

GEORGE ORWELL'S

Animal Farm

A Fairy Story

An EMC Full Text Study Edition

Animal Farm by George Orwell
(original publication 1945, text in public domain, 2021)

EMC Full Text Study Edition

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Teachers' Notes

We're delighted that *Animal Farm* is the first 20th-century novel to be published by the English and Media Centre. This classic has been studied, admired and enjoyed by school students all over the world for well over half a century and we're keen for this to continue.

We're confident that our award-winning approach to writing resources for classroom use will add significantly to your students' experience of the novel. Alongside the full text, we've written activities designed to help students to get the most out of their reading by engaging in a wide range of critical and creative activities. Written directly to young readers, these activities offer guidance about how to interrogate the text further while always respecting the value of drawing on personal responses as the most direct and effective starting point for detailed textual exploration.

The activities are divided into three broad categories, as outlined below.

Before Reading

A small number of light-touch activities have been included to prime students' reading. They are directed to think about fable and allegory, as well as debates about how society is organised. Significantly, we don't provide contextual information about Soviet Russia here. We recognise its centrality to an understanding of the novel, but feel that initially students are better served by approaching the novel more broadly. How do events in the book reflect on your understanding of society and human behaviour in general, for example?

During Reading

We've provided light touch activities before and after each chapter. These are designed to help students to reflect on and track their reading, while still moving through the text quickly enough to maintain interest and motivation.

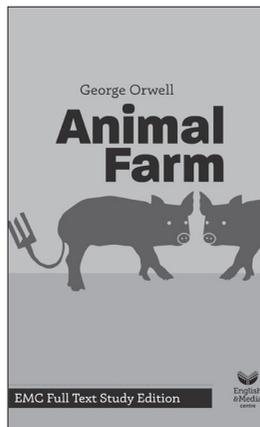
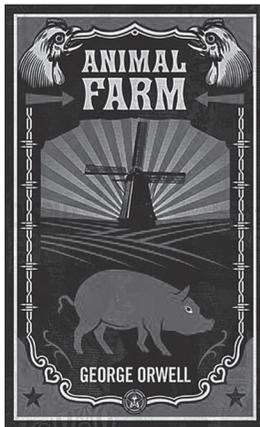
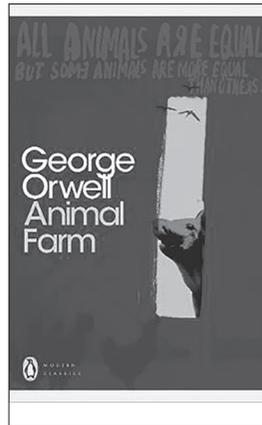
After Reading

Most activities are in this section. They're designed to help students explore the novel from multiple perspectives. We've placed activities about the novel's context near the start of this section so that students can draw on it when approaching other aspects of the text. We've designed these activities, though, so that students are not overwhelmed by issues of context. We want them to think about this novel as one that stands up on its own merits, not just as a satirical allegory about a particular moment in time.

Before Reading

Exploring Book Covers

- Discuss what you notice about the different book covers, below. Look at each cover on its own, then think about similarities and differences between them.
- Based on the covers, what kind of book do you think *Animal Farm* will be? What do you think it will be about?
- The novel has the subtitle 'A Fairy Story'. Discuss what this adds to your thinking about the novel.



Story Ingredients

Some key ingredients of the story are listed below.

- Choose at least three of these ingredients and use them to write a 100-word story set on a farm.
- Share some of your 100-word stories as a class and discuss how you used the ingredients.
- Discuss what your expectations of the novel are, based on these ingredients.

The Ingredients

- ▶ A lazy farmer who neglects his animals
- ▶ Talking animals
- ▶ Some clever, ambitious pigs
- ▶ Loyal, hardworking farm animals
- ▶ Lies and propaganda
- ▶ A stirring song: 'Beasts of England'
- ▶ A rebellion
- ▶ Working happily together to bring in the harvest
- ▶ Corruption
- ▶ An attack on the farm
- ▶ Vicious dogs
- ▶ A dictator
- ▶ The Seven Commandments

Animal Characters

In the novel, Orwell gives human characteristics to animals. For example, they can talk and read.

- Look at the list of animals, below, and discuss what human characteristics you might give each one if you were going to use them in a story.
 - ▶ Cat
 - ▶ Raven
 - ▶ Horse
 - ▶ Goat
 - ▶ Donkey
 - ▶ Sheep
 - ▶ Dog
 - ▶ Cow
 - ▶ Pig
- Share some of your ideas as a class. Discuss whether lots of you have given similar characteristics to the same animals. If so, why might that be?
- Keep your notes so that you can look out for how each animal is represented in the novel.

Thinking About Fables

When reading, you might find it useful to think of *Animal Farm* as a fable. A fable is a short story, typically featuring animals with human characteristics, that has a strong, moral message.

- Below is perhaps the most famous fable, the story of the tortoise and the hare, from *Aesop's Fables*.
- Read the story as a whole class and discuss what message you think the fable is trying to get across. What advantages are there in using animals to promote this message?
- Now, in pairs, look back at the list of animals that appear in *Animal Farm*. Make up the outline of a fable that features two or three of them. Remember that it must carry a strong, moral message.
- Listen to a selection of your fables around the class.

The Tortoise and the Hare

One day a hare came across a tortoise. The hare made fun of the tortoise for being so slow. 'Do you ever get anywhere?' said the hare.

'I do,' said the tortoise. 'In fact, I'm quicker than you think. I'll race you to prove it.'

The hare thought this would be fun. How could a hare possibly lose to a tortoise? So the hare asked the fox to set out a course and start the race.

The hare was soon so far ahead of the tortoise that they thought it would be funny to lie down on the course and have a nap while the tortoise caught up.

Slowly and steadily the tortoise kept going until they had passed the sleeping hare. The hare snoozed on and by the time they woke up the tortoise was near the finishing line. The hare sprinted as fast as they could but couldn't catch up in time. The fox declared the tortoise the winner.

After Reading Chapter 1



Old Major's Speech

- Working in pairs or threes, read the associations with the word 'comrade', below, and discuss which definition or definitions seems to best fit the way Old Major is using the word.
 - ▶ The word 'comrade' can be used to describe a friend.
 - ▶ 'Comrade' can be used to describe fellow soldiers, fighting on the same side.
 - ▶ Calling someone a 'comrade' signals that you think of them as an equal with similar beliefs and values.
 - ▶ 'Comrade' has particular associations with international organisations fighting for equality and for workers' rights.
- In your pair or three, look back at the activity 'Creating An Ideal Society'. Discuss which of these principles and values on page 11 seem to be particularly important to Old Major.
- Still in your pair or three, imagine you are animals who have listened to Old Major's speech. Talk excitedly to each other about why it was such a powerful speech. You might like to think about:
 - ▶ The language he used
 - ▶ How he addressed his audience
 - ▶ How he talked about humans
 - ▶ His vision for a better world.

A Change of View

- With a partner, try re-writing the last paragraph of the chapter in the first person from Mr Jones's point of view. For example, you could begin 'I woke with a start to a loud noise...'



- With your partner, discuss what difference it makes to see things through Mr Jones's eyes. Use the prompts below to get your discussion started.
 - ▶ Does it add anything to the story to see things from Jones's point of view? For example, does it make his character any more sympathetic?
 - ▶ If the chapter was written from Jones's point of view, what would be lost from the story?
 - ▶ As a class, discuss why you think George Orwell might have chosen to tell the story in the third person.

A Good Way to Start a Novel?

- In a small group, agree which of the statements below best sums up your response to the chapter, or write your own.
- Share your statements as a class and discuss any similarities and differences in your responses.

A.	I was drawn in by the personalities of all the animals, particularly Old Major – he is an interesting and intelligent character.
B.	At first, I thought this was going to be a fairy story, as promised in the title, but then it suddenly took a completely different turn.
C.	Old Major’s speech really made me think! He could be commenting on our society today, rather than a farm full of animals and I think this is going to be a novel with a deeper message.
D.	It seemed like a bit of a slow start, but now I want to read on to find out what the animals will do as a result of Old Major’s speech.
E.	I knew this novel was going to have talking animals in it, but this isn’t at all the kind of talking animal story I expected.
F.	This chapter doesn’t really do what openings are supposed to do. The characters and setting are introduced, but so briefly that it doesn’t seem as if they are really going to be very important to the novel. I’m not really sure what to make of this chapter. Is it the opening of a novel or a political speech?