



ANIMAL FARM

GEORGE ORWELL

Eric Arthur Blair was born on 25 June 1903 and is known by his pen name George Orwell. He was an English novelist and his work is renowned by an awareness of social injustice, opposition to totalitarianism and commitment to democratic socialism.

Animal Farm is a novel by George Orwell published in 1945. According to Orwell, the book is a political satire of the events leading up to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Stalin era in the Soviet Union.

However, it can be applied to most dictatorships that are built upon a cult of

personality and enforced by a reign of repression and terror. It was in Time magazine's top 100 books.

It starts with a meeting convened in the barn to hear a speech by Old Major, a prize boar. He is aware that his long life is about to end and wishes to inform the farm animals of his thoughts.

The plain truth, he says, is that the lives of his fellow animals are "miserable, laborious, and short" and that animals are born into the world as slaves.

He says the land has enough resources to live in luxury and that there is no reason for humans to make them live in poverty and misery.

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Mr. Jones, owner of Manor Farm, **lurched** with a ring of light from his **lantern** dancing from side to side towards his house, kicked off his boots at the back door, poured himself a glass of beer and made his way up to bed, where his wife was already snoring.

As soon as the light in the bedroom went out there was a **stirring** and a **fluttering** all through the farm buildings. Word had gone round during the day that Old Major, a prize pig, had a strange dream the previous night and wished to communicate it to the other animals.

It had been agreed that they should all meet in the big barn as soon as Mr. Jones was safely out of the way and had gone to bed drunk. Old Major was so highly regarded on the farm that everyone was quite ready to lose an hour's sleep to hear what he had to say.

At one end of the barn, on a raised **platform**, Old Major was already settled on his bed of straw under a lantern which hung from a **beam**. He was twelve years old and had lately grown rather **stout**. He was still a **majestic-looking** pig.

Before long the other animals began to arrive and make themselves comfortable. First came three dogs and then the pigs, who settled down in the straw immediately in front of the platform. The hens perched themselves on the **window-sills**, the pigeons fluttered up to the **rafters**, the sheep and cows lay down behind the pigs and began to **chew the cud**.

The two horses came in together, walking very slowly and setting down their vast hairy hoofs with great care in case there was a small animal hidden in the straw. Boxer, the bigger of the two horses, was an enormous **beast**, nearly eighteen **hands** high, as strong as any two ordinary horses put together. He was not of first-rate intelligence but he was respected for his tremendous powers of work.

When Old Major saw the animals had all made themselves comfortable and were waiting attentively, he cleared his throat and began: "Comrades, you have heard already about the strange dream I had last night but I will come to that later. I have something else to say first. I do not think, comrades, that I shall be with you for many

months longer and, before I die, I feel it my duty to pass on to you such wisdom as I have **acquired**.

"I have had a long life and have had much time for thought as I lay alone in my **stall**. I think I understand the nature of life on this earth as well as any animal now living. Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours on the farm?

"Let's face it, our lives are miserable, **laborious** and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as we need to survive and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the limits of our strength.

"The very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are **slaughtered** with hideous **cruelty**. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or **leisure** after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and **slavery**. That, comrades, is the plain truth.

"But is this simply part of the order of nature? Is it because this land of ours is so poor that it cannot afford a decent life to those who live on it?

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No, comrades, a thousand times, no! The soil of England is fertile, its climate is good, it is capable of affording food in **abundance** to an enormously greater number of animals than now inhabit it.

“All of us could live in comfort and **dignity** almost beyond our imagination. So why then do we continue in this miserable condition? Because nearly the whole of the produce of our labour is stolen from us by human beings.

“There, comrades, is the answer to all our problems. It is summed up in a single word: Man. Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the **scene** and the **root cause** of hunger and overwork is **abolished** for ever.

“Man is the only creature that **consumes** without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the **plough**, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving and the rest he keeps for himself.

“Our labour **tills** the soil, our **dung fertilises** it, and yet there is not one of us that owns anything of it. You cows that I see before me, how much milk have you given during this last year? And what has happened to that milk which should have been giving to your calves?

“Every drop of it has gone down the throats of our enemies. And you hens, how many eggs have you laid this last year and how many of those eggs have ever hatched into chickens?

“The rest have all gone to market to bring in money for Mr. Jones and his men. And you, horses, where are your four **foals** who should have been the support and pleasure of your old age? Each of them was sold at a year old. You will never see one of them again.

“In return for your foals and all your labour in the fields, what have you ever had except your bare **rations** and a stall? And even the miserable lives we lead are not allowed to reach their natural span. For myself I do not **grumble**. I am twelve years old and have had over four hundred children.

Such is the natural life of a pig. But no animal escapes the **cruel knife** in the end. You young pigs sitting in front of me, every one of you will scream at the end of your lives when you are slaughtered and sold within a year.

“To that horror we all must come, cows, pigs, hens, sheep, everyone. Even the horses and the dogs have no better **fate**. You, Boxer, the very day that those great muscles of yours lose their power, Mr. Jones will sell you to the **knacker**, who will cut your throat and boil you down for the **foxhounds**.

“As for you dogs, when you grow old and toothless, Mr. Jones will tie a brick around your necks and drown you in the nearest pond. Is it not **crystal clear**, then, comrades, that all the evils of this life of ours spring from the **tyranny** of human beings? Only by getting rid of Man and the produce of our labour can we become our own.

“Almost overnight we could become rich and free. What then must we do? Why, work night and day for the **overthrow** of the human race. That is my message to you,

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comrades: rebellion. I do not know when The Rebellion will come. It might be in a week or in a hundred years, but I know, as surely as I see this straw beneath my feet, that sooner or later justice will be done.

“Fix your eyes on that, comrades, throughout the short remainder of your lives. And, above all, pass on this message of mine to those who come after you, so that future generations shall carry on the struggle until we are **victorious**. And remember, comrades, your **resolution** must never **falter**. No argument must ever lead you **astray**.

“Never listen when they tell you that Man and the animals have a common interest, that **prosperity** is shared. It is all lies. Man serves the interests of no creature except himself. And among us animals let there be perfect unity, perfect **comradeship** in the struggle. All men are enemies. All animals are comrades.”

After Old Major had finished his speech, in this moment there was a tremendous **uproar**. While he was speaking four large rats had

crept out of their holes and were sitting on their **hindquarters** listening to him. The dogs had suddenly caught sight of them and it was only by a swift dash for their holes that the rats saved their lives. Old Major raised his **trotter** for silence.

“Comrades,” he said, “here is a point that must be settled. The wild creatures, such as rats and rabbits, are they our friends or our enemies? Let us put it to the vote. I propose this question to the meeting: Are rats comrades?”

The vote was taken at once and it was agreed by an **overwhelming** majority that rats were comrades. There were only four **dissentients**, the three dogs and the cat, who were afterwards discovered to have voted on both sides.

Old Major continued, “I have little more to say. I merely repeat, remember always your duty of **enmity** towards Man and all his ways. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend. And remember also that in fighting against Man, we must not come to **resemble** him.

Even when you have **conquered** him, do not adopt his **vices**. No animal must ever live in a house, or sleep in a bed, or wear clothes, or drink alcohol, or smoke tobacco, or touch money, or engage in trade. All the habits of Man are evil.

“And, above all, no animal must ever **tyrannise** over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal.

“And now, comrades, I will tell you about my dream of last night. I cannot describe that dream to you. It was a dream of the Earth as it will be when Man has vanished. But it reminded me of something that I had long forgotten.

“Many years ago, when I was a little pig, my mother and the other **sows** used to sing an old song of which they knew only the tune and the first three words. I had known that tune in my **infancy**, but it had long since passed out of my mind. Last night, however, it came back to me in my dream.

“I am certain they were sung by the animals of long ago

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and have been lost to memory for generations. I will sing you that song now, comrades. I am old and my voice is **hoarse**, but when I have taught you the tune, you can sing it better for yourselves. It is called 'Beasts of England'."

Old Major cleared his throat and began to sing. As he had said, his voice was hoarse, but he sang well enough, and it was a **stirring** tune. The words ran: "Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland, beasts of every land and **clime, hearken to** my joyful **tidings** of the **golden future time**. Soon or late the day is coming, tyrant Man shall be overthrown and the fruitful fields of England shall be **trod** by beasts alone.

"Rings shall **vanish** from our noses and the **harness** from our back, **bit and spur** shall rust forever, cruel **whips** no more shall crack. Riches more than mind can picture, **wheat and barley, oats** and hay, clover, beans and **mangel-wurzels** shall be ours upon that day.

"Bright will shine the fields of England, purer shall its waters be, sweeter yet shall blow its breezes on the day that sets

us free. For that day we all must labour, though we die before it break; cows and horses, geese and turkeys, all must **toil** for freedom's sake.

"Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland, beasts of every land and clime, hearken well and spread my tidings of the golden future time."

The singing of this song threw the animals into the wildest excitement. Almost before Old Major had reached the end, they had begun singing it for themselves. Even the stupidest of them had already picked up the tune and a few of the words, and as for the clever ones, such as the pigs and dogs, they had the entire song **by heart** within a few minutes.

And then, after a few **preliminary** tries, the whole farm burst out into "Beasts of England" in tremendous **unison**. The cows lowed it, the dogs whined it, the sheep bleated it, the horses whinnied it, the ducks **quacked** it. They were so delighted with the song that they sang it right through **five times in succession**, and might have continued singing it all night.

Unfortunately, the uproar awoke Mr. Jones, who sprang out of bed, making sure that there was a fox in the yard. He **seized** the gun which always stood in a corner of his bedroom, and **let fly a charge** a shot into the darkness.

The **pellets** buried themselves in the wall of the barn and the meeting broke up hurriedly. Everyone fled to their own sleeping places. The birds jumped on to their perches, the animals settled down in the straw, and the whole farm was asleep in a moment.

Three nights later Old Major died peacefully in his sleep. His body was buried at the foot of the **orchard**. During the next three months there was much secret activity. Old Major's speech had given to the more intelligent animals on the farm a completely new outlook on life.

They did not know when The Rebellion predicted by Old Major would take place, they had no reason for thinking that it would be within their own lifetime, but they saw clearly that it was their duty to prepare for it and the work of teaching and organising the others fell naturally upon the pigs.

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VOCABULARY

Lurch: To lurch is the act of staggering, or awkwardly swaying from side to side when drunk.

Lantern: A lantern has a portable transparent case to protect the flame light and was used before electricity for light.

Stirring: To stir means lively movement and fluttering is to flap a bird's wings rapidly.

Platform: A platform is a raised area above the level of the barn floor.

Stout: A polite expression for someone that's big but not necessarily fat.

Majestic-looking: Showing beauty or dignity, regal, kingly.

Benevolent: Well meaning and kindly.

Window sills: Ledges at the bottom of a window.

Rafters: Beams of wood in a roof.

Chew the cud: Food brought up by a cow's first stomach and chewed again.

Beast: A large, four-footed mammal.

Hands: A horse's height is measured in hands.

Acquired: To get or buy as one's own.

Stall: A compartment in a stable, shed or barn.

Laborious: Repetitive tasks that require a lot of work.

Slaughtered: The killing of cattle, sheep, etc. for food.

Hideous cruelty: Hideous means repulsive or very ugly and cruelty is to cause bodily harm or mental suffering.

Leisure: Freedom from work.

Slavery: Slavery is a system where people are treated as property and can be bought and sold and can be held from the time of their capture and deprived of the right to leave.

Abundance: plentiful supply.

Dignity: Self-respect or appreciation of others.

Scene: The place where events occur.

Root cause: The main reason.

Plough: A plough is a large farming implement drawn by animals and used for cutting furrows, or long narrow trenches, in the soil to prepare for the planting of seeds.

Tills the soil: Prepare the land for crops with dung, or animal excrement to fertilise it, or make productive.

Foals: Young horses.

Bare rations: To be given the smallest amount of food.

Grumble: To complain.

Cruel knife: The act of an animal being slaughtered.

Fate: Something that unavoidably befalls a person.

Foxhounds: Dogs used in fox hunting, an English sport in which humans follow foxhounds to kill a fox.

Crystal clear: Absolutely clear.

Tyranny: Abuse of authority.

Overthrow: To defeat from a position of power.

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Victorious: The act of defeating an enemy in a battle.

Resolution: Formal intention.

Falter: To hesitate in action.

Astray: Go off the correct path.

Prosperity: Success, good fortune.

Comradeship: Friendship with common aims.

Uproar: A loud and impassioned noise or disturbance.

Hindquarters: The back legs of a four-legged animal.

Trotter: A pig's foot.

Overwhelming: A very great in amount, huge, massive.

Dissentient: Someone who opposes a majority or official opinion.

Enmity: A state or feeling of active opposition or hostility.

Resemble: Be compared to or have qualities in common with.

Conquered: Win the battle with or take control of by force.

Vices: Immoral or evil habits.

Tyrannise: Rule or treat someone despotically or cruelly, abuse of authority or power.

Sows: Female pigs.

Infancy: Very young.

Hoarse: Of a person's voice sounding rough and harsh, weakness in speech.

Stirring: Exciting or thrilling.

Clime: Short for climate.

Hearken to: Hear.

Joyful tidings: Happy news.

Golden future time: Successful future.

Trod: Walked over.

Vanish: Disappear suddenly and completely.

Harness: Straps on a animal.

Bit and spur: A bit is a piece of metal in the mouth to control the animal and a spur

is short spike on a rider's boot to urge it forward.

Whips: To beat with a strap.

Wheat and barley, oats: Grains of cereal.

Mangel-wurzels: Food for livestock.

Toil: To work hard.

Learn a song by heart: To remember it without having it written down.

Preliminary: Preceding or done in preparation for something, to introduce.

Unison: To sing together.

Quacked: These words are the noises each animal makes and a quack is made by a duck.

Five times in succession: Five times without stopping.

Seize: To pick up abruptly.

Pellets: Like bullets but softer, used with a shotgun.

Let fly a charge: Shot the gun.

Orchard: An area where apples are grown.

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Q&A

Question 1: Do you believe that animals lives are miserable, laborious and short for the benefit of humans and, if you do, what would you do about it?

Question 2: Do you think it is ethical for humans to have farm animals that go to market to bring them money? If not, what would be more humane?

Question 3: Old Major says the animals will rebel because all humans are evil. Do you believe that this is true and, if so, why?

Question 4: What impact had Old Major's speech on the animals and what new outlook on life are they likely to have?

Question 5: How do you think The Rebellion could come about and how long before it did?

Question 6: In "Beasts of England", which animals learned the song quickly and who do you think are the smartest animals?

Question 7: What impact had Old Major's speech on the more intelligent animals on the farm?

Question 8: Why did the animals regard it as their duty to prepare, teach and organise?

Overview: Write in your own words what you thought of the story so far and your interpretation of its meaning.