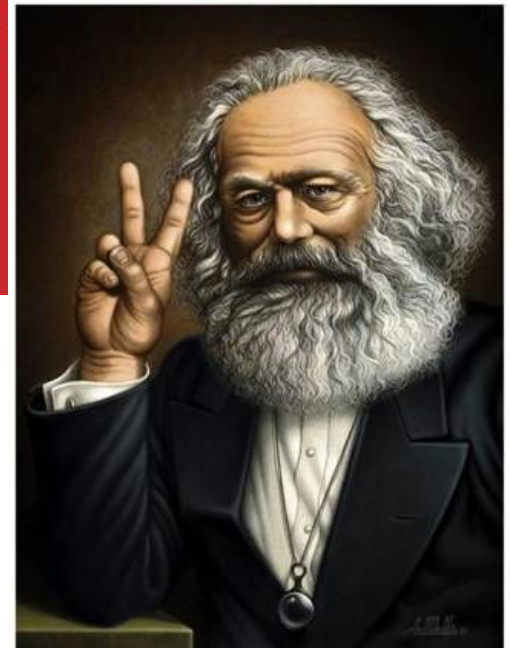
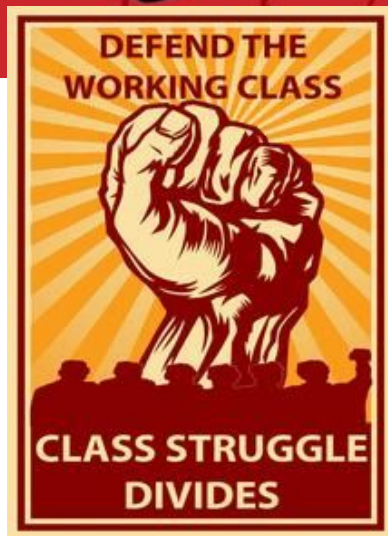


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# The Power Struggle Behind The Texts: A Look At Marxist Literary Criticism



### Idea/Perspective Summary

- A way of analyzing texts from a perspective based on the theories of the **Marxists School of Thought**.
- The history of every country in the world is composed of stories about **class struggles**.
- Every piece of literature is **a reflection** of the real world, and **which side the author is on**.
- All literary texts **are the products** of the society's **economic** and social **environment**, **not independent** from it.

### Typical Questions to Consider

- How does the text depict **material** and **socioeconomic reality**?
- How does the author's **personal experience** and the **time period** he/she lived in **shaped** his/her way of writing and depiction of the material and socioeconomic reality?
- What **social classes** are featured in the texts? And which social class does the text **claim** to **represent**?
- Are there any signs of lower class being **oppressed** by upper or ruling class?
- What **values** does it **reinforce** or **subvert**?
- **Whom** does this work of art/literature **benefit**?



## A Timeline for Marxists, and History Buffs:

### **1780s - 1840s: The Industrial Revolution**

Where the class struggle all began.

### **1789: French Revolution**

A major conflict between the different classes of society in France. If a King - then

considered a Godly figure -

could be killed, then anything is possible!

### **1848: *The Communist***

### ***Manifesto***

Marxism and Communism officially appeared on the stage of world history.

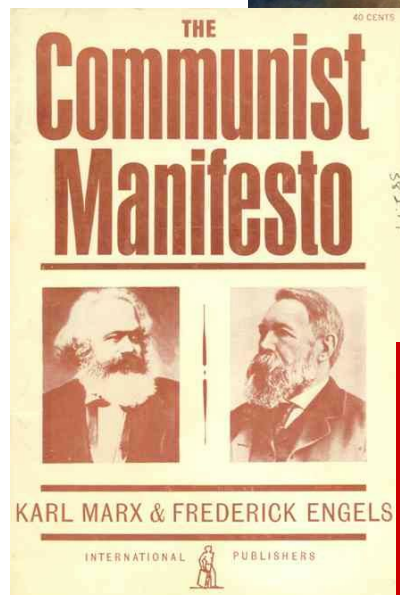
### **1917: Russian Revolution**

The beginning of USSR, the first form of a national government believed in Marxist agenda.

Inspired many other communist revolutions in other parts of the world (e.g. China).

### **1991: Collapse of the USSR**

The end of the Communist Dream - in Europe.



## **Key Words/Concepts**

**Class Struggle:** Lower class VS Upper/Ruling class. Basically, the relationship between employees and employers,

**Capital:** Anything that could be turned into profit.

**Ideology:** Whatever seems natural and good way of behaving, from recycling to the slogans on your t-shirt that you probably don't understand, all can be considered an ideology.

**Culture:** Anything - literature, music, art, or media, that means something - that are ways people trying to feed you with a political message, without you necessarily realizing it. Pretty much what those conspiracy theorists are trying to say all day.

**Bourgeois:** Employers, company CEOs, the guy who runs that Tim Hortons around the corner, whoever that makes money by exploiting the labourers.

**Proletarian:** The lower/working class, the labourers, the ones being exploited by the Bourgeois.

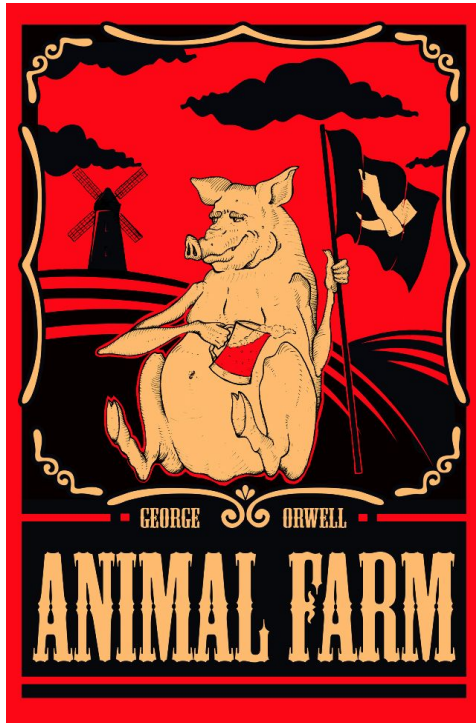
**Labour:** Want to turn your **capital** into money? Then you will need manpower and brainpower: that is, the labour force.

**Laws of History:** The development of mankind's society, or the progress of it, will eventually lead us to communism - according to Marxists.

**Dialectical Materialism:** A theory of history that sees the world as the continual resolution of contradictions, such as the recurring theme of class struggle.

**Commitment:** Committing to your cause (in this case, Marxism) by spreading the message via different forms of arts (e.g. songs, paintings, literatures).

### Example of Analyzing Texts



The novel is alluding to the **class struggle** of a society, and the animals represent the **lower/working class, the proletarians**, that is being oppressed by Mr. Jones, the **upper/ruling class, the bourgeois**. Later, a **revolution** led by the pigs kicked Mr. Jones out of the farm, and surprisingly (ok not really), the pigs declared themselves the **new ruler** of the farm, and formed an even **more oppressive** leadership,

George Orwell, the author, though a democratic socialist, realized that **Communism could be as totalitarian as the**

**Fascists** were after fighting alongside with the communists in the Spanish Civil War. He became a **harsh critic of Stalinism** - the way Stalin had been running Soviet Union. It is **under these influences** Orwell wrote *Animal Farm*, a **satirical** novel that **indirectly reflects** the events within Russia from the Russian Revolution of 1917 up until the Stalinist era in Soviet Union. Orwell believed that the Soviet Union had **become a brutal and unequal regime**, enforced by the **reign of terror**. This was exactly what was shown in the novel.

One can also argue that the novel **itself** was **exploited** by the Capitalist West as a **propaganda** tool against the Soviet Regime, to weaken communist's influence.

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/722/05/>

<http://www.shmoop.com/marxism/>

