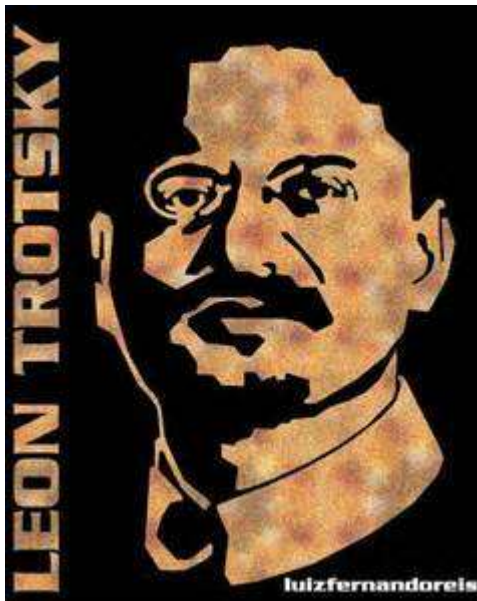


The Historical Themes of *Animal Farm*

Animal Farm is an allegory, meaning that it is a fictional story which is written in such a way to reflect real events. In this case, the story of animals on a farm is representative of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent rule of Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union. The purpose of this worksheet is to help you to understand the history that you will need to know in order to fully appreciate the allegorical themes of *Animal Farm*.

Stalin vs. Trotsky

Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky were both very important leaders in the Russian Bolshevik movement. Lenin was the leader of the Russian revolution, but died shortly after the formation of the Soviet Union and never fully left his mark on the future government. Trotsky and Stalin were two of the closest advisors to Lenin, and quickly distinguished themselves as the front-runners to take over the government once Lenin died.



Leon Trotsky was a hero from the revolution. He was known very well to the Russians as a military leader who courageously led the Red Army during the revolution. Trotsky was more committed to Leninism, which is a form of Marxism that seeks to centralize power in the government in order to improve the lives of all citizens. Leninism did allow for the idea that government officials could use their positions to live better than the other people in the governments, as long as they continued to work toward the betterment of the nation in general. The struggle between Stalin and Trotsky ended in 1927, when Stalin successfully had Trotsky kicked out of the Communist Party, and two years later, he was exiled. Trotsky went on to move to Mexico, where he continued to be an outspoken opponent of Stalinism until he was murdered by a KGB agent in 1940.



Collectivization and Industrialization

Collectivization is the nationalization of the agricultural system within a country. Once the government has taken control of the farms, it then re-organizes them to suit the needs of the government better. This is one of the first steps of re-organization in a Marxist government, since private (individual) control of the food supply represents a serious threat to the concept of equality. In the Soviet Union, beginning in 1927, Stalin and the Soviet government began to collectivize the farming system by taking over control of millions of farms. This take-over led to food shortages and eventual famines. Millions of people died in the Soviet Union during the process of collectivization.

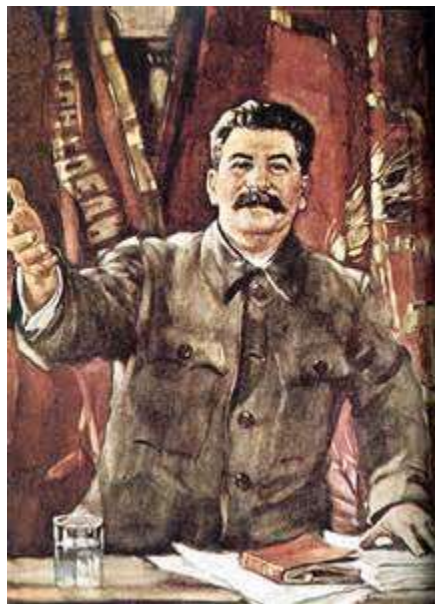
Stalin also implemented a plan to industrialize his country quickly. Through the use of propaganda, Stalin greatly exaggerated the impact of and successfulness of his first 5 year plan.

If reality was measured against the lofty claims of the projections, then by any measure, Stalin's 5 year plan was a colossal failure. The plan would be resumed later, and while it would never deliver the stated claims, the 2nd 5 year plan would actually be measured as a successful attempt at industrializing the Soviet Union.

Use of Propaganda

Stalin and his leaders were masters at changing history through the use of propaganda. Stalin was not instrumental in the initial Bolshevik Revolution, but in every school history book and poster across the Soviet Union during Stalin's control, he claimed to have been as equally important as Lenin himself. Stalin also slowly diminished Trotsky's role in the revolution as time went on, eventually claiming that he was a traitor to the revolution itself, and needed to be killed.

There were several reasons why Stalin got away with making the claims he did, especially where he would blatantly re-write history. The first way was that many people were simply too scared to say what actually happened. The KGB actively and aggressively sought out, identified, and executed millions of people who made "anti-communist," "anti-revolutionary," or "anti-Stalinist" comments. When a lie is told, and nobody corrects the lie, it tends to begin to be believed by any group of people, even when they know that it isn't true. The second reason is because the government controlled the schools. Since they were in charge of the curriculum that was taught in the schools, anyone not old enough to actually remember the facts of what had happened in the past would simply believe the lie because that is all that they were ever taught. The final reason was the general lack of education among the Russian peasantry. Since most people were too poor to have received an education prior to the revolution, all the information they had gotten before the revolution had been told to them by someone else. Over time, they just came to believe that the source of their original information had been incorrect, and that the real truth was what was currently being told by the government.



Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Make a prediction about how well the characters symbolizing Trotsky and Stalin will get along in Animal Farm.
2. Predict what will happen to the animals initially when they try to collectivize their farm?
3. How do you think Napoleon (Stalin) will control the animals of Animal Farm?

Write about it: Finish the chart you begin in SS class with the characters of animal farm and their characteristics in the book.

Understanding the Characters and Symbolism of Animal Farm

Character Name	Represents:	Characteristics in the book	Historical Context (information to understand the character)
Old Major			
Napoleon			
Snowball			
Squealer			
Boxer			
Benjamin			
Dogs			
Windmill			
Jones			
Pilkington and Frederick			