CYPRESS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Summer Reading Assignment

AP Language and Composition - 12

Animal Farm by George Orwell

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Annotation and Assignment Instructions
Animal Farm by George Orwell

Animal Farm is a haunting story about farm animals who rebel against their harsh master. After a brief struggle, the animals successfully overthrow Farmer Jones. They take control of the farm and seek to establish a government based on the equality of all animals. As you read, however, you begin to realize that George Orwell's novel is more than a simple animal story. Orwell soon challenges his readers' thoughts about the difference between what political leaders say and do and how intelligent people are swayed to follow their lead. This novel makes a political statement that can be applied to any generation. Each animal represents some part of human nature – both good and bad. **Included in this packet is helpful information to assist your understanding. Please read and annotate the supplemental background packet before the first day of school.** As part of your summer reading assignment, you will annotate your text and complete discussion questions in paragraph form. Details for both requirements are found below.

Annotations – FIFTEEN MINIMUM

Annotating keeps the reader engaged with the text. While you are reading, use one or more of these strategies to mark the book and include your thoughts and questions.

1. Write comments in the margin, especially to ask questions or relate to characters. Make connections to your own life, etc.
2. Star any passages that are very important: events, decisions, or cause/effect relationships.
3. Underline any sentences that make you think or personally appeal to you.
4. Circle/highlight words that are unfamiliar.
5. Bracket areas that cause confusion or misunderstanding for you OR passages that seem significant to the overall plot and/or author's purpose

Discussion Questions: Answer each of the following questions in paragraph format with topic sentences and substantial commentary to support your claim.

1. What do you consider a prominent THEME of this novel and explain why. Remember – a theme is a complete sentence representing a universal truth. This could also be viewed as Orwell's most significant argument. Explain thoroughly.

2. Which character disturbs or impresses you the most? Explain fully. Give two specific examples.

3. Examine our current government situation – are we similar or different to this allegorical tale? Explain your answer with multiple examples and developed commentary.

4. Orwell reveals how leaders and followers in a society can act in ways that destroy freedom and equality. Choose one leader and one follower from the novel and explain how the behavior of each contributes to the loss of freedom and equality on Animal Farm.

Annotations and TYPED responses will be due on the first day of class in August.

- You will be turning in a printed copy of this assignment as well as uploading for originality detection on the first day of class. NO handwritten assignments will be accepted.

- This assignment will count as a formative grade for the first quarter and will be subjectively graded for the following: originality, organization, MLA format, and length/depth of commentary.

- It is imperative that students have a complete understanding of their novel as multiple assignments will spring from the comprehension of each book: discussions, quizzes, essays, and possible projects.

Background Information

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The Russian Revolution consisted of two separate revolutions that radically changed the political system and way of life in early-twentieth-century Russia and culminated in the establishment of the Soviet Union, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

The February Revolution of 1917:

In February 1917, a popular revolution led to the overthrow of Czar Nicholas II of Russia, who had reigned as the Emperor and Autocrat of Russia since November 1894. A conservative ruler, Czar Nicholas, the last of the Romanov Dynasty, had long been considered inadequate due to the corruption that pervaded his government and his inability to comprehend the changing needs of the Russian economy. Poverty was wide-spread among Russia's working-class. The growth of urban industries and manufacturing enterprises created a new base of urban workers, but these workers were not paid livable wages and worked long hours only to live in dire poverty Russian workers began to resent Nicholas for his failure to bring the Russian economy up to the standards of other European countries.

Calls for increased economic opportunity and political equality were fueled by Nicholas's empty promises for reform and a growing desire for a more democratic society. When Russia engaged in World War I, its military suffered considerable losses, and additional food shortages ensued. Failing to implement the reforms he had previously promised, Czar Nicholas helplessly witnessed as, on February 23, 1917, Russian workers left factories unattended, abandoned their work stations, and took to the streets in protest. They demanded food and vociferously articulated their criticism of the government. Workers were soon joined by students, dissenting members of the military, teachers, and other Russian citizens who sympathized with their demands. Without the support of either the military or his cabinet members, Czar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate on March 2, 1917. A Provisional Government, designed to lead the way toward a Russian republic, was implemented immediately

The October Revolution of 1917:

The second stage of the Russian Revolution occurred in October 1917 when the Bolshevik Party, under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and the workers' soviets (councils), abruptly terminated the authority of the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks claimed to represent the needs and interests of Russia's urban workers and peasants. They promised a redistribution of land to the peasants and a guarantee of democratic liberties, thus championing the socialist ideals formulated by the influential economic philosopher Karl Marx in the late nineteenth century This precipitated the Russian Civil War that ended in 1921 with the formation of the Soviet Union (USSR).

Lenin argued that these goals could be achieved only if the Provisional Government was replaced and governmental power firmly assigned to the Bolsheviks. After Lenin's death in 1924, Leon Trotsky, an important fighter in the early revolution, and Joseph Stalin engaged

in a struggle for power. Trotsky was soon exiled from Russia, allowing Joseph Stalin to take over the Bolshevik party-now called the Communist Party-and to redefine Marx's original socialist ideals. Lenin's and later, Stalin's rule quickly departed from the original socialist and democratic demands of the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet Union devolved into a government-controlled totalitarian state.

THE IDEOLOGIES OF SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

Socialism:

Socialism is an ideology advocating the distribution of wealth among all members of a society, achieved through community control over its citizens' possessions and means of production. This social control can be administered through small councils or groups or: by the government on behalf of the people.

In the late nineteenth century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels formulated the principles of modern socialism. Marx and Engels believed that any capitalist society would ultimately face the inevitable struggle between the poor working classes and the rich bourgeoisie (those who owned the factories that employed the workers). This confrontation, according to Marx and Engels, would be followed by a socialist revolution. The socialist movement would completely eliminate the idea of private ownership of capital by placing ownership of the means of production into the hands of the State, thus ending the war between the classes.

Once a society had passed through the stages of capitalism and socialism, Marx envisioned that it would reach a third and final stage. Marx believed this stage would be marked by a completely classless society he characterized as Communist.

Communism:

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was fueled by Marxist Socialist ideals. The Russian population desired a more democratic government and sympathized with the plight of the working poor. Under Lenin's guidance, the Bolshevik Party-later called the Communist Party-united all means of production under state control and created a government controlled by workers' soviets (councils). Over the next few years, however, the government became increasingly authoritarian. Revolutionary fighter Leon Trotsky still clung to the democratic ideals of the original socialist movement, but he, and others, were overpowered by the leadership of Joseph Stalin, who eventually exiled Trotsky and took over the government almost single-handedly

Stalin proclaimed that he would realize the ideals of Socialism and Marxist Communism by generating a massive program of industrialization. Although Stalin still claimed to follow the principles of Marx and Lenin, it soon became clear that he had seized power in order to reinvent the Soviet Union as an authoritarian state in which *he* would function as an absolute dictator. Stalin maintained his power by threatening and eliminating his enemies, using propaganda to maintain social control, and utilizing a personal police force to execute his orders. Stalin's

communism is considered by many critics-among them George Orwell-to be a perversion and misinterpretation of the communist and socialist ideals of Karl Marx.

ELEMENTS OF TOTALITARIANISM AND AUTHORITARIANISM

Totalitarianism:

In a totalitarian state, the government exercises firm control over the public and private lives of its citizens and usually follows a particular ideology. For example, Stalin proclaimed the Soviet Union to be an ensign of Communist ideology. In addition, totalitarian states are led by dictators who retain strict control over their subjects.

Authoritarianism:

Authoritarianism is a form of government control comparable or almost identical to totalitarianism. In an authoritarian state, the government, under the leadership of a dictator, strictly controls the population, often through overt oppression or the elimination of democratic rights and liberties. In an authoritarian state, the government single-handedly writes and enacts laws. Citizens have no real opportunities for participation. Authoritarian states rely heavily on propaganda in order to control the population. Some techniques frequently employed in the maintenance of absolute control are the oversimplification of ideas, false and exaggerated patriotism , the promotion of group mentality, censorship, and an elaborate leadership cult. Hitler's dictatorship in Nazi Germany, or Stalin's oppressive government in the Soviet Union, are examples of authoritarianism.

THE THEME OF PROPAGANDA

Propaganda is a form of communication that intends to affect people's beliefs and behaviors rather than merely communicate ideas. Most forms of propaganda rely heavily on emotional, rather than rational, appeal. It is often intentionally misleading, relying on half-trutl1, generalities, logical fallacies and outright lies in order to achieve its ends.

Propagandistic ideas may seem plausible and compelling, but are often fallacious, incorrect, and dangerous. Propaganda is often directed against a particular political, religious, cultural, or social group, or employed in order to promote a specific political agenda. Thus, it is often used during times of war or crisis in order to stir up hatred against a particular country or group.

Some techniques frequently employed in the creation of propaganda are the oversimplification of ideas, broad generalizations and stereo typing, false and exaggerated patriotism, the promotion of a group mentality, censorship, and the use of oversimplified language and slogans. Additionally, propaganda is often designed to create a false sense of collective fear or collective euphoria in order to lure people to blindly accept the policies or ideas of their leaders. One of the most crucial characteristics of propaganda is the deliberate manipulation of language.

In *Animal Farm,* Orwell relies heavily on the theme of propaganda in order to voice his criticism of the Communist regime that had taken control of the Soviet Union following the revolutions of 1917. Although Orwell himself was sympathetic to Marxist socialist ideals, he considered Soviet Communism to be a perverted version of Socialism. Indeed, *Animal Farm* clearly illustrates that Orwell recognized the Soviet Communist regime as a totalitarian and undemocratic government.

The manipulation of language stands at the core of *Animal Farm.* In chapter I, Major the pig rouses the other animals by telling them of a dream he had in which he envisioned a future free of oppression and human dictatorship. The animals are excited about the prospect of equality and self-determination; they wholeheartedly embrace Major's socialist ideals. After Major's death, however, the other pigs-predominantly Napoleon-begin the gradual manipulation of language characteristic of a successful propaganda machinery The pigs become responsible for the oversimplification and falsification of the Seven Commandments originally painted on the wall of the barn and for spreading slogans such as "four legs good, two legs bad," which even the least intelligent of the animals can comprehend.

In addition to creating a sense of collective belonging, these slogans, as well as the propaganda song *Beasts of England ,* aid Napoleon and the pigs in generating a group mentality that requires the blind acceptance of ideas and eliminates dissent and rebellion. In fact, the exploitation of less intelligent animals as well as the deliberate denial of education to the bulk of animals other than pigs play a crucial role in enabling Napoleon and the pigs to foster an environment in which they can create a totalitarian government.

Other propagandistic techniques described in *Animal Farm* include the promotion of a leader cult (Napoleon is revered as an all-knowing, unapproachable, deity-like figure), elaborate ceremonies, and ritualistic flag-raisings. In the end, Major's vision of a classless, equal society has been replaced by a strict system of government that favors the pigs-corrupted by power-as the ruling class and exploits all other animals as workers. In essence, Orwell's descriptions echo the Communist regime in the Soviet Union and warn of the dangers inherent in the distortion of Socialism.

THE MANIPULATION OF LANGUAGE: LOGICAL FALLACIES

Propaganda, particularly the deliberate manipulation of language, often employs logical fallacies. Logical fallacies are parts of a seemingly reasonable argument that, upon close inspection, turn out to be erroneous or deceptive. A fallacious argument will likely appear to be extremely persuasive. Recognizing logical fallacies, therefore, requires the careful examination of an argument in order to determine its validity

In *Animal Farm,* the pigs, particularly their public propagandist Squealer, constantly use logical fallacies in order to justify their actions and decisions. The other animals are unable to discern the faulty reasoning presented by the pigs because they are uneducated and naive. The reader, however, will recognize the fallacious arguments presented by the pigs as the same arguments often presented by totalitarian leaders in order to defend their status and their decisions.

Logical fallacies have many different names, and some of them are very similar to each other. Some of the most commonly used logical fallacies are:

Hasty Generalization:

Hasty Generalization involves making assumptions about a person or a group of people based on insufficient evidence or examples. Hasty generalizations often include words such as "always," "all," "every," etc. For example, "All women are bad drivers" is a stereotype and, clearly, does not apply to every woman who drives a car. There is not sufficient evidence to support this claim. In *Animal Farm,* Boxer's slogan that "Napoleon is always right" is an example of hasty generalization. Even though Napoleon might be able to make correct decisions most of the time, he cannot be right all of the time. Therefore, to justify an action simply by saying, "We must do this because Napoleon is always right," is a logical fallacy.

Ad Hominem:

Ad Hominem is a practice that involves disagreeing with your opponent, not by explaining why his or her idea is unreasonable, but by attacking your opponent's character or personality. For example, in *Animal Farm,* the animals might argue, "You shouldn't listen to Mollie's ideas; she is a self-centered and arrogant horse." This kind of reasoning is an example of an ad hominem attack. Even though it might be true that Mollie is arrogant and self-centered, it does not necessarily follow that her ideas are unreasonable or bad.

Red Herring:

An arguer who uses a Red Herring goes off on a tangent not immediately related to the argument at hand. While what the arguer is saying might be interesting and relevant in its own right, it has no bearing on the actual argument under discussion. The intent, of course, is to distract the opponent and derail the discussion in the absence of a fair and reasonable response.

Appeal to Authority:

Appeal to Authority is a practice that involves referring to famous or influential people in order to substantiate a claim. A person who uses Appeal to Authority attempts to persuade his audience simply by stating that certain famous or influential people believe the same thing, even if these people are no experts on the discussion in question.

False Cause and Effect:

This fallacy, also known as Post Hoc, asserts that, since one event-A-occurred before another event-B-, A must have caused B. Of course, there is absolutely no necessary causal relation between the two events simply because of the chronology of their occurrence.

False Dichotomy:

In a False Dichotomy, an arguer presents a situation and pretends that the listener has only two choices, when in reality there are more than two options. For example, if the pigs say, "You either support Napoleon, or you prove that you want Mr. Jones to return," they commit a False Dichotomy because the other animals might well prefer a third alternative: not living under the leadership of Napoleon *or* Mr. Jones.

LITERARY AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES: ALLEGORY, FABLE, IRONY, SATIRE

Animal Farm as Allegory:

Allegory is a symbolic narrative, a tale in which thinly-veiled symbols are used to represent ideas or concepts that, for whatever reason, cannot be discussed directly Often moral instruction and lessons for children are constructed as allegories to make the lesson more memorable or understandable.

In an allegory, certain characters, names, objects, or events have fixed meanings that transcend their literal significance. Fables, parables, and morality plays are examples of allegorical texts that employ characters, not for their own sake, but for the symbolic meaning they carry

In *Animal Farm,* most of the characters and events refer to specific figures and events from the time of the Russian Revolution. Although allegorical meanings are rarely absolute, most of the characters and events have clearly been written in order to mirror specific individual figures and occurrences from Soviet history:

- Major -Major's character represents the original socialist ideas formulated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. His powerful speech, in which he relates his drea1TI of freedom to the other animals, fuels the animals' desire for freedom and becomes the catalyst for the rebellion against the humans.

- Mr. Jones -The character of Mr. Jones most likely represents the figure of Czar Nicholas II. The last of the Romanov Dynasty, Russia's Nicholas II ruled cruelly and ineffectively until he was forced to abdicate his throne during the Russian Revolution.

- Napoleon – Napoleon's character is a representation of Joseph Stalin, who, during the Russian Revolution, took over the Bolshevik party and manipulated the original socialist ideals formulated by Karl Marx. Like Stalin, Napoleon eliminates his political opponents (Snowball) and implements a totalitarian dictatorship, protected by his gang of loyal, vicious attack dogs. Napoleon's name, of course, further emphasizes his identity as a totalitarian dictator and a ruthless militarist who betrayed the ideals of his country's revolution and became, in many ways, a worse ruler than the regime he helped replace.

- Snowball – Snowball initially functions as a partner to Napoleon and the other pigs during the early days of the rebellion against Mr. Jones. He believes in Major's socialist vision and is a key player in turning Animal Farm into an independent facility in which animals own the means of production and the results of their labor. Like Napoleon, Snowball seems to support the special treatments the pigs receive, yet he refuses to completely abandon the vision of democracy and equality promised to them by Major. Snowball clearly represents Joseph Stalin's opponents, particularly Leon Trotsky; who struggled alongside Stalin in the early days of the revolution but eventually lost out in a struggled over power with Stalin and was forced into exile. Snowball, too, fought courageously for the animals' freedom in the Battle of the Cowshed. Like Trotsky, Snowball is eventually exiled from Animal Farm, and his previous military achievements on behalf of all animals are denied when he is deemed a traitor.

- Squealer – Squealer heads the propaganda machinery of Napoleon and the pigs. He represents public speakers and media outlets entirely under the control of the Communist Soviet government. Squealer's character is responsible for promoting and realizing the manipulation of language for the benefit of the ruling class (the pigs). He disseminates slogans, offers the "correct" interpretation of the Seven Commandments, and functions as a mediator between Napoleon's will and the other animals. Squealer's powerful rhetoric keeps the majority of the animals quiet and prevents dissent or rebellion.

- Boxer – Boxer symbolizes the most positive aspects of the Russian working classes. He is diligent and hard-working, loyal, dedicated, and trusting. Although Boxer is probably the most sympathetic character in the book, he also exemplifies the dangers inherent in a lack of education and a failure to question the authority of others. Boxer is *too* trusting when it comes to accepting the rule of the pigs; his own slogan, "Napoleon is always right," serves as a too-easy explanation that justifies the pigs' often incomprehensible actions. Boxer's character illustrates the need for education and the necessity to ask uncomfortable questions. His death is a pressing reminder of the exploitation of the working poor.

- Moses – The raven, Moses, tells the other animals of a place called Sugarcandy Mountain, a place not unlike the Christian heaven, where food is always available in abundance. His presence symbolizes the influence of the Church in general and the Russian Orthodox Church in particular. Moses is shunned by the pigs and leaves the farm after the rebellion. In the Soviet Union, Stalin's totalitarian regime was initially unsympathetic toward the Russian Orthodox Church, and religion in general. Later, however, Stalin incorporated the church into his propaganda machinery and used it to influence the Russian people. In *Animal Farm,* Moses, too, eventually returns and gains recognition from the pigs.

- Mr. Pilkington -Mr. Pilkington is the human owner of the neighboring farm, Foxwood. Like all human neighbors, Pilkington is, at first, critical of Animal Farm and supports Mr. Jones' attempts to take the farm back into his power. Later, however, Mr. Pilkington engages in trade with Napoleon and the pigs. The novel closes with an emerging power struggle between Pilkington and the pigs. Mr. Pilkington represents the allied neighbors of early twentieth-century USSR, i.e. the Western powers, including the United States and Great Britain. The Western powers initially attempted to influence Russian policy by engaging in productive talks with the Soviet government. Later, in the days of the Cold War, all cooperation between Russia and the Western powers ceased.

- Mr. Frederick -Mr. Frederick, the owner of Pinchfield Farm, is another human neighbor of Animal Farm. He functions as a representation of Germany, which was emerging as a totalitarian state under Adolf Hitler in the 1930s. Napoleon uses both of his neighbors for his own advancement as long as possible. For a while, he successfully plays Frederick against Pilkington.

- The Battle of the Cowshed – The Battle of the Cowshed is symbolic of the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the working classes overthrew the Czarist government of Nicholas II and vowed to implement a more democratic, socialist regime. More specifically, the Battle of the Cowshed might refer to ensuing struggles with Russia's neighboring countries that initially fought to prevent Russia from establishing a communist state after the Russian Revolution had been completed.

- Animalism -After listening to Major's vision of an equal, democratic society, Napoleon, Snowball, and Squealer develop a philosophy they call Animalism. In its pure, initial form, Animalism incorporates the ideas of Major. Allegorically, Animalism can be understood as the form of Socialism introduced by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. However, As *Animal Farm* progresses, Napoleon and the other pigs increasingly distort the teachings of Animalism for their own purposes.

- The Windmill – The windmill stands as a representation of the Soviet Union's attempts to establish and widen economic power and influence. Stalin organized a detailed program of industrialization after he took over governmental authority: The windmill further symbolizes the diligent and dedicated character of the Soviet working classes, who were committed to erecting the windmill even when faced with failure and considerable setbacks.

Elements of a Fable:

A fable can be characterized as a text that incorporates animals or objects from nature (such as plants, rivers, mountains) as major characters in order to create a story that conveys a definite moral lesson. In order to allow animals or objects to function as main characters in fables, they are endowed with human characteristics, such as the ability to speak, think, reason, etc. In *Animal Farm,* for example, farm animals are the main characters, whereas human beings play minor roles. In all fables, the animal characters are designed to represent particular aspects of human nature. Therefore, the lesson to be learned-or the moral at the end of the story-

always sheds light on faults or problems present in the character or behavior of human beings. Thus, many fables often include covert criticism of particular human beings-or of the human race in general.

While this use of animals to represent humans or human characteristics is a form of *personification ,* it is more accurately referred to as *anthropomorphism,* a common literary technique used in fables and children's literature as well as allegories like *Animal Farm.*

Using animal characters in order to represent faults in humans has many advantages: readers are often more inclined to read criticism and consider the validity of the moral at the end of the story when they do not feel personally attacked by the author, because blame is not placed directly on the reader in particular or on human beings in general. By proxy, readers can choose to recognize the criticism, or they can alternatively choose to read the story literally, that is, as a story about animals and natural objects In the case of *Animal Farm,* for example, most readers quickly recognize Orwell's criticism of the abuse of socialist ideals and the threat of distorted communism. Yet, *Animal Farm* has likewise been marketed as a popular and humorous children's story about animals. Since fables use animals and natural objects as main characters, they usually retain a sense of humor or light-heartedness, which makes them easy to read and comprehend on a literal level (hence *Animal Farm's* association with children's literature).

Elements of Irony:

Irony is a literary device that creates a discrepancy between what a ·writer, speaker, or narrator says in a text and what is understood by the reader or by other characters. There are three major types of irony used in fiction, poetry, and drama: situational irony, verbal irony, and dramatic or tragic irony

Situational Irony:

Situational irony occurs when an event that takes place (in a novel, poem, or on stage in a play) produces a completely unexpected outcome: an apparently good deed that results in disaster, the act of vengeance that results in friendship, etc.

Verbal Irony:

Verbal irony occurs when a writer, speaker, or narrator uses words to say one thing when he really means the opposite of what he says. One popular form of verbal irony is sarcasm.

Dramatic or Tragic Irony:

Dramatic irony occurs when the words or actions of a character reveal his ignorance toward a particular situation, while the reader or the audience has information that the character does not and thus understands the situation perfectly. Drama tic irony is the type of irony most frequently used in *Animal Farm.* For example, after the pigs find a bottle of whiskey that Mr. Jones has left behind on the farm, they spend the night drinking and celebrating. Since the

pigs have never tasted alcohol before, they are unaware of the effects alcohol will have. The next morning, the pigs, particularly Napoleon, feel extremely sick. Since the pigs do not know that what they are experiencing are classic hangover symptoms, they believe that they are dying. Squealer announces to the other animals that "Napoleon is dying l ". This announcement is an excellent example of dramatic irony because the reader immediately understands that Napoleon is, in fact, merely suffering from a hangover. In other words, the reader understands the situation completely, while Napoleon and the pigs do not. The most common results of dramatic irony are humor or suspense.

Elements of Satire:

Satire is a literary form that often relies heavily on irony. In a satirical text, the writer uses humor and wit in order to voice his criticism of a particular person or group of people. Satires cleverly disguise their criticism of their intended target by cloaking it in humorous language, funny characterizations, arid sarcasm. *Animal Farm* can be understood as a satire that aims to warn about the dangers of distorted Socialism and the abuse of power. Written with a clever sense of humor, *Animal Farm* incorporates a cast of naive animal characters that are blind to the reality of their situation, a series of ineffectual human characters who are unable to control a group of barnyard animals even with the use of weapons, and the characters of the pigs, whose efforts to become powerful and human often turns them into the most ridiculous characters of all. For example, the pigs' attempts to walk upright and dress in human clothes effectively evoke a ridiculous image for the reader.