LITERARY AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES: ALLEGORY, FABLE, IRONY, SATIRE

Animal Farm as Allegory:

Allegory is a symbolic narrative, a tale in which thinly-veiled symbols are used to represent ideas or concepts that, for whatever reason, cannot be discussed directly. Often moral instruction and lessons for children are constructed as allegories to make the lesson more memorable or understandable.

In an allegory, certain characters, names, objects, or events have fixed meanings that transcend their literal significance. Fables, parables, and morality plays are examples of allegorical texts that employ characters, not for their own sake, but for the symbolic meaning they carry.

In *Animal Farm*, most of the characters and events refer to specific figures and events from the time of the Russian Revolution. Although allegorical meanings are rarely absolute, most of the characters and events have clearly been written in order to mirror specific individual figures and occurrences from Soviet history:

- Major –
- Mr. Jones –
- Napoleon –

• Snowball –

• Squealer –

• Boxer –

• Moses –

• Mr. Pilkington –

- Mr. Frederick -
- The Battle of the Cowshed -

• Animalism –

• The Windmill –

Elements of a Fable:

A fable can be characterized as a text that incorporates animals or objects from nature (such as plants, rivers, mountains) as major characters in order to create a story that conveys a definite moral lesson. In order to allow animals or objects to function as main characters in fables, they are endowed with human characteristics, such as the ability to speak, think, reason, etc. In *Animal Farm*, for example, farm animals are the main characters, whereas human beings play minor roles. In all fables, the animal characters are designed to represent particular aspects of human nature. Therefore, the lesson to be learned—or the moral at the end of the story—

always sheds light on faults or problems present in the character or behavior of human beings. Thus, many fables often include covert criticism of particular human beings—or of the human race in general.

While this use of animals to represent humans or human characteristics is a form of *personification*, it is more accurately referred to as *anthropomorphism*, a common literary technique used in fables and children's literature as well as allegories like *Animal Farm*.

Using animal characters in order to represent faults in humans has many advantages: readers are often more inclined to read criticism and consider the validity of the moral at the end of the story when they do not feel personally attacked by the author, because blame is not placed directly on the reader in particular or on human beings in general. By proxy, readers can choose to recognize the criticism, or they can alternatively choose to read the story literally, that is, as a story about animals and natural objects. In the case of *Animal Farm*, for example, most readers quickly recognize Orwell's criticism of the abuse of socialist ideals and the threat of distorted communism. Yet, *Animal Farm* has likewise been marketed as a popular and humorous children's story about animals. Since fables use animals and natural objects as main characters, they usually retain a sense of humor or light-heartedness, which makes them easy to read and comprehend on a literal level (hence *Animal Farm*'s association with children's literature).