

English 10 Honors/Pre-Ap Summer Reading Assignment

The Book - *Animal Farm*

For this assignment, you'll be reading the novel *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, which you must purchase or obtain on your own. We recommend that you purchase the book in physical form so you can annotate it and bring it to class (as opposed to an electronic version for a phone or a Kindle). You can always check the book out from the library.

For the sake of consistency in page numbering, we suggest you obtain the Signet Classics edition of the book, with the white paperback cover that has the image of a pink pig under the title. This edition is available at Amazon for a low price and is also in our school library.

Keep the book and bring it the first day of class and thereafter as you will use it in group discussions and for writing an essay.

About the Book and Author

George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* in 1946, after observing the rise of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, which he felt were the epitome of oppressive governments that denied people their freedoms and rights. The novel is considered an **allegory**, a story that conveys a symbolic meaning. In this case, Orwell is criticizing the Bolshevik (communist) Revolution in Russia in particular, and any revolution that betrays its own principles. In order to fully appreciate the hidden meaning of the book, you must learn about the Russian Revolution of 1917 and know its key figures, including Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky, all of whom are symbolized by characters in the book. Students need to watch the youtube videos on the revolution by Keith Hughes and by Epic History. **You must also read the introduction included here.**

The Assignments:

Annotated bookmarks: as you read the book, highlight or mark key passages that reveal insights into character, plot, tone, theme, motif, and symbols. Then mark these passages with "sticky" notes, which must have a detailed comment from you written on each, that again, reveal some kind of insight into character, plot, tone, theme, motif, and symbols. For full credit **you must have at least 20 annotated bookmarks** throughout the book, **numbered in order from 1-20**. These will help you write the essay on the book and do well on the reading test.

Total Points: Major part of first quarter grade - exact points to be determined by your teacher. Book with annotations due first day of school.

(more on back)

Dialectical Journal: Write a detailed journal as you read the book on sheets of lined paper that are divided into two columns, with the quote on the left side and your comment/response on the right. After the quote, include the page number in parenthesis. Write neatly and legibly. You've done this before so you know what it looks like. These entries from the book should be significant and should reveal that you are thinking about the passage and using higher order levels of thinking. Your comments can raise a question, predict what will happen, and/or explain symbolic meaning, or anything else that is thoughtful and revealing. Each response must be **at least 4-5 sentences long**. These entries can **not** merely repeat what you have in your sticky notes. You must have 20 separate entries in the journal with 20 thoughtful responses to get full credit. **Number each entry and cite each passage according MLA requirements.** See the example below:

Total Points: Major part of first quarter grade - exact points to be determined by your teacher.

Due: first day of school

Example of dialectical journal entry

<p>1) "And among us animals let there be perfect unity, perfect comradeship in the struggle" (Orwell 10).</p>	<p>This quote reveals Old Major's naive belief that the revolution will unify all the animals. Revolutions are often followed by divisions and infighting, as was the case in the Russian Revolution. The animals will have to truly work together and keep their fledgling democratic ideals alive if they are to be unified. This didn't happen in the Russian Revolution as one side emerged as the totalitarian rule of force - will this happen on the farm? It seems likely their revolution will go the same way, especially since the animals have no real strong democratic traditions to begin with.</p>
---	--

Warning: do not use this quote or the response in your own journal. Come up with your own quote and response.

To help with your analysis, choose from one of the following "starters" to comment on the quote. (Underlined phrases should be replaced by specifics):

- This quote/imagery reveals
- The author (Orwell) seems to feel that
- The character feels that
- The detail/quote is effective/out of place/important because
- The author (Orwell) uses this technique (name it) to...
- The setting/description gives the effect of
- The tone of this passage
- This is ironic because

(See following page)

Warning:

You are in an honors class with high expectations, so be sure to do the assignment honestly. It's called an honors class for a reason. **Late work will not be accepted.** Be sure to fully read the book as you will be responsible for knowing the content, including the characters, the plot, and any possible themes. You will write an essay on the novel at some point during the first two weeks of school and take a reading test on the book the first day.

You may refer to such online sources as Sparknotes for support, but this is not a substitute for reading the book. We teachers read Sparknotes and other online summary sites, and we will know what work and analysis is your own and what is not, **so do your own work.**

Questions? Email a teacher for help:

jpika@lodiussd.org

ssnider@lodiussd.org

***ANIMAL FARM* Introduction**

In a Nutshell

Move over, Babe and Wilbur: there's a new talking pig in town.

In fact, there are a lot of talking pigs. And talking horses and birds and cows, for that matter. But George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is no Jim Henson-inspired comedy about a pig who just wants to be a sheepdog, or bittersweet tale about interspecies love—it's a biting satire about tyrannical governments and a dark warning about the perils of Russian communism.

Today, *Animal Farm* is a classic. (In fact, we have a sneaking suspicion that you're here because you're being required to read it.) But when Orwell wrote the book in 1943-44, he could hardly find a publisher. In fact, no one took him up on it until 1945, and even then readers weren't too keen on it.

You see, *Animal Farm* takes a blow at the Soviet Union, especially its leader Josef Stalin—but the Soviet Union was an *ally* in the U.S.'s fight against Nazi Germany in World War II. Criticism of Stalin wasn't banned in wartime British press, but it wasn't exactly encouraged, either. Stalin may have been bad, but Hitler was worse. When publishing house Faber & Faber rejected Orwell, an editor pointed out that it was simply distasteful to depict Stalin as "a pig."

But Orwell was no knee-jerk anticommunist. In fact, he was a socialist, a simple word for a complex and varied set of beliefs. Let's just say that socialists believe that the means of production (like factories or businesses) should be controlled by the workers for the good of everyone, rather than controlled by a tiny subset of owners for their own profit. In other words, Wal-Mart should be owned by Wal-Mart employees, rather than by the Walton family. (Does that sound crazy? There are co-ops and employee-owned business today that operate in just that way.)

Since communism is an extreme form of socialism, Orwell actually fought alongside communists in the Spanish Civil War during the 1930s. Their enemy was Spanish leader Francisco Franco and his fascist followers, who believed in strong, militaristic national identity united under an authoritarian leader—think the Wizard World under Voldemort, or Mordor under Sauron. But Orwell quickly realized that the communists he was fighting for could be just as totalitarian and oppressive as the fascists.

In fact, his time in Spain made him realize "how easily totalitarian propaganda can control the opinion of enlightened people in democratic countries." And that's where *Animal Farm* comes in: it shows Stalin's version of communism as the exact opposite of socialist values—as a brutal, oppressive, and unequal regime. Not that he saw Western leaders as much better. Brutal, drunken humans represent western leaders in *Animal Farm*—and the animals are more afraid of the humans regaining control than they are of the Stalinist pigs.

Orwell satirizes *all* political tyranny. He's just generous like that.

Okay. But why animals? Why not just write an essay? (Orwell was pretty good at the ol' essay-writing gig, after all.) Or why not write a novel with actual people, like his 1949 political satire *Nineteen Eighty-Four*?

Well, come on. If you're going to get a lecture about the evils of political tyranny, wouldn't you rather hear it from a talking horse?

WHAT IS ANIMAL FARM ABOUT AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror and said, "I'm going to be the President of the United States one day"? Or—let's take it down a notch—have you ever run for class president on a platform of better cafeteria food and free sodas for all?

As your election gift, we'll wrap up for you our very own dog-eared copy of *Animal Farm*. Using barnyard animals, it provides (practically in bullet point form, and in less than 200 pages) over 200 years of knowledge about leadership and power, distilling all of the mistakes great (and not-so-great) leaders have made over time. Chief among them? Letting the power go to your head and keeping all the free soda for yourself.

Seriously, Mr. or Ms. Future President. Go read this book right now.

