

WOLFNOTE SUMMARY OF...

GEORGE ORWELL'S

ANIMAL FARM



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Context

This story is set in Manor Farm later to be renamed Animal Farm.

The most respected animal at Manor Farm is the prize boar called Old Major. He is concerned at the neglect and cruelty he and the fellow animals suffer at the hands of Farmer Jones and his men. Just prior to his death, he tells the other animals of his dream for a new life for them all, but this can only take place if the animals rebel against Farmer Jones.

This opportunity arises shortly after Old Major's death when the animals drive the drunken farmer and his men from the farm and they call their new home Animal Farm.

Immediately, the pigs assume control over the administration of the farm and they draw up the Seven Commandments, which is the basis of the new system known as Animalism and is founded on Old Major's ideas.

From the start, there is a battle for power over the animals by two young boars named Napoleon and Snowball.

When Jones tries to recapture the farm, Napoleon and Snowball unite, but after the Battle of the Cowshed, the two young boars are in conflict once again.

Using trained dogs, which Napoleon has reared from puppies, he eventually wins the power struggle and Snowball is chased from the farm. Napoleon adopts many of Snowball's ideas, including the windmill project.

Initially, the new animal society is successful, but soon the animals' living conditions worsen due to the increasing appetites of the inefficient pigs and dogs. Slowly the Seven Commandments are transformed in order to support the pigs' actions.

Whenever things go wrong in the community, Napoleon blames Snowball and threatens the animals with the return of Farmer Jones if they do not continue working hard for Animal Farm. Using threats and the odd execution, Napoleon maintains order.

Unknown to the rest of the animals, he negotiates with neighboring human farmers regarding the sale of produce.

Despite further attempts by the humans to retake the farm, the animals continue their control and eventually the windmill is completed. However, it is only the pigs that benefit from the prosperity obtained by the farm and their behavior towards the rest of the animals becomes more human-like. They start walking on their hind legs and carrying whips.

The story ends with the working animals observing Napoleon through the farmhouse windows entertaining his human neighbors.

It is now impossible to distinguish pigs from men.

The Author

Eric Blair's pseudonym was 'George Orwell'. He was born in India in 1903, son of an Indian Civil Servant. Traditionally, he was brought to England to be educated, and eventually ended up at Eton on a scholarship in 1917.

He graduated in 1921 and decided not to go to University, but took up a post with the Civil Service in Burma, and he became a Sergeant in the Indian Imperial Police. He served in Burma until 1927 and reports are that he did not rest easy with the authority he had to wield over the Burmese people, and he resigned his post in 1927.

He spent a year among the homeless, and these experiences formed the basis of his first book called 'Down and Out in Paris and London', published in 1933.

He worked as a teacher and after he married, ran a village pub and general store with his wife. At this time he was only making a small income from his written work and it was not until after the war that he would earn sufficient as an author.

He became involved in the Spanish Civil War and ended up enlisting on the Republican side. This decision was to result in him and his wife being forced to leave Spain. He wrote the book 'Homage to Catalonia' in 1938 based on his experiences in Spain.

He suffered from tuberculosis, which prevented him serving in the armed forces during the war, but he did accept a position in the Home Guard.

He was also an active socialist and produced many works during the war for various newspapers.

In 1945, the first of the two books for which he is generally known was published, 'Animal Farm'. This book was particularly successful in the United States, and Orwell at last enjoyed a good income from this.

Orwell was one of the few people who can be regarded as classless. He was a passionate socialist and regarded as extremely honest. It is surprising, therefore, that he was able to show this, having been educated at Eton, but he was more at home in a public house than in the halls of Eton.

He had the courage to pursue his convictions, thus his involvement in the Spanish Civil War. He strongly opposed the major forces in the world during his time such as Stalinism and Fascism, and through the power of his pen, did all he could to decry these orthodoxies in his works 'Animal Farm' and 'Homage to Catalonia', which should be read in tandem.

He had moved to the Scottish Hebrides so that he could concentrate more on his writing, in particular adding the finishing touches to '1984' which was published in 1949.

Orwell's projection of a society in the near future was greatly acclaimed, and was standard reading material for English students in Great Britain.

Orwell died prematurely in London in early 1950 from exhaustion and poor health.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

THE ANIMALS

NAPOLEON (young boar)

Napoleon eventually becomes the tyrant of Animal Farm, which he obtains through his ruthlessness and cunning character. As the story develops, he becomes more distant from the rest of the animals. Like his namesake, Napoleon Bonaparte he is the chief revolutionary in the animals' overthrow of Farmer Jones. This revolution was designed to bring about Old Major's vision for the future, but Napoleon takes the responsibility for twisting Old Major's dream so that it becomes unrecognizable. He is also an opportunist and is able to manipulate events to his own purpose.

SNOWBALL (young boar)

Of all the pigs, Snowball is the most articulate and innovative. He can visualize Old Major's dream and does all in his power to make it a reality. He is used initially by Napoleon for his tactical ability and his intelligence, but once he has served his purpose, he is disposed of by Napoleon. Initially he provided an important link between the pigs and the other animals and in this respect his persuasive rhetoric was an asset. Unlike Napoleon he showed courage in the battles, but it is his naïve nature that fails to alert him to Napoleon's lust for power.

SQUEALER (pig)

On the departure of Snowball, Squealer becomes Napoleon's right-hand pig. He too has strong powers of communication and is used to twist the doctrines of Old Major. One might describe him as a propagandist of the animal society promoting Napoleon's ideas, but like Napoleon he too is a hypocrite. He is the eyes and ears of Napoleon, and keeps him informed regarding any dissent amongst the other animals.

OLD MAJOR (old boar)

At the start of the story, he is the oldest animal on the farm and would have become the natural leader in the new order. He sows the seeds of revolution, but does not see this come into fruition. He is the only pig to truly care for all the farm animals, and is thus respected by them all.

BOXER (cart-horse)

Boxer is a kind, hard-working horse of immense strength and contributes greatly to the initial success of Animal Farm. What he lacks in intelligence, he makes up for with his physical prowess and is able to ensure that the labor-intensive projects are completed successfully. His lack of intelligence is exploited by the pigs and he remains loyal to the new system despite its flaws. Napoleon feels challenged by the respect Boxer enjoys from the other animals. His death towards the end of the story is one of the most tragic aspects of Animal Farm.

CLOVER (mare)

Like Boxer, she is a hard worker for the community, and Orwell takes pains to supply the reader with a detailed character analysis. She is protective of her foals and displays kindness to all the animals, but in particular to Boxer. Like Boxer, she represents the true working class of the animal community. She perhaps understands the ideals of animalism better than Boxer, and she remains loyal to these doctrines with the hope that Old Major's dream will eventually be fulfilled. She realizes that the pigs are being manipulative, but lacks the courage to oppose them.

BENJAMIN (donkey)

Unlike the two cart-horses, Benjamin is intelligent and soon realizes the ideals of animalism are not being followed, and is cynical about their new way of life under Napoleon's rule. His loyalty lies with Boxer and Clover, but he recognizes that the pigs are no better than the humans. His views are not considered by the other animals during the initial success of Animal Farm, but eventually he is proved right.

MOLLY (mare)

Molly was more a pet for the farmer and has reservations about the new order, and contributes little to the working of Animal Farm. The revolution results in a loss of the privileges she enjoyed under Farmer Jones' regime, and she soon leaves the community so that she can enjoy life elsewhere.

MOSES (raven)

A highly religious bird, Moses tells the animals stories about the life hereafter on Sugar Candy Mountain. He is untrustworthy and some animals suspect him of being a spy, but for whom they are not sure. At the start of the story he is a human pet, but returns later and is accepted by the pigs.

THE DOGS

The dogs are closely linked to the pigs, some being reared by Napoleon from puppies. They quickly change their loyalty from Farmer Jones to Napoleon. They enjoy a privileged position alongside the pigs solely due to the fact that they are the police force of the animal society.

THE SHEEP

Not surprisingly, the sheep represent the most stupid element of the animal society. They have the most difficulty in understanding the aims of the revolution and in learning to become literate. They abbreviate the Seven Commandments to one slogan, "Four legs good, two legs bad". The pigs use the sheep as a means of oppressing free speech by encouraging them to bleat ceaselessly.

THE PIGS

As a group they are considered by the other animals as the most intelligent and capable of creatures. It is they who devise the Commandments on which the new order will be based. Collectively, they make all the decisions and innovations necessary on the farm.

THE HENS

These are the only animals to put up any resistance to Napoleon. They remember one of Old Major's initial ideals that hens' eggs should not be taken, as this is "inhumane". When Napoleon instructs that this is to continue, they rebel by smashing their eggs. They are cruelly oppressed by Napoleon.

THE CAT

Like Molly, the cat loses a lot after the revolution and her selfish attitude is evident when she cannot appreciate that the animals suffer at the hands of Farmer Jones. She is prepared to enjoy the benefits of the revolution, but is a parasite and does not work towards Animal Farm's success. She does agree that making the animals literate is a good idea, and attempts to persuade the sparrows to learn how to read.

THE HUMANS

FARMER JONES

Jones manages his farm poorly and is often drunk and during these times he forgets to feed his stock or ensure that they are safely bedded down for the night. The farm is a means for supporting his drunkenness and he puts very little effort into the farm, treating his livestock cruelly. He is used by the pigs as a threat when some show dissent, so he has a more influential part to play in the storyline after he has been forcibly removed from Manor Farm. His wife is rarely mentioned in the book, but she too is portrayed unfavorably.

PILKINGTON

He is a neighboring farmer who is also neglectful of his stock, spending most of his time hunting and fishing. Napoleon tries to persuade him to attack the farm in an attempt to play him off against another neighboring farmer, Frederick. For a short time towards the end of the story, he becomes an ally to the pigs.

FREDERICK

In contrast to Jones and Pilkington, Frederick runs an efficient farm realizing that you get more out of your farm if you put more effort into it. He is, however, a shrewd individual and in his dealings with Napoleon he is shown to be an adept businessman, successfully tricking Napoleon.

CHARACTERISATION

Orwell provides precise characterizations for the main animals in the early Chapters of the book. He describes Old Major clearly in the third paragraph of Chapter 1 – “ensconced on his bed of straw, under a lantern which hung from a beam. He was twelve years old and had lately grown rather stout, but he was still a majestic-looking pig with a wise and benevolent appearance in spite of the fact that his tusks had never been cut.”

We learn that Napoleon “was a large, rather fierce-looking Berkshire boar not much of a talker, but with a reputation for getting his own way.”

For Snowball we read that he “was a more vivacious pig, quicker in speech and more inventive, but was not considered to have the same depth of character.”

The other major pig in the story is Squealer and we never obtain a real clue as to his character, for his role is that of mouthpiece of Napoleon. We can assume that he is a survivor, and bends with the wind, and he is ideally suited to the role of Napoleon’s propaganda machine because of his persuasive rhetoric. An example of this was during the milk and apples situation, in that the animals did not receive a share of this produce. Squealer’s response was, “Comrades! 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. Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. Milk and apples contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig. We pigs are brain workers. Day and night we are watching over your welfare.” The reader can imagine similar rhetoric being transmitted over Tannoy systems in Red China and Russia to the commune workers.

For Boxer we learn that he is “an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as any two ordinary horses put together. A white stripe down his nose gave him a somewhat stupid appearance, and in fact he was not of first rate intelligence, but he was universally respected for his steadiness of character and tremendous powers of work.”

Finally, Orwell describes the donkey Benjamin after the rebellion thus, “the donkey seemed quite unchanged He did his work in the same slow obstinate way that he had done in Jones’ time, never shirking and never volunteering for extra work either. When asked whether he was not happier now that Jones was gone, he would only say ‘Donkeys live a long time. None of you has ever seen a dead donkey’ and the others had to be content with this cryptic answer.”

INTRODUCTION

George Orwell started this project in the winter of 1943 and it was designed to be a parody on the Russian Revolution of 1917 and subsequent history. His satire on 20th Century Russia is one of the reasons why the book has been so successful in the west, and in particular in the United States.

The history of Animal Farm has many parallels with that of Russia. When you consider that Old Major is based on Karl Marx and Farmer Jones is Tsar Nicolas II, you can soon make similar comparisons with the other characters in the book. More details of this will be given in the Questions section at the end.

However, to merely limit the comparison of Animal Farm to Russian history is to do an injustice to the subject matter of this book. Orwell makes deeper suggestions concerning human nature within the storyline and the reader should be aware of this.

Animal Farm is one of the milestones of Utopian fiction and stands alongside such works as Plato's 'Republic', Sir Thomas More's 'Utopia', and Swift's 'Gulliver's Travels'.

Orwell's main thrust in this novel is an attempt to protect true socialism from communism and his anti-Utopian theme is directed at this aim.

CHAPTER 1

The drunken Mr. Jones fails to finish his chores before going to bed and he leaves the chicken coup open.

Major holds a meeting in the barn and he tells the animals about his dream for a better future for all the animals on the farm – a world in which they rule themselves and live in freedom and peace. This new world would have a set of rules by which the animals would live, e.g. that they would not live in a house and they would always walk on four legs, except for the chickens. He teaches them a song called, 'Beasts of England' -

"Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland,
beasts of every land and clime,
hearken to my joyful tidings
of the golden future time.
"Rings shall vanish from our noses,
and the harness from our back,
bit and spur shall rust forever,
cruel whips no more shall crack.
"For that day we all must labor,
though we die before it break;
cows and horses, geese and turkeys,
all must toil for freedom's sake."

The noise wakens the farmer who fires his gun into the animals to suppress the noise.

Interpretation

It requires an effort of imagination by the reader to truly appreciate the strange situation of this storyline.

Orwell helps us to do this by telling the story exclusively through the eyes of the animals, so we soon view them as a collection of "citizens". Although we view events from the animals' perspective, the view is always kept impersonal. This approach keeps the human beings always in the background and the main action is contained within the animal world.

Orwell is anxious to provide a character analysis of the main animals and he does this right at the start through the descriptive paragraphs covering the animals entrance to the big barn, for example – in describing Boxer the cart-horse, Orwell says that he has “a white stripe down his nose which gave him a somewhat stupid appearance, and in fact he was not of first-rate intelligence”. He uses other succinct phrases in dealing with the other animals. By and large, most of the animals do not change throughout the storyline. The livestock retain enough animal characteristics for the story to have authenticity, but their ideas and dialogue are distinctly human.

The reader quickly adapts to this idea that animals can think and talk like humans on hearing Old Major’s speech.

The doctrine that Old Major spouts is clearly similar to the ideas of Marx and also Lenin. From these principles will emerge ‘Animal Farm’.

Although the animals will soon adopt Old Major’s ideology, they will then lose the peaceful pastoral scene that Old Major describes in his song, ‘Beasts of England’.

Old Major’s dream for the future is naïve and over-sentimentalized. Perhaps he thinks it will never take place, and that animals will always be slaves of humans.

It is important that the reader quickly establishes the nature of each animal in the storyline, and so the paragraphs dealing with their entry into the barn should be read in depth.

CHAPTER 2

Old Major dies, but his words are still ringing in the ears of the animals and in particular the pigs. They are led by Napoleon, Snowball and Squealer, and they head the rebellion against Farmer Jones who has again forgotten to feed or milk the animals. He is driven out of the farm and the animals are amazed at the ease with which this is achieved.

They set about destroying all the reminders of the farmer’s control over them, and the instruments he used to punish them.

Napoleon makes his play for absolute power by securing control over the food supply. He also draws up Seven Commandments that are written on the barn wall so that all animals can read and learn.

Now that the animals are working for themselves, they produce a bumper harvest with no wastage, and the cows are milked on a regular basis. The hens expect to see an improvement in their food by the addition of milk, but this fails to transpire.

Interpretation

Farmer Jones’ continued neglect on top of the Old Major’s speech and death proves a catalyst for the revolution. We learn that the farm is located in a remote spot, and the animals together quickly overthrow the farmer and his men, and chase them from the farm.

The revolution is led by two young boars, Snowball and Napoleon, supported by Squealer.

We note that when the animals refer to one another they use the word comrade, thus providing the Communist tone to the society that the animals are creating.

We also observe that not all the animals greet the revolution warmly, in particular Molly the Jones’ horse wants to know if she will still be allowed to wear ribbons, and Moses the tame raven keeps bringing in a religious perspective to proceedings, referring to Animal Heaven or Sugar Candy Mountain.

Although the animals work well together at first and produce an excellent harvest, there are still indications that Old Major's ideal is not going to be achieved. The ruling pigs have already condensed Old Major's ideology into Seven Commandments as follows:-

- "1. Whatever goes upon 2 legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon 4 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."

Orwell's aim here is to show how the new animal society degenerates from this initial stance.

The reader senses that the pigs are not being totally honest with the other animals. What has happened to the cows' milk?

At this stage, we are not sure whether these minor glitches will be remedied or whether this Utopian society will totally fall apart.

However, we are clear that not all animals are equal, and we already have a class society where the pigs, by consensus, organize the running of Animal Farm.

As with Communism (Marxism), animals call one another 'Comrade' in the society of animalism.

As we have said before, this satire is not just aimed at 20th Century Russia, but at the age-old evils of humanity - selfishness, pride and hypocrisy.

Orwell wishes to stress that in any society there would be stalwarts such as Boxer the shire horse, and Napoleon the prize boar.

We will see that power corrupts pigs and humans alike.

In addition to satire, there is much irony in this story as well. Perhaps the reader is surprised that the animals so readily accept the replacement of their human masters, by the pig masters, accepting that an animal's status depends on its intelligence. It is their folly that they accept this position from the outset. They do not seek to enforce the Seventh Commandment. Perhaps this should have been the First Commandment.

It is interesting to note that the actual event of rebellion is covered in just two paragraphs. Perhaps this is the author's comment on how quickly revolution can occur.

CHAPTER 3

Through the long hot summer the animals toiled on the farm except for the pigs who supervised the work.

The hardest worker of all was Boxer the horse, who was admired by all the other animals.

At the end of the summer, their hard work produced bumper levels of food, and all the animals played their part, even the ducks and hens that cleared the fields of every stalk and seed.

Soon, most of the animals were able to read and write, although the pigs were most adept at this.

An additional slogan was added to the Commandments that read, "Four legs good, two legs bad". The sheep got into the habit of bleating this slogan incessantly.

Sunday was set aside as a day of rest, and breakfast was held later, followed by a meeting where the work rotas for the forthcoming week were discussed.

The animals noticed that there was not a distribution of milk and apples amongst all the animals, and Squealer was given the task of explaining to the other animals that the pigs, being brain workers, required these items in order to keep them healthy. He threatened the animals that if the farm was to fail through the pigs' poor health, then Jones might be able to gain control of Animal Farm.

Interpretation

We now witness the slow erosion of the original ideals of the Animal Farm society.

The pigs already hold an elite position and although their management position is accepted by the rest of the animals, they are less happy about them receiving the privilege of having sole access to the milk and apples.

During the summer months, the animals experience a level of happiness not previously enjoyed on the farm. Although they are working hard apart from the pigs, their efforts bear fruit in the fact that there will be sufficient food to carry them through the winter months.

There is a general feeling of well-being amongst most of the animals, but there are ominous indications that this will be the peak of the society and that disruptive times are ahead.

The reader may note the sinister actions of Napoleon who takes responsibility in rearing the puppies.

We also see Napoleon's hand behind Squealer's actions in trying to placate the animals regarding the distribution of milk and apples.

There is also the start of the power struggle between Napoleon and Snowball, who never seem to be able to agree at the Sunday meetings. This power struggle is, of course, a representation between the struggles in Russia involving Trotsky and Stalin, following the death of Lenin.

The animals feel that they are being given more independence because they are now able to read and write, but this is a fallacy, as the power clearly rests with the pigs that are controlled by Napoleon and Snowball.

Just as Russia had its slogans during the early years of communism, so does the society on Animal Farm with the "Four legs good, two legs bad" doctrine.

Much store is also placed in symbolism, and the pigs introduce the flag that signifies the animals' revolt, and honors Old Major who instigated the rebellion.

The irony in this Chapter is the fact that the animals are still exploited, for the humans have been replaced by the pigs. Boxer is the animal that is most duped. His immense physical strength enables him to carry out a great deal of work, but this is coupled with a placid nature, and he is therefore easily manipulated.

The reader realizes that there is going to be a climax in the relationship between Snowball and Napoleon, because they are unable to negotiate and come to a consensus, as Napoleon in particular regards negotiation as a sign of weakness. At present Napoleon is astute enough to realize that Snowball is the innovator and organizes the animals with great effect, but soon his usefulness will diminish.

We also see the emergence of Squealer who plays a pivotal role in this society. His main attribute is his brilliant rhetoric and he is to some extent able to appease the other animals by cleverly distorting Major's original plan. Napoleon uses Squealer, just as Hitler used Goebbels as his Minister of Propaganda.

CHAPTER 4

Autumn approaches and the rift between Snowball and Napoleon get wider.

Snowball wishes to ensure the security of Animal Farm by spreading the revolution to the neighboring farms, whilst Napoleon wishes to increase the farm's efficiency.

The events on Animal Farm now concern the neighboring farmers, Mr. Frederick and Mr. Pilkington, and they would like to profit from this situation by gaining control over Animal Farm. Their motive is to gain property rather than to assist Jones who is portrayed as a weak, ineffectual man who now spends most of his time in the Public House.

Using pigeons, Snowball becomes aware of the plans of the neighboring farmers and he sets about making plans to repel any invasion from the humans. The pigeons are also used to spread word to the other farmers' animals regarding the rebellion. Soon the humans make an attempt to restore order to Animal Farm, but Snowball organizes the animals and the invasion fails totally. Although a sheep is killed, the animals are delighted at their success in the Battle of the Cowshed. At the end of this action, Snowball is considered by the animals as a hero and master tactician. All are pleased with Snowball's popularity except Napoleon.

During the battle, a stable lad is knocked unconscious by Boxer who had forgotten that his hooves were iron-shod. He shows compassion towards the unfortunate boy, in stark contrast to Snowball who cries, "The only good human being is a dead one". Both Boxer and Snowball receive a Military Decoration for their efforts in the battle, "Animal Hero – 2nd Class". The dead sheep also received this award posthumously.

Interpretation

Orwell deliberately portrays most of the humans in the story in an unfavorable light.

Jones is the drunk and poor farm manager, and Messrs. Frederick and Pilkington are the greedy neighbors who wish to retake the farm and benefit from the animals' harvest. They totally underestimate the animals because Snowball is able to predict their actions, and they fall into the animals' trap.

The paragraphs describing the battle are some of the most descriptive in the book and Orwell generates a feeling of excitement through his imaginative writing.

The animals' success arises from the discipline instilled in them by Snowball who leads by example, showing great courage against the armed humans.

This Chapter shows Snowball at the pinnacle of his career on Animal Farm. In addition to being an innovator and prime mover in the society, he has now become their hero. He is becoming too popular with the animals from Napoleon's perspective. We will see later how Snowball's actions in the battle are totally distorted towards the end of the story.

We note that the humans join together to liberate Animal Farm, both Frederick and Pilkington helped by Jones attack the farm. If they are successful, Jones will have to pay a heavy price to the other two farmers, and that is why Pilkington and Frederick lead the assault.

Again, the reader cannot escape the similarity with events that took place in Russia during the Communist Revolution. We note that decorations are awarded to the brave animals that led the assault, and that the victory will be celebrated periodically during the calendar year.

Paradoxically, the irony that is present in this Chapter and that will come to fruition later in the story, does not lead to humour, but to tragedy. The animals do not realize it, but they have been tricked by the pigs. They think that their victory will lead to a permanent change in their lives, but just as the peasants in Russia found out when they lost the Tsars and gained the Dictators - the animals have lost the humans and gained the pigs; their lives will not be greatly altered by the end of the story.

CHAPTER 5

Molly is seen fraternizing with a human at the edge of the farm and she is challenged about this. A few days later, she disappears and it is later learned that she is seen drawing a trap. She was never happy about the change in her personal circumstances after the rebellion and she is never referred to again by the animals.

The friction between Snowball and Napoleon intensifies. Snowball wishes the animals to build a windmill that will enable a lot of physical work to be taken away from the animals, and they will be able to enjoy a three-day week. Snowball also feels that the farm can only be permanently secure if the revolution spreads to the other farms. Napoleon wants the animals to concentrate on increasing productivity.

During the Sunday meetings the sheep, prompted by Napoleon try to disrupt Snowball's eloquent speeches with their bleating.

Napoleon views Snowball's actions as a direct challenge to his authority, and using the dogs that he had reared from puppies, Napoleon chases Snowball from the farm. The animals are amazed at this turn of events and now suddenly, they feel vulnerable to Napoleon's power.

Squealer is again used as a tool to calm the animals, but he is now accompanied by three dogs that intimidate the animals.

A few weeks later, Napoleon adopts Snowball's idea concerning the building of a windmill.

Snowball is not seen again.

Interpretation

The main event in Chapter 5 is Napoleon's coup over Snowball. It contains the two main ingredients that contribute to success – surprise and violence.

Napoleon also demonstrates that he too can be a tactician and he has clearly planned this coup carefully.

Although Snowball was prepared for the Battle of the Cowshed, he was not prepared for this banishment from Animal Farm.

The reader notices that Snowball spent a great deal of time preparing his plans for the building of a windmill, consulting various books in the farmhouse and drawing up his plans in the barn. His hard work is not wasted however, for Napoleon will use Snowball's invention at a later date.

These events are a rude awakening for the animals; for they now realize that they will be under the power of a Dictator who uses the dogs as personal bodyguards that will be released on any animal that steps out of line. This is a direct reference to Stalin's regime where those Comrades who failed to be manipulated by the system were banished from it.

There are now clear indications that the pigs are becoming more like humans. The dogs react towards Napoleon just as they would have reacted to Jones.

Napoleon is quickly learning the art of being a Dictator. The Sunday meetings and the Debates will be replaced by a system where the pigs tell the other animals what to do.

The expulsion of Snowball is the key turning point regarding Animal Farm. His scheme for the windmill would have been hard to put into practice, but if successful would have brought benefits for the whole community. Although Napoleon will try to adopt these plans, his first priority is not to benefit the farm as a whole, but to maintain his power as Dictator of Animal Farm.

Snowball is likened to Trotsky who had a purer and somewhat idealistic view of Socialism, as opposed to Napoleon and Stalin's view of Socialism, which we term as Communism.

Snowball recognizes the power of propaganda, but wishes to use this to encourage the animals on the neighboring farms to rebel, whereas Napoleon uses propaganda as a means to keep a tight control over the animals on Animal Farm.

It is useful for the reader to now look back at Old Major's vision for Animal Farm, and compare it to what has in fact transpired.

One feels a certain amount of frustration towards the end of this Chapter as Squealer succeeds in convincing some of the animals that Napoleon is a fit leader for them.

CHAPTER 6

In addition to the general running of the farm, the animals now have to work on building the windmill, which requires the quarrying of stone and its transportation to the hilltop.

The animals' happy memories of their first summer now seem very distant as their conditions become more oppressive.

Boxer remains the example to the other animals, and they are inspired by his hard work.

Soon it was necessary for the animals to work on Sunday afternoons as well, but with a common purpose they labored hard to make a success of the windmill. Their main challenge was the breaking up of the stone into suitable sized pieces, for no animal could use a pick or crowbar. In the end, the animals used gravity by dropping boulders onto other boulders in order to produce smaller pieces. However, the process was slow and laborious.

Clover was concerned that Boxer was working too hard, but her warnings went unheeded.

Although the animals were working harder than they had when Jones was in charge, at least they had sufficient amounts of food to eat.

The animals learned that Napoleon had now started trading with the other farms. This seemed to go against the basic ideology of Animal Farm. Napoleon advised the animals that he had engaged a solicitor to act on their behalf. He ended his speech by saying, "Long live Animal Farm!" and they all sang "Beasts of England". Some of the more intelligent animals questioned this action.

There were also rumors that Animal Farm would be conducting business with Messrs. Pilkington and Frederick.

The pigs now took up residence in the farmhouse, and again Squealer justified this action by saying that the pigs required peace and quiet in order to carry out their brain work.

Clover felt that the pigs' actions went against the Seven Commandments. As she had difficulty in reading, she asked Muriel to read the 4th Commandment, which read, "No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets". Clover was sure that this Commandment had never mentioned sheets, and Squealer explained that there was no rule about animals sleeping in a bed without sheets.

A gale hits the farm and the animals awake to find their windmill destroyed.

Napoleon blames this on Snowball, calling it an act of terrorism.

Interpretation

The reader now witnesses the start of the 2-tier system within Animal Farm.

Napoleon and some of the pigs do not wish to share in the hardship endured by the other animals, and so that they can lead a more luxurious life, trading commences with the neighboring farms. Using propaganda, Squealer infers that all the animals will benefit from this trading.

Unwittingly, Boxer becomes the main support for Napoleon, his idealistic view blinding him to the deception he and the other animals suffer from. Like all true dictators, Napoleon is establishing a totally different life for himself and his lieutenants and the rest of the community have to work hard to support his regime.

Orwell uses a favorite theme regarding the manipulation of history. Slowly, one by one, the original Seven Commandments are revised. For Napoleon realizes that in order to control the present and the future, he must change recent history in order to support the current doctrine. It is fortunate that the animals have poor memories, and their only grasp of the past is through the inscribed Commandments on the barn wall, which are amended whilst they work in the fields or on the windmill.

Napoleon and the pigs are slowly transforming into "humans" mimicking their behavior.

Boxer's blind acceptance of these changes means that the majority of the animals are content to fall in line. They, after all, hold Boxer in high esteem due to the hard work he puts in to the running of the farm. Boxer holds an extreme position, and is in stark contrast to Benjamin who is skeptical about all the changes that happen on the farm and the delusion of animalism.

Again there are similarities between Animal Farm and Russia between the two wars. Napoleon announces his 2-year plan for building the windmill directly mirroring the infamous 5-year Plans of Stalin. Although Napoleon recognizes the importance of the windmill, the main aim of its construction is to keep the animals occupied so that they have little time to ponder the changes that are being made on the farm. Stalin used the same tactics in keeping control over the masses in Russia, and Boxer symbolizes these masses on the farm.

Napoleon is creating a totalitarian society whose success is based on isolating the members from the outside world. Animal Farm and its occupants have been separated from the rest of the world so that they can easily accept their harsh conditions because they know nothing else.

There are many parallels in today's world regarding such systems, namely China after the Second World War, and Afghanistan and North Korea in more recent times. At the head of such a system is, of course, an omnipotent leader who lives a godlike existence, and the main purpose of the masses is to support this leader.

CHAPTER 7

Unknown to the animals, the consequences of trading with the other farms results in a food shortage the following winter, which is bitterly cold.

Napoleon introduces rationing, but this will be supplemented by potatoes when this crop is harvested. Unfortunately, the potato crop fails and soon rumors spread throughout the countryside that the animals on Animal Farm are starving. Napoleon views these rumors as undermining his position, so he invites his lawyer to visit the farm where they have filled the bins with sand covered by a shallow layer of meal. The lawyer returns and tells the community that all is well on Animal Farm.

Napoleon is now rarely seen and spends most of his time in the farmhouse, and Squealer becomes his mouthpiece.

The hens are ordered to lay eggs and they rebel against this instruction, viewing it as murder. Their food rations are stopped and they hold out in the rafters of the barn for a week, but finally succumb to laying eggs for sale. Many of them have died of starvation in the process.

The farm also has a stock of matured timber and both Pilkington and Frederick are eager to purchase this. In order to obtain a good price, Napoleon plays one farmer off against the other.

Napoleon continues to use Snowball as a scapegoat for all the ills being faced by the community. He suggests that Snowball has always been a traitor and that he is working with the farmers to overthrow animalism on Animal Farm. In order to support the view that Snowball is a traitor, Napoleon needs to spread some propaganda. He orders an assembly of all the animals in the yard and he makes a rare

appearance accompanied by his nine huge dogs. Three of the dogs suddenly attack Boxer, but he's more than a match for them, and while two retreats, Boxer pins the third under his hoof and waits for Napoleon to respond. Napoleon suggests that Boxer lets the dog go.

The four pigs that had suggested that Sunday's meetings should continue are forced to confess that they have been in touch with Snowball and collaborated in the destruction of the windmill. Once they have made their confession, the dogs rip their throats out. They are soon followed by the three hens who organized the egg rebellion plus other animals that have shown dissent in the past. Napoleon has reinforced his power over the animals through this purge, but still Boxer views these events with naivety, believing that Napoleon must be right.

Later, the animals note that one of the Commandments appears to have changed - "No animal shall kill any other animal without cause".

After the slaughter, the animals return to the site of the windmill bemused. Boxer vows to rebuild the windmill, subconsciously immersing himself in work rather than facing reality.

Squealer informs the animals that there is now no need to sing "Beasts of England". A new song will be composed in honor of their leader, Napoleon.

Interpretation

We now see that Napoleon is totally corrupted by power, and his position is maintained by the suffering of others. With the aid of his bodyguard of dogs, he is able to root out those animals that in his view do not conform, regardless of their contributions to Animal Farm. The attack on Boxer, the cornerstone of the animals' efforts, was no doubt prompted by Napoleon, but he clearly underestimated Boxer's physical power. Boxer views the attack as merely an accident and regards Napoleon as the only qualified leader of the animals. He cannot contemplate the idea that he is worth nothing in Napoleon's eyes.

The day of the purge marks a milestone in the development of Napoleon's empire. "Since Jones had left the farm, until today, no animal had killed another animal. Not even a rat had been killed."

It is surprising that Napoleon killed four of his own kind, but he is using the doctrine that if you are not for Napoleon's revolution, then you must be against it. As will be seen later in the story, Napoleon intends to breed his own master race, a clear symbol of Nazi Germany.

The animals have to accept the fact that the executions were of traitors. If not, then they have to accept the situation that conditions are worse than they were under Jones.

Orwell uses a clever technique towards the end of this Chapter by shifting the narrative. The reader now views the situation through the unconscious thoughts of Clover using a poetic description of the farm.

"These scenes of terror and slaughter were not what they had looked forward to on that night when Old Major first stirred them to rebellion. 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"

CHAPTER 8

At last the winter was over and the animals worked even harder to complete the windmill.

Some animals had thought that the walls were too thin on the original windmill, so this time the walls were made twice as thick, which meant an even harder task for the animals. They were kept going by the thought that once the windmill was completed, their lives would be easier.

Napoleon concludes his deal concerning the sale of timber to Frederick, but it turns out that the money used to buy the timber is forged.

Soon after, Frederick with fifteen men, attack the farm and blow up the windmill with gunpowder. The Battle of the Windmill results in the death of many animals, and it is only through the intervention of the dogs that the humans are driven off. They also lose three men.

Squealer tries to lead the victory celebrations, but the animals find it difficult to see how they won the battle, as they lost so many animals and the windmill was destroyed.

The pigs discover a crate of whisky and celebrate in the farmhouse. It is noted that another Commandment now seems to read differently from that originally remembered - "No animal shall drink alcohol to excess".

The effect of the explosion on the windmill is disastrous to the morale of the animals, but Boxer tries to rally them vowing that he will rebuild the windmill.

One of the pigs, Minimus, composes a song in honor of Comrade Napoleon:

"Friend of the fatherless!
Fountain of happiness!
Lord of the swill-bucket! Oh, how my soul is on
Fire when I gaze at thy
Calm and commanding eye,
Like the sun in the sky,
Comrade Napoleon!

"Had I a suckling pig,
Ere he had grown as big
Even as a pint bottle or as a rolling-pin,
He should have learned to be
Faithful and true to thee,
Yes, his first squeak should be
Comrade Napoleon."

The poem was inscribed on the wall at the opposite end of the barn from the Seven Commandments.

Interpretation

The pigs are naïve in thinking that they have taken advantage of the humans by selling the timber to Frederick at a high price, and their smugness is soon replaced by anger when they realize that they have been paid in forged notes.

Napoleon's reaction is to put Frederick on the top of his wanted list and his incompetence is soon blotted out with the battle that follows.

Unlike the Battle of the Cowshed, the Battle of the Windmill is a total failure, mainly due to the fact that the humans were in control of this affair rather than the animals. It is clear that if Snowball had still been on the scene, then matters might have turned out differently in the battle.

To the outside world, the windmill is the symbol of animalism and in destroying this symbol you destroy the animal society. Napoleon failed to ensure that the windmill was adequately protected.

Using propaganda, Napoleon through Squealer turns this defeat into victory, and throughout all this, the animals still forlornly hope that Old Major's dreams will eventually come to fruition.

Napoleon now views the animals as a means to an end. He clearly wishes to try and keep the remaining animals on board, and this can be achieved through fear. He still uses propaganda in trying to brainwash the animals, but like all such dictators, he has lost touch with those that he rules. Ironically, he is now starting to believe his own propaganda, and even some of the least intelligent of the animals are beginning to see through the façade of Napoleon.

They used to enjoy singing their old song, and what has been put in its place is uninspiring and tasteless.

There is now a steady shift away from the unreserved loyalty shown by Boxer towards the cynicism of Benjamin, who was lucky to escape the purge. He was wise enough to limit his outspoken views.

The reader again witnesses a further humanizing of the pigs with their excessive alcohol drinking, which leads to the amendment of another Commandment.

Apart from the loss of life at the Battle of the Windmill, there were also animals who suffered serious injuries, in particular Boxer who split a hoof. This marks his slow deterioration in the months ahead.

Towards the end of the Chapter, Orwell again makes good use of irony for at last the animals discover who has been amending the Commandments. Squealer is discovered in a heap below the wall showing the Commandments with a pot of paint and a brush. This comes as no surprise to the reader, but again Orwell uses third person narrative in order to provide the animals' perspective to this incident. However, the penny does not fully drop with some of the animals. They are now in the habit of not thinking for themselves, but having the pigs do this for them.

CHAPTER 9

Boxer's split hoof incurred in the Battle of the Windmill takes a long time to heal and causes him much pain.

Winter comes round again and there is once more a shortage of food, but Squealer is quick to assure the animals that life has improved since the time of Jones.

Thirty-one piglets are produced from the four sows on the farm, and Napoleon takes full responsibility for their education, and they are to be kept separate from the other animals.

Napoleon formally proclaims that Animal Farm is a Republic and he will be its President.

At the start of the rebellion, it had been agreed that there should be a retirement age for animals, and for horses this was fixed at twelve. A pasture had been set aside for retired animals but now this has been ploughed up, and the animals are concerned that there will be a change in policy regarding the retirement of animals. With Boxer's hoof healed, he continues to work as hard as ever, even though he is now past twelve years old. Suddenly, Boxer collapses and is unable to continue his work. A cart arrives, which the pigs say will take Boxer to the animal hospital, but some of the animals are able to read on the side of the cart the words, "Alfred Simmonds, Horse Slaughterer and Glue Boiler". Clover urges Boxer to break out of the cart, but he is too weak. All the animals join in the cry, "Get out Boxer, get out!" The animals try to persuade the horses drawing the cart to stop, but they just continue in their stupid fashion.

A few days later, Squealer informs the animals that there had been malicious rumors that Boxer had been sold to the horse slaughterer. He had in fact been taken to the vet, and the cart used was an old cart and

the sign had not been painted out. Despite Napoleon spending much on medicines for Boxer, he sadly died and a party was to be held in his honor. On the day of the party, "a grocer's van drove up from the town and delivered a large wooden crate to the farmhouse". Rumor had it that the crate contained whisky.

Interpretation

Boxer's collapse and subsequent slaughter provides the most moving passages in the book. These passages emphasize the hopelessness of the animals' situation and how they are trapped in a world from which there is no escape except through death or desertion.

Boxer receives no reward for the efforts he had made over the years to make Animal Farm a success. He is sold for a case of whisky, which only the pigs will enjoy.

We receive indications that Napoleon is breeding the next generation of pigs indoctrinating them in his philosophy, and they will be taught to support his totalitarian state.

The reader may like to recall the initial passages of the book and compare the situation now being experienced by the animals. They live in harsh conditions, hungry and cold outside the farmhouse while the pigs enjoy all the luxuries inside the warm farmhouse.

We also note that the pigs allow Moses, the tame raven, to return to the farm and he continues telling the animals about the life after death to be enjoyed on Sugar Candy Mountain. Although the field designated for retirement has now been turned over to producing wealth for the farm, the animals can still hope for a better life on Sugar Candy Mountain.

The reader may sympathize with Boxer, but also realize that he has been very stupid, for he failed to see that Major's vision was not shared by Napoleon. The only blessing is that Boxer will not witness the final irony played out in Chapter 10.

The reader feels a sense of frustration at this point in the book, hoping against hope that the animals will rise up against the pigs that control them. Clearly they are unfit to control the farm, demonstrated by the fact that they used the money from Boxer's slaughter to purchase alcohol rather than food for the animals.

The final irony is that the animals are now ordered to build a schoolhouse in which the next generation of pigs (rulers) will be educated. This is a clear indication that the animals will not be rid of Napoleon when he dies because there will be others to follow in his trotters.

CHAPTER 10

Many years have now passed and few of the original animals that were involved in the rebellion are left.

Animal Farm is now populated by a new generation of animals who only vaguely remember the doctrines of animalism.

The farm now boasts two windmills and the farm is both efficient and prosperous, but this has had little effect on the conditions that the animals live under, apart from the pigs and the dogs, whose situation has slowly continued to improve over the years.

One day the peace of the farmyard is broken by a terrifying neigh from Clover, and the animals witness Squealer walking on his back legs carrying a whip, followed by a long line of pigs doing the same. In the barn, the Commandments have been erased and replaced by a single slogan, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others". From that day on, the pigs supervise the other animals carrying whips.

The sheep now bleat a different slogan, "Four legs good, two legs better".

The animals' world has been turned upside down, especially for Clover and Benjamin, the latter being particularly morose, as all his early fears have turned into reality.

That night, sounds of hilarity come from the farmhouse and some of the animals approach the house and look through the windows. They see Napoleon and the other leading pigs partying with the humans, Pilkington and some others. They are toasting the prosperity of Manor Farm. The name "Animal Farm" has been abolished. They are playing a game of cards and both Napoleon and Pilkington cheat, and there is a violent quarrel. The party ends in uproar with angry shouting, and the witnessing animals, "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."

Interpretation

Napoleon has made his position secure as head of this Totalitarian State. He has achieved this by purging the dissenters, controlling the food supply, ensuring that future generations are indoctrinated into his system, and by keeping the workers occupied through toil enforced by fear. As the first generation of animals dies out, so do the original ideas of Major. When we arrive at Chapter 10, few animals remember the initial Commandments and none have the will to oppose Napoleon's regime. The Seven Commandments are replaced by the nonsensical slogan concerning the equality of animals. This is, perhaps, one of the most famous quotations to come from Orwell's pen.

The animals are now reduced to hoping for a better life after death rather than any comfort on Animal Farm, which has reverted back to Manor Farm.

Napoleon is also able to keep control due to the fact the farm is isolated and there is now no mechanism for the animals to contact the outside world.

One cannot expect a happy ending to this tale. Orwell, a true Socialist, wishes to decry Communism, or as it is called here Animalism, and the Fascist and Totalitarian systems that are based on this doctrine. None of these societies exercise freedom, justice and equality, which are the foundations of the Democratic Socialist society that Orwell supported.

The book ends with the humans taking centre-stage, just as they did at the start of the book, thus they frame the whole story.

The final paragraphs of the book are again taken from Clover's viewpoint in the third person narrative, and they provide a poignant end to "Animal Farm".

CONCLUSION

Although 'Animal Farm' is only 10 Chapters in length, it is extremely thought-provoking and it represents a milestone in satirical literature. Its appeal is that it passes comment on various Communist and Fascist regimes which were particularly prevalent in the 20th Century, but it also gives an insight into human behavior.

Orwell continues this theme in his other works, in particular '1984', 'Homage to Catalonia', and 'The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters', which were edited by Sonia Orwell.

In contrast to 'Animal Farm', Aldous Huxley's novel 'Brave New World' covers the creation of a new society.

A cartoon version of Animal Farm hit the screens in the mid 1950's, but it contains a totally different ending to the novel.

QUESTIONS for STUDY with IDEAS for ANSWERS

Q: Napoleon's totalitarian regime on Animal Farm is the core feature of this novel. What do you understand by 'a totalitarian regime'?

Ideas:

Totalitarian, Fascist or Authoritarian States are all the same in that they involve the destruction of principles and personal relationships. The State conditions its citizens to adhere to the principles of the society and this is enforced by fear. Those that oppose the State are disposed of through exile or extermination.

Patriotism for the country is replaced with patriotism for the leader and his successors, for through propaganda, the leader is the country.

Most States have a 2-tier system where a small privileged minority controls the vast majority who do the bulk of the work. Part of this minority is the army and police who help enforce the control.

Through propaganda, the majority are made to believe that the minority have few privileges and lead similar lives to the masses.

As well as indoctrinating the next generation of citizens, the State also needs to avoid contact with the outside world.

Q: 'Animal Farm' is a satirical novel aimed at discrediting Russian history from the Revolution in 1917 until the end of the Second World War. The characters and events in the story represent features of Russian history. Please expand.

Ideas:

The animals are exploited by Jones who represents Tsar Nicolas II, and dissent comes from Old Major who spouts his view of the future, which is similar to that of Karl Marx. The revolution takes place as a consequence of Major's rhetoric and therefore, he is similar to Lenin. After the revolution, the neighboring farms are concerned that this uprising will spread, just as Europe was concerned in 1917.

The humans mount an assault on Animal Farm, just as the European-backed White Army did in Russia, with a view to re-installing the Tsar on his throne. This invasion is repulsed by Snowball, just as Trotsky did in opposing the White Army.

Stalin later disposed of Trotsky, just as Napoleon deposed Snowball.

Squealer represents Stalin's propaganda machine, used to dupe Boxer who represents the Russian masses.

The Pilkington farm can be represented by the British Empire, while Frederick refers to Germany.

Just as the Battle of the Cowshed refers to the attempted invasion by the White Army, so does the Battle of the Windmill represent the German invasion in World War II.

Stalin's 5-year plans are directly mirrored by the projects to build the windmills.

We finally see Orwell's disdain for Stalin as he suggests that the drunken party in the final Chapter symbolizes Stalin's meeting with the West at the Teheran Conference.

There are many other parallels contained within the pages of 'Animal Farm'. List these.

Q: As we have said, this is a satirical novel, and Orwell uses irony in order to support his views. Please give examples.

Ideas:

Remember, irony is the stating of one thing while intending the opposite. Irony is normally used to provide humour, but here we witness a sad irony.

The main ironic theme, which takes place throughout the entire novel, is the transition of the pigs into 'human beings'.

At the start, we have Old Major's clear vision of the future that outlaws humans and all their features. It goes against his ideals to copy human habits, but one by one the central rules are amended and then ignored. Therefore, those that originally revolted against Farmer Jones, turn into humans.

In conclusion the revolution has failed.

Orwell means us to associate the Seven Commandments inscribed on the wall of the barn with the Ten Commandments set in stone in the Bible. These laws should be unchangeable, but ironically, the pigs amend the Commandments so that the final effect is that the rule is turned into an opposite meaning.

There are many small ironies e.g. the cat wishing to encourage the sparrows to learn to read so that he can get close to them and catch them. The prime mover for the cat is its instinct to hunt and kill the birds, but it will use the doctrine on educating animals in order to fulfill its instinct.

Q: Orwell uses much symbolism in 'Animal Farm'. Give some examples.

Ideas:

Symbolism is used to support the satire and irony that runs through the book.

Humans are not depicted favorably in this novel, which is written from the animals' perspective. They symbolize evil and they use instruments of terror to control the animals, e.g. whips, harnesses, bits and so on.

The fact that they walk on two legs is a characteristic that is distinctly human and is referred to in the slogan bleated by the sheep, "Four legs good, two legs bad".

When the pigs adopt the posture of walking on two legs holding whips, the full circle has been achieved.

The windmill symbolizes the success of Animal Farm and that is why it is destroyed by the neighboring farmers, but it also symbolizes the conflict between Snowball and Napoleon. For the animals the windmill symbolizes the chance of an easier life, and that is why they are determined to see it completed. To the pigs, it symbolizes 'the good life' for them.

Orwell makes a particular symbolic reference to the suffering of the Soviet people in the 1930's when farms were put under State control in the form of collectives. Many farmers opposed this and killed their cattle just as the hens on Animal Farm destroyed their eggs. It is thought that between ten and fifteen million peasants died as a result of the famine during these years.

There are many more examples of symbolism in this novel. List as many as you can.