sunday seven days a week, clover was in season all the year round, and lump sugar and linseed cake grew on the hedges." As is common knowledge, biblically speaking, Moses was the Israelite who led the Jewish people out of the command of Pharaoh in Egypt. Moses spoke of a promised land in which was flowing with milk and honey. A similar idea could be said about Moses the raven. He spoke of a special land where it was easy to live. An interpretation of this is based upon a quote from Karl Marx. In Karl Marx book, A Contribution to the Critique of Hengel's Philosophy of Right, Marx states that,

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. (Marx, introduction par. 4)

Analysis of these quotes can reveal that to Marx and Orwell, the idea of religion was nothing

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more than something that helped keep the people going. It allowed for them to work another day, to fight another battle. It was the opium in which they strived for. So in this book, religion and Moses were just wild thoughts that were to help keep the animals working, even though the end was grim.

Animal Farm is a book that is commonly thought to be just a fable, or make a believe story. But under an in-depth analysis, much more was hidden under the surface. What appeared to be a story about animals freeing themselves from captivity is actually a satirical book that brings to light political leaders and Communism. It uses pigs as Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky. The story is one of deception, military strategy and abuse, and corrupt leadership. Orwell discusses the idea that not all much had changed between the old regime and the new rule. In the end, the animals looked from man to pig, from pig to man, then back from man to pig, but they could not see a difference between them. And because the story was so intricately described and so accurate in its allegory, it has been considered one of the greatest satirical works of time.

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