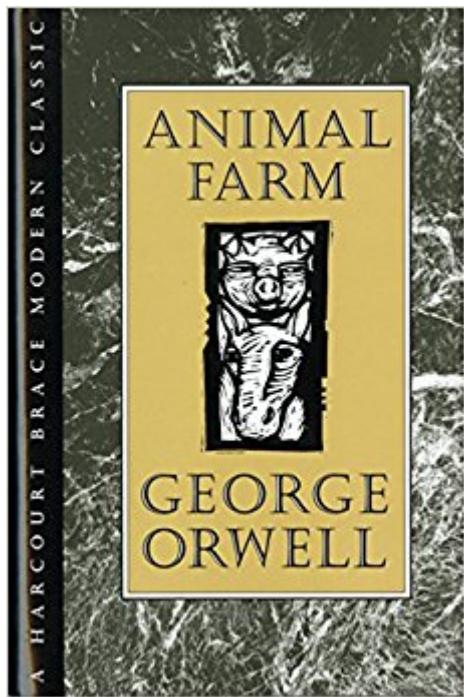


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Animal Farm



Synopsis

George Orwell's famous satire of the Soviet Union, in which all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others. •

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a handsome republication of Orwell's two most renowned works, Animal Farm and 1984. Even if you're just looking for 1984, this edition is to be commended; it comes with a fine introduction by today's leading Orwell enthusiast, Christopher Hitchens, and the reward of including Animal Farm requires very little in the way of additional effort or expense on your part. At 80-odd pages, you may as well pick it up in the same volume, and you're virtually certain to be glad that you did. I'm not alone in being of a generation that was first required to read Orwell in my student days (Middle School, in my case.) It seems that there was a lot of literature churned out then, accessible to if not directly aimed at children, with the horrors of totalitarianism as its theme. In addition to reading Orwell, we were also reading Huxley, Bradbury, and Verne -- the youth-oriented John Christopher books being yet another example. The generation that lived through Nazism and Stalinism clearly wanted the younger set to be aware of the horrors that could be, and to remain on guard against them. It doesn't seem to be quite that way anymore. Orwell's name is invoked today, but often in trivializing contexts: "Big Brother" is now a brain-numbing reality show, and "Orwellian" is a convenient and often hysterically-applied charge to political opponents. Some complacency does seem to be inevitable: we are now further removed from the days when the likes of Hitler and Stalin

killed tens of millions. Still, regimes arise that are nearly as horrific on a local scale, from Pol Pot to Saddam Hussein to the Taliban, and are real enough that Orwell's book is no joke. Orwell deserves attention if for no other reason than to sensitize us to the bad form associated with invoking his name in a trivializing context. There was a political ad on Youtube last year from an Obama supporter that cast Hillary Clinton on a giant Big Brother-like screen. I'm not in the least a fan of Senator Clinton, but associating her image with those of 1984 -- as was also done in an infamous Apple Computer ad -- trivializes Orwell's message in a deplorable way. Orwell wrote his novel to warn against real dangers that his generation lived through, and which others might yet, not as a marketing ploy to be used in selling either computers or nearly indistinguishable democratic political candidacies. The main reason I am writing this review, however, is that re-reading Orwell in my 40's is a stark reminder that his novels are more than political parables, but are worthy literature. I hope that those reading these reviews will be aware of this, and not shut their minds to a rewarding literary experience. As a kid, I was able to perceive the pedagogical intent of these books, but less so was I able to appreciate the literary artistry. 1984 in particular passes the Nabokovian test of creating a fully believable, if terrifying, alternate world. Beyond that, on nearly every page, Orwell leaves an image that just might stay with you forever. Small wonder that so many of the terms in 1984 ("Big Brother," "Newspeak") have burrowed their way into our lexicography. Orwell was a man of the left who understood something that many of his compatriots did not; that what had arisen in the Soviet Union was a regime unprecedented in its horror (arriving before, and ultimately outlasting, its horrific mirror image, Hitler's Third Reich.) At a time when others on the left simply refused to believe in the reality of the USSR, he looked at it unflinchingly and wrote what it was really about. Also, in childhood, I was not able to fully appreciate that Orwell's books simply weren't negative-utopian nightmare-fantasies, but paralleled actual events in the USSR with chilling accuracy. I knew, at some level, that he was satirizing certain events and characters in the Russian Revolution, but only in adulthood was I able to closely recognize nearly every episode and character in Animal Farm. Those familiar with USSR history will find it all here in the two books: the rewriting of the past to reaffirm the infallibility of the Party, the sudden reorienting of national propaganda to suit the latest twist of foreign policy, and the complete elimination of all references to those unfortunate souls decreed never to have existed. Truly, the thing that makes 1984 terrifying now, is not what was imagined in the novel's construction, but what was real in its sources. It exaggerates even relative to the Stalinist state -- but not by much. It is this recognition that makes it a chilling read today. 1984 is the more vivid and evocative of the two novels. Excepting one passage (Goldstein's dreary history lesson about 2/3 of the way through) it is riveting almost throughout its

300 pages. A few notes for younger readers: The moral of Animal Farm is not that Napoleon was simply a bad apple, but rather that the system adopted by the Animals ensured that ultimately such a tyrant would dominate. (I find the end of Animal Farm to be something of a false note; in the end the pigs prove no better than, and resemble, the humans they replaced, but this understates the tragic reality that the USSR was worse still than that which it replaced.) As I close, I leave you with one random question about 1984: how come it never occurs to Eastasia and Eurasia to combine against Oceania? Given that Oceania keeps flipping its allegiance from one to the other, you'd think they'd ultimately catch on and both decide to attack Oceania at the same time. Silly questions aside, this book is highly commended. Worth re-reading again, especially if you only have read Orwell when as immature as was I.

Because most people will review the actual book(s), which in this case are classics and I feel do not truly need a review, I will review this edition. Having the two in one is useful if you, like me, have not read the two prior to purchase or if you are a fan of both books. They are bound handsomely and the dust jacket is simple and smooth. The introduction is by someone who is obviously enamored with Orwell, and it gives some insight to the work and history of Orwell, though is mostly unnecessary as you could probably wikipedia the information. This is a nice edition and I felt it was a good choice for me.

Animal Farm and 1984 are classic literature. You've probably already read them. This edition presents them in a classic manner -- it is a lovely book, lovely dust jacket, and Christopher Hitchens does the intro. I usually find him funny and a little snarky, but in this intro, he is serious, high-minded, informative, and respectful. I wanted to read 1984 again, since so many people are kicking around the terms "Orwellian" and "Big Brother" regarding current politics. I'm so glad this is the volume I bought. I know I would have gotten the same *words* in a flimsy paperback, but this was a really nice read. I read both novels again. It has been... 20 years? Maybe longer since my first read-through. I'm a different reader than I was before. I've got that grisly Room 101 scene back in my head -- I had forgotten that one. Thanks, Mr. Orwell. This is a lovely edition. Treat yourself.

"Animal Farm" by George Orwell was never required reading for me when I was in school, so it took me some time to finally get around to reading it. I found it to be a complete and enjoyable read that had me hooked from the very first sentence. It is an excellent exercise in symbolism and creative imagination. While the book may be a very short read, it brings a whole lot to the table by giving you

an interesting take on how history can be reenacted in the most imaginative ways. The animals on Mr. Jones' farm have had enough of what they deem to be slavery. They're tired of being ordered around by humans while they see no benefits in their daily work. This is all sparked by a dream that the boar, Major, had about a unique place where animals called the shots and never had to be ordered around by humans ever again. He tells them a revolution is very much needed. When Major dies, the animals act quickly and are able to overthrow the alcoholic farmer and his thugs from his very own farm. The pigs are in charge now, as they claim that they are much smarter than the others and know how to lead. What seems to be paradise quickly transforms into another form of slavery altogether enforced by propaganda and threats from the pigs. And yet, the animals do not know any better, as they are deceived by the new system that gives them the illusion that they are better off than they were with Mr. Jones calling the shots. The book is greatly inspired by real events that went down during the era of communism in Russia, using animals as the actual people. While it helps to know about that time period, the book is written so well that it is easily understood even if you only know a little about what happened during that time. The use of animals was a very creative way to tell this story, as it gives you a big incentive to actually care for these characters. Had this just been about real people, then it would've just sounded like anything you could find in your history books. Orwell finds a much more interesting way of tackling the topic. He gives life to every one of his characters and they all elicit some kind of a feeling from you. There are times when the book is funny, and then there are times when it is just downright chilling (the last chapter will stay in your head for more than a few hours). George Orwell's "Animal Farm" is a genuine masterpiece that quickly hooks the reader from the very beginning. It's an extremely easy read as well as an enjoyable one--not enjoyable in the sense that this is a "happy tale," but enjoyable in the sense that you really feel like you're reading something great. If you haven't had the chance to check it out, make sure you add this to your reading list. It is something that should be read by everyone at least once in their life, even if they don't end up enjoying it as much as others. I loved every single word that was written in the extremely creative read. This is an important classic in literature that shouldn't be missed for any reason. -Michael Crane

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