



Animal Farm Study Guide

by Michael S. Gilleland
For the novel by George Orwell



Synopsis

Mr. Jones, of Manor Farm, had once been a responsible and respectable farmer, but disappointment and drink had taken their toll and now he was neglectful to the point of being abusive. One night, Major, the old boar on the farm, gathers the animals to pass along to them his wisdom before he dies. He recounts the sufferings of animals and lays all their suffering at the feet of mankind. He teaches them a song from the distant past—*Beasts of England*—and tells them they must prepare for self-rule and a revolution against humanity. The animals take Major's words to heart and begin organizing and teaching each other.

The animals' revolution comes faster than they ever could have imagined. After Farmer Jones spends a couple of days in a drunken haze and neglects to feed them, the animals break into the food stores to feed themselves. When Jones and his men attack to drive them back, the animals have had enough. They turn on the men and chase them off the farm, slamming the gate behind them. And just like that they are free and Manor Farm is renamed Animal Farm.

Two pigs on the farm, Napoleon and Snowball, have taught themselves to read and they take leadership, organizing the animals into work groups and apportioning supplies, and at first things are idyllic. The animals work hard and share all things in common and find themselves happier than ever before. But tensions arise between Napoleon and Snowball, and then rifts. Snowball is forced to flee the farm, and Napoleon gathers around him the other pigs and some dogs he has raised himself, and slowly gathers and consolidates his power.

While Napoleon and his followers supervise more and more, and the other animals work harder and harder, life slowly becomes more complicated for the animals. The original Seven Commandments of Animal Farm seem different and shifting as time goes on. Where once they had agreed "All animals are equal," now they are told "All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others." The idealistic early days of Animal Farm are gone, and things have gone terribly wrong.

George Orwell's allegorical novel explores power, corruption, and vulnerability in even the most well-intentioned community.

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Analogous Characters and Events:

Listed below are several important characters, places, or events from these chapters in *Animal Farm* that represent real people, places, or events in history. Research the real people, places, or events listed and write a few sentences describing them and their relevance to events in these chapters.

1. Squealer represents *Pravda* (the official Communist newspaper of the Soviet Union) or perhaps Vyacheslav Molotov:
2. Foxwood and Mr. Pilkington represent capitalist countries (most notably Great Britain and its aristocracy):
3. Pinchfield and Mr. Frederick represent Nazi Germany (the Third Reich) and Adolf Hitler:

General:

1. What is Boxer's personal motto and answer to every difficulty?
2. What begins to happen between Napoleon and Snowball?
3. What do we learn has been happening to the milk? How is this explained to the animals?

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4. What happens when Jones returns to Animal Farm?

Analysis:

5. *Irony* contrasts appearance and reality or expectation and reality. For example, when asked how their weekend was, someone may say, “Oh, very exciting” when it actually was boring—describing a situation different from, and maybe opposite of, what actually took place. In the beginning of Chapter III, the author says that the horses “knew every inch of the field, and in fact understood the business of mowing and raking far better than Jones and his men had ever done.” A few sentences later, the author says, “Boxer and Clover would harness themselves to the cutter or the horse-rake ... and tramp steadily round and round the field with a pig walking behind and calling out, ‘Gee up, comrade!’ or ‘Whoa back, comrade!’” Why is this situation ironic? Why do you think the pigs do this?
6. A *Golden Age* is a period in the life of a nation or group of people in which they are predominately happy, prosperous, and accomplishing their goals. How might these chapters describe a Golden Age at Animal Farm?
7. *Misdirection* began as a term of art in the field of theatrical magic. According to Wikipedia,

Magicians misdirect audience attention in two basic ways. One leads the audience to look away for a fleeting moment, so that they don’t detect some sleight or move. The other approach re-frames the audience’s perception, distracting them into thinking that an extraneous factor has much to do with the accomplishment of the feat when it really has no bearing on the effect at all. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Misdirection_\(magic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Misdirection_(magic))]

The term “misdirection” is now applied to many other situations, such as politics, advertising, or almost any situation in which one person is trying to influence the thought or actions of others.

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In the last few paragraphs of Chapter III, how does Squealer use misdirection in his explanation for why the pigs get all of the milk and apples on the farm? Which form of misdirection does Squealer use?

8. In Chapter IV, what stories do Pilkington and Frederick tell about Animal Farm? Why do they do this? Do these stories accomplish their goals?

Dig Deeper:

9. Why do you think Napoleon said that the “the education of the young was more important than anything that could be done for those who were already grown up”? How can this be used as both a positive and a negative thing?

10. In the beginning of Chapter III, Orwell writes,

The pigs did not actually work, but directed and supervised the others. With their superior knowledge it was natural that they should assume the leadership.

Is the pigs’ assuming the leadership of Animal Farm—essentially creating a division of labor and a management level—inherently a good or bad thing? Why? What would determine if it is or becomes a good or bad development?

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11. Read Romans 12:3–10, 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, 14–26. What do these verses say about people with different skills and divisions of labor, specifically among Christians, but also more broadly in life? How are we to value each other and the work we all do?

12. During the Battle of Cowshed, Boxer kicks a stable-lad in the head “and stretched him out lifeless in the mud.” After the battle is over, what does Boxer say about the resulting condition of the boy? What does this tell us about Boxer?

13. How does Snowball respond to Boxer’s reaction after the Battle of Cowshed? What does this tell us about Snowball?

14. Read Matthew 5:43–47, Luke 6:27–36, Romans 12:17–21. What do these passages say about how we should treat our enemies? Though things will be different in battle, such as the Battle of Cowshed, how could these verses still be applied?

Animal Farm Study Guide Answer Key

animals, and the skills they have, are valuable in their own ways and that should be recognized.

11. The verses in Romans immediately tells us to not think of ourselves “more highly than [we] ought.” We are part of a greater, larger body, in which each person has their own vital functions and skills that everyone else needs to function effectively. We are to use our skills, our gifts, to the best of our ability and for the benefit of all, and we are to honor everyone and their contributions. The 1 Corinthian verses are similar—we are all different and have different skills and abilities, but we are all under the same God and working for the same goals. The apostle Paul again uses the analogy of a body, telling us that the body needs all of its parts to function correctly and efficiently and no part can exist on its own. We must all work together, sharing in hardships and in honor.

12. After the Battle of Cowshed, Boxer grieves over the apparent death of the boy: “He is dead.... I had no intention of doing that.... Who will believe that I did not do this on purpose?” Snowball answers, “No sentimentality, comrade! ... War is war. The only good human being is a dead one.” Boxer responds, “I have no wish to take life, not even human life.” Answers about what this tells us about Boxer may vary. Boxer seems to be good-hearted, and though he is willing to fight to defend his freedom and Animal Farm, he does not want to take life. He values life, even the life of his enemies.

13. After Boxer expresses his regret over apparently killing the boy (who later is revealed to have only been knocked unconscious), Snowball responds, “No sentimentality, comrade! ... War is war. The only good human being is a dead one.” There are two elements to Snowball’s response—one is factual and the other communicates his ethical or moral response. Snowball’s statement that “War is war” is true, and people must kill and are killed in war; there is no way around that. However, his next statement, “The only good human being is a dead one” shows a complete lack of empathy and a disregard for the value of life. Snowball does not see any humans, or probably any enemy, as having any worth. This is a common response in times of war or other conflict—rather than being willing to recognize an enemy’s worth and significance, much less their perspective, the enemy is demonized and devalued to someone or something worthy only of death and destruction.

14. The basic takeaway from these passages is that we should love our enemies and show mercy and compassion. We are to pray for them, bless them, help them, do good for them. We are not to hate them, retaliate, or take revenge. Clearly these passages are speaking of our everyday lives, not war or armed conflict, but the overall attitude and mindset should be the same. We are to value people as God does—“[God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good”; “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” We are never to view people as worthless, unworthy of respect, or not deserving life. None of those things are up to us—Christ died for all people (see also Romans 5:6–8, 1 Peter 3:18), so if God valued each and every one of us that much, we should too.

Chapters V–VI

Vocabulary:

1. pretext; 2. blithely; 3. publican; 4. manifestly; 5. ratified; 6. canvassing; 7. aloof; 8. restive; 9. eloquence (also accept articulate); 10. sordid; 11. marshal; 12. articulate (also accept eloquence); 13. manoeuvre; 14. arable; 15. procured; 16. roused; 17. perpendicularity; 18. imposing

Analogous Characters and Events:

The following are sample summaries, but students’ descriptions may vary and be much smaller and simpler, depending on what information students deem relevant. Accept reasonable answers.