

Animal Farm

George Orwell

George Orwell (1903 –1950)

- Journalist, novelist, and essayist
- Also wrote *1984*, a famous dystopian novel
- Lower-upper-middle class: educated as a scholarship student in expensive and exclusive English boarding schools
- Purposely bought ragged clothes so he could live in the poorest areas of London, so he could write about it later
- Observed the atrocities of the Spanish civil war, WWII, and Stalinist Russia

Animal Farm is...

- An allegory: a story that carries on a second meaning. The whole story is an extended metaphor
- A satire: the literary ridicule of a subject, philosophy, idea, etc. by trying to make it seem ridiculous or lower.

Marxism

- Political and social theory developed by Karl Marx in the 19th century
- Eventually leads to classless society or communism where the workers communally own everything, including the rights to production
- Communism, up to this point, has never achieved a classless society

Literary Criticism

- Marxist Criticism
 - Champions the working class or downtrodden of society
 - Criticize works that focus positively on the elite
- Historical Criticism
 - Concerned with historical context
 - Concerned with cultural/philosophical context
 - Concerned with literary influences on the author

Russian Revolution of 1917

- February Revolution: army and people overthrew the inept Nicolas II, Tsar of Russia, in a nearly bloodless revolution which resulted in Provisional government
- Vladimir Lenin led the October revolution, which overthrew the provisional government and based his political philosophies on those of Karl Marx
- Led eventually to Stalin rising to power in 1924

Stalin

- Succeeded Lenin as leader of Russia
- Fought against another Communist, Leon Trotsky, because of deep philosophical differences
- Tried to modernize Russia but did so at the expense of the people
- Is responsible for the deaths of millions during his political “purges”
- Created a totalitarian state in which the government controls every aspect of the lives of the citizens

Propaganda

- See handout

Something to Think About

- Life in the USA would be perfect if everyone were totally equal. Do you agree? Why or Why not?
- You are designing a society in which everyone is equal. What are the laws?
- What problems can you foresee that might arise in a society with enforced “equality for all”? How would you handle those problems?
- Do you believe that total equality is possible, or would human nature assure that some people would eventually dominate others?