

Pre-Read Worksheet: Fill this worksheet before you read. An understanding of these terms will help you as you read.

The Author: The writings of George Orwell (born Eric Arthur Blair) focuses on social injustice, opposition to totalitarianism, and support of democratic socialism.

The Background: When *Animal Farm* was published, the West was supportive of Stalin because Russia assisted in allied victories in Germany. With the world focused, and rightfully so, on atrocities in Germany and the aggression of Japan, (*Animal Farm* was released the same month the US dropped atomic bombs on Japan.) Stalin's propaganda was able to gain traction in Russia. Orwell feared Stalin's actions, but to express his fears, he needed to tread carefully. He used satire to throw light on the Russian situation while keeping an acceptable distance from political tangles. His choice to use an un-opinionated third person narrator further softens his criticism.

Define the following:

1. Imperial Autocracy:

2. Totalitarianism:

3. Democratic Socialism:

4. Satire:

5. Fable:

6. Allegory:

Research a bit.

7. Who is Karl Marx? What did he predict would happen to cause every country to become Communist? Note where you have found the information used in this answer. A web address is sufficient.

History and Literature Connect

Instructions: Consider what you have just read, and using the information in this handout, answer the following questions.

Russia was an imperial autocracy from the time of Peter the Great in the 1700's. The nation became quite powerful in the 1800's after defeating Napoleon. According to Marxist theory, the meteoric rise of socialism in Russia was surprising. Always a country with a definite and wide separation of social classes, rumblings and revolts to help the lower class began in the late 1800's/early 1900's.

By the early 1900's, two parties--the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks had formed. This division, the strain of WWI, and numerous hardships came to a boil in October 1917. The October Revolution established a new government based on Communist ideals.

1. What event in *Animal Farm* represents this revolution?

When Lenin and his collaborators came to power in 1917, his New Economic Policy (NEP) increased agricultural production, but the government was not able to quiet all the rumblings and dissatisfactions. The former elite (bourgeoisie) as well as the working class (proletariat) were dissatisfied and were garnering foreign support for their cause.

2. Which character represents Lenin?
3. Which character best represents the bourgeoisie? Why?
4. Which best character represents the working class? Why?

In response to the public's dissent, the leaders in the government formed the Red Army. Led by Leon Trotsky, the Red Army launched an internal campaign of terror called the Red Terror that intended to root out and kill the "internal enemy." Thousands of people, many of whom were only suspected of being anti-communist, were slaughtered in horribly cruel ways.

5. Who represents Leon Trotsky, and how is the Red Army represented in this novella?

This discord turned into the Russian Civil War. Lenin lived through this Civil War and saw the creation of the Soviet Union in 1922, but he died in 1924. (His embalmed body is still preserved and on display in Red Square.) He left behind Leon Trotsky and Josef Stalin, two power-hungry politicians, to battle for leadership of Soviet Russia.

6. Who is Stalin in this book?

How do you know?

Trotsky's skills as a speaker were no match for Stalin's rhetorical prowess. (Many times in history, the better speaker wins power.) Stalin, at a moment when his faction was strongest, named them Bolshevik (majority) and branded Trotsky and the opposition Menshevik (minority). While Stalin's faction would not always be a true majority, their branding indicated power. Propaganda like this would play a large part in Stalin's control of Russia. Trotsky was defeated by Stalin and internal alliances, and was then expatriated along with many other leaders during the Great Purge. He was eventually killed while in exile in Mexico.

7. Which character represents Trotsky?

8. Based on the character representations in the book, do you think Trotsky would have been a better leader than Stalin? Explain your answer using evidence from the novella.

9. Who represents the Soviet propaganda machine led by Vyacheslav Molotov?

Stalin maintained power and led the Soviet Union for the next quarter century. He was determined to bring Russia out of its long standing economic deficiency including the Grain Crisis which was caused, in great part, by Stalin's suspicions of grain producers and his forced industrialization of Russia. He abandoned the NEP and began implementing new "Five Year" plans. Even with the success of these plans, the people were dissatisfied with conditions. To quell unrest and prevent rebellion, Stalin used tactics of terror and deception. To protect himself and his associates, Stalin began "The Purges" leading to the condemnation and death of many within his own party. He increased internal espionage and turned citizens against one another using fear tactics.

10. What fear tactics are used in *Animal Farm*?

11. Where, in the novella, do readers see old plans being replaced by new plans and deception of the people in general?

Stalin was worried about the quick ascension to power of the fascist Nazi party and Hitler. However suspicious he was, he kept Germany close by signing a non-aggression pact and continuing to do business with Hitler's Germany.

12. How are Hitler and Germany represented in the book?

Germany broke this pact and invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. This fight took a terrible toll on Russia. In the siege of Leningrad, 1.5 million citizens of the city died of starvation, cold, or German bombardment. Overall 20 million Russians died, but the Russians did prevail in pushing the Nazis out and eventually seized control of Berlin in 1945.

A few months later, *Animal Farm* hit bookshelves. Stalin would remain in control of the USSR until his death in 1953.

13. A satire or allegory could have been written about the Soviet situation using people as characters rather than animals. Do you think this would have been more or less effective? Explain.

14. What problems might Orwell have faced if he had used human characters? How does the use of animal characters solve these problems?