Animal Farm

AUTHOR BIO

Full Name: Eric Arthur Blair
Pen Name: George Orwell
Date of Birth: 1903
Place of Birth: Motihari, India
Date of Death: 1950

Brief Life Story: Eric Blair was born and spent his youth in India. He was educated at Eton in England. From 1922-27 he served in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma. Through his autobiographical work about poverty in London (Down and Out in Paris and London, 1933), his experiences in colonial Burma (Burmese Days, 1934) and in the Spanish Civil War (Homage to Catalonia, 1938), and the plight of unemployed coal miners in England (The Road to Wigan Pier, 1937), Blair (who wrote under the name George Orwell) exposed and critiqued the human tendency to oppress others politically, economically, and physically. Orwell particularly hated totalitarianism, and his most famous novels, Animal Farm (1945) and 1984 (1949), are profound condemnations of totalitarian regimes. Orwell died at the age of 47 after failing to treat a lung ailment.

KEY FACTS

Full Title: Animal Farm - A Fairy Story
Genre: Novel / Fairy Tale / Allegory
Setting: A farm somewhere in England in the first half of the 20th century
Climax: The pigs appear standing upright and the sheep bleat “Four legs good, two legs better!”
Antagonist: Napoleon
Point of View: Third person omniscient

HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXT

When Written: 1944-45
Where Written: England
When Published: 1945
Literary Period: Modernism
Related Literary Works: Orwell subtitled Animal Farm "A Fairy Story." Characters in fairy tales tend to be two-dimensional stereotypes used to reveal some broad observation about life. As the critic C.M. Wodehouse wrote in a piece on Animal Farm in 1954, a fairy tale has no moral. It simply says, "Life is like that—take it or leave it." Animal Farm uses the format of a fairy tale to expose the evils of totalitarian exploitation. Rather than attack totalitarianism directly, the book shows its offenses plainly and clearly and lets the reader deduce the dangers posed by totalitarian governments. The literary work most often mentioned alongside Animal Farm is 1984, another Orwell novel. 1984, published in 1949, envisions a future in which a dictatorship monitors and controls the actions of all of its citizens. Like Animal Farm, 1984 depicted the horrific constraints that totalitarian governments could impose on human freedom.

Related Historical Events: In 1917, two successive revolutions rocked Russia and the world. The first revolution overthrew the Russian Monarchy (the Tsar) and the second established the USSR, the world’s first Communist state. Over the next thirty years the Soviet government descended into a totalitarian regime that used and manipulated socialist ideas of equality among the working class to oppress its people and maintain power. Animal Farm is an allegory of the Russian Revolution and the Communist Soviet Union. Many of the animal characters in Animal Farm have direct correlations to figures or institutions in the Soviet Union.

EXTRA CREDIT

Rejection. Though Animal Farm eventually made Orwell famous, three publishers in England rejected the novel at first. One of those who rejected it was T.S. Eliot, the famous poet and an editor at the Faber & Faber publishing house. Several American publishing houses rejected the novel as well. One editor told Orwell it was “impossible to sell animal stories in the U.S.A.”

Outspoken Anti-Communist. Orwell didn’t just write literature that condemned the Communist state of the USSR. He did everything he could, from writing editorials to compiling lists of men he knew were Soviet spies, to combat the willful blindness of many intellectuals in the West to USSR atrocities.

PLOT OVERVIEW

Manor Farm is a small farm in England run by the harsh and often drunk Mr. Jones. One night, a boar named Old Major gathers all the animals of Manor Farm together. Knowing that he will soon die, Old Major gives a speech in which he reveals to the animals that men cause all the misery that animals endure. Old Major says that all animals are equal and urges them to join together to rebel. He teaches them a revolutionary song called
“Beasts of England.” Old Major dies soon after, but two pigs named Snowball and Napoleon adapt his ideas into the philosophy of Animalism. Three months later, the animals defeat Jones in an unplanned uprising. The farm is renamed “Animal Farm.”

The ingenuity of the pigs, the immense strength of a horse named Boxer, and the absence of parasitical humans makes Farm prosperous. The animals post the Seven Commandments of Animalism on the side of the barn. The commandments state that all animals are equal and no animal may act like a human by sleeping in a bed, walking on two legs, killing other animals, drinking alcohol, and so on.

A fight for power soon develops between the two pigs Snowball and Napoleon. The rivalry comes to a head over Snowball’s idea to build a windmill. At the final debate about the windmill, Napoleon summons dogs he has secretly reared to be his own vicious servants and has them chase Snowball from Animal Farm. Napoleon tells the other animals that Snowball was a “bad influence,” eliminates the animals’ right to vote, and takes “the burden” of leadership on himself. He sends around a pig named Squealer, who persuades the animals that Napoleon has their best interests at heart.

Three weeks later Napoleon decides they should build the windmill after all. The animals set to work, with Boxer leading. Focusing on the windmill reduces the productivity of the farm, and all the animals but the pigs get less to eat. The pigs begin to trade with other farms, move into Mr. Jones’s farmhouse, and start to sleep in beds. This confuses the animals who considered this forbidden behavior. But when they check the Commandment about beds, it reads: “No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets.”

Over the next few years, Animal Farm battles with its human neighbors. The windmill gets destroyed first by a storm and then by a human attack. Napoleon blames all catastrophes on other animals. Old Major’s ideas inspire the animals’ revolution, though Old Major dies before the revolution occurs. Old Major symbolizes both Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, the fathers of Communism.

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Napoleon tells the other animals that Snowball was a “traitor,” and uses fear tactics, information control, and deadly purges of anyone he considers an enemy to strengthen his power over the farm. Meanwhile, the pigs secretly continue to rewrite the Commandments and all of Animal Farm’s history to support their lies. They give the animals less food and demand more work, while eating more and working less themselves. The other animals, duped by the pigs’ misinformation, continue to consider themselves part of a great revolution. When Boxer, the most devoted worker on the farm, is no longer able to work, the pigs sell him to a glue factory and use the proceeds to buy whiskey.

Years pass. Now only a few of the remaining animals on the farm experienced the revolution. Even fewer remember its goals. The pigs teach themselves to walk on two legs and begin carrying whips. When the animals look at the Seven Commandments, they have been replaced by the statement: “All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others.” The pigs make peace with their human neighbors and have a feast. The other animals are shocked to discover that they can no longer tell the pigs from the humans.

CHARACTERS

Old Major – A pig. He creates the ideas behind Animalism and inspires the other animals to rebel. As a prize boar, Old Major has lived a relatively privileged life among the animals. This privileged life has given him the time to think about and understand fully the ways that humans exploit and enslave animals. Old Major’s ideas inspire the animals’ revolution, though Old Major dies before the revolution occurs. Old Major symbolizes both Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, the fathers of Communism.

Napoleon – A pig. One of Old Major’s main disciples. A “fierce-looking Berkshire boar,” Napoleon prizes power over ideas, unlike Snowball, Napoleon’s other main disciple. Napoleon is cowardly, shrewd, calculating, and selfish. While he fully supports the revolution against Mr. Jones, he cares more about his own power than he does about the ideals of the revolution. His selfishness leads him to build a totalitarian government based on terror and lies that gives him more power over the other animals than Mr. Jones ever had. Napoleon symbolizes Stalin, who led the Soviet Union from 1930 until his death in 1953.

Snowball – A pig. Alongside Napoleon, one of Old Major’s main disciples. Snowball is a more lively, original, and intelligent pig than Napoleon, but he is less shrewd in the ways of power. Snowball values the ideals of the revolution more than Napoleon does, though at times Snowball does seem willing to sacrifice the principle of animal equality for his own personal comfort. In the end, despite Snowball’s bravery in supporting the revolution, his political naiveté is no match for Napoleon’s cunning. Snowball symbolizes Trotsky, a rival of Stalin exiled from Russian and assassinated on Stalin’s orders in Mexico in 1940.

Squealer – A pig. Short and fat, Squealer is a terrific speaker who prioritizes his personal comfort above all else. Whenever the pigs violate the tenets of Animalism, Squealer persuades the other animals that the pigs are actually acting in everyone’s best interest. Squealer represents the Soviet press, which Stalin controlled throughout his rule.

Minimus – A pig who writes propaganda poems and songs praising Napoleon and Animal Farm. Minimus represents the takeover of art by propaganda in a totalitarian state that aims to control what its citizens think.

Boxer – A horse. Strong and hardworking, Boxer is extremely honorable, though not so intelligent. Boxer believes deeply in the revolution, so much so that he thinks the Animal Farm leader, who also leads the revolution, must be virtuous and wise. One of Boxer’s favorite sayings is “Napoleon is always
Mr. Frederick – The owner of the neighboring farm of Pinchfield. A vicious, cruel, and calculating man, Frederick symbolizes the Fascist Germans.

Mr. Pilkington – The gentleman owner of the neighboring farm of Pilkington. A man who prefers recreation to farm work, Pilkington represents the Allies before World War II, particularly the British.

Mr. Whyrmpor – The human that the pigs use as their connection to the outside world, Whyrmpor symbolizes capitalists who got rich doing business with the USSR.

1 TOTALITARIANISM

George Orwell once wrote: "Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been ... against totalitarianism." Animal Farm is no exception. Totalitarianism is a form of government in which the state seeks to control every facet of life, from economics and politics to the each individual's ideas and beliefs. Different totalitarian states have different justifications for their rule. For instance, Mr. Jones runs Manor Farm based on the idea that human domination of animals is the natural order of things, while Napoleon and the pigs run Animal Farm with the claim that they are fighting for animals against evil humans.

Orwell's underlying point is that the stated goals of totalitarianism don't matter because all totalitarian regimes are fundamentally the same. Every type of totalitarianism, whether communist, fascist, or capitalist, is founded on oppression of the individual and the lower class. Those who hold power in totalitarian regimes care only about one thing: maintaining their power by any means necessary. While the story of Napoleon's rise to power is most explicitly a condemnation of totalitarianism in the Soviet Union, Orwell intends Animal Farm to criticize all totalitarian regimes.

2 REVOLUTION AND CORRUPTION

Animal Farm depicts a revolution in progress. Old Major gives the animals a new perspective on their situation under Mr. Jones, which leads them to envision a better future free of human exploitation. The revolution in Animal Farm, like all popular revolutions, arises out of a hope for a better future. At the time of the revolution, even the pigs are excited by and committed to the idea of universal animal equality.

The Sheep – Dumb animals who believe whatever propaganda is told to them and follow orders. The sheep represent the duped citizens of a totalitarian state.

Muriel – A goat. One of the few animals other than the pigs and dogs who becomes fully literate.

Mr. Jones – The owner of Manor Farm, and once a strict and fierce master, Mr. Jones has in recent years become drunk, careless, and ineffective, though he remains as casually cruel and arrogant as ever. Mr. Jones symbolizes the Russian Tsar in the early 20th century.

Clover – A horse. Clover is a gentle, motherly, and powerful mare, who supports the revolution, but becomes dismayed by the direction it takes under Napoleon. Yet she has neither the will nor the personality to resist the pigs. She becomes a witness to the corruption of the revolution as it turns into a totalitarian state, though she only vaguely understands that something has gone wrong. Clover symbolizes the female working class and peasants of the Soviet Union.

Mollie – A vain horse who loves sugar and wearing pretty ribbons in her mane, Mollie never much cares about the revolution. She abandons Animal Farm and puts herself into service for another human well before totalitarianism even takes hold on the farm. Mollie symbolizes the selfish and materialistic middle-class.

Benjamin – A donkey. Guided by a skepticism philosophy that life will always be difficult and painful, Benjamin is not surprised when the pigs corrupt the revolution and transform Animal Farm into a totalitarian state. Though Benjamin's skepticism proves to be correct, it also makes him powerless. Alone among the other animals, Benjamin seems to understand what's going on, but he does nothing to stop it. In the end, his inaction comes back to haunt him when his dear friend Boxer is betrayed and killed. Benjamin represents those who were aware of Stalin's unjust and oppressive policies but did nothing to try to stop them.

The Dogs – Jessie, Bluebell, Pincher, and the nine attack dogs provide the pigs with the brute force necessary to terrorize the other animals. In return, the dogs receive special privileges. The dogs don't rule, but they live comfortably. The dogs symbolize the Soviet secret police.

Moses – A tame raven who constantly speaks about a beautiful place called Sugarcandy Mountain where all animals go when they die. Moses represents organized religion.

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So what undermines the animal’s revolution and transforms it into a totalitarian nightmare? Animal Farm shows how the high ideals that fuel revolutions gradually give way to individual and class self-interest. Not even Napoleon planned to become a dictator before the revolution, but as his power grew, he took more and more until his power became absolute. Revolutions are corrupted in a slow process. Animal Farm portrays that process.

3 CLASS WARFARE

One of the main tenets of Animalism is that all animals are equal. But quite quickly the pigs begin to refer to themselves as "mindworkers" to distinguish themselves from the other animals, who are physical laborers. Over time, this sense of separation takes hold: the pigs begin to discourage their children from playing with the children of the other animals, and then establish themselves as absolute rulers of the "lesser" menial laborers. Animal Farm shows how differences in education and occupation lead to the development of class, which leads inevitably to class warfare, in which one class seeks to dominate the other. Animal Farm suggests that the "mindworking" class will almost always prevail in this struggle. Animal Farm doesn't just focus on the upper classes, however. In fact, it focuses more closely on the oppressed working class. The farm animals work so hard that they have no time to learn or educate themselves or think deeply about their world. Instead, they’re taught that work is their contribution to society, their way to freedom. Boxer believes that "I will work harder" is the answer to every problem, though he never perceives that the pigs exploit his effort. Benjamin occupies the other extreme: he recognizes what’s going on, but his cynicism stops him from taking action against the pigs. In the end, Animal Farm implies that whether because of ignorance, inaction, or fear, the working class allows itself to be dominated by the "mindworkers."

4 LANGUAGE AS POWER

Animal Farm shows how the minority in power uses vague language, propaganda, and misinformation to control the thoughts and beliefs of the majority in the lower classes. The pigs, especially Squealer, become extremely sophisticated and effective in their attempts to rewrite the rules of Animal Farm and Animalism. They even revise the farm's entire history in order to mislead the other animals into believing exactly what they say. By the end of the novel, the animals on the farm believe Snowball fought against them at the Battle of the Cowshed even though they saw him fight with them. They believe life on the farm has improved even though they have less food than ever, and that Napoleon has their best interests at heart even though he kills those who disagree with him. As the only literate animals on the farm, the pigs maintain a monopoly on information that they use to build and hold their power.

5 THE SOVIET UNION

While Animal Farm condemns all forms of totalitarianism, it is most explicitly a bitter attack on the Soviet Union. Though Orwell supported the ideas of Socialism, he strongly opposed the Soviet Union's descent into totalitarianism under Stalin. Animal Farm satirically attacks the Soviet Union by mirroring many events from Soviet history in the novel. The events of Animal Farm that mirror historical events in the Soviet Union, such as the revolution and the subsequent corruption of its ideals, will be highlighted and discussed in the Summary and Analysis sections.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in red text throughout the Summary & Analysis sections of this LitChart.

CHARACTER NAMES

Orwell wrote Animal Farm as an allegory, a symbolic representation of real events. Many characters and events in the novel symbolize people in the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union. Here are some of the animals who symbolize individuals or groups in Soviet society: Mr. Jones (Russian Tsar and the aristocratic order); Old Major (Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin); Napoleon (Stalin); Snowball (Trotsky); Squealer (the press); the pigs (ruling bureaucrats); and Moses the Raven (organized religion). Nearly all of the other animals represent the working class and Soviet peasants. For a more complete list, see the "Character" section.

THE WINDMILL

The windmill represents the massive infrastructure constructions projects and modernization initiatives that Soviet leaders instituted immediately after the Russian Revolution. In Animal Farm, the windmill also comes to symbolize the pigs' totalitarian triumph: the other animals work to build the windmill thinking it will benefit everyone, and even after it benefits only the pigs the animals continue to believe that it benefits all the animals.

QUOTES

The color-coded boxes under each quote below make it easy to track the themes related to each quote. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.
CHAPTER 1 QUOTES

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.

• Speaker: Old Major
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare, Language as Power
• Theme Tracker code:

1 2 3 4

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.

• Speaker: Old Major
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare, Language as Power
• Theme Tracker code:

1 2 3 4

Remember, comrades, your resolution must never falter. No argument must lead you astray. Never listen when they tell you that Man and the animals have a common interest, that the prosperity of the one is the prosperity of the others. 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.

• Speaker: Old Major
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare, Language as Power
• Theme Tracker code:

1 2 3 4

CHAPTER 2 QUOTES

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.

• Related themes: Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare, Language as Power
• Theme Tracker code:

1 2 3 4

CHAPTER 3 QUOTES

Nobody stole, nobody grumbled over his rations, the quarreling and biting and jealousy which had been normal features of life in the old days had almost disappeared.

• Related themes: Revolution and Corruption
• Theme Tracker code:

1 2 3 4

I will work harder!

• Speaker: Boxer
• Related themes: Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare
• Theme Tracker code:

1 2 3 4

Four legs good, two legs bad.

• Speaker: The Sheep
• Related themes: Revolution and Corruption, Language as Power
• Theme Tracker code:

1 2 3 4

"Comrades!" he cried. "You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. Milk and apples (this has been proved by Science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig. We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organization of this farm depend on us. Day and night we are watching over your welfare. It is for your sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples."

• Speaker: Squealer
• Related themes: Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare, Language as Power
• Theme Tracker code:

1 2 3 4

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CHAPTER 4 QUOTES
I have no wish to take life, not even human life,' repeated Boxer, and his eyes were full of tears.

• Speaker: Boxer
• Related themes: Revolution and Corruption
• Theme Tracker code:

CHAPTER 5 QUOTES
At this there was a terrible baying sound outside, and 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.

• Mentioned or related characters: Snowball, The Dogs
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption
• Theme Tracker code:

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?

• Speaker: Squealer
• Mentioned or related characters: Napoleon
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare, Language as Power
• Theme Tracker code:

CHAPTER 6 QUOTES
Comrades, do you know who is responsible for this? Do you know the enemy who has come in the night and overthrown our windmill? SNOWBALL!

• Speaker: Napoleon
• Mentioned or related characters: Snowball
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption
• Theme Tracker code:

CHAPTER 7 QUOTES
If a window was broken or a drain was blocked up, someone was certain to say that Snowball had come in the night and done it, and when the key of the store-shed was lost, the whole farm was convinced that Snowball had thrown it down the well. Curiously enough, they went on believing this even after the mislaid key was found under a sack of meal.

• Mentioned or related characters: Snowball
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption
• Theme Tracker code:

If she herself had had any picture of the future, it had been of a society of animals set free from hunger and the whip, all equal, each working according to his capacity, the strong protecting the weak... Instead - she did not know why - they had come to a time when no one dared speak his mind, when fierce, growling dogs roamed everywhere, and when you had to watch your comrades torn to pieces after confessing to shocking crimes.

• Mentioned or related characters: Clover, The Dogs
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption
• Theme Tracker code:

Napoleon is always right.

• Speaker: Boxer
• Mentioned or related characters: Napoleon
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare
• Theme Tracker code:

Animal Farm, Animal Farm, Never through me shalt thou come to harm!

• Speaker: Minimus
• Related themes: Totalitarianism, Language as Power
• Theme Tracker code:
CHAPTER 8 QUOTES
At the foot of the end wall of the big barn, where the Seven Commandments were written, there lay a ladder broken in two pieces. Squealer, temporarily stunned, was sprawling beside it, and near at hand there lay a lantern, a paint-brush, and an overturned pot of white paint. None of the animals could form any idea as to what this meant, except old Benjamin, who nodded his muzzle with a knowing air, and seemed to understand, but would say nothing.

- **Mentioned or related characters:** Squealer, Benjamin
- **Related themes:** Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption, Language as Power
- **Theme Tracker code:**

CHAPTER 9 QUOTES
"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."

- **Mentioned or related characters:** Squealer
- **Related themes:** Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare, Language as Power
- **Theme Tracker code:**

CHAPTER 10 QUOTES
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.

- **Mentioned or related characters:** Napoleon, Squealer, Minimus, The Dogs
- **Related themes:** Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare
- **Theme Tracker code:**

Four legs good, two legs better!

- **Speaker:** The Sheep

All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.

- **Related themes:** Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption, Class Warfare, Language as Power
- **Theme Tracker code:**

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."

- **Mentioned or related characters:** Napoleon, Squealer, Minimus, Mr. Pilkington
- **Related themes:** Totalitarianism, Revolution and Corruption

The color-coded boxes under "Analysis & Themes" below make it easy to track the themes throughout the work. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1
On the Manor Farm in England, Mr. Jones, drunk as usual, goes to sleep without properly securing the animals.

Mr. Jones’s drunkenness symbolizes the Russian Tsar’s decadence.

As their leader weakens, the privileged citizens see the chance for revolution.
The animals gather in the barn to hear what Old Major has to say: the dogs arrive first; then the pigs, who sit in front of Old Major’s speaking platform. Next come the hens, pigeons, sheep, and cows; two cart horses, the enormous Boxer, and the motherly Clover who lets some orphaned ducklings shelter between her legs; Muriel the goat and Benjamin the donkey; Mollie, a white horse showing off the red ribbons in her hair; and finally, the cat. Only Moses, the tame raven, fails to come.

Old Major addresses the animals, calling them “comrades.” He says he won’t live much longer, then describes all the hardships the animals face on the Farm—long hours, little food, and death in the slaughterhouse when they’ve ceased to be useful. He asks: What’s the cause of all these problems? He answers his own question: Men, who produce nothing, but take whatever they want from the animals.

Old Major’s ideas mirror the main tenets of socialism: equality and freedom from exploitation. Old Major’s words are revolutionary: they are the first time the animals understand that they’re slaves to men, but don’t have to be.

It’s ironic that the dogs attack the rats just as Old Major calls all animals comrades. Old Major smooths over the conflict now, but he won’t always be around.

Old Major says that whatever goes on four legs or has wings is a friend, that no animal should ever kill another animal, that no animal should ever act like a man, and that the ultimate goal for animals, whether in this lifetime or the future, must be the overthrow of humans. Old Major describes his dream of a future without men, in which the words and melody came to him of a song called “Beasts of England.” All the animals learn the words and sing.

The sound wakes Mr. Jones, who fires his gun into the wall of the barn. The animals scatter to their sleeping-places.

Jones asserts his authority, but he’s unaware of the mounting revolution.

CHAPTER 2

Old Major dies three nights later, but his message takes hold. The pigs are the smartest of the animals, and over the next three months two pigs in particular emerge as leaders: the lively Snowball and the powerful Napoleon. A third pig, Squealer, gives eloquent speeches that can convince anyone of anything. These three pigs turn Old Major’s ideas into a philosophy called Animalism.

Like Karl Marx, Old Major dies before the revolution that his ideas inspired takes place. Like Lenin, his leadership is inherited by two underlings. At this point, the pigs believe in Old Major’s ideas completely.

The pigs teach Animalism to the animals, overcoming the worry, apathy, and selfishness of the others. For instance, Mollie worries that after the revolution she won’t get any more sugar or be able to wear ribbons in her hair. Snowball tells her she shouldn’t want sugar and ribbons, since these are signs of her slavery.

Not all the animals understand Old Major’s ideas. With “Beasts of England” Old Major gives the animals something they can feel. All the animals rally around the song, even though some don’t understand exactly what they’re fighting for.
The pigs also have to contend with Moses the raven, who spreads tales of a wonderful place called Sugarcandy Mountain where animals go when they die. Most of the animals dislike Moses because he never does any work, but many also believe in Sugarcandy Mountain.

Boxer and Clover show the most devotion to Animalism. Neither is very smart, but their belief in animal equality never wavers, and they never miss a secret meeting.

The revolution happens much earlier and more easily than the animals expect. In June, on Midsummer’s Eve, Mr. Jones gets so drunk in town that he forgets to feed the animals, and his lazy workers ditch their farm work to go hunting. The hungry animals break into the feed shed, which wakes up the sleeping Mr. Jones. He and his men start whipping the animals, who grow furious and attack, driving the men and Mr. Jones from the farm.

Though unsophisticated, Boxer and Clover value the essence of Animalism: equality among animals.

Like the Russian Revolution, the animals’ revolution results from their rage at what they perceive, correctly, as mistreatment. Later on, when the pigs seize power, they take special care to make sure that the animals don’t perceive their mistreatment.

Now that Jones is gone, Napoleon’s self-interest separates him from the other animals: he wants the milk for himself. And Napoleon, who clearly cares more about himself than about Animalism, realizes he can manipulate the animals’ revolutionary spirit to get what he wants. A minute after the Commandments are posted, Napoleon has started to undermine them.

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CHAPTER 3

The animals work hard but happily at the harvest. The pigs, the smartest animals, soon start directing the other animals' work. The pigs' cleverness and Boxer's immense strength and work ethic help solve all the problems the animals encounter in their work. Boxer even adopts the motto "I will work harder" in response to every problem. The harvest is the biggest the farm has ever seen.

The early days are idyllic. Animalism results in a successful harvest and happy animals. Yet already signs of class difference between the pigs and other animals have arisen based on their intellectual differences.

Though most animals are happy, Mollie, the symbol of the materialistic middle class, isn’t thrilled with the revolution. Benjamin, a skeptic, refuses to believe the good times will last.

The meetings show Animalist equality, but the non-pigs don’t use their equal rights. Instead, they let the pigs dominate. So it’s not just that the pigs seize power, it’s that the other animals let them.

The sheep can’t read or memorize the Seven Commandments. To help them, Snowball summarizes all of Animalism with the single phrase "Four legs good, two legs bad." Soon the sheep start bleating this phrase whenever they feel like it.

Napoleon sees little value in Snowball’s committees, but he says he believes in the importance of educating the young. When two dogs give birth, Napoleon trains their nine puppies in a secret place.

The mystery of the missing milk is solved when the pigs declare that only they can use all apples and milk on the farm. The other animals grumble, but Squealer explains that the pigs are crucial to the running of the farm and need the milk and apples to stay healthy. If the pigs fail, Squealer says, Mr. Jones will return. The animals agree that the pigs should get the milk and apples.

The pigs begin to define themselves as a separate class deserving of special privileges, and use fear tactics and confusing language to convince the other animals the privileges are in the common interest. Even Snowball is willing to sacrifice Animalism for his own self-interest.

CHAPTER 4

It’s late summer and news of the revolution at Animal Farm spreads. Snowball and Napoleon send out flights of pigeons to teach "Beasts of England" to the animals of nearby farms.

Soviet Communists also spread propaganda, hoping to make Communism global.

Snowball’s committees show his commitment to Animalism, but also his political naiveté. Trotsky set up similar committees in the Soviet Union.

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Mr. Jones spends his time getting drunk and complaining about his fate. The owners of the farms neighboring Animal Farm, the gentleman farmer Mr. Pilkington of Foxwood and the shrewd Mr. Frederick of Pinchfield, are concerned that the revolution might spread to their own farms. But they dislike each other so much that they can’t even agree on defending themselves. Instead, the Frederick and Pilkington spread rumors about the misery of life on Animal Farm. No animals anywhere believe them. “Beasts of England” spreads across England with incredible speed.

One day in October, pigeons fly into Animal Farm with news that Jones, along with men from Pilkington and Frederick, are headed to attack the farm. Snowball has a defense planned out: he draws the men into an ambush, then leads the charge against the men. Jones scars Snowball with a blast from his shotgun, but Snowball still manages to knock Jones down. Boxer’s strength, meanwhile, terrifies the other men. The animals rout the men with just a single casualty: a sheep that Jones shot dead.

Boxer is dismayed to learn that one of his kicks seems to have killed a stable boy. To console him, Snowball responds that the only good man is a dead man. Just then the animals realize that Mollie is missing: she hid in the stable throughout the fighting. When they return, it turns out the stable boy was only stunned, and has run off.

As the animals bury the sheep, Snowball emphasizes that animals must be willing to die to defend Animal Farm. Snowball and Boxer receive the award of Animal Hero, First Class. They name the battle the “Battle of the Cowshed,” and agree that twice each year they’ll fire Mr. Jones’s gun, which they found lying in the mud, to celebrate both this battle and the anniversary of the revolution.

CHAPTER 5

One day, Clover spots Mollie at the boundary of Foxwood, and argues with Mr. Pilkington’s men stroke her nose. On a hunch, Clover searches Mollie’s stall and finds sugar cubes. Mollie denies all of it, but three days later she disappears. Weeks after that, a pigeon spots Mollie pulling a man’s cart, with ribbons in her hair. No one on Animal Farm ever mentions Mollie again.

The pigs plan for the next year throughout the winter. All the animals now accept that the pigs will decide all farm policy, subject only to a farm-wide majority vote.

In the Sunday meetings, Snowball and Napoleon now argue about everything. The most intense point of disagreement between the two is Snowball’s plan to build a windmill. He says the windmill will produce electric power to warm stalls and run electrical tools that will make everyone’s life easier. Napoleon, though, argues that the farm should focus on more pressing needs like food production.

Snowball’s position seems noble: the animals should be willing to die for Animal Farm, right? But the implication is that whatever Animal Farm does must always be right, even if it results in the killing of animals...

Mollie, like the Russian middle-class, chooses comfortable slavery over less comfortable freedom, which makes all the other animals hate her. But later in this same chapter the other animals also choose comfortable slavery over less comfortable freedom.

Class differences continue to take hold. The animals allow the pigs to take nearly absolute power.

These disputes mirror Trotsky and Stalin’s main disagreement: Trotsky favored modernizing the USSR while Stalin emphasized more immediate concerns. Note that the disagreements intensify only after the human threat is gone.
The animals take sides: some support Snowball’s windmill, while others favor Napoleon and food production. Only Benjamin refuses to join sides, observing that no matter who wins, life will go on as it always has—badly.

Snowball finally finishes his plans for the windmill. The next Sunday the animals gather to vote. Snowball speaks passionately about the paradise the windmill will create, while Napoleon just says the windmill is nonsense. Snowball’s eloquence prevails.

But Napoleon isn’t playing by Animalist rules. By seizing power and denying the non-pigs’ right to vote, Napoleon counters the fundamental idea of Animalism: animal equality. If the animals let Napoleon get away with this act, Animal Farm will no longer be Animalist and the animals’ freedom will vanish. In the USSR, Stalin defeated Trotsky in a power struggle and exiled him.

None of the animals want Jones back, and Boxer, after heavy thinking, says, “If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right.” boxe

Three weeks later, Napoleon announces that they’ll build the windmill after all. Squealer explains: Napoleon opposed the windmill just to get rid of Snowball, who was a bad influence on everyone. The animals accept this explanation, especially since Squealer has the attack dogs with him. Squealer manipulates language in citing secret documents and using fear tactics to make it seem like Napoleon is defending freedom when really he’s undermining it. Tricky language effectively misleads a poorly educated, frightened, and idealistic population.

Fear stops the animals from opposing Napoleon. Like Mollie, they choose comfort over freedom.

Napoleon’s announcement disturbs the animals, but few can muster any counterarguments. Four young pigs protest, but the dogs growl and silence the pigs. The sheep burst into an extended bleating repetition of “Four legs good, two legs bad.”
CHAPTER 6

To build the windmill and keep the farm running at the same time, the animals have to work like slaves, enduring long hours. The animals make the sacrifice happily, since it’s for their own benefit rather than for a human master. Boxer works the longest and hardest. Despite all the effort, the time spent working on the windmill makes the harvest slightly worse than it was the previous year.

The farm suffers shortages of items it can't produce itself, like nails and iron. Napoleon announces Animal Farm will start trading hay, wheat, and possibly even eggs with its neighbors, not for commercial uses, but for the benefit of the windmill. The animals are uneasy because they had agreed never to use money. Napoleon hires a man named Mr. Whymper to represent the farm, while Squealer convinces everyone that no rule ever banned the use of money.

Though the humans outside Animal Farm still hate and fear it, they also develop a grudging respect for the farm’s efficiency.

The pigs’ deception has worked. The animals still believe they are free even though they have no freedom at all. The pigs use Animalism to get the animals to sacrifice for the pigs’ benefit.

Squealer begins to refer to Napoleon as “The Leader” and the pigs move into the farmhouse and begin sleeping in beds. Though Boxer dismisses the change by saying “Napoleon is always right,” Clover is certain that the Commandments ban beds. She gets Muriel to read her the Fourth Commandment, but they discover that they seem to have misremembered it. It says: “No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets.”

By October the animals grow tired. Since the farm had to sell some food for money, the winter promises to be bad. The windmill is now half-finished, which pleases everyone (except Benjamin).

One night in November, a terrible storm knocks down the windmill. The animals are horrified. Napoleon sniffs around the rubble. He looks worried and his tail wiggles as if he’s thinking fast. Suddenly Napoleon shouts “SNOWBALL!” He announces that Snowball destroyed the windmill. The animals are shocked and furious that Snowball could do such a thing. Napoleon vows they will start rebuilding the windmill that very day.

Note the pigs’ manipulation of language to increase their power and luxury. They take more privileges for themselves and justify those privileges by secretly rewriting the Commandments of Animalism.

CHAPTER 7

Despite the hard, bitter winter, the animals work to rebuild the windmill, which the humans claim fell because of its thin walls. Though the pigs say the humans’ claim is a lie, they make the new windmill’s walls three feet thick.

Humans start accepting the farm as the pigs act more like humans.

The animals trust the pigs’ lies rather than the obvious truth because they still believe blindly that “Four legs good, two legs bad!”

1 2 3 4
In January, the farm’s food supply runs out. Even though it seems possible the animals could starve, the pigs hide the food trouble from the humans, escorting Mr. Whymper through a storehouse made to appear full of food.

Napoleon now issues almost all orders through Squealer, who one day announces that the hens must give up four hundred eggs a week to pay for grain and feed. The hens angrily refuse. Napoleon responds by cutting the hens’ rations. He also declares that any animal that feeds the hens will be killed. After five days, during which nine hens starve to death, the hens give in.

At about the same time, Napoleon enters negotiations with Squealer, to sell some wood to either Pilkington or Frederick. Whenever he’s close to a deal with Pilkington, rumors circulate that Snowball is hiding at Frederick’s farm, and vice versa.

In addition, Squealer soon announces that Snowball has been sneaking onto Animal Farm at night: Napoleon can smell him. Squealer tells the animals that Snowball was Jones’s “secret agent” from the beginning. He reminds them how Snowball tried to betray them at the Battle of the Cowshed and Napoleon saved the day.

By tricking the animals into thinking Animalism and Animal Farm are the same, the pigs can kill or punish anyone who disagrees with their orders and claim they’re defending Animalism. It’s slavery disguised as freedom.

Four days later, Napoleon calls for an assembly in the yard. When the animals gather, Napoleon whimpers and his dogs attack Boxer and the four pigs that had questioned Snowball’s removal. The pigs are bloodied, but Boxer repels the attack and pins one of the dogs to the ground. Boxer glances at the stunned Napoleon to ask what he should do. Napoleon orders him to let the dog go and then commands the pigs to confess. They confess, and the dogs kill them as traitors to Animal Farm. A series of other animals also confess: all are killed.

In the aftermath of the assembly, the animals are miserable, having witnessed the first killings on the farm since Mr. Jones was defeated. Boxer thinks he must work harder to make things better. Clover leads the animals in a sad rendition of “Beasts of England.” Squealer soon announces that “Beasts of England” has been forbidden; it was a song of revolution, and the revolution has ended. A pig named Minimus has composed a new song: “Animal Farm, Animal Farm, Never through me shalt thou come to harm.”

Stalin “purged” the Soviet government by torturing those he considered enemies until they admitted to crimes they hadn’t committed. Then he had them killed. Napoleon considers Boxer an enemy because Boxer remembers the past correctly. And Boxer can’t comprehend that Napoleon just attacked him.

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Clover and some other animals remember that the Sixth Commandment forbade killing. But when they get Muriel to read it for them, it says: "No animal shall kill any other animal without cause."

The pigs continue to rewrite and corrupt the tenets of Animalism for their own benefit.

Now the pigs begin to manipulate facts. The uneducated animals now have no reality they can trust. They trust the pigs just because it’s too tiresome not to.

Napoleon inflates his image through propaganda, making himself bigger than life and all-powerful. Stalin used propaganda similarly to increase his power.

As WW II approached, the USSR’s negotiations with the Allies and Fascists intensified. When the Soviets leaned toward a treaty with the Allies, the Soviet propaganda machine spouted anti-German rhetoric, and vice versa.

The animals joyfully finish the windmill in autumn. But Animal Farm still lacks the machinery to produce electricity, and two days later Napoleon announces a deal to sell the wood to Frederick. (His mantra is changed to "Death to Pilkington!"). The sudden reversal shocks the animals. The pigs explain that Napoleon planned all along to play Pilkington and Frederick against each other to raise the price of the wood.

Three days later, Whymper rushes into the farmhouse. The animals hear Napoleon let out a roar of anger. As it turned out, Frederick paid for the timber with fake bills! Napoleon promises Frederick will be killed and warns the animals to brace for the worst.

The Germans signed the Non-aggression Pact as a fake-out, a move intended to mislead the USSR. The Germans then invaded the USSR almost immediately.

About 25-30 million Soviets died while pushing back the Germans. The war annihilated Soviet infrastructure, symbolized in Animal Farm by the destruction of the windmill.

Though the animals are tired and bloody, the pigs lead two days of patriotic celebrations of their victory over the men. The animals’ spirits rise and the memory of the forged bank notes fades.
A few days later, the pigs discover whiskey in the cellar of the farmhouse. There are shouts and revelry that night in the farmhouse. But the next morning the house is silent. When Squealer eventually appears he has awful news: Comrade Napoleon is dying! By evening Napoleon has recovered, and the pigs soon purchase machinery to build a still to produce alcohol.

Soon after, a crash in the middle of the night wakes the animals. They see Squealer unconscious on the ground next to a fallen ladder and a bucket of white paint beneath the commandments written on the barn. Benjamin seems to understand what’s happened, but refuses to say. Muriel later discovers that she’s misremembered the Fifth Commandment. It now reads “No animal shall drink alcohol to excess.”

CHAPTER 9

Boxer still works harder than everyone else, but his strength begins to wane. He comforts himself with thoughts of retirement. In the first days of Animal Farm, it was decided that a horse could retire at age twelve and receive a pension.

Food during the winter is even scarcer than in the previous year, and the animals’ rations the animals are reduced. In contrast, the rations for pigs and dogs remain at their normal levels. Squealer continues to claim that they’re all better off than ever, and explains that a rigid equality in rations would be against Animalism.

The pigs immediately resume rewriting Animalism for their own benefit. The animals are too beaten down and uneducated to realize the pigs’ deception even when the evidence makes it obvious. The pigs take power, but the animals let them.

In April, the farm is declared a Republic, and an election takes place. Napoleon, the only candidate, wins unanimously. On the same day, it’s announced that Snowball fought openly against the animals at the Battle of the Cowshed.

Moses the raven suddenly reappears, talking of Sugarcandy Mountain. The pigs say it’s all nonsense, but give him an allowance of beer.

The pigs control over information ensures that animals can’t properly evaluate their situations. They must trust the pigs, even if it’s obvious the pigs are lying.

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One day, while working on the new windmill, Boxer’s lung fails and he falls, no longer able to work. Squealer announces that Napoleon has decided to send Boxer to a human veterinary doctor. The idea of a human examining Boxer disturbs the animals, but Squealer says a vet can do more for Boxer than they can. Boxer stays in his stall until a van comes to pick him up. The animals yell their goodbyes, but Benjamin shouts that side of the van reads, “Horse Slaughterer and Glue Boiler.” The animals cry out. Boxer tries to break down the door of the van with his hoofs. But he’s now too weak to escape.

Boxer gave up his freedom without knowing it by trusting the pigs’ words instead of analyzing their actions: he allowed them to take power but never held them accountable. By the time he realizes he’s been betrayed, Boxer is too weak to do anything about it. In a tragic irony, his strength has been sacrificed to the regime that now sacrifices his life for its own benefit.

Three days later, Squealer announces that Boxer died in the hospital, and that his last words were “Napoleon is always right.” In response to the “dark rumors” the animals had heard about the van, Squealer explains that the vet had just bought the van from the glue boiler and had not yet repainted it. A few days later the pigs buy a new crate of whiskey.

CHAPTER 10

Years go by. Only Clover, Benjamin, Moses the raven, and some of the pigs remember the revolution. Animal Farm is more prosperous than ever. The windmill is finished, though instead of producing electricity it’s used to mill flour, and brings in a hefty profit. Although the farm is richer, only the pigs and dogs seem better off. Still, the animals can’t remember any other way of life, and even those that don’t remember the revolution are proud to be free.

The pigs’ willingness to sell Boxer to a glue producer proves that they view the other animals merely as means to their own profit and luxurious indulgences, such as alcohol. Mr. Jones viewed the animals the same way.

The pigs’ power is so complete that they now feel free to act exactly like humans. Napoleon’s whip is a symbol of oppression.

The pigs rule Animal Farm as masters, just as Mr. Jones once did. However, they control language and thought on their farm so completely that their animals still consider themselves free citizens.

The animals are silent and seem poised to protest. Just then the sheep begin to bleat “Four legs good, two legs better!” over and over, and the prospect of protest passes.

Clover asks Benjamin to read the Seven Commandments to her. But the wall now only reads, “All Animals Are Equal. But Some Are More Equal Than Others.”

Once again the animals don’t take their chance to rebel. The pig’s propaganda overpowers them.

Animalism has been entirely rewritten to benefit the pigs. It now reads like nonsense.
The next day, all the pigs start carrying whips and wearing clothes. A week later, they invite humans from nearby farms to look around and stay for dinner at Animal Farm. That night, the animals, led by Clover, sneak up and watch the pigs and humans through the window. Pilkington and Napoleon toast each other. Pilkington says he’s pleased to have their history of mistrust behind them. He expresses admiration that the pigs can feed their animals so little yet get so much work out of them. He adds that pigs and men have similar problems: pigs have lower animals to deal with, while men have lower classes.

Napoleon agrees wholeheartedly with Pilkington, and announces plans to eliminate all signs of Animal Farm’s revolutionary past, including its name. From now on it will be called by its original and proper name: Manor Farm.

The similarity of all totalitarian governments is represented by the changing of the farm’s name back to its original name.

The men and pigs return to a game of poker and the farm animals turn to leave, but a shout from within stops them. Napoleon and Pilkington have discovered each other cheating at cards. A fight has broken out. In the chaos, the animals can’t tell the pigs from the humans.

In their petty greed, the Animalist and Capitalist leaders are indistinguishable. The animals are back where they started: enslaved by oppressive leaders.

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