

Context – Animal Farm was written by George Orwell in 1945.

George Orwell – George Orwell was the writing name of Eric Blair (1903-1950). He was outspoken in his support of democratic socialism, and spoke out frequently against totalitarianism and social injustice. He wrote a wide range of fiction, poetry, literary criticism and polemical journalism, although without doubt his two most famous works are *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).



Nicholas II– Tsar Nicholas II was the last emperor of Russia. Tsar Nicholas was deemed to be a poor ruler – the country lost key battles against Japan and Germany during his reign, costing large military casualties and financial losses. There were also gross inequalities: Nicholas lived in luxury while thousands of unemployed peasants struggled to survive. Tsar Nicholas was eventually overthrown by the Bolsheviks and was executed in July 1917.



Karl Marx and Communism– Karl Marx was a German philosopher from the 19th Century, who rejected capitalism. He instead believed in the introduction of a system in which wealth was communal and labour was shared. He believed this would produce a fairer, more stable way of life. Whilst he lived a long time before the Russian Revolution (and in a different country) his theories formed the foundations for what became Communism.



The Russian Revolution – The revolution was the movement that removed the reigning Tsarist autocracy from power and led to the rise of the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, were able to overthrow the provisional government and establish their own federal government, creating the world's first socialist republic. Eventually they became reconstituted as the Communist Party.



Joseph Stalin – Following the death of Lenin in 1924, Stalin rose to power through discreetly canvassing, manipulating and intimidating others, sidelining other potential leaders such as Victor Trotsky. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union became more autocratic and totalitarian: he oversaw mass repressions, hundreds of thousands of executions and millions of non-combatant deaths. He has hence become known as one of the most significant and vilified figures of the 20th Century.



Life in the Communist Soviet Union – The working class in the Soviet Union were supposed to be the country's ruling class under the doctrines from which their socialism was derived, and yet they grew increasingly repressed throughout the progression of the USSR's existence. It is generally accepted that the standard of living decreased, working conditions deteriorated, and personal freedoms were significantly violated.



Main Characters – Consider what Orwell intended through his characterisation of each of the below...

Napoleon – Napoleon is the pig who emerges as the leader of Animal Farm after the rebellion. Napoleon's character is based on Joseph Stalin – the leader of the communist Soviet Union. Napoleon is cunning, treacherous, lazy and selfish. He uses Squealer (propaganda) and the dogs (military force) to exert power over others. He has no real talents, rather he is a corrupt opportunist.

Napoleon Quote: "To the prosperity of The Manor Farm!" (10.32)

Boxer– Boxer is a cart-horse, who demonstrates incredible strength, work ethic, and loyalty. He represents those in the working classes who were hugely overworked. Boxer completes the most work on the farm, and is admired by others for his physical accomplishments and mental grit. His downfall is his slow wit, which ensures that he is unable to think for himself and is easily manipulated.

Boxer Quote: "Napoleon is always right" (5.22)

Old Major – Old Major is a prize-winning boar whose vision of a place in which the animals work for themselves serves as the inspiration for the rebellion. He is based on both Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, who inspired communism. Old Major is well-respected, articulate, and persuasive. He is a clear leader who the other animals listen to. When he dies, Napoleon and Snowball are left to struggle for control over the animals.

Old Major Quote: "my message to you, comrades: Rebellion!" (1.11)

Snowball – Snowball is one of the other leading pigs, who challenges Napoleon for leadership of the farm after the rebellion. He represents Leon Trotsky. He is intelligent and passionate, yet he does not resort to the same levels of cunning and manipulation as Napoleon. Despite largely winning the support of the animals on the farm, Snowball is driven from the farm by Napoleon's forces.

Snowball Quote: "liberty is worth more than ribbons" (2.7)

Squealer – Squealer represents the Soviet propaganda machine. He is a pig who is an exceptionally gifted and persuasive speaker, and is utilised to spread positivity about Napoleon, and negativity about Napoleon's competition. He uses false statistics to suggest that the farm thrives under Napoleon, and twists the truth to ensure that the pigs retain political and social control.

Squealer Quote: "It is for YOUR sake that we ... eat those apples." (3.14)

Benjamin – Benjamin is a long-lived donkey who refuses to feel enthused by the rebellion. Some say he represents the aged people of Russia, who remained cynical of the revolution. Benjamin is seen by the other animals as a pessimist, however his prediction that life will remain unpleasant regardless of who is in charge proves correct. He is the only animal who appears able to understand the atrocities that are taking place, yet he refuses to openly oppose the pigs.

Old Major Quote: "None of you has ever seen a dead donkey"(5.22)

The Power of Persuasion

Rhetorical Questions	Old Major uses this type of question to make the animals think deeply: "Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours?"
List of Three	Old Major does this to build an argument: <i>our lives are miserable, laborious, and short.</i>
Dishonesty	Squealer uses lies and deception to convince the animals: <i>Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself!</i>
Repetition	Squealer uses repetition to emphasise points: <i>Jones would come back! Yes, Jones would come back!</i>

Scene-by-Scene Summary – Alongside key quotations from each scene

Chapter I	A drunk Mr Jones stumbles to bed, forgetting to lock up his farm buildings. The animals thus convene in the big barn to hear Old Major's speech. He blames their short and miserable lives on man, and incites rebellion. He teaches them a song: Beasts of England.	<i>Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal.</i>
Chapter II	Old Major dies in his sleep, and the other animals prepare for rebellion. The pigs (the cleverest animals) prepare the others, teaching them animalism, which they don't all fully understand. The Rebellion occurs, and Jones is driven from the farm. The farm is renamed 'Animal Farm' and seven commandments are made.	<i>"Never mind the milk, comrades!" cried Napoleon, placing himself in front of the buckets. "That will be attended to. The harvest is more important."</i>
Chapter III	The animals labour in the fields throughout the summer. Boxer works hardest. There is a flag-raising ceremony each Sunday – Snowball and Napoleon often clash. Snowball spends time trying to educate the animals. Napoleon takes a group of puppies to 'educate' in a loft. When it is noted the pigs have been eating the apples and milk, Squealer persuades the animals that it is best.	<i>Milk and apples (and this has been proved by Science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig. We pigs are brain-workers.</i>
Chapter IV	The news of Animal Farm has spread to neighbouring farms (through the birds), where animals have begun singing Beasts of England. Jones and other farmers thus launch an attack, however they are easily beaten by the animals. Boxer and Snowball fight heroically and are awarded medals as a result. Only a single sheep is lost, who is given a hero's burial. Snowball tells Boxer not to feel guilt for a human's death.	<i>"Who will believe that I did not do this on purpose?" "No sentimentality, comrade!" "War is war. The only good human being is a dead one."</i>
Chapter V	Mollie is tempted away from the farm by a red-faced man who feeds her. Snowball and Napoleon grow increasingly hostile towards one another. As Snowball announces plans for a new windmill, Napoleon unleashes his dogs, which attack Snowball and chase him off the farm. The animals are anxious about this, but Squealer's passionate defence and the growl of the dogs is enough to assure them that 'Napoleon is always right.'	<i>"One of them all but closed his jaws on Snowball's tail, but Snowball whisked it free just in time. Then he put on an extra spurt and, with a few inches to spare, slipped through a hole in the hedge and was seen no more."</i>
Chapter VI	The animals work at a rapid pace to build the windmill, and their rations are cut. It is announced that the farm is now trading with humans, to the shock of the animals. It begins that the pigs have begun amending the commandments to suit their own interests. A storm destroys the windmill, yet Napoleon blames the destruction on the 'traitor Snowball.'	<i>"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? SNOWBALL!"</i>
Chapter VII	Snowball is blamed for more and more failures, which the humans attribute to planning errors. Hens eggs are now sold, which makes the hens rebel. Napoleon holds a meeting in which several animals are murdered by the dogs for their apparent treasons against the farm. It is revealed 'Beasts of England' may no longer be sung.	<i>One Sunday morning Squealer announced that the hens, who had just come in to lay again, must surrender their eggs. Napoleon had accepted... a contract for four hundred eggs a week."</i>
Chapter VIII	More of the commandments appear to change, but the animals are persuaded that this is not the case. Napoleon has now taken the title of 'Leader' and has multiple other honours. Trading with humans intensifies. A further battle with humans takes place, with the windmill destroyed, several animals killed, and Boxer injured. The pigs begin drinking alcohol.	<i>"He called the animals together and told them that he had a terrible piece of news to impart. Comrade Napoleon was dying!"</i>
Chapter IX	Animal Farm is named a republic and Napoleon unanimously named the president. Moses the raven returns and speaks of Sugarcandy Mountain. Boxer grows frailer and one day collapses. The pigs announce that he will be taken to hospital, but Benjamin reads on the van that he is in fact being taken to a slaughterhouse. Squealer announces that he died at the hospital, and that the van had only just been bought by the hospital.	<i>"Boxer!" cried Clover in a terrible voice. "Boxer! Get out! Get out quickly! They're taking you to your death!"</i>
Chapter X	Years pass by. Many animals die and few can remember the rebellion. Only the pigs seem richer, yet all animals remain proud of being on Animal Farm. The pigs begin walking on two legs. Humans come over for a meeting and commend how hard the pigs make the animals work, for so little rations. The name Animal Farm is returned to 'Manor Farm.' The animals can no longer differentiate between people and pigs.	<i>"Somehow it seemed as though the farm had grown richer without making the animals themselves any richer..." "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."</i>

Features of Allegory

Writer's Values – The writer normally holds strong political or moral views about a topic, e.g. Orwell didn't like how the Soviet Union had realised communism.

Surface Level Story – There must be a literal story that works on a surface level, e.g. The story of the animals taking over a farm and then some of the animals disputing power.

Symbolic Level Story – There must also be a deeper, more symbolic meaning to the story, e.g. The Russian Revolution and subsequent duel for authority.

Polarising Relationships – There needs to be oppositional views in the story in order for the reader to reflect on morals e.g. the views of Benjamin vs. the other animals during the revolution.

Themes

The Corruption of Socialist Ideals – *Animal Farm* is famous for being a stinging critique of the development of Soviet communism. Although Orwell strongly believed in the socialist ideals upon which the revolution was built, he abhorred the ways in which these values had been repeatedly manipulated by those who rose to power. The gradual disintegration of the seven commandments visually depicts this.

Class – *Animal Farm* demonstrates through its allegory the means by which human beings seek to maintain and reestablish class structures. The novella shows how the oppressed who are able to stand united in the face of adversity often generate their own class divisions over time after the enemy is eliminated. This is evident in the slow rise of the pigs to fill the void left by Mr Jones.

Naivety – *Animal Farm* is not only told from the viewpoint of those in power, but also from the viewpoint of those who are oppressed. Orwell makes clear that these types of situations are formed not only because of the strategies of the oppressors, but also the naiveté of the people who do not have the education or the position to know better. For example, Boxer believes everything that he is told.

Religion – An idea of heaven (Sugar Candy Mountain) is promised to the animals by Moses (the raven) at some points throughout *Animal Farm*. Moses is derived from the name of the bible character who brought the word of God to the people. The thought of an evergreen, beautiful afterlife awaiting them drives the animals on to work harder, and so the pigs use Moses to their benefit.