

George Orwell

Animal Farm

Adaptation, dossiers and activities by Raffaele Polichetti and Maureen Simmons



Animal Farm

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Interior of a barn (W. H. Hunt, 1835)

George Orwell



George Orwell, the pen-name¹ of Eric Arthur Blair, was born on 25th June 1903 in eastern India, the son of a British colonial civil servant². The following year, Eric Arthur was taken to England and brought up almost exclusively by his mother. He was a studious child and won a King's Scholarship³ to Eton College in 1917.

In 1921, he passed the entrance examination of the Indian Imperial Police and was accepted into its Burma (present

Myanmar) division. We have practically no information about his five-year experience in Burma; however, we know that it offered the material for two of his best-known essays⁴, 'A Hanging' and 'Shooting an Elephant' and his first novel *Burmese Days* (1934). He left the job in 1927 and decided to become a writer.

In 1928, he moved to Paris where the lack of success as a writer forced him into a series of low jobs. He described his experiences in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, a book of memories published in 1933. He took the name George Orwell, which combined the name of the reigning monarch (George V) with a river flowing through the county of Suffolk in England.

The following years were an important period in Orwell's life: in 1935, he completed a second novel, *A Clergyman's Daughter*, while working in a bookshop in London. Here he met his first wife, Eileen O'Shaughnessy, and wrote a third novel, partly based on his bookselling experience, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936).

An anarchist in the late 1920s, by the 1930s he had begun to consider himself a socialist. In 1936, he wrote an $account^5$ of poverty among

- 1. *pen-name:* a name used by a writer instead of their real name.
- 2. *civil servant:* a person who works for the government.
- scholarship: an amount of money given by a school, college, university, or other organization to

pay for the studies of a person with great ability.

- essay: a short piece of writing on a particular subject, written in order to be published.
- 5. *account:* a written or spoken description of an event.

unemployed miners in northern England, which resulted in *The Road* to Wigan Pier (1937). The crucial political experience of his life was the six months he spent in Spain, in 1937, as a Republican volunteer against Francisco Franco. Spain made Orwell "believe in Socialism for the first time", as he wrote, while instilling a strong hatred⁶ of totalitarian political systems. *Homage to Catalonia*, an account of his time in Spain, was published in 1938.

Between 1941 and 1943, Orwell worked for the BBC. In 1943, he became literary editor of the *Tribune*, a left-wing weekly magazine. By now, he was a prolific journalist, writing articles, reviews and books.

Animal Farm, his bitter satire of the Soviet experiment, was written by the middle of 1944. This political fable, based on Stalin's betrayal⁷ of the Russian Revolution, made Orwell famous and ensured he was financially comfortable for the first time in his life. Publishers' timidity, and the pressure exerted by a Russian spy working for the Ministry of Information, delayed⁸ the appearance of this allegorical short novel until August 1945. Five months earlier, Eileen had died during an operation. The couple had previously adopted a small boy, Richard Horatio Blair.

Nineteen Eighty-Four was published four years later (1949). This book, which is set⁹ in an imaginary totalitarian future, made a deep impression. Its title and many phrases, such as, 'Big Brother is watching you', 'newspeak' and 'doublethink' entered popular use.

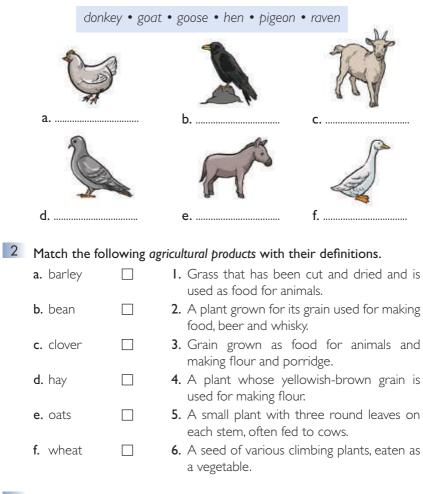
The enormous international success of this dystopian¹⁰ novel came too late for its author. Orwell's health was slowly deteriorating and shortly before his death, he made an unexpected second marriage to Sonia Brownell, the assistant editor of a literary magazine. He died of tuberculosis on 21st January 1950, aged 46.

- 6. hatred: hate; opposite of love.
- betrayal: the act of ignoring your principles or beliefs in order to achieve something or gain an advantage for yourself.
- 8. *delayed:* made something happen at a later time than originally planned or expected.
- 9. is set: takes place.
- **10.** *dystopian:* describing a negative society.



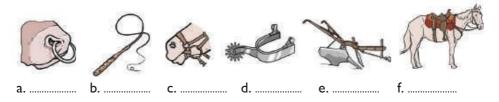


1 The illustrations below show some of the *animals* that appear on the farm. Match them with the words in the box.



3 The illustrations below show *objects* which can be found on a farm. Match them with the words in the box.

bit • harness • plough • ring • spur • whip



Beasts of England

Chapter 1

Mr Jones, the owner of Manor Farm, drank his last glass of beer and, unsteady on his feet¹, walked to bed, where his wife was already snoring². He switched the light off and fell immediately asleep.

Soon after, unusual noises came from the farm buildings. All the animals of the farm were meeting in the barn³ because Old Major, a very big pig of excellent breed⁴, wanted to tell them about a very strange dream he had had the night before. Everyone was there because Old Major was highly respected and loved.

The first to arrive were the dogs, followed by the pigs, then the hens, the ducks, the pigeons, the sheep and the cows. After them, the two horses, Boxer and Clover, came in together. Boxer was an enormous beast, as strong as two ordinary horses put together, universally respected for his good character. After the horses, came Muriel, the white goat, and Benjamin, the donkey. Benjamin was the oldest animal on the farm, and had the worst character. He never laughed and seldom talked, and when he did, it was usually to make some cynical comment. More animals arrived; among them was Mollie, the pretty white female horse; she was very vain⁵ and was trying to draw attention to her red decorations. Last of all came the cat, who looked round for the warmest place. All the animals were now present except Moses, the raven. When Major saw that they were waiting quietly, he cleared his throat and began,

"Comrades⁶, you've already heard about the strange dream that I had last night. But I'll come to the dream later. I've got something else to say first. Before I die, I'd like to pass on to you some of

- 1. *unsteady on his feet:* moving from side to side, as if he might fall.
- 2. *snoring:* breathing in a noisy way while she was sleeping.
- **3.** *barn:* a large farm building for storing grain or keeping animals in.
- 4. *breed:* a stock of animals within a species having a

distinctive appearance and having been developed by deliberate selection.

- 5. *vain:* too interested in her own appearance.
- comrade: a member of the same political group, especially a communist or socialist group.

the things I've learnt. I've had a long life, I've had much time for thought. Now, comrades, I ask you: what are our lives like?"

Major stopped for a few seconds in the complete silence of the barn, then he continued in a louder voice.

"Our lives are miserable, difficult and short! We're born, we're given very little food – just enough to keep us alive –, we're forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and when we're no longer useful, we're slaughtered⁷ with horrible cruelty. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or free time after they are one year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery⁸. That's the truth!"

He paused, looked around and then went on.

"But is all this normal, is it natural? Does this happen because our land is so poor that it can't give a decent life to those who live on it? No, comrades, a thousand times no! England has a fertile soil⁹, its climate is good, it's capable of giving large quantities of food to an enormously greater number of animals than now live in it. This single farm of ours would support a dozen horses, twenty cows, hundreds of sheep and all of them would live in a comfort and a dignity that are now beyond our imagination. Why then do we continue in this miserable condition? Because nearly the whole of the produce¹⁰ of our work is stolen from us by human beings! This, comrades, is the answer to all our problems. It's summed up in a single word – Man! Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the cause of hunger and overwork is abolished forever!"

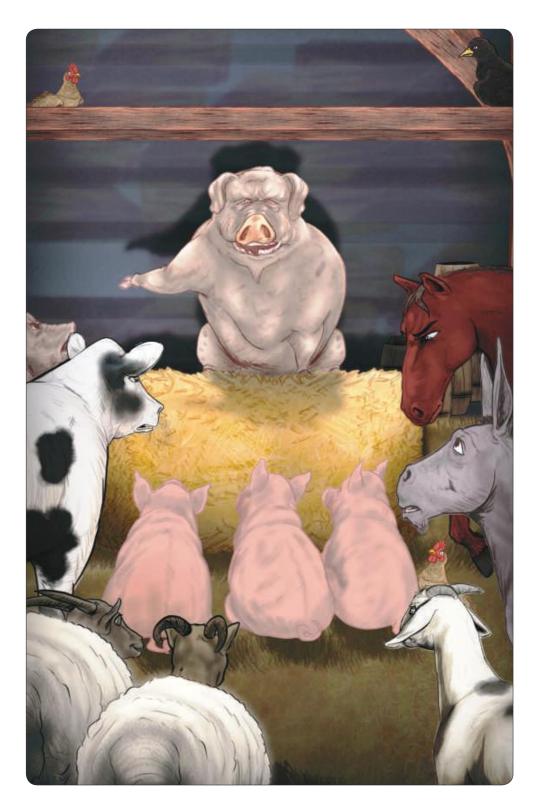
A murmur¹¹ of approval came from the animals in the barn.

"Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. They don't give milk, they don't lay eggs, they're too weak to pull the plough, they can't run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet, Man is lord of all animals. They make us work, they give us the minimum that will prevent us from dying, and the rest they keep for themselves.

- 7. *slaughter:* to kill an animal for its meat.
- 8. *slavery:* the practice of forcing someone to work hard without paying them at all.
- 9. soil: the top layer of the earth in

which plants, trees, etc. grow.

- **10.** *produce:* food or any other substance or material that is grown or obtained through farming.
- **11.** *murmur:* something that is said which can hardly be heard.



"Now, comrades, I ask you: what are our lives like?" (Illustration by M. Sewilam, 2019)

We work the soil, our dung¹² fertilises it, and yet there isn't one of us that owns more than their skin. You cows that I see before me, how many thousands of gallons¹³ of milk have you given during this last year? And what's happened to that milk? Every drop of it has gone down the throats of our enemies. And you hens, how many eggs have you laid? Most of them have gone to market to bring in money for Jones and his men. And even the miserable lives we lead aren't allowed to reach their natural end. I don't complain for myself, because I'm one of the lucky ones. I'm twelve years old and have had over four hundred children. This is the natural life of a pig. But no animal escapes the cruel knife in the end. We all must come to that horrible end – cows, pigs, hens, sheep, everyone. Even the horses and the dogs have no better fate. You, Boxer, the day that your great muscles lose their power, Jones will sell you to the butcher. As for the dogs, when they grow old and toothless, Jones ties a big stone round their necks and drowns¹⁴ them."

All the animals were looking at one other, many were terrified.

"Isn't it clear, then, comrades, that all the evils of this life of ours come from the tyranny of human beings? Let's get rid¹⁵ of Man and the produce of our work will be ours! We could become rich and free. What must we do then? Well, work night and day, body and soul, for the overthrow¹⁶ of the human race! That's my message to you, comrades: REBELLION! I don't know when that Rebellion will come; it might be in a week or in a hundred years, but I know that sooner or later justice will be done. Above all, pass on this message of mine to those who come after you, so that future generations will carry on the fight until it's victorious! And remember, never listen when they tell you that Man and animals have a common interest, that the success of the one is the success of the others. It's all lies! Man serves the interests of no creature except themselves! Among us animals, there must be perfect unity in the struggle¹⁷. All men are enemies. All animals are comrades!"

- **12.** *dung:* solid waste from animals, especially cattle and horses.
- **13.** *gallon:* a unit for measuring liquid. In the UK it is equal to about 4.5 litres.
- **14.** *drown:* to push someone under water and make them die because they cannot breathe.
- get rid: to free oneself of something or someone unpleasant or undesirable.
- **16.** *overthrow:* the act of removing someone from power using force.
- 17. struggle: fight.



(Illustration by Ralph Steadman, Hartcourt, 1995)

While Major was speaking, four large rats came out of their holes and started to listen to him. As soon as they realised that the dogs and the cat were looking fixedly at them, they rushed back into their holes and saved their lives. Soon after, Major raised his left foot for silence.

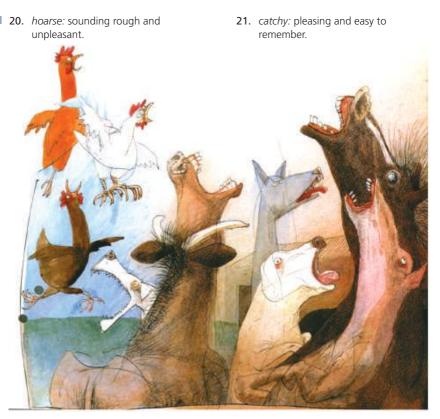
"Comrades," he said, "here is a point that must be decided. Are wild creatures – such as rats and rabbits – our friends or our enemies? Let's put it to the vote. I propose this question to the meeting: are rats comrades?"

It was agreed by a majority vote that rats were comrades. There were only four 'no' votes, the three dogs and the cat. Then Major continued.

"I have little more to say. I repeat, always remember that Man is our enemy. Whatever goes on two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes on four legs, or has wings, is a friend. And remember also that in fighting against Man, we must not look like them. When you've won, don't copy their vices¹⁸. No animal must ever live in a house, or sleep in a bed, or wear clothes, or drink alcohol, or smoke tobacco, or touch money, or engage in trade¹⁹. All the habits of Man are morally bad. And, above all, no animal must ever oppress their own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal!" There was general exultation. Major raised his left foot for silence again.

"And now, comrades, I'll tell you about my dream of last night. I can't remember it all; however, it was a dream about the future as it will be when Man has disappeared. But it reminded me of something that I had forgotten. Many years ago, when I was a little pig, my mother used to sing an old song of which she only knew the melody and the first three words. Last night the music came back to me in my dream. What is incredible is that all the lyrics also came back during the dream! And when I woke up, I could remember all the words! Now I'll sing you that song, comrades. I'm old and my voice is hoarse²⁰, but when I've taught you the tune, you can sing it better for yourselves. It's called *Beasts of England*."

Old Major cleared his throat and began to sing. As he had said, his voice was hoarse, but he sang well enough, and it was a nice and catchy²¹ tune, something very similar to *Oh, my darling Clementine*.



(Illustration by Ralph Steadman, Hartcourt, 1995)

Beasts of England

The words were:

Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland, Beasts of every land and clime²², Listen to my joyful news Of the golden future time.

Soon or late the day is coming, Tyrant²³ Man will be overthrown, And the fruitful fields of England Will be walked by beasts alone.

No more rings from our noses, No more harness from our back, Bit and spur will disappear, Cruel whips no more will crack²⁴.

Riches more than mind can picture, Wheat and barley, oats and hay, Clover, beans, and big potatoes Will be ours on that day.

Bright will shine the fields of England, Purer will its waters be, Gentler winds will blow forever On the day that sets us free.

For that day we all must work hard, Though we die before it comes; Cows and horses, geese and turkeys, All must play freedom's drums.

Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland, Beasts of every land and clime, Listen to my joyful news Of the golden future time.

22. *clime:* climate.23. *tyrant:* a person who has complete power in a country and uses it in an

unfair and cruel way. 24. *crack:* to make a sudden, short noise.



"...the loud noise woke up Mr Jones." (from Animal Farm, animated film produced by Halas and Batchelor, 1954)

The singing of this song excited the animals a lot. Almost before Major had reached the end, they had begun singing it for themselves. Even the stupidest of them had already picked up the tune and a few of the words. As for the clever ones, such as the pigs and dogs, they were able to learn the entire song by heart within a few minutes. And then, after a few preliminary tries, the whole farm was singing Beasts of England in incredible unison. They were so delighted with the song that they sang it five times in succession.

They wanted to sing it all night but, unfortunately, the loud noise woke up Mr Jones. He immediately seized²⁶ his gun and started to shoot into the darkness. He thought that there was a fox²⁷ near the barn. The bullets²⁸ hit the wall of the barn and the meeting was interrupted in a flash. Everyone fled²⁹ to their own sleeping-place and the whole farm was asleep in a moment.

25. to seize: to take something quickly27. fox:



- **28.** *bullet:* a small, metal object that is shot from a gun.
- **29.** *fled (flee-fled-fled):* escaped by running away.

AFTER READING • Beasts of England

WORKING ON THE TEXT

1 Answer the following questions.

- a. Who is Mr Jones?
- **b.** Where do all the animals meet?
- **c.** Who is Old Major?
- d. According to Old Major, what are animals' lives like?
- e. Why do animals live in a miserable condition?
- f. Why is Man the only real enemy of animals?
- g. What examples of cruelty to animals are given by Old Major?
- h. What message does Old Major give to the animals?
- i. What are the seven human vices that animals must not copy?
- j. What is Old Major's dream?
- ${\bf k.}$ Which animals are able to learn the entire song in a few minutes?
- I. The loud noise from the barn wakes up Mr Jones. Why does he seize his gun and start to shoot?

2 Decide whether the following statements are true or false. Then correct the false ones.

	F
a. All the animals are present in the barn except the cat.	
b. Old Major starts his speech by talking about	
his strange dream.	
c. No animal is happy or has had free time since	
they were born.	
d. Old Major says that the farm is capable of giving	
large quantities of food to a greater number of animals.	
e. He says that when Man is overthrown, the cause	
of hunger and overwork will be abolished forever.	
f. Man is the only creature that produces without consuming.	
g. Old Major is twenty years old and has had forty children.	
h. The Rebellion might come at any time.	
i. Only the dogs and the cat vote that wild animals, such as	
rats and rabbits, should not be considered "comrades".	
j. All living beings on two legs, except birds, are enemies.	
k. Old Major's mother taught him the melody and the	
lyrics of Beasts of England.	
I. The animals want to sing the song all night but Mr Jones's	
shooting makes them flee to their own sleeping-places.	\square



Chapter

AFTER READING • Beasts of England

WORKING ON VOCABULARY

3 Find the opposites of the following words on the first page of this chapter.

Chapte

a.	awake:	i.	often:
b.	best:	j.	short:
c.	loudly:	k.	small:
d.	coldest:	١.	steady:
e.	first:	m.	tiny:
f.	hated:	n.	ugly:
g.	last:	0.	weak
h.	normal:	p.	youngest:

4 Describe some of the characters from Chapter I using the words/ phrases in the box.

cynical • enormous • excellent breed • good character • long life • oldest animal • pretty • strong • vain • very big • white • worst character

Old Major	Boxer	Benjamin	Mollie

WORKING ON GRAMMAR

5 All the following sentences are spoken by Old Major in the first chapter. Turn them into *Reported Speech* using the reporting verbs suggested.

- a. "I've got something else to say first," he said to the animals.
- **b.** "What are our lives like?" he asked.
- c. "But is all this normal, is it natural?" he enquired.
- d. "Our work is stolen from us by human beings!" he exclaimed.
- e. "My message to you is Rebellion!" he added.
- f. "Are rats and rabbits our friends or our enemies, I wonder?"

AFTER READING • Beasts of England

WORKING ON SKILLS

Listening

The following are the 10 commandments Major gives the animals. Listen to the recording and fill in the blanks.

١.	No animal must ever live in a
2.	No animal must ever sleep in a
3.	No animal must ever wear
4.	No animal must everalcohol.
5.	No animal must ever smoke
6.	No animal must ever touch
7.	No animal must ever engage in
8.	No animal must ever his own kind.
9.	No animal must ever any other animal.
10.	All animals are

Speaking

- 7 PAIR WORK. Old Major's speech is meant to stir the animals so that they will actually rebel against Man. Develop the following points by answering these questions in turns.
 - a. What are our lives like?
 - **b.** Does this happen because our land is so poor that it can't give a decent life to those who live on it?
 - c. Why do we continue in this miserable condition?
 - **d.** Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. What happens to the milk that you cows produce?
 - e. And what happens to the eggs that you hens lay?
 - f. Does an animal escape the cruel knife in the end?
 - **g.** Isn't it clear that all the evils of our life come from the tyranny of human beings?
 - h. What must we do then?

Writing

8 B1 Preliminary PART 2 Analyse the song Beasts of England. What is the message? What emotions and needs does it appeal to? Write an article of about 100 words.

AN ALLEGORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Allegory, fable and satire

Animal Farm is an allegory of the 1917 Russian Revolution and the following years of Stalin's regime. The novel is a beast fable following the tradition of the fables by Aesop, Phaedrus and Jean de La Fontaine, and the legacy¹ of English-speaking satirists such as Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope and Charles Dickens.

An **allegory** is a work of written, oral or visual expression that uses symbolic figures, objects, and actions to convey² truths or generalisations about human behaviour or experience.

A **fable**³ is a short story that teaches a moral lesson, especially one with animals as characters. In a fable, characters often personify abstract concepts or types.

A **satire** is a piece of writing which criticizes a person, an idea or an institution using humör and/or irony.



In the form of simple fables or complex narrative, symbolic allegory has frequently been used to represent political and historical situations and has long been popular as a vehicle for satire.

- 1. *legacy:* something that is a part of your history.
- convey: to express a thought, feeling or idea so that it is understood by other people.
- 3. *fable*: the main difference between a fable and a fairy tale is that the former usually has a moral lesson at the end, whereas the latter is essentially for children's entertainment.

The Fox and the Grapes by Aesop (painting by M. Shaw, 1966).

Karl Marx and the Russian Revolution

Animal Farm was written by the middle of 1944, but it was published only in August 1945 (see the reasons for this on p. 5). On the surface, this short novel is a fable about farm animals who rebel against their human oppressor, but it also expresses the author's disillusionment⁴ with the result of the Bolshevik⁵ Revolution.

Russia was ruled for centuries by absolute monarchs, the Tsars. During the reign of **Nicholas II**, the condition of the people got worse, especially after Russia entered the First World War. There were many strikes⁶ and revolts, and the Tsar was forced to give up power (March 1917). After a few months of a provisional government, the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, seized control of the country (**October Revolution**). The name Russian Empire was changed into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

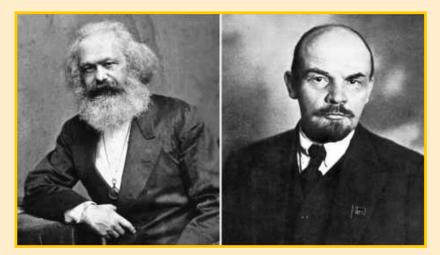
The theories at the base of the Russian Revolution had been expressed by the German political economist **Karl Marx** in his *Communist Manifesto* and later on in *Das Kapital* (*Capital*).

The pigs in Animal Farm are based on Communist Party leaders, as we will see in the next Extensions. Mr Jones represents Nicholas II, whereas Old Major symbolises both Karl Marx and Lenin.

- disillusionment: the state of being disappointed because the person you admired or the idea you believed to be good and true now seems without value.
- 5. *Bolshevik:* a political group that took power in Russia in 1917 and from

which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union arose. A soviet is an elected governmental council.

6. *strike*: a period of time when workers refuse to work because of a disagreement over pay or conditions.



Karl Marx (1818-1883).

Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924).



Animal Farm

B1+

Animal Farm is an allegorical short novel against Stalinism but it can be considered Orwell's fictional manifesto against any form of totalitarianism. It tells the story of a group of farm animals who rebel against their human farmer, hoping to create a society in which animals can be equal, free and happy. However, the rebellion is betrayed and, under the dictatorship of a pig named Napoleon, the animals slowly realise that one form of tyranny has been replaced with another.

The book is enriched with dossiers about the historical and political context in which the allegory takes place.

beginner	• A1 (Breakthrough)	Levels of accredited examination boards:	
elementary	• A2 (Waystage)	Cambridge English:	Preliminary (PET)
🗸 pre-intermediate	• B1 (Threshold)	Trinity: City & Guilds (Pitman):	Grade 5, 6 / ISE I
intermediate	• B2 (Vantage)	ESB:	Intermediate 1, 2
post-intermediate	• C1 (Effectiveness)	Edexcel:	Elementary



Teacher's Resources available online: Answer Key, Audioscripts, Summing-up Activities.