

Animal Farm

by George Orwell · Language: EN

Summary by booksummaryai.com — <https://booksummaryai.com/country/en/animal-farm>

Overview

Animal Farm is a satirical allegorical novella by George Orwell, first published in 1945. It tells the story of a group of farm animals who rebel against their human owner, Mr. Jones, hoping to create a society where animals are free, equal, and live without oppression. Led by the pigs, who represent the intellectual leaders of the revolution, the animals establish a set of commandments, the most famous being "All animals are equal." However, as time passes, the pigs gradually consolidate power, alter the commandments, and begin to behave like the very humans they overthrew, ultimately becoming indistinguishable from them.

The narrative arc follows the rise and corruption of the revolution. The initial ideals of equality and shared labor are slowly eroded as the pigs, especially Napoleon and Squealer, use propaganda, fear, and manipulation to control the other animals. The working animals, such as the horses Boxer and Clover, remain loyal and hardworking, but their efforts are exploited. The book ends with the pigs walking on two legs, carrying whips, and declaring that the animals must now deal with "the human beings" as equals, revealing that the revolution has been betrayed.

Animal Farm matters because it is a powerful critique of totalitarianism, particularly the Soviet Union under Stalin, and a timeless warning about how revolutions can be hijacked by those who seek power. Orwell wrote it as a political fable, using animals to make complex political ideas accessible and memorable. Its themes of corruption, propaganda, and the abuse of power remain relevant in any era, making it a staple of political literature and a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked authority.

Key Takeaways

- Power corrupts: The pigs, who start as idealists, become tyrants, showing that absolute power leads to the betrayal of revolutionary ideals.
- Propaganda is a tool of control: Squealer's lies and manipulation demonstrate how language can be twisted to justify oppression and rewrite history.
- Equality is fragile: The commandment 'All animals are equal' is gradually altered to 'All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others,' showing how equality can be subverted.
- The working class bears the burden: Boxer's loyalty and hard work are exploited, and he is sold to the knacker when he is no longer useful, highlighting the cost of blind faith.

- Fear and violence maintain power: Napoleon uses the dogs to terrorize the other animals, showing that coercion is often necessary to sustain a dictatorship.
- History can be rewritten: The pigs change the past to suit their needs, illustrating how totalitarian regimes control the narrative to legitimize their rule.
- The revolution is betrayed: The final scene, where pigs become indistinguishable from humans, shows that the revolution has failed and the oppressors have simply changed faces.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1

Old Major, a prize boar, calls a meeting of the animals at Manor Farm. He delivers a stirring speech about the misery of their lives under human rule and teaches them a song, 'Beasts of England,' which envisions a future where animals are free. He urges them to rebel, but warns against adopting human vices. The animals are inspired, and the meeting ends with the song, though the dogs and other animals are not fully united. Old Major dies three nights later, but his ideas take root.

Chapter 2

The pigs, led by Snowball, Napoleon, and Squealer, develop Old Major's teachings into a system called Animalism. When Mr. Jones forgets to feed the animals, they rebel and drive him off the farm. The animals take over and rename the farm 'Animal Farm.' They create Seven Commandments, with the first being 'Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.' The pigs, being the cleverest, take charge and begin to organize the farm, while the other animals, like Boxer, pledge to work hard.

Chapter 3

The animals work hard to bring in the harvest, with Boxer and Clover leading the effort. The pigs, who do not work, supervise and claim that their brainwork is essential. Snowball organizes committees and teaches the animals to read, while Napoleon focuses on training puppies. The milk and apples are secretly given to the pigs, with Squealer explaining that pigs need them to think, and that the pigs are the guardians of the farm's future.

Chapter 4

The neighboring farmers, Mr. Pilkington and Mr. Frederick, spread rumors about Animal Farm, fearing a rebellion. In October, Mr. Jones and his men attempt to recapture the farm, but the animals, led by Snowball, fight bravely and win the Battle of the Cowshed. Snowball is decorated as a hero, and the farm celebrates its victory. The animals are proud, but the pigs begin to take more privileges, such as sleeping in the beds, which they justify by altering the commandments.

Chapter 5

Snowball and Napoleon clash over the future of the farm, particularly the windmill project. Snowball wants to build a windmill for electricity, while Napoleon opposes it. During a meeting, Napoleon releases his trained dogs, who chase Snowball off the farm. Napoleon then announces that the windmill will be built after all, and Squealer spreads lies that Snowball was a traitor. The animals are confused but accept Napoleon's leadership, and the windmill project begins.

Chapter 6

The animals work harder than ever to build the windmill, enduring long hours and poor conditions. The pigs begin to trade with the outside world, selling hay and wheat, and they start to sleep in beds, drink alcohol, and eventually trade with humans. The commandment 'No animal shall drink alcohol' is altered to 'No animal shall drink alcohol to excess.' The animals are uneasy but are silenced by Squealer's justifications. The windmill is partially built, but a storm destroys it.

Chapter 7

The animals are devastated by the windmill's collapse, but Napoleon blames Snowball, who he claims is sabotaging the farm. The animals face a harsh winter with food shortages. Napoleon, with the help of his dogs, forces confessions from animals who are then executed for treason. The animals are terrified and begin to doubt the revolution. Squealer rewrites history to make Napoleon the hero of the Battle of the Cowshed, and the animals sing 'Beasts of England' to comfort themselves, but it is later banned.

Chapter 8

The animals work to rebuild the windmill, and the farm becomes more prosperous, but the pigs become more human-like, wearing clothes and drinking whiskey. Napoleon negotiates with both Pilkington and Frederick, playing them against each other. Eventually, he sells timber to Frederick, but Frederick pays with counterfeit money and then attacks the farm, destroying the windmill. The animals fight back and win the Battle of the Windmill, but the windmill is ruined. The pigs continue to exploit the animals, and the commandments are further altered.

Chapter 9

The animals struggle to rebuild the windmill, while the pigs live in luxury, drinking beer and eating apples. Boxer works himself to exhaustion, and when he collapses, he is taken away to be sold to the knacker, despite the pigs' promises of a hospital. The animals are heartbroken, but Squealer claims that Boxer died in a hospital, and the pigs use his death to buy more whiskey. The farm is now run by pigs who are indistinguishable from humans, and the animals are worse off than before.

Chapter 10

Years pass, and the farm is now run by pigs who walk on two legs and carry whips. The Seven Commandments are reduced to a single rule: 'All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.' The pigs invite the human farmers to a dinner, where they toast to the future.

The animals look from pig to man and from man to pig, but they cannot tell the difference. The revolution has been completely betrayed, and the pigs have become the new oppressors.

Themes

- Corruption of power
- Propaganda and manipulation
- Equality and inequality
- Revolution and betrayal
- Class struggle
- Totalitarianism

Notable Quotes

- "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." — The final commandment, revealed at the end of the book, after the pigs have rewritten the original Seven Commandments to justify their privileges.
- "Four legs good, two legs bad." — A simplified slogan taught to the sheep, which is later changed to 'Four legs good, two legs better' when the pigs begin to walk on two legs.
- "Napoleon is always right." — A maxim repeated by the sheep and other animals, demonstrating the blind obedience and propaganda that Napoleon uses to maintain control.
- "Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland, Beasts of every land and clime, Hearken to my joyful tidings Of the golden future time." — The opening lines of the revolutionary song that Old Major teaches the animals, which inspires them to rebel and later is banned by Napoleon.
- "The creatures outside 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." — The final line of the book, describing the pigs' complete transformation into the likeness of humans, symbolizing the betrayal of the revolution.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Animal Farm about?

Animal Farm is a political allegory about a group of farm animals who overthrow their human owner and establish a self-governing society. The pigs, who lead the revolution, gradually become corrupt and tyrannical, betraying the ideals of equality and freedom. The story mirrors the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, showing how revolutions can be hijacked by power-hungry leaders.

Is Animal Farm worth reading?

Yes, *Animal Farm* is a short, powerful, and thought-provoking book. It is a classic that offers deep insights into politics, power, and human nature. Its allegorical style makes it accessible to readers of all ages, and its themes remain relevant today. It is often assigned in schools and is a must-read for anyone interested in political satire or history.

How does *Animal Farm* end?

Spoiler: The pigs, led by Napoleon, have fully transformed into tyrants. They walk on two legs, wear clothes, and carry whips. The Seven Commandments are reduced to one: 'All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.' The pigs host a dinner with human farmers, and the other animals watch, unable to tell the pigs from the humans. The revolution is completely betrayed.

Who should read *Animal Farm*?

Animal Farm is suitable for anyone interested in politics, history, or literature. It is often read by middle and high school students, but adults can also appreciate its deeper political commentary. It is especially valuable for those who want to understand the dangers of totalitarianism, propaganda, and the corruption of ideals. It is a quick read that leaves a lasting impact.

How long does it take to read *Animal Farm*?

Animal Farm is a short novella, typically around 112 pages. At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, it takes about 2 to 3 hours to read. Many readers finish it in one sitting. It is a quick but impactful read that can be completed in an afternoon.