

Argumentative Sample Response

Prompt: How does old Major use propaganda techniques to influence the animals' behavior?

What would it take to convince you to take part in a rebellion? For the animals in George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm*, the answer is propaganda. Propaganda is information that is intended to shape how people think or behave and is generally used to promote a particular political cause or point of view. While some use propaganda techniques to manipulate others and maintain a position of power, this is not always the case. For example, the character old Major uses propaganda techniques to inspire the other animals to take action that he believes will benefit their lives. In his speech, old Major uses the propaganda techniques of fear and glittering generalities to convince the animals that they should rebel against their human masters.

At the beginning of his speech, old Major repeatedly uses the propaganda technique of fear to suggest the animals' lives are in danger from humans. Propagandists use fear to convince or demonstrate to an audience that they are in significant danger, and then suggest a way of avoiding that danger. Old Major uses this technique when he vividly describes the violent deaths that await each of the animals on the farm. He tells the pigs, "You young porkers ... will scream your lives out at the block within a year" (9), and then reminds the animals, "to that horror we must all come" (9). He describes how Boxer, the horse, will go to the knacker's to be slaughtered and turned into glue, and that even the beloved dogs will be drowned by a "brick round their necks" (9) when they are too old to work. These graphic images undoubtedly terrify the animals, which is the aim of the propaganda technique of fear. It is clear that old Major is using fear purposefully, as immediately after he describes the animals' violent deaths, he offers his solution: "Rebellion!" (9). Because he has used the powerful propaganda technique of fear, the animals are primed to listen to what he has to say.

As the speech progresses, old Major uses glittering generalities to demonstrate how good life could be if the animals rebelled against humans. Glittering generalities is a propaganda technique where the speaker uses appealing but non-specific words or phrases to create positive emotions in the listeners. Old Major describes to the animals how, after overthrowing human beings, "almost overnight we could become rich and free" (9). Words like "rich" and "free" have very positive connotations and are likely appealing to the other animals, but old Major does not go into specifics about what those words actually mean in the context of overthrowing humans. Freedom may mean different things to different animals, and the idea of what makes someone rich may differ.

These positive words stand in clear contrast to the words that old Major uses when describing the horrific future that awaits each animal if they do not **abolish** humanity's hold on them. When choosing between "screaming your lives out" and becoming "rich and free," the choice is obvious. Old Major has chosen his words carefully so that the animals will be persuaded by his argument.

By using the propaganda techniques of fear and glittering generalities, old Major convinces the animals that it is in their interest to rebel against humanity. Rather than giving a speech to mislead the animals or gain power over them, old Major uses these propaganda techniques **shrewdly** to persuade the animals to see the world the way he does in order to help them avoid a life of suffering and encourage them to seek happiness and fulfillment. These techniques successfully inspire the animals to act and kick Mr. Jones off the farm. Old Major's use of propaganda techniques proves that propaganda can be used to convince people to do things that will benefit them, showing that propaganda can be a good thing for society if it is used by the right people in the right ways.