Totalitarianism—a type of government controlled by one political group which suppresses all opposition, often with force, and which controls many aspects of people's lives. A totalitarian government usually regulates what goods are produced by industry, what radio and television programs are broadcast, what books the people may read, and other controls on private life. (Ex. Nazi Germany)

This novel can be read as simply an animal story. Orwell meant it to be, however, a statement against totalitarianism of any sort. It is set against the background of the Russian Revolution. He did not think people would react well to his message if he lectured to them, so he chose to use a beast fable.

Animal Farm is the story of the takeover of Manor Farm by its animal inhabitants. They are persuaded to believe that the removal of the humans responsible for their misery and hunger will free them to make the farm a better place to live. Orwell wanted to show that often revolution against a tyrant often results in a new tyrant.

For much of its history Russia was ruled by czars. Typically they had all the money and power, and the majority of people were peasants who were very poor. Discontent grew among the Russian people after an economic depression in 1899. A Revolution took place in 1917 (the Russian Revolution/the taking over of Manor Farm). Czar Nicholas and his family were imprisoned and then shot. Lenin convinced a group called the Bolsheviks to try and seize power. His assistant, Trotsky, helped him plan the takeover. A new government was formed and run by Lenin. When Lenin became ill, Trotsky was next in line to be in control. However, Joseph Stalin was elected. He began a rule of terror. His secret police arrested millions of people. They were shot or sent to prison camps. As many as 20 million people may have been killed.

Communism is a form of totalitarian government. Most or all property is owned by the state and is supposed to be shared by all. It is based on the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 1800's and seeks the overthrow of noncommunist societies in behalf of the laboring class, usually as the result of a series of struggles of class conflict. A small group, theoretically representing the common people, would run the government.
Animal Farm

Characters and their counterparts in Russian history

1. Major- He represents Lenin. He is a dignified boar who tells his political philosophy to the animals, triggering their revolt. He believes man is a tyrant who takes the fruit of the animals' labors and gives them nothing but misery in return. He urges the animals to rid themselves of man and have a society where all animals are equal. He recalls a song from his past called "Beasts of England" which mirrors the Communist philosophy. Had Czar Nicholas known Lenin's potential power he would have had Lenin killed rather than exiled.

2. Napoleon- The name "Napoleon" can only mean one thing—an ambitious militaristic, domineering leader. This can only mean Joseph Stalin. Napoleon's use of terroristic dogs, his disregard of his people's sufferings, and his greed for the materialistic trappings of Farmer Jones all prove Orwell's theory that the greed for power corrupts.

3. Snowball- A snowball is a symbol of something pure that does not last very long. Snowball represents Leon Trotsky. His political endeavors are totally unselfish. He believes in the possibility of a perfect society and is willing to sacrifice himself for it. Snowball does not last very long when Napoleon finds that he has a powerful rival who actually believes a revolutionary philosophy. Like Trotsky (who was expelled from the party in 1925 and while in exile in Mexico was killed by a "friend" of the party) Snowball receives the death sentence from the self-appointed dictator Napoleon.

4. Mr. Jones-He represents Czar Nicholas II. He is a hard man who drinks and neglects his animals (symbolically the Russian people). He and his neighbors, Pilkington of Foxwood (England) and Frederick of Pinchfield (Germany), often engage in lawsuits (wars) that take their time and money.

5. Squealer- The name "Squealer" is given to indicate his purpose—to make convincing noises. Squealer changes the wording of the Seven commandments. He then convinces the animals that they are mistaken in thinking that the wording was ever different.

6. Boxer- Orwell portrays his hero—the common man, as the hardest working animal on the farm, a horse. His name fits him because Boxer is willing to fight for the survival of the farm with the sweat of his labor and with his hooves in battle. His political type is representative of the hardworking Russian people who blindly believed in the revolution and gave their all to it.
7. Moses - The raven Moses is the symbol of the Russian Orthodox Church. Orwell describes Moses as a spy and a talebearer, but...also a clever talker. He claimed to know of the existence of a mysterious country called Sugarcandy Mountain, where animals went when they died. He did no work. He was fed by Mrs. Jones and went with her when she left. (He can be compared to Rasputin, a monk that was favored by the czarina and regarded as a god because of his effect on her hemophiliac son.)

8. Minor characters - The cat, sheep, and Mollie are minor animals representing different types in society. The cat is a sneaky opportunist who votes on both sides of the issue. He shows up after the work is done with very convincing excuses. Mollie is the beautiful horse who won't give up the luxurious life she had in the old times. She eventually defects. The sheep represent the masses who are blindly and willingly led in any direction by the party.

Mr. Jones, Czar Nicholas II  old Major, Karl Marx
Napoleon, Joseph Stalin  Snowball, Leon Trotsky
the pigs, the Bolsheviks  Mollie, the White
or Reds  Russians
the Rebellion, the  the farmhouse, the
October Revolution  Kremlin
Mr. Pilkington, Britain  Mr. Frederick, Germany
Squealer, Pravda, the official newspaper of Russian propaganda
Boxer, the loyal workers, also known as the proletariat
"Beasts of England," "L'Internationale"
the wild animals, the muzhiks or Russian peasants
Moses, the Russian Orthodox Church
the hoof and horn flag, hammer and sickle flag
the Battle of the Cowshead, the Allied Invasion of 1918–1919

Propaganda Down on the Farm There are dozens of propaganda devices used by countries or political parties within a country. Here are a few:

Directions: Find examples of these techniques in Animal Farm. State how effective they are.

Scapegoat (Jews are evil and responsible for all our troubles) (The first two examples were used by Hitler in Germany.)
Over-simplified stereotype (Nazis are supermen)
Appeal to hatred and fear (exaggerated emotional statements)
Namecalling ("America—The Great Satan")
Atrocity story (tales of torture, cruelty, etc.)
Appeal to sympathy for underdog ("We are weak and helpless")
Glittering names ("Savior of the People")
Glittering generalities ("law and order," "The American Way")
Confusion (changes in attitude and/or policies)
Questions Animal Farm Chapters 1 and 2

1. Who is the owner of Manor Farm? What is he like?

2. Why is Boxer respected?

3. Describe Benjamin the donkey.

4. Why does Old Major call a meeting of the animals?

5. Describe the life of the animals in England according to Old Major.

6. What does Old Major say the animals must do?

7. What is the decision about the wild creatures?

8. How will they tell an enemy?

9. What is the name of the song the animals sing?

10. What are some of the vices of man that Old Major warns the animals about? (in song)

11. Who are the smartest animals?

12. What name do the animals give to Old Major's teachings?
13. What does Moses, the raven, talk about to the other animals?

14. What event happens to bring about the rebellion, to cause the animals to revolt?

15. What exactly do they do?

16. After Jones is gone, what do the animals do?

17. What do they decide to do with the farmhouse?

18. Name 3 of the 7 commandments of Animalism.
Animal Farm  Chapters 3 and 4

1. How did boxer show himself to be the hardest worker? What was his personal motto?

2. What kinds of committees did Snowball form?

3. What was the one saying that replaced the seven commandments?

4. What project did Napoleon undertake?

5. What happened to the milk and apples? Why?

6. Where was Mr. Jones as the animals continued to control the farm?

7. What rumors did Frederick and Pilkington (neighboring farmers) tell about Animal Farm?

8. Why did Jones come back to the farm?

9. How did the animals defend themselves?

10. What was "Animal Hero, First Class" and who received it?

11. What was the battle called?
Animal Farm Chapters 5

1. What happens to Mollie? What kind of life does she have?

2. What do Napoleon and Snowball fight about? How do they differ in winning votes?

3. What is Snowball’s major project? What will it accomplish?

4. Explain why the animals became divided over this issue.

5. Explain the difference in philosophy over defense of the farm.

6. What happens when it is time to vote on the windmill? What underhanded tactic does Napoleon use?

7. What changes does Napoleon put into effect?

8. What techniques are used by Squealer to make the animals do as Napoleon wished?

9. How is Napoleon’s change of mind about the windmill explained?
Animal Farm  Chapter 6

1. What problems did the animals encounter with building the windmill? How did they solve these problems?

2. Why did Napoleon say it was necessary to engage in trade with human beings?

3. Some of the animals felt uneasy about this trade with humans. How were their protests stopped?

4. How is the commandment about sleeping in beds changed? What threat is used to keep the animals in line?

5. What happens to the windmill?

6. Who is blamed for this destruction?

7. Why do you think Napoleon chose to do this?
Animal Farm  Chapter 7

1. What did the animals do to conceal the fact that they were low on food?

2. What was the plan for the hens? What did they do in response to this plan?

3. What new discoveries were blamed on Snowball? Why do you think he was blamed?

4. What new information about Snowball was revealed?

5. Boxer has doubts about this new revelation. How does Squealer convince him?

6. Why were four pigs attacked?

7. What other animals confessed? Why do you think they did so?

8. Which commandment had now been broken?

9. What bothered Clover about the new life at Animal Farm?

10. Why was "Beasts of England" abolished?

11. What was the difference between "Beasts of England" and the new song composed by Minimus?
Chapter 8

1. How had the sixth commandment been changed?

2. How was Napoleon now addressed?

3. How does the song "Comrade Napoleon" differ from "Beasts of England"?

4. Why did the animals dislike Frederick?

5. How was the history of animal farm changed?

6. What new facts were revealed about Snowball?

7. How had Frederick swindled the animals?

8. How do the animals react when Frederick and his men attack?

9. What happens to the windmill?

10. How do the animals react?

11. Why did they think Napoleon was dying? What was really the problem?

12. How was the Fifth Commandment changed?

13. What was Squealer doing when he fell off the ladder?
1. What was Boxer looking forward to and why?

2. Give two examples of how Squealer says things are better now than when they were under Mr. Jones.

3. Show at least two ways that pigs were being treated better than the other animals.

4. What was a spontaneous demonstration?

5. How does Napoleon change history?

6. What has happened to Boxer?

7. Where did Squealer say Boxer was going?

8. What was written on the side of the van?

9. How did Squealer explain this?

10. What was insinuated about the case of whiskey which had arrived?
Animal Farm Questions Chapter 10

1. Even though the farm was prosperous, the lives of the animals were the same. Describe this life by naming 3 things.

2. What made their farm unique in England?

3. What was a big change in the pigs?

4. What do the sheep now chant?

5. What is the only commandment remaining?

6. At the meeting of pigs and humans, what did Mr. Pilkington say about Animal Farm that he had observed on the farm?

7. What did he say humans had in common with the animals?

8. What was the new name of Animal Farm?

9. What observation did the animals make about the pigs and men at the end of the novel?