

A Sample Lesson from The Gold Book British Literature



Animal Farm

Lesson 34 Novel Study—
Animal Farm by George Orwell (any unabridged publication)

1. a. Link to the Author: George Orwell

Eric Blair, better known by his pen name, George Orwell, was born in 1903 in India (part of the British Empire at the time). During his school years in England he was often shunned and persecuted by his wealthier, class-conscious teachers and classmates for his lower class status. After completing Eton College he joined the Imperial Police (then British ruled) in Burma. There he witnessed inequality and oppression but from an angle with him on top. He returned to Paris and London where he worked meager jobs and lived in relative poverty. Out of his experiences of social injustice he wrote his first novels. Orwell promoted democratic socialism and claimed to be pro-socialist. He was against capitalism and communism. He believed wealth should be distributed and class distinctions diminished or eliminated. The original ideals of Marx and Engels appealed to Orwell, but he saw them as perverted especially under Stalin. Orwell fought for the Republic during the Spanish Civil War, was shot in the throat, and returned to England. He died in 1950 from tuberculosis.

b. Major characters in *Animal Farm*:

Old Major: the old boar, a visionary, who calls for a better life and rebellion

Snowball: the prize boar who competes for leadership of Animal

Farm

Napoleon: the ambitious, young boar who becomes the leader

Boxer: the work horse, the unquestioning hard worker Benjamin:
the donkey, a skeptic

Moses: the

raven, Mr. Jones' pet, who tells stories of Sugar Candy Mountain

Squealer: the pig who excuses the actions of the boars with lies

Mr. Jones: the master of Manor Farm, who whips and neglects the animals

- c. Read Chapter 1 of *Animal Farm*.
 - d. Old Major calls the other animals comrades. He also reminds them that they are the working class and are exploited by the privileged men. What does this remind you of?
 - e. Is Old Major's assertion that all men are enemies correct?
 - f. Is it true that "all the evils of this life of ours [the animals] spring from the tyranny of human beings"?
 - g. There is evidence in Chapter 1 that all animals are not necessarily comrades. What shows us this?
 - h. Which animals were called the "clever ones"?
2. a. Read Chapter 2.
- b. With regard to the preparation for the rebellion and the rebellion itself, what are you reminded of that we have already read in another novel?
 - c. Each kind of animal represents a certain segment of society. What does Moses represent?

- d. Mollie's questions are called the "stupidest of all." However, what is revealed by the answers to Mollie's questions?
 - e. Commandments one and seven have already failed. What evidence do we have that the animals do not uphold commandment number two?
 - f. How do commandments three through five threaten rather than create an ideal state?
 - g. What evidence do we have that Napoleon has his own interests at heart?
3. a. Read Chapters 3-4.
- b. Chapter 3 challenges one of the seven commandments. Which commandment is being challenged and what is the point?
 - c. How do the pigs violate commandment seven?
 - d. Who emerges as the leader of Animal Farm after the Battle of the Cowshed?
4. a. Read Chapter 5.
- b. Why does Mollie leave the farm?
 - c. What are Napoleon's three sources of power?
 - d. In terms of their attitudes toward community welfare what is the difference between Napoleon and Snowball?
5. a. Read Chapter 6.
- b. The destruction of the windmill actually helps Napoleon's interests. How?
 - c. How does Napoleon use Snowball to his advantage?
 - d. What is the main point of Chapter 6?

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Answers

Animal Farm

This section includes a summary of the complete novel. It will assist you in discussing the novel with the student. Also, some students are better able to understand the novel if they first read a summary, however, it should not replace reading the full novel. Please use this at your discretion.

Summary of *Animal Farm*

Mr. Jones, the owner of Manor Farm, drinks too much, often neglects to feed the animals, and carries a whip. Old Major, the farmer's prize boar, tells the animals that Man is evil and that all their hardships are due to these two-legged creatures. He is the visionary who draws a utopian picture of plenty and peace for the animals—a life free from the dominion of Man. He encourages a Rebellion but soon after dies, leaving Snowball and Napoleon, also pigs, to lead the animals. Sheer hunger initiates and drives the Rebellion, and Mr. and Mrs. Jones are chased out of their farm. The farm is renamed Animal Farm. Soon after the Rebellion, the pigs teach themselves to read and write, and a list of Seven Commandments appear on the barn wall. One by one, the commandments are broken by the pigs, but the other animals are lulled into believing lies and disinformation spread successfully by Squealer. The other animals are not as smart as the pigs and are easily led. Snowball and Napoleon keep the milk and apples for themselves with Squealer convincing the others that they are the hardest workers and need this extra food. At any hint of discontentment, Squealer conjures up the other animals' greatest fears by asking, "Do you want Jones back as your master?" This squelches the other animals' doubts every time. Snowball and Napoleon often quarrel, finally leading Napoleon to oust Snowball, his competitor. Napoleon orders the continued building of the windmill, Snowball's original idea to bring ease into the animals' lives. Napoleon's selfish motive brings hardship

to all the workers. Eventually, Boxer, the loyal workhorse, dies giving his life for (apparently) nothing. Even in death, Boxer is used to further Napoleon's selfish ends. By now, the Seven Commandments have been reduced to "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." What began as a way to free themselves from Man's oppression has quickly turned full circle. By the end of the novel, the pigs have broken all the commandments. They are sleeping in beds, wearing clothes, killing other animals, drinking alcohol, consorting with Men, and walking on two legs. The other animals find that it is now impossible to distinguish the pigs from Man.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, published in 1945, was written as a criticism of Soviet Russian Communism under Stalin. Although the novel attacks Stalinist Russia, it really is about any authoritarian government and is as applicable today as it was then. The book's main character, Napoleon, represents Stalin, whom Orwell regarded as a traitor to his own country and an enemy of socialism.

Major characters in *Animal Farm*:

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Snowball: the prize boar who competes for leadership of Animal Farm

Napoleon: the ambitious, young boar who becomes the leader

Boxer: the work horse, the unquestioning hard worker

Benjamin: the donkey, a skeptic

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1.

d. It reminds one of communism.

e. No. Examples to the contrary are too numerous to list.

f. If Orwell attributes human intelligence and reason to the animals, then the animals are subject to human-like shortcomings that create their own root problems.

g. The rats are allowed to be called comrades only by a vote. Even at that, there were abstentions.

h. The pigs and dogs were called the “clever ones.”

2.

b. Defarge’s revolutionary preparation and then the storming of the Bastille followed a similar pattern. (A Tale of Two Cities)

c. Moses represents organized religion.

d. The animals will be denied material things that they had under man’s rule. Also, animals will be denied certain freedoms. Mollie should have the right to wear her ribbons, but she will be forced not to.

e. The pigs regard Moses as a spy and talebearer, which makes him an enemy.

f. These commandments deny freedoms that some animals might like to have. These commandments could be amended to deny further freedoms.

g. Napoleon sends the other animals away while he takes care of the milk, which disappears without being accounted for.

3.

b. Commandment seven. There are great differences among the animals intellectually, physically, and behaviorally.

c. The pigs demand special privileges for their special abilities.

d. Snowball emerges as the leader.

4.

b. She is unhappy that she is denied things she likes. Furthermore, she does not like the regimen that has been prescribed for her. She would rather work for some human in return for the lifestyle she wants.

c. Napoleon gained a following by criticizing Snowball behind his back once debates were over. Another source of power, of course, is force. Thirdly, he controls with propaganda and threats.

d. Snowball is genuinely interested in bettering the lives of the other animals. Napoleon wants to use the community to serve his own interests.

5.

b. The labor necessary to build the windmill keeps the animals busy and tired. They hardly have any time or energy to object to the changes that have come about.

c. Snowball is a scapegoat. Problems that arise can be blamed on him directly, or indirectly, by creating lies about Snowball's misguided notions of the past.

d. Many of the seven commandments and resolutions have been broken by the elite class of pigs. The pigs are manipulating the system to create more privileges for themselves.