

ANIMAL FARM

Pre-Assessment & Interpretation Guide

CENTRAL IDEA

How does a revolution against unfair rule end up rebuilding the thing it destroyed — and at exactly which step could it have gone otherwise?

Novel: Animal Farm by George Orwell

Setting: An English farm, at no stated date, in a story the author subtitled “A Fairy Story”

Designed for: Advanced readers in grade 8, adaptable for advanced grade 7, with supports

TEXT USE

Use a teacher-approved copy of the complete 10-chapter novella. This resource supplies original prompts and no reproduced passages, including none of the commandments painted on the barn wall.

Purpose & Directions

This pre-assessment reveals current reasoning about written rules and who can verify them, about responsibility distributed across people with different amounts of knowledge, and about the difference between a story that argues something and evidence that establishes it. It does not require any knowledge of the novella and should not be used as a gatekeeping score.

ADMINISTRATION

Allow 25–40 minutes, or split across two sittings. Students may write, dictate, or record oral responses. Keep the reasoning demand constant.

Student Directions

- Explain how you know; more words do not automatically mean stronger thinking.
- Name uncertainty when evidence is limited.
- You may revise any response.
- Do not search the internet during this task.

1. The Posted Rule

SCENARIO

A rule is posted where everyone can see it. Over time it is quietly edited. Most people remember the original but cannot prove it changed.

Task

Who holds the power in that situation? What would it take to break the arrangement?

2. Who Can Read It

SCENARIO

In a group, only a few members can read the documents everyone is governed by. The rest rely on summaries.

Task

What follows from that? Is anyone at fault, and if so, for what?

3. The Small First Exception

SCENARIO

A group agrees to share everything equally. Almost immediately, a small exception is made and explained. Nobody objects.

Task

Does the exception matter? What would you want to know before answering?

4. The Person Who Knew

SCENARIO

Someone in a group understood what was happening the whole time and said nothing. They did not benefit and they did not participate.

Task

How would you judge them compared to those who did not understand?

5. The Confession

SCENARIO

A person publicly confesses to something they did not do. Their audience believes them.

Task

What has to already be true for that to work? What would have to change for it to stop working?

6. Loyalty

SCENARIO

Someone responds to every problem by working harder and trusting whoever is in charge. They are widely admired.

Task

Is that a virtue? Under what conditions does it become dangerous?

7. The Story That Argues

SCENARIO

Someone writes a story in which everything stands for something real, in order to make a point about history.

Task

What can that story prove? What can it only suggest? How would a careful reader tell the difference?

Student Self-Reflection

Which response best shows your thinking? Why?

Where did you need more evidence?

Did any answer change while you were writing it?

Facilitator Interpretation Guide

Dimension	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
Claim	Opinion or summary	Defensible but broad	Nuanced, conditional, revisable
Evidence	Unanchored assertion	Relevant example	Selects evidence by purpose and names its limits
Perspective-Taking	One party's view only	Names two views	Explains why views differ and what each one misses
Reasoning	Evidence listed	Explains a link	Explains mechanism, motive, and uncertainty
Complexity	Dismisses alternatives	Mentions another view	Tests counterevidence and revises

Look Especially For

- Item 7: does the student separate an argument from evidence? This is the single most important predictor for this unit, and the most common failure.
- Item 4: does the student distinguish degrees of responsibility among people with different knowledge? Mission 3 and the Benjamin question depend on it.
- Item 1: does the student identify verification, rather than authorship, as the seat of the power?
- Item 6: does the student notice that a virtue can become an instrument? Students who see this will handle Boxer without sentimentality.

Do Not

- Convert the matrix into an IQ label or a single permanent score.
- Penalize handwriting, spelling, speech, or length when they are not the construct.
- Assume a confident answer equals a well-reasoned one.
- Delay access supports until a student struggles.

Instructional Decision Sheet

Dimension	Current Evidence	Next Challenge / Support
Claim		
Evidence		
Perspective-Taking		
Reasoning		
Complexity		

Compacting Decision

☐ Maintain core sequence ☐ Compact routine practice ☐ Accelerate to independent inquiry

Access Plan

Reassessment after Mission 3
