

The Class Inequality in Animal Farm

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to see how the class inequality described in George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* reflects the social inequalities that exist in modern society, and how this novel can help us understand the social challenges that humans still face today. In this research, we used a qualitative method with a Marxist theoretical approach because this approach is considered most suitable for analyzing issues related to social class, power, and ideology. The data we used were dialogues between characters, character actions, and symbolic events in the novel, then we analyzed them using four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. From the results of the analysis, we found that the novel *Animal Farm* clearly show the inequality between the working class represented by the animals in the farm and the ruling class represented by the pigs. This inequality is maintained through economic and ideological control, which turns out to be still very relevant to the social conditions we face in the real world today. This novel can be read not only as a work of fiction, but also as a critical reflection on the social injustices that continue to happen in human life.

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1. Introduction

Literature plays a crucial role in human life because it shows as a means of expressing thoughts, feelings, and life experiences. Through literary works such as novels, poetry, and drama, people can understand many perspectives, values, and social realities that they might not experience directly. Literature helps us see the world more widely and deeply and plays a role in supporting empathy and influenced in the modern social world. By reading literature, we can learn to understand the feelings and conditions of others. This makes literature a bridge between cultures and individuals.

George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm*, discusses how it present the main issue of social class inequality through a Marxist approach. The term "Class Inequality" in the title refers to the social inequality that exists between groups of characters in the novel, where pigs monopolize elite positions with several advantages while working animals such as horses and chickens remain exploited present the revolution. This inequality is the main focus of this study, as Orwell critiques the failure of the social revolution.

The novel "*Animal Farm*" is an allegory that directly present the structure of class inequality through the description of animals as humanoids. This novel was chosen as the object of study because it uses literary techniques such as imagery, symbolism, and characterization to express social criticism. One example is the character of Napoleon, who is shown as a leader who exploits the lower classes, while also illustrating how ideology can be used by the ruling class to maintain its dominance. This title overall reflects the research objective, which is to analyze how George Orwell depicts the reality of social inequality through narrative elements in the novel, while also proving that literary works can function as a powerful and relevant medium for social criticism today (Bahri et al., 2026). It also demonstrates that literary works can function as a place to shows social issues that remain now days.

Literary works often show differences between social classes in society. Some people have more opportunities and resources, while others have less access to them (Fabela & Khairunnisa, 2024) because of this condition, people from lower social classes usually have difficulty improving their quality of life or

reaching a higher position in society. According to Marxist theory, this condition occurs because productive resources are owned and controlled by only a small group of people. Those who have control over these resources also have the authority to influence the way other people live and work (Das, 2023). This problem continues because society, culture, and even history still support the system today. People from upper classes also try to keep their advantages through certain ideas and beliefs. That is why class inequality still exists and is difficult for lower-class people to fight against (Gunderson, 2024).

This aspect is important because people can start to see economic control as something normal in society. In the end, lower-class groups may follow the system instead of resisting it (Øversveen & Kelly, 2023). Marxist criticism in literary studies usually focuses on how literary works show differences in power between social classes. In *Animal Farm*, researchers explain that social hierarchy is kept not only through control of the economy, but also through ideology. The use of propaganda and changes in people's shared beliefs help support inequality and make lower-class groups less likely to resist (Maurya, V. 2025).

The class inequality represented in *Animal Farm* is a central theme of George Orwell's critical vision. From the earliest stages of the revolutionary betrayal, strict class classification maintains itself on the farm, with pigs stand at the top of a social pyramid built on the work of horses, sheep, chickens, and other working animals (Johan Setiawan, 2018). The pigs take over the milk and apples, move into the farmhouse, reduce the working class's food rations while maintaining their own comforts, and eventually begin walking on two legs, a physical manifestation of their transformation into the class they once fought against. The chilling irony of *Animal Farm* lies in the fact that the class distinctions the revolution sought to abolish are not only restored but increased, now disguised behind the rhetoric of equality and shared burdens. Orwell in this way reveals how class inequality is not simply an economic phenomenon, but one actively produced and reproduced by those who control the mechanisms of government, law, and ideology.

In this way, George Orwell show that class inequality is not only an economic issue, but also a problem repeated created and maintained through the mechanisms of power and ideology. The scholarly significance of *Animal Farm* has received extensive recognition across various disciplines. Recent studies have examined how the power interact in the novel lead to moral decline and social inequality, while others have approached the text through Marxist theory, postcolonial, and discourse analysis. However, this study examines how the theme of class inequality in this novel can be used to understand contemporary social challenges, which remains an underexplored area. This gap is what this research aims to address.

Based on this background, this research focuses on how class inequality in George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* reflects social inequality in modern society. Therefore, this study objectives to analyze the representation of class inequality in the novel as a point of view for understanding the social challenges that humans still face today by examining the narrative elements, character actions, and symbolic events in the novel through a Marxist theoretical framework, this study to confirm that literary works such as *Animal Farm* remain highly relevant not only as fiction but also as a powerful medium for critically reflecting on the avoid social injustices in modern human life

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative method with a Marxist theoretical approach. In the analysis process, this research uses a Marxist theoretical perspective related to the concepts of class struggle and ideology to identify class inequality shown in George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm*.

The main data in this study come from the novel *Animal Farm* written by George Orwell and published in 1945. The data consist of several quotations, such as dialogues, character behaviors, and symbolic scenes that represent social class differences. These quotations were selected because they contain ideas about class struggle, unequal power, and interactions between upper and lower classes that can be discussed using a Marxist approach.

The data were collected through documentary study by reading the novel several times carefully. During the process, the relevant parts were identified and recorded, then grouped according to the focus of the research. In this study, the researchers acted as the main instrument and used a data categorization table to help organize the quotations based on their connection to class inequality in the novel.

The data analysis used four stages: collecting data, reducing data, presenting data, and making conclusions. First, the relevant quotations from the novel were collected. Second, the data were selected to keep only the parts related to the research topic. Third, the chosen data were organized and explained in a

clear structure. Lastly, conclusions were made by interpreting the data through Marxist theory to find patterns of class inequality shown in the novel.

3. Results

From this study, we obtained analytical results from George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* to answer our research question: this study objectives to analyze the representation of class inequality in the novel as a point of view for understanding the social challenges that humans still face today. We selected nine dialogue selection from the novel that illustrate elements of Marxist theory that focus on class inequality. These nine dialogues were chosen because they directly illustrate the inequality between the working class, represented by the farm animals, and the ruling class, represented by the pigs, while also reflecting social challenges that remain relevant today. Through the statements of the characters in the novel *Animal Farm* shows a hierarchical and exploitative social structure maintained through economic and ideological mechanisms.

We classified these dialogues based on the parts of the representation of class inequality they present.

Based on the data classification, two main dialogue categories were obtained:

- 1) Economic Exploitation,
- 2) Ideological Manipulation

Tabel 1. Data on Class Inequality Findings in the Novel *Animal Farm*

No.	Quote from Novel	Pages	Marxism Analysis
1.	"Man is the only creature that consumes without producing."	4	<i>Criticism of the ruling class, which lives off the labor of others without making any real contribution.</i>
2.	"Only get rid of man, and the produce of our labour would be our own."	5	<i>A pledge to end exploitation, ensuring that the fruits of one's labor return to the hands of those who produced them</i>
3.	"The animals had assumed as a matter of course that these would be shared out equally; one day, however, the order went forth that all the windfalls were to be collected and brought to the harness-room for the use of the pigs."	7	<i>The ideology of class equality as the foundation of the revolutionary movement.</i>
4.	"All animals are equal."	7 & 17	<i>The principle of egalitarianism, which served as the foundation of the new post-revolutionary system.</i>
5.	"Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers."	25	<i>The initial phase of the appropriation of extra value by the new ruling class</i>
6.	"No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal. He would be only too happy to let you make your decisions for yourselves. But sometimes you might make the wrong decisions, comrades"	40	<i>Ideological manipulation disguised as concern is used to strip the working class of their right to think.</i>
7.	"...""Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones to come back?"	41	<i>The tactic of false consciousness involves instilling fear to prevent the lower classes from questioning the system.</i>
8.	"This work was strictly voluntary, but any animal who absented himself from it would have his rations reduced by half."	43	<i>The peak of ideological confusion where class inequality was finally openly recognized as legitimate.</i>
9.	"ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS"	91	<i>The peak of ideological corruption where class inequality was finally openly recognized as legitimate.</i>

The whole point of Orwell's *Animal Farm* is how easily a revolution can be ruined. The animals finally get rid of humans, but then the pigs take over and basically copy-paste the exact same unfair system. It's a perfect metaphor for a capitalist society. When we look at how the characters treat each other, we can instantly see the Marxist angle, it's all about the ruling class exploiting everyone else. That's why the book still matters; it's not just checking a history box, it's talking about the exact social messes we're still stuck in today.

4. Discussion

Animal Farm is a novel by George Orwell that shows that life on a farm after the animals successfully defeat their human owners through a revolution. However, instead of realizing the promised equality, the pigs take over power and create a new system not significantly different from the old one. Understandably, the farm in this novel represents a capitalist society with a clearly divided social structure, so the relationships between the characters reflect the power relations between the ruling and exploited classes, in agreement with Marxist theory more than just historical criticism, this novel also reflects the social challenges that humanity still faces today.

1. Working Animals as the Proletariat

The working animals on the farm represent the proletariat, the group at the lowest level of the social structure. They work the hardest but receive less, have no access to knowledge, and are completely dependent on the narrative controlled by the pigs. The most easily noticeable character in this group is Boxer, a horse who symbolizes the loyalty and hard work of the working class. Boxer works tirelessly throughout his life but is ultimately sold to a butchery when he is no longer productive. As Maurya and Nurul (Nur & Arafah, 2020) note the bourgeoisie dominates society by controlling the proletariat, and characters like Boxer are forced to work all the time for the ruling class's privilege while being left to carry out all difficult work as the pigs position themselves as planners and decision-makers. Furthermore, exploitation in the novel occurs not only economically but also through social, political, intellectual, and psychological channels with the pigs systematically disadvantaging the working class represented especially by Boxer and other lower-class animals (Ali et al., 2025). Boxer's fate represents a real challenge that the working class still faces today where loyalty and hard work offer no protection in a system that was not designed to be fair.

2. The Pigs as the Bourgeoisie

The pigs in *Animal Farm* represent the bourgeoisie, the group that controls resources, wields power, and enjoys the fruits of the work of those below them. Unlike working animals who live in privation and exhaustion, the pigs enjoy better food, lighter work, and constantly growing privileges. The most famous character is Napoleon, who represents an authoritarian leader who uses power for the benefit of his own class. (Saoudi, 2022) argues that two core Marxist principles are central to understanding this dynamic: class conflict and the base-superstructure relationship, through which the upper class systematically overpowers the lower class, ultimately driving the dominated group to conditions worse than those of the pre-revolutionary period. Furthermore, Squealer serves as a propaganda tool, actively maintaining the system by manipulating language and narrative. In Marxist theory, Squealer can be understood as an agent of leadership who helps normalize inequality so that the working class is unaware of their authority. As (Merzah, 2024) demonstrates, Squealer skillfully uses language to distort facts and justify the pigs' unjust actions, directly reflecting the manipulative power of propaganda in sustaining an authoritarian regime.

Dialogue Interpretation

To present the data analysis, each selected dialogue was classified into two categories: 1) Economic Exploitation and 2) Ideological Manipulation. These categories appear as the storyline develops in the novel and each reflects social challenges that are relevant to current social problems now days.

1. Economic Exploitation

This category includes dialogues that shows how class inequality reveals itself through the unequal distribution of resources. As noted by (V. Maurya, 2025), the bourgeoisie dominates society by controlling the proletariat, and social classes are maintained through the unequal distribution of opportunities and duties a dynamic clearly mirrored in the farm's structure. This exploitation does not always take the form of direct violence, but more often manifests as apparently reasonable policies that systematically disadvantage the working class. The social challenges shows through this category remain highly relevant given the ongoing unequal distribution of wealth in the real world.

Quote 1 (p. 4)

"Man is the only creature that consumes without producing."

Old Major basically calls out humans for being total freeloaders during his speech. He points out how they are the only creatures around that eat up resources without contributing a single thing to the farm. It is a direct attack on the elite. He frames them as a lazy class surviving purely on the sweat of everyone else. From a Marxist angle, it is a

blunt critique of how the rich hoard wealth off the profits generated by actual workers. Old Major isn't just complaining here. He is trying to wake the animals up and spark some real class awareness, showing them that this whole rigged system needs to be smashed to pieces (Maurya, 2025).

Quote 2 (p.5)

" Only get rid of man, and the produce of our labor would be our own."

This part of Old Major's speech is all about the big promises made before the revolution. It is a classic Marxist dream, getting rid of exploitation so the workers actually keep what they produce. But the irony is brutal. The pigs ruin everything later on, breaking every single promise the moment they take over. It just goes to show that swapping rulers doesn't fix a broken setup. This is a massive issue in the real world too. New leaders step in all the time, but true structural change almost never happens (Pant, 2024).

Quote 3 (p.7)

"The animals had assumed as a matter of course that these would be shared out equally; one day, however, the order went forth that all the windfalls were to be collected and brought to the harness-room for the use of the pigs."

The moment the pigs took the milk and apples for themselves signals where things started to go wrong. The animals had fought for a future where everything would be shared, so naturally they expected the harvest to reflect that. But without much explanation, the pigs simply kept it for themselves. This is where Orwell quietly echoes a Marxist concern, that whoever ends up on top will eventually behave like those they replaced. The revolution removed the humans, but the pattern of a few taking from the many remained intact (Bahri et al., 2026).

Quote 4 (p.43)

"This work was strictly voluntary, but any animal who absented himself from it would have his rations reduced by half."

This dialogue shows more elusive but equally dangerous form of exploitation. Sunday work is presented as a choice, yet any animal who opts out faces real consequences that hit where it hurts most, their food. So in practice, the so-called voluntary arrangement is anything but. This is something Marxist thought has long pointed to: that coercion does not always come with chains. Sometimes it hides behind the language of free will while leaving people with no real options. With this, Orwell shows the animals working sixty hours a week, with Sunday afternoons eventually declared working time by Napoleon a form of alienation that severed them from the natural world and extinguished hope among the lower class (V, Swathi, R. Kanan, 2024).

2. Ideological Manipulation

This category includes dialogues that illustrate how language and ideology are systematically used to establish and then slowly undermine the principle of equality. This manipulation is a social challenge no

less dangerous than economic exploitation because its victims do not feel controlled, making it much more difficult to resist.

Quote 5 (p.25)

"Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers."

Old Major's statement reaffirmed that the principle of class equality is the foundation of the Animalist movement. In Marxist theory, this dialogue reflects the ideology of Equalitarianism that underlies the class struggle. However, its significance lies in the way this principle was subsequently manipulated by those in power as a pretext to conceal the inequality they had gradually built up. The social challenge described here is how narratives of equality can be used as a tool to perpetuate inequality itself (Saoudi, 2022).

Quote 6 (p.7&17)

"All animals are equal."

The Seventh Commandment of the Seven Commandments of the Animalist Movement reaffirms the promise of a total revolution. In Marxist theory, this dialogue reflects the ideology of Equalitarian that underlies the class struggle. The significance of this in the novel lies in the way the command is progressively mistreated and manipulated by the pigs to justify their own privileges, reflecting the social issues raised by the abuse of the principles of justice by those in power (D. S. K. Maurya, 2025).

Quote 7 (p.41)

"Surely, comrades, you don't want Jones to come back?"

Whenever an animal starts to question the pigs' rules, Squealer pulls out this line. The working animals are basically forced to choose between going along with everything or losing it all, the threat of Jones coming back is just a way to shut down any conversation. According to Marxist theory, this is a form of false consciousness, where the oppressed class is scared into thinking that anything else would be way worse than what they're already going through, even if what they're going through is pretty bad. (Merzah, 2024) identifies this as part of a broader pattern of fallacious reasoning specifically the false dilemma where Squealer systematically eliminates any perceived third option, leaving the animals with no logical basis to resist. Since fear-based narratives are still used all the time to silence criticism of unfair systems, the social issue shown here is still very much relevant today (Nur & Arafah, 2020).

Quote 8 (p.40)

"No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal. He would be only too happy to let you make your decisions for yourselves. But sometimes you might make the wrong decisions, comrades..."

Squealer's statement is probably the clearest example of ideological manipulation dressed up as genuine concern. He talks about equality while at the same time stopping everyone else from actually thinking for themselves or making their own choices. According to Marxist theory, this conversation is a perfect illustration of ideological hegemony, where the ruling class doesn't just control the resources, but also controls how the lower class thinks. In today's world, where control over public narrative is often sold to us as being "for the greater good" but actually ends up serving the interests of a small group of people, the social issues brought up here are still very much relevant (Das, 2023).

Quote 9 (p.91)

"ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL, BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS"

This one commandment pretty much sums up the entire ideological shift that happens throughout the novel. The class inequality that was previously hidden behind all kinds of narratives is now just openly accepted. Consistent with this, the findings of recent scholarship reveal that Orwell's portrayal of class conflict reflects Marx's concept of the proletariat's exploitation by the ruling class, while the animals' shifting awareness demonstrates both the emergence and gradual erosion of class consciousness (Faidza & Al Ayubi, 2025). According to Marxist theory, this moment marks the point where the ruling class's dominance has gotten so big that nobody can really push back against it anymore. This quote captures the biggest social issue Orwell is pointing at: how inequality can become so normal and so widespread that even the most marginalized members of society eventually just accept it as the way things are without even questioning it.

5. Conclusion

Class inequality works through economic exploitation and ideological manipulation at the same time, each reinforcing the other. Overthrowing a system solves less than people hope, as a change in leadership means little if the conditions that enabled exploitation are left untouched. What actually needs to shift ranges from who gets to learn and think critically, to whether ordinary people feel entitled to question those above them at all. Fear and convenient promises have always been enough to keep most people from pushing too hard. No society is safe from exploitation if its members stop paying attention, as inequality has a way of creeping in through the back door, dressed up in the language of fairness or framed as simply the way things work. The two patterns uncovered here, economic exploitation and ideological manipulation, are not relics of the past. They are ongoing, and they are quiet, and that is precisely what makes them worth studying

This study does not wrap things up neatly, because the issues it points to are not neat. For researchers who want to go further, the same framework used here, reading economic exploitation and ideological manipulation together rather than separately, could be applied to other political allegories or dystopian works. There is still a lot of ground to cover, especially in non-Western literary traditions where class dynamics look different on the surface but follow the same underlying logic. For teachers and educators working with literature at any level, *Animal Farm* is not just a story about pigs and farms. Bringing Marxist theory into the classroom in an accessible way gives students a vocabulary for things they already sense but cannot always name, the way systems justify themselves, the way language gets used to make unfairness sound reasonable. That vocabulary matters outside the classroom too. For anyone reading this who is not a researcher or a teacher, the novel's argument is simple enough: pay attention, especially when something is being told to you as though there is no other way it could be.

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SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN GEORGE ORWELL%27S ANIMAL FARM_A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

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