

CliffsNotes.com® At a Glance for **ANIMAL FARM**

Animal Farm is George Orwell's satire on equality, where all barnyard animals live free from their human masters' tyranny.

An old pig named Major tells the other animals on Mr. Jones's Manor Farm about his dream of a society run according to what Major calls Animalism, in which all animals are equal. Led by two pigs named Snowball and Napoleon, the farm animals rebel against the humans and rename the farm Animal Farm. They paint the Seven Commandments of Animalism on a barn wall. Because the pigs are more intelligent than the other farm animals, the pigs supervise the newly free society, and at first all goes well.

The humans try to retake the farm, but led by Snowball, the animals defeat the humans. Snowball begins making plans for a windmill to provide electricity and thereby make life easier for the animals. Napoleon opposes the windmill, however. On the day that a vote is scheduled on the matter, Napoleon has a pack of vicious dogs chase Snowball off the farm forever – after which Napoleon has the windmill built, claiming it was his own idea.

Eventually Napoleon becomes a dictator, directing the dogs to kill any animal he sees as a threat to his power. The pigs move into Mr. Jones's farmhouse and grow fat, while the other animals receive less and less to eat. The pigs amend and violate more and more of the Seven Commandments, eventually reducing them to one rule: "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." As years go by, Animal Farm expands and the pigs begin to walk on hind legs and drink alcohol. By the end of the novel, the pigs are indistinguishable from the humans they once overthrew.

Written by: George Orwell

Type of Work: novel

Genres: political satire; allegory

First Published: August 17, 1945

Setting: Mr. Jones' Manor Farm

Main Characters: Old Major; Snowball; Napoleon; Squealer; Boxer; Mollie; Benjamin; Moses; Jones; Frederick; Pilkington

Major Thematic Topics: animalism; mob rule; virtue; religion as a drug; distortion of reality; death; false allegiance; political corruption

Motifs: rebellion; power; communism

Major Symbols: Cold War; the barn

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The three most important aspects of *Animal Farm*:

- *Animal Farm* is an allegory, which is a story in which concrete and specific characters and situations stand for other characters and situations so as to make a point about them. The main action of *Animal Farm* stands for the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the early years of the Soviet Union. Animalism is really communism. Manor Farm is allegorical of Russia, and the farmer Mr. Jones is the Russian Czar. Old Major stands for either Karl Marx or Vladimir Lenin, and the pig named Snowball represents the intellectual revolutionary Leon Trotsky. Napoleon stands for Stalin, while the dogs are his secret police. The horse Boxer stands in for the proletariat, or working class.
- The setting of *Animal Farm* is a dystopia, which is an imagined world that is far worse than our own, as opposed to a utopia, which is an ideal place or state. Other dystopian novels include *Brave New World*, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and Orwell's own *1984*.
- The most famous line from the book is "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." This line is emblematic of the changes that George Orwell believed followed the 1917 Communist Revolution in Russia. Rather than eliminating the capitalist class system it was intended to overthrow, the revolution merely replaced it with another hierarchy. The line is also typical of Orwell's belief that those in power usually manipulate language to their own benefit.