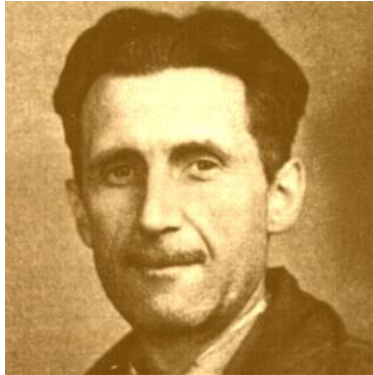


# ANIMAL FARM

by George Orwell



## THE AUTHOR

George Orwell was the pen name of Eric Blair (1903-1950), who was born in India, where his father was part of the British civil service. He was educated in private schools in England, but hated the repressive atmosphere there and never went to university. He worked for five years as a policeman in Burma, but found the British colonial government no less repressive than the schools he so detested. Returning home because of poor health, he spent time in the slums of London and Paris and in the coal mines of northern England, later writing about his experiences in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1934). His experiences among the poor turned him toward socialism, though he often criticized English socialists as being unrealistic dilettantes. He hated totalitarian government of any kind, and in 1936 went to Spain to fight on the Loyalist side in the Spanish Civil War. He was at first thrilled, but later disillusioned, by the progress of socialism in Spain. After leaving Spain, he contracted tuberculosis, from which he would continue to suffer for the remainder of his days. When World War II began, he wanted to enlist in the army, but was judged to be medically unfit, though he did serve in the Home Guard. Orwell never sought adequate treatment for his tuberculosis, and died on the island of Jura off the coast of Scotland in January 1950.

The growing awareness of the atrocities perpetrated by the communists in the Soviet Union and the fascists in Germany led Orwell to write his greatest works, the political satires for which he is chiefly remembered. *Animal Farm* (1945) is really a political fable of the Russian Revolution, with different animals clearly intended to represent historical figures like Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin. Ironically, Orwell encountered difficulty in getting the book published because, in 1945, the Russians were viewed as allies, and any criticism of them was deemed by publishers to be detrimental to the spirit of the nation and potentially insulting to an important friend and co-belligerent. A more highly-developed critique of totalitarianism is found in the dystopian fantasy *1984* (1949), a cautionary tale of the dangers of totalitarianism in the West. In his last and greatest book, Orwell emphasized the roles played by language, history, and the media (especially the new medium of television) in supporting totalitarian oppression, and spoke cynically of the uses of war for domestic political purposes.

## PLOT SUMMARY

After Farmer Jones, the owner of Manor Farm, goes to bed in a drunken stupor, the animals meet to hear about Old Major's dream. The elderly pig speaks of a time in the past when all animals were free and equal, and encourages the animals to band together and revolt against their oppressor, Man. He then teaches them a song he heard in his dream, *Beasts of England*. Three nights later, Old Major dies in his sleep. In the weeks that follow, the pigs develop Old Major's teachings into a system called Animalism, which they teach to the other animals in secret meetings. One day, Farmer Jones is so drunk that he forgets to feed the animals. When they burst into the barn and begin to feed themselves, he and his hands come out and start beating them, but they resist, and soon send the humans away from the farm in full flight. The next day, the pigs, who had learned to read and write, rename the place Animal Farm, then paint Seven Commandments on the side of the barn. Napoleon, the leader, milks the cows, then sends the animals out to work the farm, but when they return, the milk is gone.

The animals cooperate to bring in the hay harvest, and continue to do so throughout the summer, enjoying life as they never had before. The pigs teach the other animals to read (at least those who are able and willing), but they themselves do no work, spending their time supervising the work of the others. Napoleon and Snowball hardly ever agree, but continue as leaders of the farm. Napoleon takes charge of the education of the young, taking them away from their parents and keeping them isolated from the rest of the community, while Snowball organizes numerous committees to advance the cause of Animalism and improve the work on the farm. When apples begin to fall from the trees, the pigs order that all should be brought to the barn for their own use (the animals had earlier discovered that the pigs were drinking all the milk given by the cows). Meanwhile, Farmer Jones is sitting in the tavern commiserating on his fate with neighboring farmers. As pigeons spread the dogma of Animalism and the words to *Beasts of England* to the animals at surrounding farms, the humans organize to take the farm back. They appear one day with sticks and guns, but the animals, led by Snowball, fight them off in the Battle of the Cowshed. The wounded Snowball and a dead sheep are honored as military heroes, and a day is set aside each year to commemorate the great victory.

Disruptions begin to darken the bright atmosphere at Animal Farm, however. Mollie, the foolish mare, avoids work whenever possible and finally runs off to a neighboring farm, where she is later seen pulling a cart while bedecked with ribbons. Napoleon and Snowball continue to disagree about everything. The former wants to strengthen the animals' military capacity, while the latter wants to spread the revolution to nearby farms so they will not have to protect themselves. The latter wants to build a windmill (and draws up elaborate plans), but the former opposes the whole idea. Finally, just as the vote on the windmill is about to be taken with the supporters clearly in the majority, Napoleon whistles, and nine ferocious dogs appear - the dogs he had taken away from their parents at birth and trained himself - and attack Snowball, driving him from the farm. Napoleon then announces that no further votes will need to be taken, since a committee of pigs, headed by himself, will act in the best interest of all the animals. With nine ferocious dogs at his side, few dare to voice dissent. Napoleon then brings out the skull of Old Major and mounts it on a pedestal for all the animals to file past as they go to their weekly meetings. He then announces that the windmill project will go forward after all, and hints that it had really been his idea in the first place.

By this time the animals are putting in sixty-hour weeks for no more food than they had gotten before the revolution. Production declines, needed supplies are missing, and the progress on the windmill is agonizingly slow. Work is expanded to a half day on Sunday. One day Napoleon announces that Animal Farm will begin to trade with neighboring farms to obtain necessities through the intermediary services of a lawyer named Mr. Whymper. Some of the animals seem to recall an injunction against dealing with humans, but Squealer assures them that their memories are faulty. The same occurs when the pigs move into the farmhouse and begin to use the kitchen and sleep in the beds. Meanwhile, progress on the windmill continues to the point that it is almost half built. One night, a big storm arises and a horrible sound like a gunshot rings out. When the animals get up in the morning they find that the windmill has been destroyed - an act of vandalism that Napoleon says is the work of Snowball. Work must now continue whatever the weather in order to rebuild the windmill. During the harsh winter that follows, Napoleon deceives and manipulates Whymper to convince the outside world that the farm is prospering while in reality the animals are near starvation. He contracts to sell eggs to other farmers in exchange for the grain needed at Animal Farm; the hens rebel, but the rebellion is soon stymied. Meanwhile, everything that goes wrong on the farm is blamed on Snowball, who is said not only to be in league with the neighboring farmers, but is now rumored to have been secretly an agent of Farmer Jones from the beginning. One day, Napoleon calls the animals together. One by one, pigs who had protested the end of the weekly meetings, hens who had protested the sale of the eggs, and others who had at various times committed small offenses step forward, confess their crimes, admit being in league with Snowball, and are summarily executed by Napoleon's dogs. The rest of the animals, shocked both by the confessed treason and the ensuing bloodshed, go off to the base of the windmill, but can think of nothing to do except to sing *Beasts of England*. No sooner do they do so, however, than Squealer appears and announces that henceforth the theme song of the revolution was forbidden, since the revolution was now completed.

Soon after, the animals discover that another of the Seven Commandments has been altered. Not only did the Fourth Commandment now read, "No animal shall sleep in a bed *with sheets*," but the Sixth Commandment now read, "No animal shall kill any other animal *without cause*." Though food is still scarce, Squealer regularly spouts figures showing that production is much higher than it had been during the bad old days under Farmer Jones. Meanwhile, Napoleon increasingly isolates himself and becomes practically an object of worship, with poems being written in his honor and his picture being painted on the wall of the barn. He also enters into negotiations with the neighboring farmers for the sale of some wood. At first he negotiates with Pilkington and paints Frederick as the animals' worst enemy, but in the end he sells the lumber to Frederick. Shortly thereafter, he discovers that the money given him by Frederick is counterfeit; the next day, Frederick and his well-armed men attack Animal Farm. The fighting is brutal and many animal lives are lost. The humans occupy half the farm and blow up the recently-completed windmill. Filled with rage, the animals counterattack and drive the men off. Napoleon then christens the Battle of the Windmill a great victory and awards himself a newly-invented medal. That night, the pigs celebrate the victory by getting drunk on Mr. Jones' whisky. The next day, the Fifth Commandment reads, "No animal shall drink alcohol *to excess*."

After the Battle of the Windmill life continues to be hard. Rations are again cut (except for the pigs and the dogs), and the animals again turn their attention to rebuilding the destroyed windmill. The generous retirement pensions promised to retired animals had yet to materialize. Boxer, who was badly injured in the battle, continues to work harder than ever, though the impact

on his health is becoming increasingly evident, since he is nearing retirement age. More and more of the income from the farm is being poured into supporting the increasingly opulent lifestyle of the pigs, including building a schoolhouse for the newly-born piglets, while the other animals suffer another reduction in rations. Napoleon maintains their spirits, however, by staging weekly Spontaneous Demonstrations celebrating the glories of Animal Farm and its Leader. Soon, he declares Animal Farm to be a republic, and is unanimously elected its first president (he is the only candidate). Later, Boxer collapses while hauling stone for the windmill. Squealer announces that Napoleon has made arrangements for him to be taken to the hospital, but when the van arrives for him, it is from the glue factory. Benjamin reads the lettering and rouses the animals to try to stop the van, but they fail. A few days later, they hear from Squealer that Boxer has died in the hospital, complete with touching accounts of the tender care he received and his last words - "Napoleon is always right." The pigs then purchase whisky with the proceeds from Boxer's death and stage an all-night drunken carouse.

The years pass and the revolution becomes a distant memory. Few of the animals from the old days remain. The farm becomes more prosperous, but the animals see little of its benefits. They still work hard and suffer from hunger, cold, and heat. Few question the way things are because no one has ever known anything else. Eventually, the pigs begin walking upright, wearing clothes, and fraternizing with men from the neighboring farms. One day, Clover asks Benjamin to read the Commandments on the wall and is surprised to discover that only one remains: "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others." One day a banquet is held at Animal Farm, attended by guests from other farms. Pilkington announces that Animal Farm is no longer to be feared by its neighbors, and Napoleon speaks of his desire for peaceful coexistence rather than ongoing revolution. As a token of his sincerity, he declares that the title "Comrade" is to be abolished, the flag of the farm is no longer to bear the hoof and horn, and the name of the establishment will revert again to Manor Farm. All cheer, but the animals looking in through the windows notice that the pigs have gradually changed so much that in appearance they are indistinguishable from the humans with whom they are celebrating.

## **MAJOR CHARACTERS**

- Farmer Jones - The drunken owner of Manor Farm who represents Czar Nicholas II in the story.
- Old Major - A wise old boar who shares his dream at the beginning of the story, then dies shortly thereafter; his skull is later put on permanent display. He combines characteristics of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin.
- Napoleon - A large, powerful pig who represents Joseph Stalin, he assumes leadership of the animals after the rebellion succeeds and takes over the task of educating young dogs and training them as a secret police force with which he takes over the farm.
- Snowball - A clever pig who represents Leon Trotsky, he organizes the animals into committees, and is eventually driven off the farm by Napoleon's guard dogs; he becomes the scapegoat for all failures on the farm.

- Squealer - A young pig who is very persuasive and serves as the mouthpiece for the pigs, he represents propagandists such as Gregory Zinoviev and Pravda, the Soviet news agency.
- Boxer - A strong and steadfast plow horse, unswervingly loyal to the pigs; he does more work than anyone else on the farm, and represents the oppressed proletariat. His two slogans are “I will work harder” and “Napoleon is always right.”
- Clover - Boxer’s companion, she outlives most of the other animals on the farm.
- Benjamin - An old donkey, the oldest resident of the farm, who is skeptical of everything he sees around him.
- Muriel - A white goat who is one of the few animals to master reading, she often reads the Commandments to Boxer and Clover; through her the reader learns of the alterations in the Commandments.
- Mollie - A silly and stupid carriage mare, she eventually flees the farm for the comforts of ownership by man; she represents the Russian bourgeoisie who flee the revolution.
- Minimus - A pig who serves as the poet of the new regime; he writes the song *Animal Farm*, a patriotic screed, to replace the earlier revolutionary tune, *Beasts of England*.
- Moses - A tame raven who speaks to the animals of Sugarcandy Mountain, a place where all animals go after they die, he represents the paradox of Soviet hatred for and cynical manipulation of religion.
- Mr. Whymper - A solicitor who represents Animal Farm in its dealings with the world of men.
- Mr. Frederick - Owner of Pinchfield Farm, he represents Adolf Hitler.
- Mr. Pilkington - Owner of Foxwood Farm, he represents England in general and its leaders, such as Chamberlain and Churchill, in particular.

## **HISTORICAL PARALLELS**

- The Rebellion is the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, though Lenin did not die before it occurred but led it in its early years.
- The pigs are the Russian intelligentsia who seize power after the fall of the czar; they then come to stand for the Communist Party bureaucrats.
- The Battle of the Cowshed is the failed attempt by the victorious Allies to overthrow the Bolsheviks after World War I.

- The dogs raised and trained by Napoleon represent the OGPU, the forerunner of the KGB.
- The management of the farm represents the collectivization of agriculture in the late 1920s, which led to the starvation of many and the deaths of those who refused to cooperate; the Russian kulaks, prosperous peasant farmers, destroyed their livestock rather than given them to the collective, and were mercilessly slaughtered, much like the hens in the story.
- The use of pigeons to spread Animalism to other farms reflects the advocacy of international revolution by Trotsky and the attempts of the Third International to spread communism throughout Europe by using national communist parties.
- The expulsion of Snowball parallels the expulsion of Trotsky and his later vilification. Trotsky was not only the scapegoat for all sorts of conspiracies and a name frequently mentioned at the show trials during the purges, but was eventually murdered by Soviet agents in Mexico.
- The confessions and executions of the outspoken pigs and many others represent the Stalinist purges of the late 1930s, where many former party supporters were brainwashed, confessed their misdeeds in show trials, and were summarily executed.
- The Battle of the Windmill is World War II, particularly the German invasion of the Soviet Union, which was preceded by a non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin that Hitler unceremoniously violated.
- The final scene in the book represents the alliance formed by the Soviets and the Western democracies, both of which Orwell mistrusted; the fact that he found the two indistinguishable is illustrated most clearly in his great dystopian fantasy *1984*, published four years after *Animal Farm* was written.

## NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“All men are enemies. All animals are comrades.” (Old Major, ch.1, p.21)

### “THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS

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 animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal.” (ch.2, p.33)

“The animals believed every word of it. Truth to tell, Jones and all he stood for had almost faded out of their memories. They knew that life nowadays was harsh and bare, that they

were often hungry and often cold, and that they were usually working when they were not asleep. But doubtless it had been worse in the old days. They were glad to believe so. Besides, in those days they had been slaves and now they were free, and that made all the difference, as Squealer did not fail to point out.” (ch.9, p.105-106)

“Somehow it seemed as though the farm had grown richer without making the animals themselves any richer - except, of course, for the pigs and the dogs.” (ch.10, p.118-119)

“All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.” (ch.10, p.123)

“No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.” (ch.10, p.128)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* is a fable of the Russian Revolution. While it is obviously critical of that revolution, especially of the Stalinist regime, can you identify any aspects of the revolution that Orwell admires? Be sure to cite specifics from the novel in support of your arguments.
2. George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* is a fable of the Russian Revolution, but the Soviets are not the only ones who are targets of criticism in the novel. In what ways does Orwell target the Western democracies in his social critique? Be specific, using examples from the book.
3. Discuss the development of George Orwell’s thought between the publication of *Animal Farm* in 1945 and his masterpiece *1984* in 1949. In what ways do the two novels address similar themes? In what ways does the later work expand upon the themes of the earlier one? Be specific, using examples from both works in your answer.
4. Propaganda involves not only the dissemination of biased information, but also restricted access to opposing points of view. In the light of this definition, discuss the role of Squealer in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. Is he a propagandist in the true sense of the word? Why or why not? Why is such propaganda essential for the survival of totalitarian regimes?
5. Use the character of Moses in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* to discuss the communist attitude toward religion. Karl Marx argued that religion was “the opiate of the masses” and that it should therefore be abolished. Did the Soviet regime follow this precept, or did it use the Russian Orthodox Church as its own form of opiate? Answer the question using information from the novel as well as your knowledge of the history of the period.

6. Discuss George Orwell's assessments of the use and abuse of language in *Animal Farm* and *1984*. Include in your discussion the issue of limiting language to limit debate ("four legs good, two legs bad" and Newspeak), twisting language to manipulate others, and using false statistics in order to maintain power. Be sure to use examples from both novels in your discussion.
7. "Every successful revolution puts on in time the robes of the tyrant it has deposed." Assess this statement in the light of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Did Orwell believe this statement to be true? Why does this tendency exist? Support your arguments from the novel and from your knowledge of history.
8. According to George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, what are the consequences of a politically passive populace? Why does he consider keeping oneself informed and being willing to challenge authority essential aspects of gaining and maintaining human freedom? Support your arguments with specifics from the novel.
9. Discuss the gradual alteration of the Seven Commandments in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. What are the main points the author is trying to make through these changes in the rules of the community? Relate both the original commandments and the changes made in them to the broader ideas Orwell is trying to communicate.
10. Discuss the development of class structure in an allegedly egalitarian society in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. In what way does the assertion that "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others" summarize Orwell's view of social classes? Does he consider social stratification evil, inevitable, or both?
11. In George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, why do you think the author chooses an animal fable to convey his message? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach, citing specifics from the novel to support your arguments.
12. Analyze the lyrics to the song *Beasts of England* found in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. To what extent is the song a picture of a Marxist utopia? How does the song come to be manipulated by the pigs as the story progresses?
13. Analyze Old Major's speech at the beginning of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. What are the leading Marxist ideas it contains? In what ways are those ideals betrayed by the end of the story? Note particularly the specific examples of the mistreatment of animals by man cited in the speech.
14. Discuss the role of fear in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. To what extent do the leaders of the totalitarian state that Animal Farm becomes use fear to maintain their power? How do they spread fear, and why are their tactics effective?
15. George Orwell was a committed socialist, yet abhorred what had become of socialism in

the Soviet Union. What indications may be found in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* that the author favors socialism but despises its abusers? What, in his mind, constitutes true socialism, and what constitutes its abuse? Use specifics from the novel to support your arguments.

16. Lord Acton once said that "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." To what extent is this maxim illustrated in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*? Is the corrupting force of power inevitable, or must the seeds of corruption already exist in those who hold power in order for it to have such a baleful effect? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.
17. At the end of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, we find that "the creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which." Clearly the pigs were being transformed into the humans they purportedly despised, but to what extent does Orwell imply that the men were beginning to look more and more like the pigs they had declared to be their enemies? Discuss the meaning of the book's last sentence in the light of Orwell's critique, not only of Soviet communism, but also of the capitalist societies of the West.
18. Discuss the concept of the rewriting of history as it is utilized in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*. Why are the actions of Squealer and the Ministry of Truth in altering the past central to the ability of the ruling clique to maintain their control over the common people? What does this tell us about the importance of knowing history?
19. Develop a biblical critique of the totalitarian state pictured in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Choose three key aspects of the government pictured in the novel and show how they conflict with what Scripture teaches about the proper function of the state.
20. Often in a play or novel, one character serves as the mouthpiece of the author. Is this true in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*? If so, what character plays this role? If not, what alternative technique does Orwell use to communicate his point of view?
21. Discuss the use of irony in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. How does the satire of the novel become more powerful through the contrast between what is actually said and what is meant? Be sure to use specific examples to support your general arguments concerning the different ways in which Orwell uses irony to communicate his message.
22. To what extent is George Orwell's *1984* a sequel to *Animal Farm*? Trace the ways in which the practices that develop in the fable are deeply entrenched in the dystopian fantasy. Why were Orwell's fears for the direction of Western society greater in 1949 than they had been in 1945?
23. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* are both extremely pessimistic accounts of human

society. Based on these narratives, would you conclude that Orwell had no hope for the future of man? Can you find anything in these novels that would provide a basis for hope for mankind? If so, what evidence can you cite? If not, on what basis does Orwell draw his despairing conclusion?

24. When George Orwell wrote an introduction to *Animal Farm*, he spent most of it bemoaning the lack of discernment - indeed, the active collaboration - of his fellow socialists in minimizing or concealing the evils of the Bolshevik Revolution and its aftermath, particularly the horrors of the Stalinist regime. Ironically, when the book was published, the publisher refused to include Orwell's introduction. In what sense is the novel a critique of such attitudes as Orwell himself experienced in his efforts to get his book published? To what extent is the story a cautionary tale about the ways in which socialists had betrayed (and were still betraying) their own ideals?
25. In George Orwell's introduction to *Animal Farm*, he said, "The enemy is the gramophone mind, whether or not one agrees with the record that is being played at the moment." In the light of this statement, evaluate characters in the book such as the sheep, Boxer and Clover, and Benjamin the donkey. Did Orwell intend the reader to see any of them as admirable, or are they simply different pictures of the kinds of people who endanger the future of human society?
26. When he was involved in the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell was part of a Trotskyist cell in Spain. This cell was persecuted by pro-Russian communists. To what extent is Orwell's personal experience reflected in his treatment of Snowball in *Animal Farm*? Does his picture of the deposed and vilified pig lack objectivity because of the author's personal experience? Evaluate the extent to which Trotsky (and by extension, Stalin) is presented fairly in Orwell's animal fable.