



# 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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The pigs were generally recognised as being the cleverest of the animals and pre-eminent among the pigs were two young **boars** named Snowball and Napoleon, whom Mr. Jones was breeding up for sale. Napoleon was a large, rather fierce-looking boar. He was not much of a talker but had a reputation for getting his own way. Snowball was a more **vivacious** pig than Napoleon, quicker in speech and more inventive, but was not considered to have the same depth of character.

All the other male pigs on the farm were **porkers**. The best known among them was a small fat pig named Squealer, with very round cheeks, twinkling eyes, nimble movements, and a shrill voice. He was a brilliant talker and when he was arguing some difficult point he had a way of skipping from side to side and whisking his tail which was somehow very persuasive. The others said of Squealer that he could turn black into white."

These three had worked out with great care Old Major's teachings into a complete system of thought, to which they gave the name of

Animalism. Several nights a week after Mr. Jones was asleep they held secret meetings in the barn and **expounded** the principles of Animalism to the others.

At the beginning they met with much stupidity and **apathy**. Some of the animals talked of the duty of loyalty to Mr. Jones, whom they referred to as "Master", or made **elementary** remarks such as "Mr. Jones feeds us. If he were gone, we should starve to death." Others asked such questions as, "Why should we care what happens after we are dead?"

And one asked, "If this Rebellion is to happen anyway, what difference does it make whether we work for it or not?" and the pigs had great difficulty in making them see that this was contrary to the spirit of Animalism.

Their most faithful **disciples** were the two cart-horses, Boxer and Clover. These two had great difficulty in thinking anything out for themselves, but having once accepted the pigs as their teachers, they **absorbed** everything that they were told, and passed it on to the other animals by simple

arguments. They were **unfailing in their attendance** at the secret meetings in the barn and led the singing of "Beasts of England", with which the meetings always ended.

Now, as it turned out, The Rebellion was achieved much earlier and more easily than anyone had expected. In past years Mr. Jones, although a hard master, had been a capable farmer, but of late he had fallen on evil days.

He had become much disheartened after losing money in a **lawsuit** and had taken to drinking more than was good for him. For whole days at a time he would lounge in his chair in the kitchen reading the newspapers, drinking and occasionally feeding his raven on crusts of bread soaked in beer.

His men were idle and dishonest, the fields were full of **weeds**, the buildings wanted roofing, the hedges were **neglected** and the animals were underfed. June came and the **hay** was almost ready for cutting. On Saturday, Mr. Jones went into Willingdon and got drunk at the Red Lion pub.

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Mr. Jones got so drunk that he didn't come back until midday on Sunday. The men had milked the cows in the early morning and then had gone out **rabbiting** without bothering to feed the animals. When Mr. Jones got back he immediately went to sleep on the sofa with the **News of the World** over his face, so that when evening came the animals were still unfed.

At last they could **stand it** no longer. One of the cows broke in the door of the store-shed with her horn and all the animals began to help themselves from the bins. It was just then that Mr. Jones woke up. The next moment he and his four men were in the store-shed with whips in their hands, **lashing out** in all directions. This was more than the hungry animals could bear. Although nothing of this kind had been planned beforehand, they flung themselves upon their **tormentors**.

Mr. Jones and his men suddenly found themselves being **butted** and kicked from all sides. The situation was quite out of their control. They had never seen animals behave like this before, and this sudden **uprising** of

creatures whom they were used to thrashing and maltreating just as they chose, **frightened them almost out of their wits**.

After only a moment or two they gave up trying to defend themselves and **took to their heels**. A minute later all five of them were in full flight down the cart-track that led to the main road, with the animals pursuing them in triumph. Mrs. Jones looked out of the bedroom window and saw what was happening. She hurriedly threw flung a few possessions into a bag and slipped out of the farm by another way.

Meanwhile the animals had chased Jones and his men out on to the road and slammed the gate shut behind them. And so, almost before they knew what was happening, The Rebellion had been successful: Jones was **expelled** and Manor Farm was theirs.

Their first act was for the horses to **gallop** in around the boundaries of the farm to make quite sure that no human being was hiding anywhere on it. Then they raced back to the farm buildings to **wipe out** the last

traces of Jones's hated reign. The cruel knives with which Mr. Jones had been used to castrate the pigs and lambs, were all flung down the well. All the animals danced with joy when they saw the whips going up in flames.

They could hardly believe that it was all their own. Then they went back to the farm buildings and halted in silence outside the door of the farmhouse. That was theirs too and, after a moment, Snowball and Napoleon butted the door open with their shoulders and the animals entered. They **tiptoed** from room to room with a kind of **awe** at the unbelievable luxury.

Napoleon asked for pots of black and white paint and led the way down to the gate on the main road. Then Snowball took a brush between the two knuckles of his trotter, painted out MANOR FARM from the top bar of the gate and in its place painted ANIMAL FARM. This was to be the name of the farm from now onwards.

They explained that by their studies of the past three months the pigs had succeeded in reducing the principles of "Animalism" to

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Seven Commandments. These Commandments would now be painted on the wall and would form an unalterable law by which all the animals on Animal Farm must live for ever after. Snowball climbed up and the Commandments were written on the tarred wall in great white letters:

## 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.

How they toiled and sweated to get the hay in and their efforts were rewarded, for the harvest was an even bigger success than they had hoped. The pigs did not work and only **supervised** the others. With their superior knowledge it was natural that they should assume the leadership. The animals were as happy as they had never thought it possible to be.

Every mouthful of food was a pleasure now that it was truly their own food, produced by themselves and for themselves. With the worthless **parasitical** human beings gone, there was more for everyone to eat.

Nobody stole, nobody grumbled over his rations, the quarrelling and jealousy which had been normal features of life in the old days had almost disappeared. On Sundays there was no work and a ceremony was observed every week without fail. First came the hoisting of the flag, which had been painted with a hoof and a horn in white to signify the future Republic of the Animals.

As not many of the animals could read, after much thought Snowball declared that the Seven Commandments could be reduced to a single **maxim**: "Four legs good, two legs bad." This, he said, contained the principle of Animalism. "Comrades!" he cried. "You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Our sole object in taking your milk and apples is to preserve our health.

"We pigs are brainworkers and the management and organisation of this farm depend on us. Day and night we are watching over your welfare. It is for YOUR sake that we drink the milk and eat those apples. Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back. There was one thing that the animals were completely certain of, it was that they did not want Jones back.

One day, after surveying the ground, Snowball declared he wanted to build a windmill, which could be made to supply the farm with electric power. This would light the stalls, warm them in the winter months and be used to power an electric milking machine. The whole farm was deeply divided on the subject of the windmill though.

Snowball did not deny that to build it would be difficult. Stone would have to be carried and built up into walls, but he maintained that it could all be done in a year. Thereafter, he declared, so much labour would be saved that the animals would only need to work three days a week. Napoleon, however, argued for more production.

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His argument was that there was a greater need at the moment to increase food production, and that if they wasted time on the windmill they would all starve to death. A little while later, the animals heard a terrible noise outside. Nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars came bounding into the barn. They dashed straight for Snowball, who only sprang from his place just in time to escape their snapping jaws.

Snowball was racing across the pasture that led to the road. He was running as only a pig can run, but the dogs were close on his heels. Suddenly he slipped and it seemed certain that they had him. Then he was up again, running faster than ever and the dogs were gaining on him again. One of them all closed its jaws on Snowball's tail but Snowball was free just in time. Then he slipped through a hole in the hedge and was seen no more.

Silent and terrified, the animals crept back into the barn and the dogs came bounding back. At first no one had been able to imagine where these creatures came from, but the problem was soon solved:

they were the puppies Napoleon had taken away from their mothers and reared privately. Though not yet full-grown, they were huge dogs and they kept very close to Napoleon.

Napoleon, with the dogs following him, now mounted the raised portion of the floor where Old Major had previously delivered his speech. He announced that from now on the Sunday-morning meetings would come to an end. They were a waste of time, he said. In future all questions relating to the working of the farm would be settled by a special committee of pigs, presided over by himself.

"Comrades," he said, "I trust that every animal here appreciates the sacrifice that Comrade Napoleon has made in taking this extra labour upon himself. Do not imagine, comrades, that leadership is a pleasure. On the contrary, it is a deep and heavy responsibility. No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal. He would be only too happy to let you make your decisions for yourselves. But sometimes you might make the wrong

decisions, comrades, and then where should we be?

"Loyalty and obedience are all important. Discipline, comrades, iron discipline, is what we all need. If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right" and from then on the maxim, "Napoleon is always right" was adopted.

All that year the animals worked like slaves but they were happy in their work. They grudged no effort or sacrifice, well aware that everything that they did was for the benefit of themselves and those of their kind who would come after them and not for a pack of idle, thieving human beings.

Throughout the spring and summer they worked a sixty-hour week and in August Napoleon announced that there would be work on Sunday afternoons as well. This work was strictly voluntary, but any animal who absented himself from it would have his rations reduced by half.

One Sunday morning, when the animals assembled to receive their orders, Napoleon announced that he had decided on a new policy.

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## VOCABULARY

**Boar:** Much the same as a pig but wilder.

**Vivacious:** Attractively lively and animated.

**Porkers:** Pigs that were being fattened for their meat to be sold.

**Expounded:** Present and explain a theory or idea in detail.

**Apathy:** Without passion or emotion.

**Elementary:** Basic, uncomplicated, simple.

**Disciples:** Followers of the ideas of others.

**Absorbed:** Take in and understand fully, deeply interested in.

**Unfailing in their attendance:** Never absent from.

**Lawsuit:** A case against him in court.

**Weeds:** A valueless plant growing wild.

**Neglected:** Forgotten about and left to grow without any care and attention.

**Hay:** Grass used for animal food.

**Rabbiting:** Hunting for rabbits.

**News of the World:** A British Sunday newspaper.

**Stand it:** Put up with the situation.

**Lashing out:** Hit or kick out at something wildly with swift blows.

**Bear:** To endure.

**Tormentors:** People inflicting pain or suffering on others.

**Butted:** To hit with heads or horns.

**Uprising:** A resistance or rebellion.

**Frightened out of their wits:** To make someone very frightened.

**Took to their heels:** To run away.

**Full flight:** To run very fast.

**Expelled:** Thrown out.

**Gallop:** Horses running fast.

**Wipe out:** To destroy

**Last traces:** Any surviving mark or evidence of a former existence.

**Castrate:** To remove the testicles.

**Tiptoe:** Walk quietly and carefully with heels raised.

**Awe:** Reverence, wonder.

**Unalterable:** That which cannot be changed.

**Supervised:** Observe and direct the work of someone else.

**Parasitical:** Habitually relying on or exploiting others for one's own benefit.

**Maxim:** Statement expressing a general rule of conduct.

**Bounding:** Leaping towards.

**Reared:** Bring up and care for.

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## Q&A

**Question 1:** When talking of The Rebellion, some animals were scared as they had been under the "care" of Farmer Jones. How would they survive?

**Question 5:** 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?

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

**Question 2:** The pigs are recognised as the cleverest of all the animals. What human traits are given to them?

**Question 6:** Old Major says the animals will rebel because all humans are evil. Do you believe in this story that this is true and, if so, why?

**Question 3:** What do you think the idea of Animalism is really all about? Is it a socialist society?

**Question 7:** The Seven Commandments were reduced to a single maxim. What did it mean?

**Question 4:** What had become of Mr. Jones and his men after he lost money in court?

**Question 8:** For what reason were the animals told to appreciate the sacrifices that Comrade Napoleon made?