



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.

ANIMAL FARM

GEORGE ORWELL

Napoleon's new policy was that from then on Animal Farm would engage in trade with the neighbouring farms, not, of course, for any commercial purpose, but simply in order to obtain certain materials which were necessary.

Once again the animals were conscious of a vague uneasiness. Never to have any dealings with human beings, never to engage in trade, never to make use of money. Had not these been among the earliest resolutions passed after Jones was expelled?

It was about this time that the pigs suddenly moved into the farmhouse and took up their residence there. Again the animals seemed to remember that a resolution against this had been passed in the early days, and again Squealer was able to convince them that this was not the case.

It was absolutely necessary, he said, that the pigs, who were the brains of the farm, should have a quiet place to work in. It was also more suited to the dignity of The Leader to live in a house than in a mere sty. Nevertheless, some of the animals were

disturbed when they heard that the pigs not only took their meals in the kitchen and used the main room for recreation but also slept in the beds.

Boxer passed it off as usual with "Napoleon is always right", but Clover, the horse, thought she remembered a definite ruling against beds. "Muriel," Squealer said, "read me the Fourth Commandment. Does it not say something about never sleeping in a bed?" With some difficulty Muriel replied, "It says, 'No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets,'" she announced finally. "You have heard then, comrades," he said, "that we pigs now sleep in the beds of the farmhouse?"

Squealer continued, "And why not? You did not suppose, surely, that there was ever a ruling against beds? A bed merely means a place to sleep in. A pile of straw in a stall is a bed. The rule was against sheets, which are a human invention. "Comrades," he said quietly, "do you know who is responsible for this? Do you know the enemy who has come in the night and overthrown our windmill we are building?"

"Snowball!" he suddenly roared in a voice of thunder. "Snowball has done this thing. In sheer **malignity** [spite], thinking to **avenge** himself for his **ignominious** expulsion, this **traitor** has crept here at night and destroyed our work of nearly a year. Comrades, here and now I pronounce the death sentence upon Snowball.

The animals were shocked to learn that even Snowball could be guilty of such an action. "No more delays, comrades," cried Napoleon when the footprints had been examined. "There is work to be done. This very morning we begin rebuilding the windmill.

We will teach this miserable traitor that he cannot undo our work so easily. Remember, comrades, there must be no alteration in our plans: they shall be carried out this day. Forward, comrades! Long live the windmill! Long live Animal Farm!"

In the winter the stormy weather was followed by sleet and snow and the windmill blew down. Pretending not to believe that it was Snowball who had destroyed the

ANIMAL FARM

GEORGE ORWELL

windmill they said that it had fallen down because the walls were too thin. The animals knew that this was not the case. "Comrades," cried Squealer, making little nervous skips, "a most terrible thing has been discovered. Snowball has sold himself to Frederick of Pinchfield Farm, who is even now plotting to attack us and take our farm away from us.

"Do you know what the real reason was for Snowball's treachery? Snowball was in league with Jones from the very start. He was Jones's secret agent all the time." The animals were stupefied. This was a wickedness far outdoing Snowball's destruction of the windmill. But it was some minutes before they could fully take it in.

Four days later, in the late afternoon, Napoleon ordered all the animals to assemble in the yard. When they were all gathered together, Napoleon emerged from the farmhouse wearing both his medals—he had awarded himself "Animal Hero, First Class", and "Animal Hero, Second Class".

At last, feeling this to be in some way a substitute for the

words they was unable to find, the animals began to sing "Beasts of England" and they sang it three times over. They had just finished singing it when Squealer, attended by two dogs, approached them with the air of having something important to say.

He announced that, by a special **decree** of Comrade Napoleon, "Beasts of England" had been abolished. From now onwards it was forbidden to sing it. The animals were **taken aback**. Surveying his audience Napoleon uttered a high-pitched scream and immediately his dogs bounded forward, seized four pigs by the ear and dragged them, squealing with pain and terror, to Napoleon's feet. The pigs' ears were bleeding, the dogs had tasted blood and for a few moments they appeared to go quite mad.

The four pigs waited, trembling, with guilt written on every line of their faces. Napoleon now called upon them to confess their crimes. They were the same four pigs that had protested when Napoleon abolished the Sunday meetings. Without any further prompting they confessed they had been

secretly in touch with Snowball ever since his expulsion.

When they had finished their confession, the dogs promptly tore their throats out, and in a terrible voice Napoleon demanded whether any other animal had anything to confess.

A few days later, when the terror caused by the executions had died down, some of the animals remembered, or thought they remembered, the Sixth Commandment decreed, "No animal shall kill any other animal" and it was felt that the killings did not fit with this.

Clover asked Benjamin to read her the Sixth Commandment, and when Benjamin, as usual, said that he refused to meddle in such matters, she fetched Muriel. Muriel read the Commandment for her. It said, "No animal shall kill any other animal WITHOUT CAUSE." Somehow or other, the last two words had slipped out of the animals' memory.

Napoleon called the animals together and in a menacing voice pronounced the death

ANIMAL FARM

GEORGE ORWELL

sentence upon Frederick. When captured, he said, Frederick should be boiled alive. At the same time he warned them that after this treacherous deed the worst was to be expected. Frederick and his men might make their long-expected attack at any moment.

Sentinels were placed at all the entrances to the farm. In addition, four pigeons were sent to Foxwood with a conciliatory message, which it was hoped might re-establish good relations with him. Napoleon stood majestically upright, casting haughty glances from side to side, and with his dogs **gambolling** round him. He carried a whip in his trotter. Amazed, terrified and huddling together, the animals watched the long line of pigs march slowly around the yard.

It was as though the world had turned upside-down. A moment later, out from the door of the farmhouse came a long file of pigs, all walking on their hind legs. Napoleon said, "Four legs good, two legs BETTER! Four legs good, two legs BETTER! ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS."

But they had not gone twenty yards when they **stopped short**. An uproar of voices was coming from the farmhouse. They rushed back and looked through the window again. Yes, a violent **quarrel** was in progress. There were shoutings, bangings on the table, sharp suspicious glances, furious denials.

The source of the trouble appeared to be that Napoleon and Mr. Pilkington had each played an ace of spades simultaneously. Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs.

Clover's old dim eyes flitted from one face to another. Some of them had five chins, some had four, some had three. But what was it that seemed to be melting and changing? Then, the applause having come to an end, the company took up their cards and continued the game.

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.

STORY NOTES

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. Vladimir Lenin's chief allies began jockeying for power in the newly formed state, the most influential included Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky.

Trotsky and Stalin emerged as the most likely heirs to Lenin's vast power. Trotsky was a popular and charismatic leader, famous for his impassioned speeches, while the taciturn Stalin preferred to consolidate his power behind the scenes. After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin orchestrated an alliance against Trotsky.

In the following years, Stalin succeeded in becoming the unquestioned dictator of the Soviet Union and had Trotsky expelled first from Moscow, then from the Communist Party, and finally from Russia altogether in 1936. These developments in Soviet history have direct parallels in *Animal Farm*: Napoleon ousts Snowball from the farm and uses Snowball in his purges just as Stalin used Trotsky.

ANIMAL FARM

VOCABULARY

Resolutions: A firm decision to do something, an agreement.

Expelled: Forced out.

Malignity: Malevolence, intense ill will or spite.

Avenge: Inflict harm in return for a wrong done to someone.

Ignominious: Deserving or causing public disgrace or shame.

Traitor: A person who betrays someone or something.

Treachery: Betrayal of trust

In league with: Conspiring with another or others.

Stupefied: To be astonished and shocked.

Decree: An official order that has the force of law.

Taken aback: Confused.

Meddle: Interfere in something that is not one's concern.

Sentinels: A soldier or guard whose job is to stand and keep watch.

Haughty: Arrogantly superior and disdainful.

Gambolling: Run or jump about playfully.

Stopped short: To stop suddenly.

Quarrel: Argument.

Ace of spades: One card in the deck of playing cards.

ANIMAL FARM

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: Why were the pigs all walking on their hind legs and what did Four legs good, two legs BETTER mean?

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

Question 7: Old Major says the animals will rebel because all humans are evil. Do you believe in that this is true and, if so, why?

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

Question 8: The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig. Why was it impossible to say which was which?