Symbolism In Animal Farm

Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities, by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Generally, it is an object representing another, to give an entirely different meaning that is much deeper and more significant. The author George Orwell uses symbolism throughout his novel/fable Animal Farm, to convey his ideas and concepts. The symbols can be analysed through objects, characters, and actions. The fable is a satirical allegory through which Orwell presents his cynical view of human nature. He uses the fable effectively to expose human society as well as present his views of the Russian Revolution. He also uses the fable to convey the ideas of certain characters and objects and link them to important figures during the Russian Revolution.

Orwell uses the windmill as a symbol for the Russian industry that has been built by the working-class. The windmill represents the massive infrastructure construction projects and modernisation initiatives that Soviet leaders instituted immediately after the Russian Revolution, specifically Joseph Stalin's Five-Year Plans. 'All that year the animals worked like slaves….any animal who absented himself from it would have his rations reduced by half.' (near the beginning of chap 6) The way that the animals go hungry in order to build the windmill in the first place mirrors how the Five Year Plans, while intended to create enough food for everyone, were wildly unsuccessful and led to widespread famine in the early 1930s. Snowball initially proposed the Windmill as a way of improving the farm's living conditions; when Snowball is driven off, Napoleon claims it as his own idea, but his mismanagement of the project and the attacks from other landowners meant that the project took far longer to complete than expected. 'They dashed straight for Snowball, who only sprang from his place just in time to escape their snapping jaws...he was out of the door, and they were after him.' (near the end of chapter 5). The final product is of inferior quality, much like many of the projects undertaken by the Soviets post-revolution. In the end, the Windmill is used to enrich Napoleon and the other pigs at the expense of the other animals. The windmill also comes to symbolise the pigs' totalitarian triumph: the other animals work to build the windmill thinking it will benefit everyone, but even after it benefits only the pigs, the animals continue to believe that it benefits all of them. To conclude, the author uses the windmill effectively to convey the idea of Stalin's 5-year plan and the horrible times the proletariats went through as well as the pigs using it to assert their power over the animals.

Orwell uses objects such as whiskey to symbolise ideas relating to the Russian Revolution. Whiskey represents corruption. When Animalism is founded, one of the commandments is ?No animal shall drink alcohol.' (near the end of chap 2) Slowly, however, Napoleon and the other pigs come to enjoy whiskey and its effects. The commandment is changed to ?No animal shall drink alcohol to excess' after Napoleon experiences his first hangover and learns how to moderate his whiskey consumption. When Boxer is sold to the Knacker, Napoleon uses the money to purchase whiskey. With this act, Napoleon fully embodies the human qualities that the animals once revolted against. To sum up, Orwell conveys the idea of an object, which in this case is whiskey representing corruption, to symbolise something deeper and relating to the Russian Revolution.

Orwell uses the seven commandments to symbolise and signify something deeper than it

originally was. The Seven Commandments of Animalism is written on the barn wall for all to see. (near the end of chap 2) Representing the power of propaganda, the malleable nature of history, and information when people are ignorant of the facts. The commandments are altered throughout the novel; each time they are changed indicates that the animals have moved even further away from their original principles. The commandments are altered by the pigs which can be read near the end of chapter 6 where Clover gets Muriel to read out the commandment. ‘No animals shall sleep in a bed with sheets’. Clover hadn’t remembered anything about sheets which is stated in the chapter. Squealer comes by and clears everything up since he represents propaganda. To conclude, the author symbolises and conveys his ideas through the 7 commandments. These ideas are that the commandments symbolise the power of propaganda and that the pigs changed the seven commandments throughout the story to their liking.

Orwell uses the hen’s rebellion and execution to symbolise the events that took place during the Russian Revolution. The events are the execution of the animals which symbolises the Great Purge which was between 1936 and 1938. The hens refuse to give their eggs up to the pigs, and Napoleon resolves to starve them until they change their minds. (found near the beginning of chap 7) Several of the hens died, and the rest simply gave up. Soon after, Napoleon calls a general meeting, and the dogs drag out several pigs 'squealing with pain and terror' (near the end of chapter 7). The pigs confess that they were working with Snowball and Mr. Frederick, and a moment later the dogs 'tore their throats out' (near the end of chap 7). After that, the same thing happens with the surviving hens from the rebellion, a goose, and several sheep. In the end, there is 'a pile of corpses and Napoleon’s feet and the air was heavy with the smell of blood, which had been unknown there since the expulsion of Jones' (near the end of chap 7). This symbolises a nightmarish allusion to the Great Purge, which took place between 1936 and 1938. Working to eliminate every last trace of the opposition, Stalin had executed or sent to Gulag labor camps many of those who could claim association with Leon Trotsky, as well as ex-kulaks, military leaders, and anyone that might be labeled 'anti-Soviet.' The estimates of how many died in the purges range from about 500,000 up to 2 million. What made Stalin’s purges particularly abominable was that he forced many to come forward and confess falsely to crimes that they never committed, often after severe psychological torment and outright torture. These became known as the 'Moscow Show Trials.' What is being conveyed in Animal Farm is a very simple and direct illustration of how Stalin’s purges worked. Squealer tells the other animals that Snowball, the scapegoat for everything, is not just working against them from outside the farm, but that he has been sneaking back inside: he’s trying to destroy them from within. Snowball here becomes the figure of general Stalinist paranoia, and what the readers get from this is an old-fashioned witch-hunt, plain and simple. It’s worth remembering that Karl Marx’s vision was of a utopia, of precisely the opposite of what Stalin had to offer. A Russian in the late 1930s might look back on what happened and think, like old Clover, 'These scenes of terror and slaughter were not what they had looked forward to on that night when old Major first stirred them to rebellion' (near the end of chap 7). To conclude, Orwell uses the fable effectively to convey the hen’s rebellion and animal’s execution as an event which happened during the Russian Revolution, the Great Purge.