Animal Farm is George Orwell’s satire on the corrupting influence of power. Animal Farm is a dystopian allegorical novel published in England in 1945. It reflects events leading up to and during the Stalin era in the Soviet Union before World War II.

One of the reasons why the book has such a wide appeal today is that it possesses those timeless qualities which enable readers of different generations and different cultures to apply its lessons to their own circumstances. One commentator has shrewdly observed: "There have been, are, and always will be pigs in every society, and they will always grab power. Even more cruel is the conclusion that everyone in the society, wittingly or unwittingly, contributes to the pigs' tyranny."

Animal Farm is more than a fairy story. It is a commentary on the relevance of independent thought, truth, and justice.

As you read each section, please answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper in complete sentences.

CHAPTER I
1. What is significant about how the animals arrange themselves as they gather to hear Major? What might this arrangement say about future meetings or events?

2. According to Major, what is the cause of all the animals’ problems?

3. What motto does Major give the animals?

4. Name three (3) of the commandments Major gives the animals? Can you think of ways each of them could be considered a vice?

5. Examine the song “Beasts of England” as poetry. What imagery is present? What is the message? Why do the animals like it so much that they memorize it on the spot? To what emotions and needs does it appeal?

6. Do you sympathize with the animals’ complaints and goals? Why or why not?
CHAPTER II
1. After Major’s death what happens to the idea of rebelling against man?

2. What causes the animals to finally rebel against Mr. Jones and his four farmhands?

3. When the humans have been chased from the farm, what do the animals do?

4. What is your opinion of the Seven Commandments?

CHAPTER III AND IV
1. Why is the animals' harvest better than previous harvests with the humans?

2. What further examples of the difference between the pigs and the other animals occur in these two chapters?

3. How is Squealer able to convince the other animals to accept whatever Napoleon decides?

4. What do the other humans think about Animal Farm? What rumors do they spread about it?

5. Describe the Battle of the Cowshed.

CHAPTER V
1. Why does Mollie run away from the farm?

2. What changes have been made in the weekly meetings over the last year?

3. What does “Four legs good, two legs bad” mean?

4. Explain the windmill controversy from Snowball’s point of view.

5. Explain the windmill controversy from Napoleon’s point of view.

6. What changes does Napoleon make after his dogs chase Snowball off the farm?

7. What is the importance of the dogs accompanying Squealer when he comes to talk to the animals?

CHAPTERS VI AND VII
1. Why does Napoleon decide to engage in trade with neighboring farms? Do you think this will be a good idea? How do the animals react?

2. How is the windmill destroyed? Why does Napoleon blame Snowball?

4. Why does Napoleon order that the hens’ eggs be sold?

5. How does Napoleon react when the hens’ rebel against his orders?

6. Why does Napoleon revive the threat of the farm being sabotaged by Snowball?

CHAPTERS VIII AND IX
1. What purpose is served by the production figures Squealer reads to the animals?

2. How is Napoleon becoming more and more like a typical dictator?

3. Why do humans attack the farm?

4. Why do the men blow up the windmill?

5. Why are the animals so easily fooled, even when they find Squealer with a ladder and white paint beside the barn at night?

6. What is happening to Boxer?

7. What are living conditions like for all of the animals except the pigs and dogs?

8. Why does Napoleon allow Moses to return and to tell his stories about Sugarcandy Mountain?

9. What happens to Boxer? How do the animals accept it?

10. Of what kind of person does Benjamin remind you? Give some examples. What makes people behave this way?

CHAPTER X
1. What drastic actions do the pigs use to shatter the animals’ complacency?

2. All seven commandments are erased. What is the new commandment? What is its importance? How has it been true from the beginning?

3. At the conference with neighboring farmers, what new changes does Napoleon point out?

4. What happens to the pigs’ appearance?

5. In Chapter 10 the pigs begin to walk on two legs. In your opinion is this evolution a sign of progress? Explain.
Vocab.

apathy    benevolence    collaborate    cryptic
enmity    ensconce      ignominy     indefatigable
indignation    malign    maxim       preeminence
reproach    uproarious   conciliatory  laborious
vivacious   parasitical  ignominious  canvass
articulate  capitulate  demeanor    treachery

Essay Questions:

1. In the aftermath of the rebellion against Mr. Jones, Snowball and Napoleon emerge as the predominant figureheads—yet it is Napoleon who eventually consolidates and assumes power as unquestioned leader. Snowball, now banished from the farm, goes on to assume a newer and possibly more powerful role. Describe the differences between Snowball and Napoleon. What actions taken by Napoleon ensured his ascension to power and "victory" over Snowball? Why does Snowball play so heavily in the decisions and actions on Manor Farm even after he's no longer there?

2. Why do you think Orwell chose to use a fable in his condemnation of Soviet communism and totalitarianism? What different opportunities of expression does a fable offer its author?

3. Paying particular attention to the character of Squealer, how is language used as an instrument of social control? How do the pigs rewrite history?

4. Discuss Boxer. What role does he play on the farm? Why does Napoleon seem to feel threatened by him?

5. Clover saw many changes on the farm after the first mention of the Rebellion at the meeting with Major. How does her character change? What/who is she meant to represent? What is she thinking as she sees her husband carted off to his death? Put yourself in her mind and write an explanation of major events from her point of view.

6. Write a continuation of the novel beginning at the point the novel ends. Could a new revolutionary leader appear? Might Benjamin decide to take a more active role? When and how might the society fail?

7. Explain why an “enemy” or scapegoat is necessary for the animals. Why does the “enemy” have to change? If there were no “enemy,” what would that mean for any society, including that of Animal Farm?

8. What is a dystopia? Explain how this is a perfect example of a dystopia.

9. Throughout the novel, the natural characteristics of each animal figure heavily in their motives and pronouncements. How do the actions of Napoleon (a pig), Boxer (a
horse), Benjamin (a donkey) and the dogs and sheep reflect the traits normally
associated with the animal? Do your feel that Orwell purposely chose certain types of
animals to assume certain roles?

10. Repeatedly, the animals sacrifice themselves in order to complete the windmill, only
to see it destroyed time and again. What, if any, symbolic role does the windmill play?
How do you account for the pigs' insistence that it be built and re-built?

11. Following the massacre of "guilty" animals at the hands of Napoleon and the other
pigs, Clover reflects sadly on what she thought life should have been like on Manor
Farm: "If she herself had had any picture of the future, it had been of a society of
animals set free from hunger and the whip, all equal, each working according to his
capacity, the strong protecting the weak, as she had protected the lost brood of
ducklings with her foreleg on the night of Major's speech." Is Clover overly idealistic
in feeling this way? Do you feel that such a community can exist?

12. Initially, the seven commandments issued by the animals were deemed unalterable,
and symbolized a code by which the animals could live peacefully and equally among
themselves. How and by what means were the commandments eventually changed?
Choose and discuss one or two individual commandments. Who benefited in each
instance and how?

13. Among the various characters in the novel, whom do you feel is the noblest or most
worthy? Which animal would be best suited to lead a group against Napoleon and the
pigs?

14. What attitude about totalitarian government do you think Orwell conveys? Explain
using examples from the book.

15. One of the observations about communism is that it is a perfect system in theory but it
fails in practice because human beings corrupt it. Explain how Animal Farm either
backs up this philosophy or rebukes it. Give details from the book to support your
answer. Is a utopia possible? Explain in detail.
Character List

**Napoleon** - The pig who emerges as the leader of Animal Farm after the Rebellion. Based on Joseph Stalin, Napoleon uses military force (his nine loyal attack dogs) to intimidate the other animals and consolidate his power. In his supreme craftiness, Napoleon proves more treacherous than his counterpart, Snowball.

**Snowball** - The pig who challenges Napoleon for control of Animal Farm after the Rebellion. Based on Leon Trotsky, Snowball is intelligent, passionate, eloquent, and less subtle and devious than his counterpart, Napoleon. Snowball seems to win the loyalty of the other animals and cement his power.

**Boxer** - The cart-horse whose incredible strength, dedication, and loyalty play a key role in the early prosperity of Animal Farm and the later completion of the windmill. Quick to help but rather slow-witted, Boxer shows much devotion to Animal Farm’s ideals but little ability to think about them independently. He naïvely trusts the pigs to make all his decisions for him. His two mottoes are “I will work harder” and “Napoleon is always right.”

**Squealer** - The pig who spreads Napoleon’s propaganda among the other animals. Squealer justifies the pigs’ monopolization of resources and spreads false statistics pointing to the farm’s success. Orwell uses Squealer to explore the ways in which those in power often use rhetoric and language to twist the truth and gain and maintain social and political control.

**Old Major** - The prize-winning boar whose vision of a socialist utopia serves as the inspiration for the Rebellion. Three days after describing the vision and teaching the animals the song “Beasts of England,” Major dies, leaving Snowball and Napoleon to struggle for control of his legacy. Orwell based Major on both the German political economist Karl Marx and the Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

**Clover** - A good-hearted female cart-horse and Boxer’s close friend. Clover often suspects the pigs of violating one or another of the Seven Commandments, but she repeatedly blames herself for misremembering the commandments.

**Moses** - The tame raven who spreads stories of Sugarcandy Mountain, the paradise to which animals supposedly go when they die. Moses plays only a small role in *Animal Farm*, but Orwell uses him to explore how communism exploits religion as something with which to pacify the oppressed.

**Mollie** - The vain, flighty mare who pulls Mr. Jones’s carriage. Mollie craves the attention of human beings and loves being groomed and pampered. She has a difficult time with her new
life on Animal Farm, as she misses wearing ribbons in her mane and eating sugar cubes. She represents the petit bourgeoisie that fled from Russia a few years after the Russian Revolution.

**Benjamin** - The long-lived donkey who refuses to feel inspired by the Rebellion. Benjamin firmly believes that life will remain unpleasant no matter who is in charge. Of all of the animals on the farm, he alone comprehends the changes that take place, but he seems either unwilling or unable to oppose the pigs.

**Muriel** - The white goat who reads the Seven Commandments to Clover whenever Clover suspects the pigs of violating their prohibitions.

**Mr. Jones** - The often drunk farmer who runs the Manor Farm before the animals stage their Rebellion and establish Animal Farm. Mr. Jones is an unkind master who indulges himself while his animals lack food; he thus represents Tsar Nicholas II, whom the Russian Revolution ousted.

**Mr. Frederick** - The tough, shrewd operator of Pinchfield, a neighboring farm. Based on Adolf Hitler, the ruler of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, Mr. Frederick proves an untrustworthy neighbor.

**Mr. Pilkington** - The easygoing gentleman farmer who runs Foxwood, a neighboring farm. Mr. Frederick’s bitter enemy, Mr. Pilkington represents the capitalist governments of England and the United States.

**Mr. Whymper** - The human solicitor whom Napoleon hires to represent Animal Farm in human society. Mr. Whymper’s entry into the Animal Farm community initiates contact between Animal Farm and human society, alarming the common animals.

**Jessie and Bluebell** - Two dogs, each of whom gives birth early in the novel. Napoleon takes the puppies in order to “educate” them.

**Minimus** - The poet pig who writes verse about Napoleon and pens the banal patriotic song “Animal Farm, Animal Farm” to replace the earlier idealistic hymn “Beasts of England,” which Old Major passes on to the others.

**Themes**

*The Corruption of Socialist Ideals in the Soviet Union*

Retelling the story of the emergence and development of Soviet communism in the form of an animal fable, *Animal Farm* allegorizes the rise to power of the dictator Joseph Stalin. In the novella, the overthrow of the human oppressor Mr. Jones by a democratic coalition of animals quickly gives way to the consolidation of power among the pigs. Much like the Soviet intelligentsia, the pigs establish themselves as the ruling class in the new society.

*The Societal Tendency Toward Class Stratification*
Animal Farm offers commentary on the development of class tyranny and the human tendency to maintain and reestablish class structures even in societies that allegedly stand for total equality.

**The Danger of a Naïve Working Class**

**The Abuse of Language as Instrumental to the Abuse of Power**

One of Orwell’s central concerns, both in Animal Farm and in 1984, is the way in which language can be manipulated as an instrument of control. In Animal Farm, the pigs gradually twist and distort a rhetoric of socialist revolution to justify their behavior and to keep the other animals in the dark. The animals heartily embrace Major’s visionary ideal of socialism, but after Major dies, the pigs gradually twist the meaning of his words.