

## **Animal Farm**

**A novel written by George Orwell**

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### **Summary**

Animal Farm is a satirical fable set on Manor Farm, a typical English farm. Orwell employs a third-person narrator, who reports events without commenting on them directly. The narrator describes things as the animals perceive them.

Old Major calls a meeting of all the animals in the big barn. He tells the animals that human beings are the sole reason that No animal in England is free and that the life of an animal is misery and slavery. Therefore the animals must take charge of their destiny by overthrowing Man in a great Rebellion. He relates his dream of rebellion.

Old Major dies soon after the meeting and the other animals prepare for the Rebellion under Snowball, Napoleon, and Squealer's leadership. One night, Mr. Jones passes out drunk, creating the perfect opportunity for the animals to rebel. They are so hungry that they break into the store-shed. When Jones and his men try to whip them into submission, the animals run them off the farm. The animals burn all reminders of their former bondage but agree to preserve the farmhouse as a museum. Snowball changes the name of the farm to Animal Farm and comes up with Seven Commandments, which are to form the basis of Animalism. They are:

- 1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.*
- 2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.*
- 3. No animal shall wear clothes.*
- 4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.*
- 5. No animals shall drink alcohol.*

*6. No animal shall kill any other animal.*

*7. All animals are equal.*

The pigs milk the cows, and then the animals go out to begin the harvest. When they return, the milk has disappeared mysteriously. The first harvest is a great success. The animals adhere to the tenets of Animalism happily, and with good result. Each animal works according to his ability and gets a fair share of food.

Every Sunday, Snowball and Napoleon lead a meeting of all the animals in the big barn. The pigs are the most intelligent animals, so they think up resolutions for the other animals to debate. Soon after, the pigs set up a study-center for themselves in the harness-room. Snowball embarks on various campaigns for social and economic improvement. Napoleon opposes whatever Snowball does. Because most of the animals lack the intelligence to memorize the Seven Commandments, Snowball reduces them to the single maxim, "Four legs good, two legs bad." The sheep take to chanting this at meetings.

As time goes by, the pigs increase their control over the animals and award themselves increasing privileges. They quell the animals' questions and protests by threatening Mr. Jones's return. During this time, Napoleon also confiscates nine newborn puppies and secludes them in a loft in order to "educate" them.

By late summer, Snowball's and Napoleon's pigeon-messengers have spread news of the Rebellion across half of England. Animals on other farms have begun lashing out against their human masters and singing the revolutionary song "Beasts of England." Jones and other farmers try to recapture Animal Farm but fail. The animals celebrate their victory in what they call The Battle of the Cowshed.

The animals agree to let the pigs make all the resolutions. Snowball and Napoleon continue to be at odds and eventually clash over the windmill. Snowball wants to build a windmill in order to shorten the work week and provide the farm electricity, but Napoleon opposes it. Napoleon summons nine fierce dogs (the puppies he trained) to run Snowball off the farm. Napoleon announces that Sunday meetings will cease and that

the pigs will make all the decisions in the animals' best interest. At this point, Boxer takes on his own personal maxims, I will work harder and Napoleon is always right. In the spring, Napoleon announces plans to build the windmill, claiming that it was his idea all along—rewriting history.

Building the windmill forces the animals to work harder and on Sundays. Shortages begin to occur, so Napoleon opens up trade with the human world. Through Squealer, he lies that no resolutions against interaction with humans or the use of money had ever been passed. Napoleon enlists Whymper to be his intermediary, and the pigs move into the farmhouse. Squealer assures the animals that there is no resolution against this, but Clover and Muriel discovers that one of the resolutions has been changed to: No animal shall sleep in a bed *with sheets*. Squealer convinces her that there was never a resolution against beds at all.

One night, strong winds shake the farm and the animals awake to discover the windmill destroyed. Napoleon blames Snowball and sentences the expelled pig to death.

In the winter, as conditions become worse on Animal Farm, Napoleon deceives the human world into thinking Animal Farm is prospering. He signs a contract for a quota of four hundred eggs per week, inciting a hen rebellion that results in several deaths. Around the same time, Napoleon begins negotiating with Frederick and Pilkington to sell Animal Farm's store of timber. He also spreads propaganda against Snowball, claiming that Snowball was always a spy and a collaborator while Napoleon was the true hero of the Battle of the Cowshed, and Squealer warns against Snowball's secret agents.

Four days later, Napoleon holds an assembly in which he makes several animals confess to treachery and then has the dogs execute them. The dogs try to get Boxer to confess but leave him alone when they cannot overpower him. Afterwards, Clover and some other animals huddle together on a hill overlooking the farm. They reminisce about Animalism's ideals and consider how much they differ from the violence and terror of Napoleon's reign. They sing "Beasts of England," but Squealer informs them that the song is useless now that the Rebellion is

completed and that it is now forbidden. The new anthem begins with the lyrics: "Animal Farm, Animal Farm, / Never through me shalt thou come to harm!"

Another commandment is changed to read: "No animal shall kill any other animal *without cause*." Clover and Muriel convince themselves that the commandment has always been this way. Squealer begins reading the animals statistics regularly to convince them that production is increasing. Napoleon seldom appears in public. The animals now call him "our Leader, Comrade Napoleon." They attribute all misfortunes to Snowball and all success and luck to Napoleon.

Napoleon continues to negotiate with the farmers and eventually decides to sell the timber to Mr. Pilkington. At last, the windmill is finished and named "Napoleon Mill." Soon after, Napoleon announces that he will sell the timber to Frederick, quickly changing his allegiance and disavowing his earlier vilification of Frederick. Napoleon says that Pilkington and Snowball have been collaborating. Frederick pays for the timber in fake cash, and the next morning, Frederick and his men invade the farm and blow up the windmill. The animals manage to chase the humans off, though many die or are injured in what they call "The Battle of the Windmill."

After the battle, the pigs discover a case of whisky in the farmhouse. They drink to excess and soon, Squealer reports that Napoleon is dying and, as his last action, has made the consumption of alcohol punishable by death. But Napoleon recovers quickly and then sends Whymper to procure manuals on brewing alcohol. Squealer changes another commandment to "No animal shall drink alcohol *to excess*."

Napoleon plans to build a schoolhouse for the thirty-one young pigs he has parented. Towards the end of the winter, Napoleon begins increasing propaganda to distract the animals from inequality and hardship. He creates special "Spontaneous Demonstrations" in which the animals march around and celebrate their triumphs.

In April, Napoleon declares the farm a Republic and is elected unanimously as President. The animals continue to work feverishly, most

of all Boxer. One day, Boxer collapses while overexerting himself. Napoleon promises to send him to the veterinarian in Willingdon. A few days later, a horse-slaughterer takes Boxer away in his van. The animals are none the wiser until Benjamin reads the lettering on the side of the van. A few days later, Squealer reports that Boxer died in the hospital despite receiving the best possible care. He claims that Boxer's last words glorified Animal Farm and Napoleon. He also claims that the van belongs to the veterinarian, who recently bought it from the horse slaughterer and had not yet managed to paint over the lettering. Napoleon promises to honor Boxer with a special banquet. But the pigs use the money from his slaughter to buy a case of whisky, which they drink on the day appointed for the banquet.

Years go by, and though Animal Farm's population has increased, only a few animals that remember the Rebellion remain. Conditions are still harsh despite technological improvements. The pigs and dogs continue to do no manual labor, instead devoting themselves to organizational work. One day, Squealer takes the sheep out to a deserted pasture where, he says, he is teaching them a song. On the day the sheep return, the pigs walk around the yard on their hind legs as the sheep chant, "Four legs good, two legs *better*." The other animals are horrified. Clover consults the barn wall again. This time Benjamin reads to her. The Seven Commandments have been replaced with a single maxim: "All animals are equal / But some animals are more equal than others."

The pigs continue the longstanding pattern of awarding themselves more and more privileges. They buy a telephone and subscribe to magazines. They even wear Jones's clothing. One night, Napoleon holds a conciliatory banquet for the farmers. Pilkington makes a speech in which he says he wants to emulate Animal Farm's long work hours and low rations. Napoleon announces that the farm will be called "Manor Farm" again, the animals will call each other "Comrade" no longer, and they no longer will march ceremoniously past Old Major's skull (a practice he denies understanding). He also declares that the farm's flag will be plain green, devoid of the symbols of the Rebellion. As the animals peer through the windows to watch the humans and pigs play poker, they cannot distinguish between them.

## **Animal Farm Character List**

### **Benjamin**

The donkey. He is the oldest animal on the farm and stereotypically stubborn and crotchety. He is also intelligent, being the only animal (aside from the pigs) that can read fluently. He never laughs, preferring to make cynical comments, especially the cryptic line, "donkeys live a long time." Despite Benjamin's unfriendly nature, he has a special affinity for Boxer. The Rebellion does not change Benjamin's personality, although he eventually helps the animals read the lettering on the side of the van and the maxim that replaces the Seven Commandments. Benjamin represents the human (and also stereotypically Russian) tendency towards apathy; he holds fast to the idea that life is inherently hard and that efforts for change are futile. Benjamin bears a similarity to Orwell himself. Over the course of his career, Orwell became politically pessimistic and predicted the overtake of the West by totalitarian governments.

### **Bluebell, Jessie, and Pincher**

The dogs. When Bluebell and Jessie give birth to puppies, Napoleon confiscates them and secludes them in a loft, where he transforms them into fierce, elitist guard dogs.

### **Boxer**

The male of the two horses on the farm. He is "an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as any two ordinary horses put together. A white stripe down his nose gave him a somewhat stupid appearance, and in fact he was not of first-rate intelligence, but he was universally respected for his steadiness of character and tremendous powers of work" (26). Boxer has a special affinity for Benjamin. With his determination to be a good public servant and his penchant for hard work, Boxer becomes Napoleon's greatest supporter. He works tirelessly for the cause of Animal Farm, operating under his personal maxims, "I will work harder" and "Napoleon is always right." The only time Boxer doubts propaganda is when Squealer tries to rewrite the story of Snowball's valor at the Battle of the Cowshed, a "treachery" for which

he is nearly executed. But Boxer recants his doubts when he learns that the altered story of the battle is directly from Napoleon. After Boxer is injured while defending the farm in the Battle of the Windmill, Napoleon sends him to be slaughtered for profit. The pigs use the money from the slaughter to buy themselves a case of whisky. Boxer is not pugnacious despite his name, but he is as strong as his name implies. In this way, Boxer is a painfully ironic character. He is strong enough to kill another animal, even a human, with a single blow from his hoof, and the dogs cannot manage to overpower him in Chapter VII. Still, Boxer lacks the intelligence and the nerve to sense that he is being used. Boxer represents the peasant or working class, a faction of humanity with a great combined strength--enough to overthrow a manipulative government--but which is uneducated enough to take propaganda to heart and believe unconditionally in the government's cause.

#### **the Cat**

The only cat on Manor Farm. She is lazy and indifferent, but she does participate in the Battle of the Cowshed.

#### **Clover**

The female of the two horses on the farm. She is "a stout motherly mare approaching middle life, who had never quite got her figure back after her fourth foal." Clover is Boxer's faithful companion as well as a motherly figure to the other animals. Like Boxer, Clover is not intelligent enough to read, so she enlists Muriel to read the altered Seven Commandments to her. She sees the incongruities in the government's policies and actions, but she is not smart or defiant enough to fight for the restoration of justice. Clover represents those people who remember a time before the Revolution and therefore half-realize that the government is lying about its success and adherence to its principles, but are helpless to change anything.

#### **the Dogs**

Nine puppies, which Napoleon confiscates and secludes in a loft. Napoleon rears them into fierce, elitist dogs that act as his security guards. The dogs are the only animals other than the pigs that are given special privileges. They also act as executioners, tearing out the throats of animals that confess to treachery. The dogs represent the NKVD and

more specifically the KGB, agencies Joseph Stalin fostered and used to terrorize and commit atrocities upon the Soviet Union's populace.

### **Frederick**

The owner of Pinchfield, the small farm adjacent to Manor Farm. He is a hard-nosed individual who is known for his frequent legal troubles and demanding business style. He cheats the animals out of their timber by paying for it with fake banknotes. Frederick represents Adolf Hitler.

Rumors of the exotic and cruel animal tortures Frederick enacts on his farm are meant to echo the horror stories emerging from Nazi Germany. Frederick's agreement to buy the timber represents the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression treaty, and his subsequent betrayal of the pact and invasion of Animal Farm represents the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union.

### **Jones**

The owner of Manor Farm and a drunkard. His animals overthrow him in the Rebellion. When he tries to recapture his property, they defeat him, steal his gun, and drive him off again. Mr. Jones dies in a home for alcoholics in another part of the country. He represents the kind of corrupt and fatally flawed government that results in discontent and revolution among the populace. More specifically, Jones represents the latter days of imperial Russia and its last leader, the wealthy but ineffective Czar Nicholas II.

### **Minimus**

A pig with "a remarkable gift for composing songs and poems." Under Napoleon's rule, Minimus sits with him and Squealer on the barn platform during meetings. Minimus composes propaganda songs and poems under Napoleon's rule. Though we never hear Minimus complain about his duties as propaganda writer, he represents the Soviet Union's artists, who were forced to use their talents to glorify communism rather than express their personal feelings or beliefs.

### **Mollie**

The white mare that draws Mr. Jones's trap. Her personality is superficial and adolescent. For example, when she arrives at the big meeting in Chapter 1, Orwell writes, "Mollie ... Came mincing daintily in, chewing a lump of sugar. She took a place near the front and began flirting her white mane, hoping to draw attention to the red ribbons it



was plaited with" (27). Mollie is the only animal not to fight in the Battle of the Cowshed, instead hiding in her stall. She eventually flees the farm and is last seen, bedecked in ribbons, eating sugar and letting her new owner stroke her nose. Mollie represents the class of nobles who, unwilling to conform to the new regime, fled Russia after the Revolution.

### **Moses**

A tame raven that is Mr. Jones's "especial pet." He is a spy, a gossip, and a "clever talker." He is also the only animal not present for Old Major's meeting. Moses gets in the way of the pigs' efforts to spread Animalism by inventing a story about an animal heaven called Sugarcandy Mountain. Moses disappears for several years during Napoleon's rule. When he returns, he still insists on the existence of Sugarcandy Mountain. Moses represents religion, which gives people hope of a better life in heaven. His name connects him to the Judeo-Christian religions specifically, but he can be said to represent the spiritual alternative in general. The pigs dislike Moses's stories of Sugarcandy Mountain, just as the Soviet government opposed religion, not wanting its people to subscribe to a system of belief outside of communism. Though the Soviet government suppressed religion aggressively, the pigs on Animal Farm let Moses come and go as he pleases and even give him a ration of beer when he returns from his long absence.

### **Muriel**

The white goat. Muriel can read fairly well and helps Clover decipher the alterations to the Seven Commandments. Muriel is not opinionated, but she represents a subtle, revelatory influence because of her willingness to help bring things to light (as opposed to Benjamin).

### **Napoleon**

One of the leaders among the pigs, Napoleon is a "large, rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar" that is up for sale. He is the only Berkshire boar on the farm. He is "not much of a talker" and has "a reputation for getting his own way" (35). Napoleon expels Snowball from the farm and takes over. He modifies his opinions and policies and rewrites history continually to benefit the pigs. Napoleon awards special privileges to the pigs and especially to himself. For example, he dines on Mr. Jones's fine china, wears Mr. Jones's dress clothes, and smokes a pipe. As time goes

on, Napoleon becomes a figure in the shadows, increasingly secluding himself and making few public appearances. Eventually, Napoleon holds a conciliatory meeting with the neighboring human farmers and effectively takes over Mr. Jones's position as dictator. Napoleon represents the type of dictator or tyrant who shirks the common good, instead seeking more and more power in order to create his own regime. Orwell reflects Napoleon's greed for power with a name that invokes Napoleon Bonaparte, the very successful French leader who became "Emperor" and brashly invaded Russia before being defeated by Russia. But Napoleon the pig more directly represents Stalin in his constantly changing policies and actions, his secret activities, his intentional deception and manipulation of the populace, and his use of fear tactics and atrocities.

### **Old Major**

A prize Middle White boar that the Joneses exhibited under the name "Willington Beauty." He is, "stout ... But still a majestic-looking pig, with a wise and benevolent appearance". In addition to his laurels in the exhibition world, Major is highly respected among his fellow farm animals. His age is twelve years, which makes him a senior among them, and he also claims to have had over four hundred children. He is the one who calls the meeting in the first chapter to discuss his strange dream. Major claims to understand the nature of life on this earth as well as any animal now living. Months after his death, the pigs disinter his skull and place it at the base of the flagpole beside the gun. Major symbolizes two historical figures. First, he represents Karl Marx, the father of Marxism. Marx's political hypotheses about working-class consciousness and division of labor worked infinitely better in theory than in practice, especially when corrupt leaders twisted them for their personal gain. Second, Major represents Vladimir Lenin, the foremost of the three authors of the Russian Revolution and the formation of the Soviet Union. Lenin died during the Soviet Union's early years, leaving Trotsky (Snowball) and Stalin (Napoleon) to vie for his leadership position.

### **Pilkington**

The owner of Foxwood, the large, unkempt farm adjacent to Manor Farm. He is an easy-going man who prefers pursuing his hobbies to

maintaining his land. At the book's end, Mr. Pilkington offers a toast to the future cooperation between human farms and Animal Farm. He also says he plans to emulate Animal Farm's low rations and long work hours. Pilkington can be seen to represent the Allies. Allied countries explored the possibility of trade with the Soviet Union in the years leading up to World War II but kept a watchful distance. Ominously, as Friedrich Hayek points out in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), communist principles had strong proponents among many Allied nations as well. Pilkington's unwillingness to save Animal Farm from Frederick and his men parodies the Allies' initial hesitance to enter the War. Napoleon's and Pilkington's poker game at the end of the book suggests the beginnings of a power struggle that would later become the Cold War.

### **the Sheep**

The sheep are loyal to the tenets of Animal Farm, often breaking into a chorus of "Four legs good, two legs bad" and later, "Four legs good, two legs better!" The Sheep--true to the typical symbolic meaning of "sheep"--represent those people who have little understanding of their situation and thus are willing to follow their government blindly.

### **Snowball**

One of the leaders among the pigs, Snowball is a young pig that is up for sale. He is more intelligent than Napoleon but lacks Napoleon's depth of character. He is also a brilliant orator. Snowball, who represents Leon Trotsky, is a progressive politician and aims to improve Animal Farm with a windmill and other technological advances, but Napoleon expels him before he can do so. In his absence, Snowball comes to represent an abstract idea of evil. The animals blame misfortunes on him, including the windmill's destruction, and entertain the idea that he is lurking on one of the neighboring farms, plotting revenge. Napoleon uses the animals' fear of Snowball to create new propaganda and changes history to make it seem as though Snowball was always a spy and a traitor. Snowball's name is symbolic in this way. Napoleon encourages the animals' fear of him to grow or snowball so that it becomes so great it is almost palpable. Snowball's name may also refer to Trotsky's call (following Marx) to encourage a revolution outside the Soviet Union that would "snowball" into an international proletariat revolution. Snowball

can more generally be said to represent systems of belief outside of communism, which the government demonizes in order to lionize its own system.

### **Squealer**

The best known of the porker pigs, Squealer has very round cheeks, twinkling eyes, nimble movements, and a shrill voice. He is also a brilliant talker who is talented in the art of argument. The other pigs say Squealer could turn black into white. Under Napoleon's rule, Squealer acts as the liaison to the other animals. He lies to them, rewriting history and reading them encouraging, but false, statistics. Squealer is especially good at playing on the animals' ignorance and gullibility. He represents the propaganda machine of a totalitarian government.

### **Whymper**

A solicitor in Willingdon who acts as Animal Farm's intermediary to the human world. He is a sly-looking little man with side whiskers. He visits the farm every Monday to get his orders and is paid in commissions. Mr. Whymper's business-minded attitude towards Animal Farm, which allows him to ignore the injustices and atrocities committed there, make him a parody of nations that conducted business with the Soviet Union while turning a blind eye to its internal affairs.