INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF GENERAL STUDIES EDUCATION (IJOGE)
VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1, 2026
ISSN: 1462-2032

Power and Corruption in George Orwell's Animal Farm: A Critical Analysis

[1]Akinwale Ebenezer Olumuyiwa & [2]Princess Adaeze Ezejideaku
[1.2]Department of English, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, 07040397454, 08038691126, Email: muyiwaky007@gmail.com

Abstract
George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) is one of modern literature's most important political parables. It uses the story of farm animals who revolt against oppressive humans in the name of equality and freedom to construct a withering critique of a variety of political systems, especially those of a totalitarian nature. Revolutions do not bring about the change of the government. It is basically a pigs' game. This paper considers the theme of power and corruption in *Animal Farm* and discusses how Orwell shows that once revolutionary leaders gain power, they become like the oppressive leaders they replace. By employing a Marxist literary theory and a political allegory framework, the paper shows how power becomes evil, and what ramifications that evil brings to politics and the people in power. By doing a thorough analysis of the text, this paper reveals that Orwell speaks to the inherent cycle of political evil and the perils of power. The paper argues that power corrupts whomever it touches. In the current global political climate, the arguments Orwell makes in *Animal Farm* are still relevant today.

Keywords: power, evil, oppressive, power and politics, animal farm.

IJOGSE 2026

Introduction

Literature serves many purposes beyond entertainment. Authors use literature as a social and political tool to express their thoughts about the world around them. A great political literary work is George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Because of the events that transpired in the world after World War II, Orwell molded *Animal Farm* with barnyard animals and a farm to serve as a reflection and critique of the Stalin regime in Russia after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

The corrupting influence of power can be seen as the main topic of *Animal Farm*. Orwell was able to show that the leadership of a revolution can transform and be interested more in the revolution for selfish reasons rather than the greater good. The animals were oppressed by Mr.

Jones the human farmer. The pigs led by Napoleon, quickly turned Animal Farm into an oppressive regime.

This work examines *Animal Farm* to demonstrate Orwell's power and corruption mentality. It delves into Orwell's thoughts on the abuse of power, the role of propaganda and social control, and the use of fear and education in a corrupt regime. Using very precise theory and evidence, the paper shows the world Orwell's message on political corruption and the fear of losing democracy.

Book Summary

In the beginning of Animal Farm, Old Major, a pig, wants to share his dream of an animal utopia, where humans do not exist, with the other animals on the farm. Old Major persuades the other animals to revolt against the farm's owner, Mr. Jones, and to create a farm where all animals are equal and all animals share the farm as a collective.

After Old Major passes away, the other pigs, Napoleon and Snowball, lead the farm in revolution against Mr. Jones. Following the successful revolt, the animals decide to rename the farm to Animal Farm. They create the Seven Commandments, and emphasize the value of animal equality. At first, the farm flourished because of collective work. But then, power struggles were seen, particularly between Snowball and Napoleon with respect to their styles of leadership and their visions for the farm's development. Eventually, Snowball is chased away by Napoleon's dogs, and he establishes a totalitarian rule.

While Napoleon's totalitarian rule progresses, greater corruption is leveled onto the basic foundations of Animalism. The Pigs begin to change the Animalism philosophy to suit their needs and exploit the Animal's work, with the rest of the farm's animals bearing the additional burden of the Pigs' privileges. This is all made possible by the regime of lies made by propaganda, of which Squealer is the most important author. He writes the regime's rule changing the philosophy of Animalism. By the novel's end the pigs are just like humans. The well-known alteration of the principle regarding equality states, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." In realizing that the fruit of their revolution was a new type of oppression, the animals see that the revolution itself has failed.

IJOGSE 2026

Statement of the Problem

One of the concerns highlighted in *Animal Farm* is the inclination of politicians to abuse power once they are in a position of authority. Once they achieve power, most revolutions dismantle into totalitarian orders. Orwell attempts to unpack the mechanisms of such drastic changes, and why the common person is so powerless to stop them. The research addresses the bond between political power and corruption as illustrated in *Animal Farm*. More specifically, it attempts to address the emergence of authoritarian rule and the betrayal of revolutionary ideas.

The present study carries out the following:

i) Focus on the use of power and corruption in *Animal Farm.*
ii) Focus on what *Animal Farm* says about the kind of political leaders *Animal Farm* thinks exist.
iii) Focus on what *Animal Farm* says about the use of propaganda to maintain power.
iv) Look at what *Animal Farm* says about the importance of education and ignorance in the control of politics.
v) Examine if *Animal Farm* is speaking to anything that is happening today.

Theoretical Framework

i)Marxist Literary Theory

The analysis is done using the main analytical framework of Marxist literary theory. Marxist criticism views literature as being connected to class struggle, economic disparity and power dynamics. In the view of Karl Marx, societies are divided into classes in terms of economic power. Labourers have no power over resources and institutions. Marx has suggested that political systems usually reflect the interests of the dominant class.

The pigs slowly develop into ruling elite in *Animal Farm.* The revolution is meant to end the inequality, but a new class system comes to replace it. The pigs are treated well, while the other animals are treated worse. This is an example of class domination, in the sense of Marx.

ii) Political Allegory

Animal Farm is studied as an allegory of politics, too. An allegory is a story in which the characters and events represent more general historical or political facts. Allegory is used to indict the betrayal of the ideals of the revolution and the rise of dictatorship.

IJOGSE 2026

Old Major is a representation of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. Joseph Stalin is represented by Napoleon. Snowball is Leon Trotsky. The events of *Animal Farm* are analogous to the Russian Revolution and the rise of authoritarianism in the Soviet Union.

Themes in *Animal Farm*

Theme of Power and Corruption in the novel: Power is the ability to influence or control the actions of others. Corruption is when power is misused for personal gain and not for the public good. In *Animal Farm*, Orwell shows that when there are no accountability systems in place, individuals grow corrupt when they hold the power. Initially the pigs are revolutionists but over time became oppressors. The corruption process in the *Animal Farm* is a gradual one as follows:

i. Acquisition of Power

Authorities are given to the pigs because they are more educated than the other animals. They are intelligent and can take on leadership roles.

ii. Consolidation of Power

Napoleon removes any political opposition by driving out Snowball. He takes over the power and blinds out dissent.

iii. Abuse of Power

When he has consolidated his power, Napoleon plays with the laws, controls information and uses other animals as workers.

iv. Institutionalization of Corruption

Propaganda and fear are the tools with which corruption becomes normal and institutionalized. The animals are resigned to the injustice they suffer.

Orwell proposes that corruption is a systemic issue and not an individual one.

Detailed Textual Analysis

Napoleon is a symbol of corrupt leadership: Napoleon is a representation of a revolutionary leader turning into a dictator. Early in the novel he seems dedicated to working for the common good. But as he gains in power, his real ambition shows itself. His use of violence is shown when he lashes out with doggies at Snowball. This is an act of political cleansing that is often seen in totalitarian countries. Napoleon's leadership is based on terror, not argumentation. His actions are a testament to the famous saying by Lord Acton, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

IJOGSE 2026

The part Squealer plays and how he acts as a propagandist: Squealer is the propagandist of the regime. He twists the words around to create a fog of reality and to rationalize the pigs' privileges. For instance, when the pigs start eating milk and apples, Squealer says that they need to feed their intellectual development. Instead, the animals don't challenge the injustice; they just take his word for it.

There are several functions of propaganda as follows:

Justifying inequality.

Rewriting history.

Silencing criticism.

Maintaining public loyalty.

Boxer and the tragedy of blind loyalty:

Boxer is a working-class dog. Unquestioning obedience is illustrated by his personal mottos: “I will work harder” and “Napoleon is always right.” But Boxer's loyalty is not rewarded for his great work. When he becomes injured, Napoleon sells him for profit. Boxer's fate is an example of oppression of labor from corrupt rules. Orwell cautions against blind loyalty towards leaders and urges the development of critical thinking.

Manipulation of the Seven Commandments:

As the Seven Commandments gradually change, it represents the way in which laws are altered by those who have the power to make them.

Examples include:

Original: "No animal will lie in a bed.

Revised: "No animal shall lie in a bed with sheets.

Expanded: "No animal shall drink alcohol. Original: "No animal is to take drink.

Rather the rule was rewritten to: "No animal shall drink to excess.

These changes reflect the efforts of authoritarian governments to change laws to justify their actions.

Education and Political Control:

The pigs maintain power partly because they control knowledge. Most animals are unable to read or understand political developments. This educational imbalance creates dependency and

IJOGSE 2026

facilitates manipulation. Orwell emphasizes that an informed population is essential for preventing tyranny.

Fear as a Political Weapon:

Napoleon frequently invokes fear of Mr. Jones's return to discourage opposition. Whenever animals question authority, they are reminded of the potential return of human rule. Fear becomes an effective mechanism of social control, preventing resistance and encouraging compliance.

Relevance to Contemporary Society:

Although *Animal Farm* was written in 1945, its themes remain relevant today. Many contemporary governments continue to exhibit the following characteristics identified by Orwell like:

Political propaganda.

Media manipulation.

Abuse of authority.

Suppression of dissent.

Cults of personality.

The novel encourages citizens to remain vigilant and actively participate in democratic processes. Modern societies continue to face challenges related to corruption, misinformation, and political inequality. Orwell's work serves as a reminder that freedom requires constant protection.

Findings

The study shows that the following are true:

i) In absence of accountability, power corrupts.
ii) Propaganda is a strong means of political manipulation.
iii) The authoritarian control in our is possible because of ignorance.
iv) Aspiration to revolution can be tainted by personal ambition.
v) Opposition is often quelled with fear.

Conclusion

In George Orwell’s Animal *Farm*, there is a deep look into the nature of power and corruption. Taclilefu's use of allegory, symbolism, and satire reveals the threats of unrestrained power and

IJOGSE 2026

the defection of revolutionary ideals. *Animal Farm* is a tale of the cyclical nature of political oppression, as it started out as a community of equality, and ended up as a dictatorship.

The rise of Napoleon illustrates how leaders can influence institutions as well as public opinion to stay in control. Boxer and other animals' lives illustrate the results of ignorance and unquestioning loyalty. Ultimately, Orwell contends that education, accountability and active citizen participation are the only ways to freedom and equality.

Animal Farm's enduring popularity stems from its ongoing relevance in the field of political systems and human behavior. The novel is an enduring cautionary tale about corruption and dictatorship.

Recommendations

The paper has the following recommendations:

i) Political awareness and critical thinking should be developed among citizens.
ii) Civic responsibility and democratic values should be encouraged in an educational system.
iii) Governments need to put in place robust systems of accountability.
iv) Independent media should be safeguarded to keep out propaganda and misinformation.
v) The rule of law should apply to political leaders.
vi) Citizens have a role in governance which they should play to avoid concentration of power.

IJOGSE 2026

References

Acton, J. E. E. D. (1887). *A letter from bishop Mandell Creighton*. Longman.
Bloom, H. (2007). *Animal Farm, by George Orwell.* Chelsea House.
Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848). *The Communist Manifesto*. Penguin Classics.
Meyers, J. (2000). *The wintry conscience of a generation*: Orwell. W.W. Norton.
Orwell, G. (1945). *Animal Farm*. Secker and Warburg.
Rodden, J. (1999). *Understanding Animal Farm: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents.* Greenwood Press.
Smith, N. (1984). *George Orwell A Critical Study*. Macmillan.
Williams, R. (1971). *Orwell.* Fontana.
Woodcock, G. (1966). *The Crystal Spirit: A Study of George Orwell.* Little Brown and Company.