

Unit Organizer--Eighth-Grade English *Animal Farm*

Subject Matter and Relationship to Core Knowledge Sequence:

- ❖ George Orwell's *Animal Farm*
- ❖ Elements of fiction: plot, setting, theme, point of view, conflict (internal/external), climax, character (static/dynamic; flat/round) (*Thinking Framework = Knowledge*)
- ❖ Literary terms (Irony, flashbacks, foreshadowing) (*Thinking Framework = Knowledge*)

Assessments:

- ❖ Class discussion (factual, cause-effect, interpretation, themes, literary terms)
- ❖ Journal entries dealing with key issues in the texts
- ❖ Various worksheets helping make the allegorical connections between the book and the U.S.S.R.
- ❖ An assignment (if time) requiring the student to write his/her own allegorical fable
- ❖ Final group presentation or essay test

Standards for Achievement and Performance:

AFTER THIS UNIT THE STUDENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO...

- ❖ Know what an allegory is.
- ❖ Experience the superiority of an author *showing* an idea/point vs. just *telling* it.
- ❖ Know the key facts of Orwell's life and mission, including his impact on political language.
- ❖ Express the differences between different economic visions/systems like capitalism and socialism.
- ❖ Explain the historical realities of the Russian Revolution and resulting regime according to the story of *Animal Farm*.
- ❖ Understand the role of propaganda in political control.
- ❖ Analyze a totalitarian regime's use of forceful and linguistic manipulation.
- ❖ Know the importance of building empathy between key characters and the audience in order to make a point more forcefully.
- ❖ Further appreciate the power of fiction, opposed to having only reasoned explanation.

Character Traits/Habits of Mind:

Animal Farm is powerful and uncomfortable. Obviously it brutally exposes the evils of the U.S.S.R.'s leadership, but in its defense of the working class, it also pulls no punches in its underhanded critique of controlling aspects of established western systems. Orwell was a socialist, and his voice, if taken critically, can have a balancing effect in beneficial ways. The enemy of this book is not only the U.S.S.R., but also all forms of totalitarianism everywhere. Thus, the unit raises essential questions to develop the quality of citizenship—the type of citizenship that values democratic and fair ideals.

Orwell considered political writing paramount, so he offers a great chance for the students to stretch their views of language's usefulness and impact. Writing that *shows* is more powerful

than writing that merely *tells*. The show needs to be substantially worth it, but it still needs to be a show. Orwell could have gotten away with merely writing essays. He was a talented essayist, and the students know this as they studied an Orwell essay in 7th grade (“Shooting an Elephant”), but he delved into fiction and even in the aforementioned essay he uses a story to make his point (it is a narrative essay). This is one of the most important language arts principles/habits that the students can take with them into the rest of their lives.

Previous Unit(s):

- ❖ Vocabulary
- ❖ Essays and Speeches

Next Unit(s):

- ❖ This is the last unit of the year.