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.

PowerPowerlessWealthPoor**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”**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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
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| ***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.
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**Other Connections**



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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
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| **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
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