Understanding Animal Farm: An Allegory for Russia (Soviet Union) and the Russian Revolution

* George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* is an allegory. Therefore, the novel has both a literal and figurative meaning.
  + On the surface, *Animal Farm* tells the story of farm animals who are tired of obeying the orders of a cruel master. This is the story’s literal meaning.
    - A pig is a pig.
  + It is important to understand that *Animal Farm* also has a figurative meaning. This novel also tells the story of Soviet Russia during the Russian Revolution.
    - A pig is a political leader.

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| **Real Life (Russia)** | ***Animal Farm*** |
| **Tsar Nicholas II** |  |
| * Tsar Nicholas II was Russia’s last tsar. He was part of the Romanov dynasty that ruled Russia for over 300 years! * Russian tsars lived in a magnificent palace called the Kremlin. * Tsar Nicholas was narrow-minded and incompetent. He was an autocrat – a self-appointed ruler who holds all the political power.   Power  Powerless  Wealth  Poor  **1 man**  Tsar  **Aristocracy**  **Military**  **Agriculture**  **Industry**  **– Proletariat –**  **Workers from**  **Privatized Farms and Industry**  **(owned by aristocracy)**  Millions of People |  |

**Pre-Revolution Russia**

Power

Powerless

Wealth

Poor

**1 man**

**Agriculture**

**Industry**

**Pre- revolution**

**“Manor Farm”**

|  |  |
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| **Real Life (Russia)** | ***Animal Farm*** |
| ***Karl Marx (Communism)*** |  |
| * Marx believed the workers (proletarians) were the true producers of wealth. But the capitalists (bourgeoisie) owned the means of production – land and industry. Therefore, the capitalists made huge profits while the workers earned just enough to survive. Not fair! * Marx called for “workers of the world” to unite against their capitalist oppressors. * Marx believed that eventually the proletariat would become so numerous and so impoverished that they would rise up against the capitalist system throughout the world. |  |

**No Man**

**Self-governance**

**Collectively Owned Agriculture**

**Collectively Owned Industry**

**Mandatory Military Service**

**For All Citizens**

Power

Wealth

**Vision of Communist Rule**

**(and also of Animalism)**

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| **Real Life (Russia)** | ***Animal Farm*** |
| ***October Revolution (1917)*** |  |
| * Majority of population faced poverty, hunger, and unemployment * In March 1917, there were food riots and army mutinies in Petrograd (a Russian city). Tsar Nicholas couldn’t cope with the difficult situation, so he abdicated the throne. * Revolts led by hungry workers erupted across Russia * 1917 – Tsar Nicholas II was overthrown * Soviets gain popular support by promising: Land, Bread, Peace |  |

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| **Real Life (Russia)** | ***Animal Farm*** |
| ***Leon Trotsky*** |  |
| * Trotsky was a brilliant intellectual and speaker who organized the Red Army and led it to victory against the White Armies in the Civil War of 1918-1919. * Trotsky and Stalin disagreed on Russia’s future. Trotsky wanted the Communist revolution to be worldwide. Stalin wanted to protect the Soviet Union from outside forces (keep communism in the USSR). * Stalin defeated Trotsky at the Communist Party Congress in 1927 and gained control of the secret police. * Trotsky was chased away by the KGB (secret police) and fled to Mexico City, where a Soviet agent killed him with an axe in 1940. |  |

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| **Real Life (Russia)** | ***Animal Farm*** |
| ***Joseph Stalin*** |  |
| * While most Russian leaders belonged to the middle-class, Joseph Stalin was born into the peasant class. * Unlike Trotsky, Stalin was not well-educated and could not discuss Marxist theory on a sophisticated level. * Stalin was named General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1922. He was in charge of dull paperwork for the Communist party. * Though this position seemed unimportant, Stalin used his position as secretary to gain supporters for his future rise to power. He eventually defeated Trotsky in the struggle for power. |  |

Power

Powerless

Wealth

Poor

**1 man**

**Stalin**

**Secret Police**

**(KGB)**

**Military**

**Agriculture**

**Industry**

**– Proletariat –**

**Workers from**

**Government Farms and Industry**

**(owned by Stalin)**

Millions of People

**Communism under Stalin**

Power

Powerless

Wealth

Poor

**1 man**

**Agriculture**

**Industry**

**y**

Animal Farm under

Napoleon

|  |  |
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| **Real Life (Russia)** | ***Animal Farm*** |
| ***“Five Year Plan”*** |  |
| * Stalin instituted the “Five Years Plan” to increase economic growth, but ordered farms to give most of their produce to the government. * Peasants often slaughtered their animals and burned down their farm buildings rather than give them to the Soviets! * Peasants who opposed Stalin were sent to labor camps, deported, or executed. * The Five-Year Plan created a man-made famine. Five million people starved to death or were executed as a result! |  |
| ***Purge Trials*** |  |
| * By 1936, Stalin began to use what would become known as the Moscow Purge Trials to control workers.   + High ranking officials were arrested, forced to confess to false charges, and then executed   + About 70% of the Party leadership became victims of the Great Purge.   + These trials served as an example of what would happen to people if they opposed Stalin.   + Stalin was seen as protecting Russia * Stalin maintained power by using political and social terror.   + KGB, Cheka, and system of spies |  |
| ***Stalin’s Control of Media*** |  |
| * In addition to his campaign of terror, Stalin also controlled all media sources. * Stalin could effectively rewrite history to suit his political/military needs. |  |

**Other Connections**

[](https://sites.google.com/a/puhsd.k12.ca.us/mr-agee-s-english-class/english-10-1/animal-farm/russian-revolution-allegory-jigsaw/allegorical-connections/Flags.jpg?attredirects=0)

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| **Real Life Russia** | ***Animal Farm*** |
| **Propaganda in Stalin's government; Pravda newspaper**   * worked for Stalin to support his image * used any lie to convince the people to follow Stalin * benefited from the fact that education was controlled |  |
| **Religion**   * Marx said it's the "opiate of the people" to make them easy to manipulate * used to make people not complain and do their work * later, religion was tolerated because people would work * Stalin knew religion could stop violent revolutions- even against him |  |
| **Vain, selfish people in Russia and world**   * some people didn't care about revolution * only thought about themselves * went to other countries that offered more for them |  |

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| **Real Life Russia** | ***Animal Farm*** |
| **Dedicated, but tricked communist supporters**   * people believed Stalin because he was "Communist" * many stayed loyal after it was obvious that Stalin was a tyrant * they were betrayed by Stalin who ignored and killed them |  |
| **Skeptical people in Russia and outside Russia**   * weren't sure revolution would change anything * realized that a crazy leader can call himself communist * knew that communism wouldn't work with power hungry leaders |  |
| **Germany and England**   * world powers didn’t trust revolution * Germany makes treaty, Russia exits World War I in 1917 * Hitler attacks Soviet Union in World War II; Russians win at Battle of Stalingrad * England too busy to help at first |  |