

Ideas 8

Analysis: Animal Farm Propaganda

Ideas: Quality

This paper scores an 8 for the quality of ideas because of the depth of understanding revealed in the Benjamin paragraph:

Orwell's message is this: Malicious groups of people, like the pigs, will continue to use propaganda to usurp power, to exploit the vulnerable, and to control the masses, unless courageous individuals spread the truth and stand up for those who cannot fight for themselves.

Another characteristic of an 8 is the complex combination of types of propaganda:

This moment represents the intersection of using effective slogans – “Long live Animal Farm”, appealing to fear by utilizing the disparaging “miserable traitor”, and scapegoating Snowball to maintain his own power. By including this in the book, Orwell illustrates that in a state lacking sufficient information, propaganda can be used to seize even more power, eliminate all enemies, and unite the public based on lies.

When multiple moments of critical thinking are combined, the result is the complex thinking seen in this essay.

Essay: Animal Farm Propaganda

Prompt: How does Orwell use propaganda to convey his central message?

Throughout history propaganda has been used by malevolent leaders to maintain control over naïve populations. These propaganda artists is the art of systematically alter information and opinions and disseminateing these ideas it to the masses. Propaganda works by appealing to emotions in order to alter the way people perceive events. In George Orwell's Animal Farm, an allegory for the Russian Revolution, the pigs usurp control through multiple propagandistic techniques. In Stalinist Russia, the government, in the hands of the communist dictator Joseph Stalin, exploited the public through the effective use of propaganda, ultimately creating a comparatively worse existence for the masses than under the previous regime. People in communist states are more vulnerable to governmental manipulation because they give up personal

possessions and individual freedoms, trusting their leaders completely. Similarly, in Orwell's novel where animals take over a farm and set up their own government, Napoleon, a powerful pig, and his master of propaganda, Squealer, manipulate the animals into complete submission. The characters' use of propaganda mirrors that of Russia in the height of Stalin's autocratic rule; both deftly capitalize on different types and techniques. Orwell conveys his central message, that in a communist state, the controlling of the masses through propaganda enables the abuse of power; the educated must eradicate this propaganda in its infancy or take responsibility for the personal and societal consequences.

Orwell's characters use slogans throughout this novel to implant messages into the hearts and minds of each animal. Propagandists constantly repeat these brief, striking phrases, capitalizing on stereotypes and prejudices. They utilize these slogans to captivate, motivate and inspire the audience. Napoleon deploys such slogans to drown out the powerful arguments made by Snowball, or to change the subject when animals begin to question his legitimacy. For example, the pigs teach the sheep a powerful slogan to control key moments in the farm meetings. When dissent is voiced, at the prodding of Napoleon or Squealer, "The sheep... bleat...out '4 legs good, 2 legs bad!'" (47). Squealer strategically prompts the sheep to interrupt Snowball's speeches at key moments in the argument with this seemingly animalist slogan. If the sheep had been better educated, they might have realized Squealer was taking advantage of them. With this quote, Orwell shows that slogans are effective tools used by the intellectually superior to manipulate the inferior. The catchiness and execution of this slogan makes it inevitable for Napoleon and the sheep to achieve their goals. Squealer's slogans and messaging seep into the heart of Boxer, a work horse and an influential character in the novel, who often mutters powerful slogans to motivate himself and his comrades. His justification, that, "If comrade Napoleon said it, it must be true!" (56), exemplifies how if one powerful figure gets swept away, the masses will follow. Boxer inspires the animals; his blind loyalty encourages and misleads his fellow "comrades". In essence, he becomes a tool for Squealer. Since Squealer cannot be everywhere at once, he exploits Boxer's ignorance and loyalty to affirm Napoleon's points to animals constantly. Boxer does this subconsciously, unfortunately manipulating the animals more successfully because they absolutely trust him. Through his characters' use of contagious slogans, Orwell suggests that without proper resistance, powerful messages of propaganda spread quickly, infecting the masses.

Throughout *Animal Farm*, Orwell uses Napoleon and Squealer to illustrate another effective propagandistic technique: appealing to fear. This fear, specifically visual and psychological fear, persuades the masses to follow the pigs' lead. Most notably, this fear comes in the form of the dogs that Napoleon turns into his private army. When Napoleon wants to expel Snowball, "Nine enormous dogs... [come] bounding into the

barn” (53). Then they growl in an intimidating fashion at any animal that complains or argues. This successfully uses fear to force every animal into submitting to Napoleon’s regime; the animals literally fear for their lives, imagining the gruesome, bloody consequences for disobedience. However, Squealer also utilizes more subversive forms of appealing to fear to manipulate the animals. When the circumstance calls for a softer approach, like when Squealer must explain why the animals should trust Napoleon and why Snowball’s exile is necessary, Squealer uses psychological fear. Playing off the animals’ distrust of humans, Squealer threatens, “One false step and our enemies will be upon us! Surely comrades, you don’t want Jones back!” (37). Squealer exploits the animals’ fear by reminding them how miserable life was under Jones’s rule; he threatens a return to this existence if they do not listen and succumb to Napoleon’s will. Appealing to fear strengthens the pigs’ relative power over the rest of the animals, but this, coupled with the use of slogans, might not have been enough to establish and maintain control. This is why scapegoating is necessary.

Scapegoating, a form of propaganda that relies on blaming an innocent person for someone else’s crimes or failures, effectively helps maintain power and control. The threat of scapegoating maintains a constant fear for members in such a society. In *Animal Farm*, when the windmill, the hope for independent sustainability and the symbol of animalistic pride, crumbles, Napoleon and Squealer blame their political enemy, Snowball, for their faulty engineering of the windmill. This diverts attention from any misconduct of the leading party while simultaneously razing the credibility of enemies. Upon finding the windmill in ruins after a storm, Napoleon seizes control of the situation: “Do you know who is responsible for this? Do you know the enemy who has come at night and overthrown our windmill? SNOWBALL!!!” (69-70). By scapegoating his “enemy” Snowball, Napoleon averts the blame and responsibility for his error and makes the animals distrust his opponent. Though it is obvious to the discerning reader that Snowball could not have been the culprit, the oblivious farm animals both want to believe Napoleon and have no alternative explanation. In this one act, Napoleon crushes any remaining loyalty to Snowball among the animals. Furthermore, Napoleon manages to use the failure of the windmill to his political advantage. He unites the animals by preaching, “We will teach this miserable traitor he cannot undo our work so easily... forward comrades! Long live the windmill, and long live Animal Farm!” (71). This moment represents the intersection of using effective slogans – “Long live Animal Farm”, appealing to fear by utilizing the disparaging “miserable traitor”, and scapegoating Snowball to maintain his own power. By including this in the book, Orwell illustrates that in a state lacking sufficient information, propaganda can be used to seize even more power, eliminate all enemies, and unite the public based on lies.

In order to halt the momentum of this propaganda, courageous, informed individuals must confront these

ideas early enough either to stop them or to take responsibility for personal and societal consequences. Even though Benjamin, a work horse, realizes what is happening, he does nothing. Although few of the other animals can read, “Benjamin could read as well as any pig, but never exercised his faculty... [because] he said, there was nothing worth reading” (33). When other animals, suspicious of potential changes to the posted Commandments, reach out to Benjamin, he “refuse[s] to meddle in such matters” (91), and he “say[s] nothing” (109). If Benjamin had voiced his concerns or at least provided accurate information to the other animals, he could empower them to make their own decisions. Clearly, the horses, having already defeated the humans, could easily overpower the pigs if they were not being manipulated through propaganda and if they were getting complete and accurate information. Benjamin’s inaction makes him as culpable as the pigs. At the end of the novel, when Benjamin finally does attempt to take action to save his dear friend, it is too late. Because Boxer, the most hardworking and loyal of all the animals, is no longer able to work, the pigs summon a horse slaughterer. Benjamin, able to read the words on the side of the van, protests, “Fools! Fools!... Do you not understand what that means? They are taking Boxer to the knacker’s! (122)”. If Benjamin had voiced concerns earlier, when the other animals sought his advice, the momentum of the pigs’ propaganda could have been stopped. Because Benjamin chooses to not use the knowledge and skills he has until it is too late, he shares responsibility for Boxer’s death. Orwell’s message is this: Malicious groups of people, like the pigs, will continue to use propaganda to usurp power, to exploit the vulnerable, and to control the masses, unless courageous individuals spread the truth and stand up for those who cannot fight for themselves.

Orwell’s allegory for the Russian Revolution, *Animal Farm*, illustrates how the effective use of propaganda enables the dangerous manipulation of the masses. Because communism replaces individual freedoms with governmental control, people in these countries are more vulnerable to being manipulated. In order for those in power to maintain the public’s trust in the midst of lies and schemes, they use propaganda – slogans, appealing to fear, and scapegoating – to manipulate people to accept the rulers’ judgment and maintain absolute power. Orwell’s use of allegory effectively conveys his key message: unchecked propaganda will lead to ceaseless injustice for the masses. Without being well informed, anyone can be manipulated as easily as the people in Stalinist Russia or the animals on the farm. The sole weapon people possess to annihilate the cycle of propaganda, power, and corruption is the courageous voice of an individual, armed with knowledge.