

Standards Focus: *Subgenres of Literature—Allegory* Chapter Five

Many students are familiar with the different **genres**, or categories, of literature—fiction, nonfiction, poetry, autobiography, biography, plays, newspaper, folk tales—to name a few. However, there are often many **subgenres** of literature within these genres. For example, under the broad genre of plays, there are the subgenres of comedy, tragedy, and history. Under the genre of mystery, there are the subgenres of thriller, detective, historical, romantic, and suspense.

Animal Farm falls under the genre of fiction and is considered a satirical **allegory**. In literature, an allegory is a symbolic story in which the characters and action are representations of a deeper message or meaning. Often, the characters in an allegory have a general personality which represents a type of person, rather than a unique individual, and the underlying theme of the literature has a political, moral, social, or religious significance. *Animal Farm* is satirical in that by disguising the characters and action of the story, he is exposing and humorously attacking current political and social issues of his time, with the hope of inspiring acknowledgement of the issues, and provoking change.

Animal Farm is an allegory about the Russian Revolution of 1917 in which the Russian Czar, Nicholas II, was overthrown, and the world’s first Communist regime was established. In his novel, Orwell creates fictional characters (which happen to be cleverly disguised as animals), who represent the actual people surrounding the events of the Russian Revolution.

Directions: As you read Animal Farm, complete the chart below and on the next page with observations of the use of allegory in the story. An example has been done for you.

Real Person/Group	Fictional Character/Concept	Similarities
Karl Marx (1818-1883) wrote the Communist Manifesto and set ideas of revolution and the Communist ideal in motion.	Old Major	Old Major introduced the idea that “humans are bad” and set the Animal Farm revolution in motion.
Joseph Stalin (1897-1953) Communist leader of Russia from 1920-1953 after Vladimir Lenin. Known for his violent executions and persecution.	Napoleon	
Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) differed from Stalin in Communist ideals; was expelled from the Communist Party by Stalin and his followers.	Snowball	
Propaganda department; worked to improve Stalin’s image and promote his support.	Squealer	