

## **Animal Farm by George Orwell**

*The animals take over Manor Farm. It becomes Animal Farm, based on the principles of Animalism - principles articulated to the animals in a dream by the wise old pig, Old Major. It is a dream of economic and social co-operation, equality and prosperity.*



### **Old Major's vision**

*In the opening paragraph, Old Major gathers the animals into the barn and outlines his vision for the future. It is an idyllic and utopian dream based on equality. (Its principles reflect those of Karl Marx; he, too, believed that the workers (the proletarians) should control the factory and thereby control the means of production and their economic future.)*

**Old Major elaborates upon his visionary dream:**

“Never listen when they tell you that Man and the animals have a common interest, that the prosperity of the one is the prosperity of the others. It is all lies. Man serves the interests of no creature except himself. And among us animals let there be perfect unity, perfect comradeship in the struggle. All men are enemies. All animals are comrades.” ... At this moment there was a tremendous uproar. While Major was speaking four large rats had crept out of their holes and were sitting on their hindquarter, listening to him. The dogs had suddenly caught sight of them, and it was only by a swift dash for their holes that the rats saved their lives. Major raised his trotter for silence ...

I have little more to say. I merely repeat, remember always your duty of enmity towards Man and all his ways. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend. And remember also that in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him. Even when you have conquered him, do not adopt his vices. 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 trade. All the habits of Man are evil. And above all, no animal must tyrannise over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal.” (7)

### **The seven commandments are the bedrock of “Animalism”**

Snowball, Napoleon and Squealer reworked old Major's teachings into a “complete system of thought, to which they gave the name of Animalism” The principles of “Animalism” were reduced to seven commandments:

“THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal.” (p. 17)

**The pigs establish their authority based on their “intellect”; their brainpower which also derives from their literacy skills; only the pigs can read. Most of the animals are illiterate. Snowball and Napoleon never agree on any point of debate, but they do agree on the priority needs of the pigs. Squealer becomes Napoleon’s mouthpiece. He is a “brilliant talker” who can turn “black into white”.** “The mystery of where the milk went to was soon cleared up. It was mixed every day into the pigs’ mash. The early apples were now ripening, and the grass of the orchard was littered with windfalls. The animals had assumed as a matter of course that these would be shared out equally; one day, however, the order went forth that all the windfalls were to be collected and brought to the harness-room for the use of the pigs.” Squealer explains: “Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. Milk and apples (this has been proved by Science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig. We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organisation of this farm depend on us. Day and night we are watching over your welfare. It is for your sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples. Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back! Yes, Jones would come back! Surely, comrades’, cried Squealer almost pleadingly, skipping from side to side and whisking his tail, ‘surely there is no one among you who wants to see Jones come back?’” (25)

## **Snowball and Napoleon agree to disagree**

**The two leaders are in constant disagreement. Snowball is a strategic thinker, organises the rebellion and articulates the principles of Animalism. Napoleon observes and undermines his projects. “These two disagreed at every point where disagreement was possible.” At one meeting, the animals had to vote on whether they should begin work on the windmill - the tool of their economic prosperity. The trouble started after Snowball finished his speech** “By the time he had finished speaking there was no doubt as to which way the vote would go. But just at this moment Napoleon stood up and, casting a peculiar sidelong look at Snowball, uttered a hith-pitched shimper of a kind no one had ever heard him utter before. At this there was a terribly baying sound outside and nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars came bounding into the barn. They dashed straight for Snowball, who only sprang from the palce just in time to escape their snapping jaws. In a moment he was out of the door and they were after him. .. On each of them all but closed his jaws on Snowball’s tail, but Snowball whisked it free just in time. They he pout on an extra suprt and with a few inches to spare, slipped through a hole in the hedge and was seen no more.” (39)

**Napoleon starts to brutalise the animals who do not follow his commands. He also begins to explore trade links with the humans - starting with Farmer Whymper.**

“One Sunday morning Squealer announced that the hens, who had just come in to lay again, must surrender their eggs. Napoleon had accepted through Whymper, a contract for four hundred eggs a week. The price of these would pay for enough grain and meal to keep the farm going till summer came on and conditions were easier. (56) When the hens heard this they raised a terrible outcry. They had been warned earlier that this sacrifice might be necessary. .. for the first time since the expulsion of Jones there was something resembling a rebellion. ... Napoleon acted swiftly and ruthlessly. He ordered the hens’ rations to be stopped, and decreed that any animal giving so much as a grain of corn to a hen should be punished by death. .. For five days the hens held out, then they capitulated and went back to their nesting boxes. Nine hens had died in the meantime. Their bodies were buried in the orchard and it was given out that they had died of coccidiosis. Whymper heard nothing of this affair, and the eggs were duly delivered, a grocer’s van driving up to the farm once a week to take them away.” (57)

**Later in a meeting, four pigs, who dare to challenge Napoleon, are slaughtered.**

“Three three hens who had been the ringleaders in the attempted rebellion over the eggs now came forward and stated that Snowball had appeared to them in a dream and incited them to disobey Napoleon’s orders. They too were slaughtered ... Then a goose came forward ... then a sheep confessed to having urinated in the drinking pool.. by Snowball. They were all slain on the spot. And so the tale of confessions and execution went on, until there was a pile of corpses lying before Napoleon’s feet and the air was heavy with the smell of blood, which had been unknown there since the expulsion of Jones.” (62)

**Essay Topic:**

**Who and what is to blame for the disintegration of Old Major’s dream?**

<b>Indicate which sentences summarise and which analyse the various character’s attitude.</b>	
1. The Old Major has a vision of equality when he says “weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers.”  2. Old Major’s dream of economic harmony fails to take into account the pigs’ thirst for power and authority.  3. The pigs are to blame as they violate the commandments and establish an unequal hierarchy.  4. Old Major’s utopian vision misjudges the animals’ competitive desires that undermines the premise of equality and co-operation.	
5. The dogs are brutal and aggressive and hunt down the rats just as they attack Snowball and the hens.  6. Napoleon progressively undermines the principles of Animalism and uses the dogs to create a reign of terror.  7. The dogs use their strength to frighten the other animals such as the rats. This happens at the beginning and then at key points of the story.	
8. One problem of Old Major’s dream is that, from the outset, some of the animals appear to use their strength to overpower others.  9. The dream of equality breaks down right from the start owing to the pigs’ sense of entitlement.	
10. The conflict between Snowball and Napoleon , and their respective followers, impacts negatively upon the farm’s economic management. Their rivalry mean that the animals are not able to focus on the goal of economic and social prosperity for all.	
11. Most of the animals are illiterate and tend to place too much trust in the leaders, and are conditioned to fear the return of the enemy - Jones.  12. The difference in literacy levels between the pigs and the animals contributes to the downfall of the farm. Many of the animals have no option but to trust the pigs because they cannot read the commandments.	
13. Orwell characterises the animals as naive and ignorant because they have not learnt to read.	
14. Orwell suggests that the pigs are too quick to take advantage of their superior skills – literacy and persuasive skills to the detriment of the other animals.	

**What techniques do we recognise? Give quotes and analyse the context**

**1. A comparison between Animals and Man**

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**2. A foreshadowing device**

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**3. A comparison between principles (the commandments) and the political reality (the actions of the pigs)**

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**4. Old Major's rhetorical devices.**

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**Useful expressions: exploring new words and phrases**

- Old Major implores/exhorts/the animals to take charge of their economic future. (*to implore: (to beseech, to entreat; to call upon in urgent supplication); (to exhort - to urge, to advise or caution earnestly)*)
- The Old Major prevails upon the animals to “remove man from the scene”. His point that man is the “cause of hunger and overwork”. (*to prevail upon: to use persuasion or inducement successfully on someone*)
- Old Major galvanises the animals into overthrowing Jones (*to galvanise: to stimulate; to rouse (into action); to startle into sudden activity*)
- The pigs violate /breach the commandments/rules (a breach: an infraction; or violation as of law; trust, faith promise; a severance of friendly relations)
- The pigs transgress the commandments; the pigs undermine the commandments (weaken)
- Napoleon traduces Snowball’s character: (to traduce; to speak evil or maliciously or falsely of; slander; calumniate; or malign)
- Napoleon orders the hens to forego their own which leads to insubordination and subsequently murder. (He is a megalomaniac.)

**Essay topic:**

**Who and what is to blame for the disintegration of Old Major’s dream?**

**The question asks you to consider:**

- ◆ Who is responsible for the trouble on the farm?
- ◆ Who is responsible for the breakdown of Old Major’s vision?
- ◆ How does Old Major’s vision fall apart?
- ◆ What narrative techniques can you refer to that enable you to highlight Orwell’s views and values?

**Write a paragraph analysing the pigs’ actions that disrupt Old Major’s dream**

Napoleon undermines the principles of Old Major’s vision and the seven commandments of Animalism by exploiting the animals’ trust and ignorance.

- ◆ Firstly outline the main points of Old Major’s vision. How does Napoleon’s actions conflict with his principles of a peaceful society?
- ◆ Napoleon trades with Whymper (a farmer). This undermines the decree that no animal shall trade with humans.
- ◆ Napoleon kills the hens and other animals. This breaches the 6th commandment.
- ◆ Use comparisons to write a smart paragraph.
- ◆ You need to be careful of describing Old Major’s vision for the future. You may embed these points in a discussion of Napoleon’s transgressions.
- ◆ Include quotes and find other examples in the text show reveal Napoleon as untrustworthy and violent.

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## Essay topic:

### Who and what is to blame for the disintegration of Old Major's dream?

#### Summary-style

Old Major's dream is about equality for the animals. He focuses on equality and co-operation and urges them to work together. However, at the same time, the dogs chase the rats which becomes a worrying sign of the animal's behaviour. The dogs spontaneously try to kill the rats, who had crept out of their holes. They are saved only by a swift dash for their holes (to terrify, intimidate, overpower) frighten. Right at the beginning the dogs, refuse to vote for equality of all animals. (they also learned to read) Later, Napoleon relies on the brutality of the dogs, who "saw to it that these orders were carried out". He makes himself "responsible for their education" and takes them to the loft which is secluded from the rest of the farm (25). During one debate with Snowball, nine "enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars" bound into the barn, upon Napoleon's direction, and threaten Snowball. He escapes from their "snapping jaws" and slips through the hedge -- to be "seen no more". They become his secret service weapon. They are aggressive, and conditioned to kill. (39)

#### Topic Sentence: key idea

Evidence: story-telling

#### Evidence: example

#### Analysis-style

One factor in the demise of Animal Farm is that, right from the outset, some of the animals are obsessed with power and use their strength to brutalise others. As a foreshadowing tactic, during a break in Old Major's visionary speech, the dogs try to intimidate the rats as soon as they emerge from their holes. ironically, they, who do not vote, become pawns in Napoleon's quest for power and his reign of terror. In an ominous move, he surreptitiously raises nine puppies and turns them into "fierce looking wolves", conditioned to kill. In a scene, paralleling that between the rats and the dogs, Napoleon summons the dogs ("wearing brass-studded collars") to attack Snowball — thus undermining the commandment of equality. As in the case with the rats, Snowball narrowly escapes from the dogs' "snapping jaws" and slips through the hedge to be "seen no more". Orwell also draws an analogy between their services to Mr Jones and to Napoleon: they "wagged their tails to him in the same ways as the other dogs had been used to do to Mr Jones". In this regard, Napoleon uses Mr Jones as a model for intimidation and power. According to Orwell, it is his thirst for power and his savagery that play a large part in the destruction of the dream of Animal Farm.

#### Topic Sentence: key idea

- *Notice Orwell's use of a foreshadowing device.*
- *Such a device sets up a comparison.*
- *Compare the two events.*
- *What is similar?*
- *What is different?*
- *How does the comparison reflect Orwell's views and values?*
- *Give quotes.*
- *Make one or two cross-references between them.*
- *Note the analogy.*