Critical Essays *The Russian Revolution*

One of [Orwell](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/george-orwell-biography)'s goals in writing *Animal Farm* was to portray the Russian (or Bolshevik) Revolution of 1917 as one that resulted in a government more oppressive, totalitarian, and deadly than the one it overthrew. Many of the characters and events of Orwell's novel parallel those of the Russian Revolution: In short, Manor Farm is a model of Russia, and [old Major](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/character-analysis/old-major), [Snowball](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/character-analysis/snowball), and [Napoleon](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/character-analysis/napoleon) represent the dominant figures of the Russian Revolution.

Mr. Jones is modeled on Tsar Nicholas II (1868-1918), the last Russian emperor. His rule (1894-1917) was marked by his insistence that he was the uncontestable ruler of the nation. During his reign, the Russian people experienced terrible poverty and upheaval, marked by the Bloody Sunday massacre in 1905 when unarmed protesters demanding social reforms were shot down by the army near Nicholas' palace. As the animals under Jones lead lives of hunger and want, the lives of millions of Russians worsened during Nicholas' reign. When Russia entered World War I and subsequently lost more men than any country in any previous war, the outraged and desperate people began a series of strikes and mutinies that signaled the end of Tsarist control. When his own generals withdrew their support of him, Nicholas abdicated his throne in the hopes of avoiding an all-out civil war — but the civil war arrived in the form of the Bolshevik Revolution, when Nicholas, like Jones, was removed from his place of rule and then died shortly thereafter.

Old Major is the animal version of V. I. Lenin (1870-1924), the leader of the Bolshevik Party that seized control in the 1917 Revolution. As old Major outlines the principles of Animalism, a theory holding that all animals are equal and must revolt against their oppressors, Lenin was inspired by Karl Marx's theory of Communism, which urges the "workers of the world" to unite against their economic oppressors. As Animalism imagines a world where all animals share in the prosperity of the farm, Communism argues that a "communal" way of life will allow all people to live lives of economic equality. Old Major dies before he can see the final results of the revolution, as Lenin did before witnessing the ways in which his disciples carried on the work of reform.

Old Major is absolute in his hatred of Man, as Lenin was uncompromising in his views: He is widely believed to have been responsible for giving the order to kill Nicholas and his family after the Bolsheviks had gained control. Lenin was responsible for changing Russia into the U.S.S.R., as old Major is responsible for transforming Manor Farm into Animal Farm. The U.S.S.R.'s flag depicted a hammer and sickle — the tools of the rebelling workers — so the flag of Animal Farm features a horn and hoof.

One of Lenin's allies was Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), another Marxist thinker who participated in a number of revolutionary demonstrations and uprisings. His counterpart in *Animal Farm* is Snowball, who, like Trotsky, felt that a worldwide series of rebellions was necessary to achieve the revolution's ultimate aims. Snowball's plans for the windmill and programs reflect Trotsky's intellectual character and ideas about the best ways to transform Marx's theories into practice. Trotsky was also the leader of Lenin's Red Army, as Snowball directs the army of animals that repel Jones.

Eventually, Trotsky was exiled from the U.S.S.R. and killed by the agents of Joseph Stalin (1979-1953), as Snowball is chased off of the farm by Napoleon — Orwell's stand-in for Stalin. Like Napoleon, Stalin was unconcerned with debates and ideas. Instead, he valued power for its own sake and by 1927 had assumed complete control of the Communist Party through acts of terror and brutality. Napoleon's dogs are like Stalin's KGB, his secret police that he used to eliminate all opposition. As Napoleon gains control under the guise of improving the animals' lives, Stalin used a great deal of propaganda — symbolized by [Squealer](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/character-analysis/squealer) in the novel — to present himself as an idealist working for change. His plan to build the windmill reflects Stalin's Five Year Plan for revitalizing the nation's industry and agriculture. Stalin's ordering Lenin's body to be placed in the shrine-like Lenin's Tomb parallels Napoleon's unearthing of old Major's skull, and his creation of the Order of the Green Banner parallels Stalin's creation of the Order of Lenin. Thanks, in part, to animals like [Boxer](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/character-analysis/boxer) (who swallow whole all of their leader's lies), Stalin became one of the world's most feared and brutal dictators.

Numerous events in the novel are based on ones that occurred during Stalin's rule. The Battle of the Cowshed parallels the Civil War that occurred after the 1917 Revolution. [Jones](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/character-analysis/jones); [Frederick](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/character-analysis/frederick) represents Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), who forged an alliance with Stalin in 1939 — but who then found himself fighting Stalin's army in 1941. Frederick seems like an ally of Napoleon's, but his forged banknotes reveal his true character. The confessions and executions of the animals reflect the various purges and "show trials" that Stalin conducted to rid himself of any possible threat of dissention. In 1921, the sailors at the Kronshdadt military base unsuccessfully rebelled against Communist rule, as the hens attempt to rebel against Napoleon. The Battle of the Windmill reflects the U.S.S.R.'s involvement in World War II — specifically the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943, when Stalin's forces defeated Hitler's (as Napoleon's defeat Frederick). Finally, the card game at the novel's end parallels the Tehran Conference (November 28-December 1, 1943), where Stalin, Winston Churchill, and Franklin D. Roosevelt met to discuss the ways to forge a lasting peace after the war — a peace that Orwell mocks by having Napoleon and [Pilkington](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/character-analysis/pilkington) flatter each other and then betray their duplicitous natures by cheating in the card game

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**FIVE THINGS I LEARNED….make a list….**