

# Lesson Plan: Power, Persuasion, and Pigs - An Interactive Study of *Animal Farm*

## Lesson Overview

**Subject:** English Language Arts / History / Social Studies

**Target Audience:** Middle to High School (Ages 12-18)

**Duration:** 60-90 minutes (can be split into two sessions)

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- Define **allegory** and identify the historical parallels in *Animal Farm*.
- Analyze how language and **propaganda** are used to manipulate others.
- Evaluate the "Seven Commandments" and track how they are altered to serve those in power.
- Create an original piece of propaganda reflecting a theme from the book.

## Materials Needed

- A copy of *Animal Farm* by George Orwell
- Large chart paper or a whiteboard (Digital alternative: Google Jamboard or Canva)
- Art supplies (markers, colored pencils) or digital design tools
- "The Seven Commandments" tracking sheet (printable or hand-drawn)
- Small treats or stickers (for the introductory "Hook" activity)

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## 1. Introduction: The Hook (10 Minutes)

### The "Fairness" Simulation:

- Assign the learner(s) a role: "Worker" or "Leader."
- Distribute a small reward (like stickers or snacks). Give the "Leaders" five and the "Workers" one.
- Explain that the Leaders earned more because they had to "think" while the Workers just "did."
- **Discussion Question:** How does it feel to have the rules changed based on who is in charge? What makes a rule "fair"?
- **Transition:** Introduce *Animal Farm* as a story where animals try to create a perfect, fair world, only to watch it crumble because of how power is handled.

## 2. Body: Content and Practice (45-60 Minutes)

### Part A: The "I Do" - Understanding Allegory (Direct Instruction)

Explain that *Animal Farm* is an **allegory**—a story where characters and events represent real-world historical figures and ideas.

- **Old Major:** The dreamer (Karl Marx/Vladimir Lenin).

- **Napoleon:** The ruthless leader (Joseph Stalin).
- **Snowball:** The intellectual exile (Leon Trotsky).
- **Boxer:** The hard-working common person.

*Real-World Relevance:* Discuss how stories are often used to criticize real-world politics safely. Why would an author use animals instead of real people?

## Part B: The "We Do" - The Commandment Shuffle (Guided Practice)

Review the original Seven Commandments of Animalism. On a board or paper, list them out. Together, look at how the pigs "edit" these rules throughout the book.

- **Original:** "No animal shall sleep in a bed." → **Revised:** "No animal shall sleep in a bed *with sheets*."
- **Original:** "No animal shall kill any other animal." → **Revised:** "No animal shall kill any other animal *without cause*."
- **Activity:** Use "sticky notes" to place the revisions over the original rules. Discuss: Why do the other animals believe the rules were always that way? (Introduce the term **Gaslighting**).

## Part C: The "You Do" - The Propaganda Challenge (Independent Practice)

Learners will take on the role of **Squealer**, the pig responsible for propaganda. Their task is to create a poster or a 30-second "radio ad" (speech) to convince the other animals of one of the following:

1. Why the pigs deserve all the milk and apples.
2. Why the windmill was actually Napoleon's idea all along.
3. Why "Four legs good, two legs better" makes perfect sense.

### Success Criteria for the Poster/Speech:

- Uses persuasive language (e.g., "Surely you don't want Jones back?").
- Includes a strong visual symbol or catchy slogan.
- Demonstrates an understanding of how the pigs manipulate the truth.

## 3. Conclusion: Closure and Recap (10-15 Minutes)

**Summary:** Recap the journey from "All animals are equal" to "Some animals are more equal than others."

- **Recap Discussion:** What was the turning point where the rebellion failed? Was it the pigs' greed, or the other animals' silence?
- **Exit Ticket:** Ask the learner to write down one "Commandment" they would create for a perfect society and one way they would prevent someone from changing it.

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## Assessment Methods

- **Formative Assessment:** Observe participation during the "Commandment Shuffle" and the ability to link characters to their historical counterparts.
- **Summative Assessment:** Evaluate the "Propaganda Challenge" based on the success criteria (use of persuasive rhetoric and thematic accuracy).

## Adaptability & Differentiation

- **For Younger/Struggling Learners:** Focus less on the Russian Revolution and more on the universal themes of "Fairness vs. Unfairness." Provide a template for the propaganda poster.
- **For Advanced Learners:** Ask them to research a modern-day example of "Newspeak" or political propaganda and compare it to Squealer's tactics.
- **Kinesthetic Option:** Act out the scene where the pigs first walk on two legs. How do the different animals react physically?
- **Digital Option:** Use a tool like Canva to create a professional-looking "Ministry of Information" digital poster for Animal Farm.