

Essay Questions

Choose three questions and answer them in the form of an essay.

Requirements

Formulate a clear, defensible thesis that makes a specific claim about Orwell's argument.

Discuss the allegorical significance of the story in relation to real-world political systems.

Suggested length: 4–6 paragraphs.

Some questions have suggested ideas to get you started.

1. How is *Animal Farm* a satire of Stalinism or generally of totalitarianism? How does Orwell use it to comment on the history of communism?

A good way to answer this question is to pick a specific example of totalitarianism in any country, historical or current, and explain how the ideas Orwell puts forth in *Animal Farm* apply to it. Go back and forth between the historical facts and the events of the novel. Note the actions of the leaders, the mechanisms of fear and power, and the reactions of the people over time.

2. What does the windmill represent?

The windmill's symbolic meaning changes during the course of the novel and means different things to different characters. It is to be for electricity but ends up being for economic production. As it is built, it is a symbol of work without benefit and a medium of the pigs' power. For the humans, it is a dangerous symbol of the growing power of the farm. Consider also the relationship between the windmill and the biblical Tower of Babel.

3. Examine the Seven Commandments and the way they change during the course of the novel from Old Major's death to the banquet Napoleon holds with the farmers.

The commandments begin as democratic ideals of equality and fraternity in a common animal identity, but they end in inequality when some animals are "more equal" than others. As the pigs take more control and assume their own liberties, they unilaterally change the commandments to fit their own desires. Consider especially the interactions between Clover, Muriel, and Squealer surrounding the Seven Commandments, determining how easy it is to change the fundamental rules of society on the farm, where most of the animals can do no better than to remember that four legs are good and two legs are bad.

4. What major tactic to the pigs use to keep the animals unified and obedient and to keep them from being bothered by all of the things that start to go wrong? What characteristics of human nature does this show?

How are lying and deception used? Give example of most blatant lies and the animals' reaction to these lies. What is the role of education or lack of it? What is the role of brute force? What is the role of instigating fear?

5. Napoleon is able to achieve power because he slowly takes away the rights of the other animals, rather than all at once. Discuss.

Napoleon uses force against the other animals to secure his power which is undermining the animal's rights to freedom and equality. The pigs use cruel and brutal means, such as the dogs, and control the other animals. The animals begin to live in fear and terror. This goes against Old Major's decree (vision) that no animals are to "tyrannise over his own kind". He deliberately trains the puppies and makes them used to the taste of blood. .. Puppies... – cruel force... all animals are being slaughtered... the animals not only live in fear, but because they cannot read, they are not able to challenge the power of the pigs.

6. How does the behaviour of the pigs reflect the behaviour of some humans?

The pigs had the meals in the house, used the kitchen and slept in the beds. Eventually they start to drink alcohol which is the worst possible... thing; they are only interested in their fun and fortune and no longer interested in the welfare of the animals.

7. How are the themes of totalitarianism and class hierarchy expressed throughout the novel?

(See THEMES)