

Animal Farm by George Orwell

Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_Farm

Animal Farm is an allegorical and dystopian novel by George Orwell, published in England on 17 August 1945. According to Orwell, the book reflects events leading up to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and then on into the Stalin era in the Soviet Union. Orwell, a democratic socialist, was a critic of Joseph Stalin and hostile to Moscow-directed Stalinism, an attitude that was critically shaped by his experiences during the Spanish Civil War. The Soviet Union, he believed, had become a brutal dictatorship, built upon a cult of personality and enforced by a reign of terror. In his essay "Why I Write" (1946), he wrote that *Animal Farm* was the first book in which he had tried, with full consciousness of what he was doing, "to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole".

The original title was *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story*, though the subtitle was dropped by U.S. publishers for its 1946 publication and subsequently all but one of the translations during Orwell's lifetime omitted it. Orwell wrote the book from November 1943 to February 1944, when the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union was at its height and Stalin was regarded highly by the British people and intelligentsia, a circumstance that Orwell hated. It was initially rejected by a number of British and American publishers, including one of Orwell's own, Victor Gollancz. Its publication was thus delayed, though it became a great commercial success when it did finally appear partly because the Cold War so quickly followed World War II.

Plot summary

Old Major, the old boar on the Manor Farm, summons the animals on the farm together for a meeting, during which he refers to humans as parasites and teaches the animals a revolutionary song called *Beasts of England*. When Major dies, two young pigs, Snowball and Napoleon, assume command and consider it a duty to prepare for the Rebellion. The animals revolt and drive the drunken and irresponsible farmer Mr Jones from the farm, renaming it "Animal Farm". They adopt Seven Commandments of Animalism, the most important of which is, "All animals are equal." Snowball teaches the animals to read and write, while Napoleon educates young puppies on the principles of Animalism. Food is plentiful, and the farm runs smoothly. The pigs elevate themselves to positions of leadership and set aside special food items, ostensibly for their personal health. Napoleon and Snowball struggle for preeminence. When Snowball announces his plans to build a windmill, Napoleon has his dogs chase Snowball away and subsequently declares himself leader of Animal Farm.

Napoleon enacts changes to the governance structure of the farm, replacing meetings with a committee of pigs who will run the farm. Through a young pig named Squealer, Napoleon claims credit for the windmill idea. The animals work harder with the promise of easier lives with the windmill. When the animals find the windmill collapsed after a violent storm, Napoleon and Squealer convince the animals that Snowball is trying to sabotage their project. Once Snowball becomes a scapegoat, Napoleon begins to purge the farm with his dogs, killing animals he accuses of consorting with his old rival. *Beasts of England* is replaced by an anthem glorifying Napoleon, who appears to be adopting the lifestyle of a man. The animals remain convinced that they are better off than they were under Mr Jones.

Mr Frederick, one of the neighboring farmers, attacks the farm, using blasting powder to blow up the restored windmill. Though the animals win the battle, they do so at great cost, as many, including Boxer the workhorse, are wounded. Despite his injuries, Boxer continues working harder and harder, until he collapses while working on the windmill. Napoleon sends for a van to take Boxer to the veterinary surgeon, explaining that better care can be given there. Benjamin, the

cynical donkey who "could read as well as any pig", notices that the van belongs to a knacker, and attempts a futile rescue. Squealer reports that the van was purchased by the hospital and the writing from the previous owner had not been repainted. But in reality, Napoleon has sold his most loyal and long-suffering worker for money to buy himself whisky.

Years pass, and the pigs start to resemble humans, as they walk upright, carry whips, and wear clothes. The Seven Commandments are abridged to a single phrase: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others". Napoleon holds a dinner party for the pigs and local farmers, with whom he celebrates a new alliance. He abolishes the practice of the revolutionary traditions and restores the name "The Manor Farm". As the animals look from pigs to humans, they realize they can no longer distinguish between the two.

Characters

Pigs

- **Old Major** – An aged prize Middle White boar provides the inspiration that fuels the Rebellion in the book. He is an allegorical combination of Karl Marx, one of the creators of communism, and Lenin, the communist leader of the Russian Revolution and the early Soviet nation, in that he draws up the principles of the revolution. His skull being put on revered public display recalls Lenin, whose embalmed body was put on display.
- **Napoleon** – "A large, rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar, the only Berkshire on the farm, not much of a talker, but with a reputation for getting his own way". An allegory of Joseph Stalin, Napoleon is the main villain of *Animal Farm*. In the first French version of *Animal Farm*, Napoleon is called *César*, the French form of Caesar, although another translation has him as *Napoléon*.
- **Snowball** – Napoleon's rival and original head of the farm after Jones' overthrow. He is mainly based on Leon Trotsky, but also combines elements from Lenin.
- **Squealer** – A small, white, fat porker who serves as Napoleon's right-trotter pig and minister of propaganda, holding a position similar to that of Molotov.
- **Minimus** – A poetic pig who writes the second and third national anthems of *Animal Farm* after the singing of "Beasts of England" is banned.
- **The Piglets** – Hinted to be the children of Napoleon and are the first generation of animals subjugated to his idea of animal inequality.
- **The young pigs** – Four pigs who complain about Napoleon's takeover of the farm but are quickly silenced and later executed.
- **Pinkeye** – A minor pig who is mentioned only once; he is the pig that tastes Napoleon's food to make sure it is not poisoned, in response to rumours about an assassination attempt on Napoleon.

Humans

- **Mr Jones** – The former owner of the farm, Jones is a very heavy drinker. The animals revolt against him after he drinks so much that he does not feed or take care of them. He is an allegory of Russian Tsar Nicholas II, who abdicated following the February Revolution of 1917 and was executed, along with the rest of his family, by the Bolsheviks on 17 July 1918.
- **Mr Frederick** – The tough owner of Pinchfield, a small but well-kept neighbouring farm, who briefly enters into an alliance with Napoleon. He is an allegory of Adolf Hitler, who enters into an alliance with Joseph Stalin only to later break it by invading the Soviet Union.
- **Mr Pilkington** – The easy-going but crafty and well-to-do owner of Foxwood, a large neighbouring farm overgrown with weeds.
- **Mr Whymper** – A man hired by Napoleon to act as the liaison between Animal Farm and human society. At first he is used to acquire goods needed for the farm, such as dog biscuits and paraffin, but later he procures luxuries like alcohol for the pigs.

Horses

- **Boxer** – Boxer is a loyal, kind, dedicated, and respectable cart-horse, although quite naive and gullible.

- **Clover** – Boxer's companion, constantly caring for him; she also acts as a matriarch of sorts for the other horses and the other animals in general.
- **Mollie** – Mollie is a self-centred, self-indulgent and vain young white mare who quickly leaves for another farm after the revolution.
- **Benjamin** – A donkey, one of the oldest animals. He has the worst temper, but is one of the wisest animals on the farm, and is one of the few who can read properly. He is sceptical and pessimistic: his most frequent remark is, "Life will go on as it has always gone on—that is, badly." The academic Morris Dickstein has suggested there is "a touch of Orwell himself in this creature's timeless scepticism" and indeed, friends called Orwell "Donkey George", "after his grumbling donkey Benjamin, in *Animal Farm*."

Other animals

- **Muriel** – A wise old goat who is friends with all of the animals on the farm. She, like Benjamin and Snowball, is one of the few animals on the farm who can read.
- **The Puppies** – Offspring of Jessie and Bluebell, taken away from them by Napoleon at birth and reared by Napoleon to be his security force.
- **Moses** – An old raven who occasionally visits the farm, regaling its denizens with tales of a wondrous place beyond the clouds called Sugarcandy Mountain, where he avers that all animals go when they die—but only if they work hard. Orwell portrays religion as "the black raven of priestcraft—promising pie in the sky when you die, and faithfully serving whoever happens to be in power." The raven "was Mr. Jones's especial pet, was a spy and a tale-bearer, but he was also a clever talker." Napoleon brings the raven back, (Ch. IX) as Stalin brought back the Russian Orthodox Church.
- **The Sheep** – They show limited understanding of the situations but nonetheless blindly support Napoleon's ideals with vocal jingles during his speeches and meetings with Snowball.
- **The Hens** – The hens are among the first to rebel against Napoleon.
- **The Cows** – Their milk is stolen by the pigs, who learn to milk them. The milk is stirred into the pigs' mash every day, while the other animals are denied such luxuries.
- **The Cat** – Never seen to carry out any work, the cat is absent for long periods, and is forgiven because her excuses are so convincing and she "purred so affectionately that it was impossible not to believe in her good intentions". She has no interest in the politics of the farm, and the only time she is recorded as having participated in an election, she is found to have actually "voted on both sides".