

## ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN GEORGE ORWELL'S ANIMAL FARM: A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*The research uses a Marxist perspective to examine George Orwell's Animal Farm: it focuses on economic exploitation and social inequality. The research investigates how the ruling pigs exploit the labor of other animals to consolidate their power and control over resources, and examines how social inequality is constructed and maintained through class divisions, hierarchical structures, and ideological manipulations. A qualitative approach, using literary analysis, thus interprets the text, informing the evidence through Orwell's narrative, character actions, dialogue, symbolic events, and relevant scholarly literature. It Emerges that the pigs establish themselves as a ruling elite, appropriating for themselves the best food, comfort, and decision-making privileges, while the laboring animals-class persons, such as Boxer and Clover-are compelled to work tirelessly day after day for the benefit of the ruling class. Propaganda, revision of the Seven Commandments, and persuasive slogans are used strategically to legitimize inequality and suppress dissent-the running themes underpinning Marxist concepts of false consciousness, surplus value, and class domination. The paper, in any case, demonstrates that the maintenance of social hierarchy is not solely done through economic controls but also through ideological manipulations which make the working animals accept subordination as natural or necessary. Animal Farm has remained a perpetual critique of oppression and class divisions, as well as an exploration of ideals being corrupted during a revolution in history and in society. This paper has addressed its importance in understanding power and class divisions and could be used to further studies in other subjects such as sociology and literary theory.*

**Keywords:** narrative, economic exploitation, social inequality, power, Seven Commandments

### Introduction

#### Background of the Study

Literature has always had a reflective role in uncovering societal realities through its mirrored representation of power and oppression in society. Literary texts have been analyzed in the light of socio-economic realities and class struggle in Marxist literary criticism (Eagleton, 2011; Williams, 1977). In this light, George Orwell's Animal Farm (1945) represents a monumental text in literary history as it has a strong political undertone in analyzing exploitation and oppression in a revolutionary setting in society. Though Animal Farm has had a profound impact on understanding Russian Revolution and Stalin's rule in Russia, its theme transcends this specific instance to make a general statement about societies and revolutions reinventing systems of oppression in the name of revolutionary change in society (Tyson, 2006).

In the book "Animal Farm" by George Orwell, a farm is depicted with animals that rise against their human master to gain equality and a prosperous life. Based on the ideas of Old

Major, the animals organize their own version of a utopian society with collective work and property, which meets the norms of socialism, having a classless society (Marx & Engels, 1848/2002). Interestingly, in the course of the story, the pigs start to take control of the political and economic might of the society, positioning themselves at the top of the social hierarchy as the dominant class. They do all the Explore stealing the intelligence of the animals, especially Boxer, who represents the proletariat, with utmost cunning through their control of intelligence, means of production, and ideas (Eagleton, 2011).

The use of propaganda, intimidation, and historical manipulation by the pigs is an example of the application of Louis Althusser's (1971) Concept of Ideological State Apparatus. The purpose of these state apparatuses is the perpetuation of the dominance of the ruling class. The animals are made to believe by Squealer's persuasive words that they must make sacrifices for the better good of all. With the pigs issuing new versions of the Seven Commandments in order to legitimate their own privileges, Orwell reveals through this novel how ideology can be an apparatus of oppression, which conceals exploited relations through the rhetoric of revolution.

On a Marxist perspective, *Animal Farm* reveals how socialism falls apart through the development of a ruling class elite. The animals on the farm originally had egalitarian access to food, but later on, they see that food rations diminish among the working-class animals, while the pigs live in luxury. This reflects Marx's ideology of surplus value, in which working-class labor is exploited by those with power (Marx and Engels, 1848/2002).

In connection with the topic, the roots of this research can be traced back in relation to exploring the ways through which the concepts of economic oppression, class stratification, and ideology are reflected in Orwell's work as depicted in '*Animal Farm*' as per Marxist critical discourse. The importance of Orwell's fable has also been highlighted in this research in relation to contemporary societal politics, where the reality of equality can be hampered by corruption and class oppression despite the assertions of equality being promoted in those societies (Selden et al., 2013). On the Marxists' interpretation of *Animal Farm*, it has been argued that this fable has been a classic criticism of systemic oppression as well as the reality of exploitation in human society (Tyson, 2006).

### **Statement of the Problem**

*Animal Farm* by George Orwell remains a popular novel in terms of its representation of the Russian Revolution as a political allegory; in fact, there exists a void in its related literature with respect to its application as a detailed Marxist critique of economic exploitation and social inequality. In the novel, the animals stage a revolt against the humans and establish a society with equality and collective ownership in mind; in fact, the pigs inevitably become the ruling class again, and there exists unequal allocation of resources and labor, and ideological control of the working class of animals, specifically Boxer, as a representation of the proletariat. The issue at hand in writing this research paper lies in comprehending the manner by which the revolutionary tenets are betrayed and the manner by which the systems of oppression remain unaltered and in place in *Animal Farm*. Using various concepts of class struggle, surplus value, and false consciousness from the theory of Marxism, it would be fruitful in detailing the manner by which economic exploitation and social inequality exist and remain in place at *Animal Farm*.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To analyze how economic exploitation is represented in *Animal Farm* through the actions and policies of the ruling pigs from a Marxist perspective.
2. To examine the construction and maintenance of social inequality among the animals, focusing on class divisions and ideological manipulation.

### Research Questions

1. How does *Animal Farm* depict economic exploitation under the leadership of the pigs within a Marxist framework?
2. In what ways is social inequality created and sustained among the animals through power, propaganda, and class hierarchy?

### Significance of the Research

*Animal Farm* by George Orwell remains a popular novel in terms of its representation of the Russian Revolution as a political allegory; in fact, there exists a void in its related literature with respect to its application as a detailed Marxist critique of economic exploitation and social inequality. In the novel, the animals stage a revolt against the humans and establish a society with equality and collective ownership in mind; in fact, the pigs inevitably become the ruling class again, and there exists unequal allocation of resources and labor, and ideological control of the working class of animals, specifically Boxer, as a representation of the proletariat. The issue at hand in writing this research paper lies in comprehending the manner by which the revolutionary tenets are betrayed and the manner by which the systems of oppression remain unaltered and in place in *Animal Farm*. Using various concepts of class struggle, surplus value, and false consciousness from the theory of Marxism, it would be fruitful in detailing the manner by which economic exploitation and social inequality exist and remain in place at *Animal Farm*.

### Literature Review

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a critically explored novel not only as an allegory of political power but also with respect to the dynamics of classes, their exploitation, and inequality in society. Current research in the field examines the novella, exploring the ways in which power, ideologies, and systems perpetuate inequality in a post-revolutionary scenario in *Animal Farm*. An instance in this respect is the following, where it is seen that Orwell "traces the stratification of social classes and the corruption of revolutionary ideals via propaganda, indoctrination, and subversion of social structures, thereby emphasizing the inherent inequality within the power structure in the farm" (Qamar, 2025).

Analysts, using a Marxist critique, show how satire is used by Orwell as a means to uncover how a revolution based on equality turns into a system that resembles that which it attempted to destroy through oppression. The story represents the deep class divisions and ultimately, the subjugation of the working animals in particular-the proletariat-by the new elite class through its self-sustaining mechanism of labor and information exploitation. This reflects concerns by Marx regarding how the ruling classes manipulate socioeconomic structures to maintain dominance and suppress class consciousness.

In fact, other research on class conflict in *Animal Farm* has been done with a focus on how such struggle remains even after revolutionary change. The ruling pigs against the laboring animals represent classes enduring antagonisms, where economic relations and ideology continually reproduce the power of the elite class. The lower class, which often existed under worse conditions than before the revolution, reflects more circular realities of oppression (Saoudi et al., 2022).

Marxist readings also focus on the issue of alienation in *Animal Farm* and extend the notion of economic exploitation into one that includes psychological and social alienation. In Orwell, socio-political, economic, and psychic forms of alienation are depicted-the harnessed animals experience estrangement from their labor, community, and even their own self-worth, reflecting Marx's broader critique of alienation under systems of domination.

Also emerging within scholarship is the way in which *Animal Farm* is critical of the economic power of the elite. "The pigs' usage of better food, comfort, and power of decision"

represents the unfair distribution of wealth and power through the way in which the economy of the farm resembles capitalism (Pakistan Social Sciences Review, 2025).

Together, these studies add depth to the Marxian analysis on the theme of “Animal Farm” and how the mechanisms of exploitation and inequality are maintained through class stratification and ideology. These studies clearly indicate that the parable has a vastly larger significance in explaining the ways in which the mechanisms of inequality and socio-economic imbalance continue to prevail in human societies (Qamar, 2025; Ali et al., 2025; Saoudi et al., 2022).

George Orwell’s “Animal Farm” has been the focus of extensive studies in academic circles not only as it pertains to the political allegory of totalitarianisms but also with regard to its implications for economic exploitation and class and social inequalities. It has also been noted with significance by scholars that the story of *Animal Farm* represents the betrayal of revolutionary ideology and the persistence of class hierarchies in supposedly egalitarian societies. Maurya (2025) locates the story of *Animal Farm* in the context of sociological theory in a Marxist sense, noting how the social organization of the farm represents the actual state of society with power in the hands of the ruling class and the exploited working class.

Nurul Akbar and Arafah also continued this thought by emphasizing the shortcoming of *Animal Farm* in creating a classless society. The authors believe that *Animal Farm* portrays a critique of equality in which animals’ ideology promotes equality at first, and it later turns into hierarchy and exploitation. However, this theme has also been supported by Inch, who in 2016 argued that ideology manipulation is used as a means of controlling the proletarians:

“Manipulation of ideology by injecting meaning secondary to its concrete definition acquires its own ideology which legitimizes oppression to acquire control over proletarians.” Within the context of *Animal Farm*, control and manipulation of information as well as changing rules demonstrate how “the ruling class” retains power through deception, thus letting down “the working class,” as depicted through a Marxist perspective about how a revolution can be manipulated.

Seguedeme, Dikpo, and Abodohoui (2022) also go on to emphasize the structural dynamics of power and exploitation that exist within the novella. The authors explain that the pigs exercise and maintain their power over the animals not only through resource control, as initially observed, but also through the abuse that ensues, signifying that the elite use the material as well as psychological structures for the maintenance of inequalities. There is a linkage here with the struggle for class and Orwell’s understanding that the new elite always imitates the strategy that existed within the past ruling class.

Siahaan (2018) examines another ideological aspect of the novella and focuses on *Animal Farm* and its criticism of ideology as a means to secure and promote class power. Siahaan and this research find that ideology in *Animal Farm* is utilized through slogans, propaganda, and revisionist history in order to naturalize inequality. In this way, the story shows how the ideology not only legitimized the privileges of the ruling class but also made sure of the subordination of the working class in society.

At last, the unpublished manuscript *A Marxian Analysis of Animal Farm* (no date) brings home the materialist and socio-economic concerns of Orwell’s work. In this analysis, the authors show that the ways in which the pigs commodify resources, labor, and power indicate bourgeois tendencies in the novel that point to the novel’s concern with economic oppression. These examples show that *Animal Farm* is multifaceted in that it describes the corruption of revolutionary ideals, describes economic exploitation, and reveals the ideology of oppression.

## **Research Methodology**

The research methodology for this particular research is qualitative. To be more precise, the research methodology for this research is literary analysis. The reason for selecting literary analysis as the research methodology for this particular research is that literary analysis allows for the in-depth examination of thematic elements, story structure, character development, and ideological themes in a literary work, which are critical for understanding how issues of economic exploitation and inequality are presented in that work. The research does not involve data collection; instead, it interprets several instances of the data.

## **Data Collection:**

The primary source of this study shall be taken from the publication of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* in 1945. The quotes shall be gathered from the novel based on dialogues and occurrences which appear to be associated with economical exploitation and ideological manipulation. A number of theoretical notions shall be taken from article writings, as well as publication writings on Marxist literary critique.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

In this study, thematic and textual analysis methodologies are used in line with the guidelines of the Marxist interpretation of literature. Important themes such as economic exploitation, class stratum, and ideological domination will uncover meaning:

1. **Economic Exploitation:** Analysis of how the pigs' dominance regarding resource availability, labor, and benefits portrays the exploitation of surplus value and oppression of working animals.
2. **Social Inequality:** The processes that shape class divisions and how class divisions are sustained through ideology, propaganda, and hierarchical society.

The data collected was analyzed with the concepts of Marxism to interpret the manner in which Orwell critiques the oppression of the proletariat and the perpetuation of the inequality with the application of the concepts that include class struggle, surplus value, false consciousness, and alienation.

## **Scope and Delimitation:**

The research is limited to the textual analysis of *Animal Farm* and an application of Marxist theory therein. It does not extend to historical analysis of the Russian Revolution beyond what is directly relevant to the text. The study is focused on the economic and social aspects of inequality and has left the sociological variables like gender and race out of its scope.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

### **Economic Exploitation in *Animal Farm***

In *Animal Farm*, the use of economic exploitation is one of the important tools which the pigs use to maintain control of the other animals on the farm, which links with the ideas of surplus value and exploitation introduced in the Marxist ideology. Right from the start of the novel, the pigs maintain that they are the intellectual and administrative class with the rights to make decisions on planning and resource allocation. Though the initial running of the farm was on the principle of equality and collective possession that Old Major advocated for the animals to adopt, the pigs find ways to appropriate the best for themselves, like the best food and living conditions, such as the consumption of milk and apples, which they explain that it is necessary for the development of their intellectual capacities to run the other animals on the farm properly, a principle that mirrors the way the bourgeoisie appropriates the surplus value generated by the workers, claiming it to be justified and necessary (Maurya, 2025; Inch, 2016).

Another strong example of the pigs' exploitation is the management of labor. Characters like Boxer, who symbolizes the proletariat, are forced to work incessantly for the benefit of the

ruling class, influenced by slogans such as "I will work harder" and "Napoleon is always right." Such slogans serve as ideological tools in fooling the working animals into believing that their labor is morally right and of essence to the success of the farm, when in reality, the beneficiaries are the very same pigs. This corroborates Marx's false consciousness, whereby the exploited class is systematically duped into accepting their subordination as natural or beneficial to them.

Further, the pigs abuse their privileged status of knowledge carriers to legitimize economic injustice. With Squealer's propaganda work, they have manipulated the animals' perception of labor, productivity, and means of distribution time after time by portraying their very exploitation as indispensable to the welfare of the farm. For instance, in situations where the pigs cut the amount of feed given to the rest of the animals but keep their quantity constant, they justify this move as needed for their "mental work" in controlling the management of the farm.

Economic exploitation on *Animal Farm*, as presented by Orwell, goes beyond a lack of resource equality to become a system supported by resource exploitation, ideological dominance, and manipulation through social norms. Indeed, class division among animals separated into a ruling class and a working class, as a result of decisions made and actions taken by the ruling class of pigs, aligns with Marx's ideas about how the capitalist class exploits the working class, thus upholding inequality through ideas and manipulation of social norms (Maurya, 2025; Inch, 2016; Seguedeme et al., 2022).

### **Social Inequality in *Animal Farm***

*Animal Farm* examines social inequality as a strategic mechanism designed and implemented by the dominant class in society—the pigs—in a way that is both hierarchical and ideological. In this story, social equality is initially promised to all animals in society through Old Major's plan. However, a social divide is eventually established between the dominant group and the majority through strategic manipulation by the dominant class. This is in line with proper understanding and concepts discussed by Marx regarding class stratification in society. The bourgeois dominates society in a bid to control the proletariat (Maurya, 2025; Nurul Akbar & Arafah, 2020).

Social classes are maintained by the distribution of opportunities and duties. As farmers, the pigs become planners and decision-makers in managing the economy of the farm. By contrast, the animals regarded as laborers, like Boxer and Clover, and other animals, are left to do the rigorous work. There is an inequality in the distribution of work and benefits, which establishes a hierarchy in which the pigs are on top, while the other animals are the subordinate classes. It is not only an economic hierarchy but also has social aspects, since the other animals learn to accept the authority of the pigs because it is natural (Seguedeme et al., 2022).

Ideological manipulation presents an important aspect of maintaining such inequality. This occurs through Squealer, an important pig character who engages in propaganda in order to explain the advantages of such inequality. For example, when the animals notice that the pigs eat milk and apples, Squealer explains such behavior in terms of their intellectual work to run the farm. This raises inequality within their midst. In addition, the gradual revision of the Seven Commandments and the formulation of phrases such as "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" ensures such structures within the society and facilitates a lack of rebellion against such ideologies (Inch, 2016; Siahaan, 2018).

The control of knowledge and the discouraging of dissent further maintain social inequality. The working animals remain uninformed and are cultivated to be unquestioning, obedient, and submissive. This reflects Marxist theory about ideology as social control in which the

ruling class manipulates beliefs and norms to maintain power and create limitations on social mobility. Such is the respect of status subordination among the animals that it proves this ideological manipulation effectively legitimized inequality and prevented the stimuli to class consciousness.

Through it all, Orwell shows that social inequality in *Animal Farm* is constructed and maintained by means of economic privilege, hierarchical structures, and ideological control. The strategic use of propaganda and manipulation by the pigs assures class divisions reproduction and consolidation of their authority—a very Marxist critique of how power and ideology work in tandem to perpetuate social stratification. This novella thus gives a nuanced analysis of systemic inequality in the sense that even revolutions with egalitarian aims may support entrenched class hierarchies (Maurya, 2025; Nurul Akbar & Arifah, 2020; Seguedeme et al., 2022; Siahaan, 2018).

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

#### **Conclusion**

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is an allegory, which highlights the workings of economic exploitation and social inequality in a revolutionary structure. The pig leaders' strategy and policies in the farm portray how a percentage of the elite is responsible for controlling the masses, who are the workforce, while exploiting resources and enjoying their rights in the revolutionary structure, which is justified in terms of manipulative ideologies. The first objective, covering economic exploitation, highlighted that the pigs in the novel retain their power over the working-class animals in the farm in terms of their labor, resources, and propaganda manipulations, which relate to the ideologies surrounding surplus value, false consciousness, and the exploitation inherent in a class structure, as clarified in Marxism.

The second objective, which investigated the formation and reproduction of social inequality, revealed that in this novel, Orwell portrays in a deliberate manner the partitions of social hierarchy reinforced by ideology, propaganda, and repression of counter-arguments. The pigs create a dominant class, and in fact, the working class animals remain subordinate to them, commenting on the way in which social inequality is constructed and produced. The novel does so through slogans, manipulation of knowledge, and alteration of the commandments in order to illustrate the mechanisms of ideology in ensuring that inequality is normalized in society in a manner that inhibits the growth of consciousness among the oppressed.

In short, it can be said that the conclusion reached by this study is that *Animal Farm* is more than simply a political allegory but is, in fact, an enduring commentary upon the socio-economic systems by which exploitation and inequality are maintained. The tale told by Orwell points towards the presence of class systems and the way in which ideals are abandoned in the pursuit and maintenance of power, and it serves as an excellent indictment from within the context of Marxism.

#### **Suggestions**

Based on the result of this study, educators, literary scholars, and students are called upon to use *Animal Farm* in exploring dynamics on economic exploitation, social inequality, and ideological manipulation. The use of Marxist literary theory in classroom discussion can be helpful to teachers in making students critically observe how power, class, and labor relations operate in fictional and real societies. Other researchers are encouraged to investigate other similar allegorical texts from different cultural contexts to comparatively observe how social hierarchy and exploitation are represented, or to adopt other critical perspectives such as feminism, postcolonialism, or psychoanalysis to further flesh out the understanding of oppression and inequality in literature. Further, the application of interdisciplinary

approaches that join up literary analysis with sociology, political science, or economics may better light up how systemic inequality and class division are reproduced in literature and society.

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