

Year 8 Workbooklet – George Orwell & *Animal Farm*

1. George Orwell – The Man Behind *Animal Farm*

George Orwell, whose real name was Eric Arthur Blair, was born in India in 1903 when it was part of the British Empire. He grew up and went to school in England. Later, he worked as a police officer in Burma before deciding to become a writer. Orwell cared deeply about fairness and justice. He believed in speaking out against governments and societies that treated people unfairly.

He wrote *Animal Farm* in 1945, just after the Second World War. The book is an allegory – which means it's a story where the characters and events represent real historical events. In *Animal Farm*, Orwell uses animals on a farm to tell the story of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the rise of communism under Joseph Stalin. Communism is the idea that everyone should be equal, and that resources like food, land, and money should be shared fairly.

Even though the story seems simple, it carries a serious message about power, corruption, and how leaders can betray the people they are meant to serve.

Questions:

1. Why do you think Orwell chose to use animals instead of humans to tell his story?
2. How does knowing Orwell's background help us understand why he wrote about justice and fairness?
3. What does the word "allegory" mean, and why is it important for *Animal Farm*?

2. Historical Context – What Was *Animal Farm* Written About?

In 1917, the Russian people rose up against their king, called the Tsar. They wanted equality and fairness. A group of revolutionaries, led by Vladimir Lenin, promised a better life for poor people.

After Lenin died, Joseph Stalin took control. Stalin became a brutal dictator, and the hope of equality disappeared.

Orwell wrote *Animal Farm* as a warning: revolutions might start with good intentions, but power can corrupt even the people who were meant to make things better.

Questions:

1. Why might Orwell have chosen to write about a real event (the Russian Revolution) in a disguised way?
2. What dangers does Orwell show us about leaders and power?

3. Character Profiles

Farmer Jones is the owner of Manor Farm and represents Tsar Nicholas II, the last king of Russia. Jones is lazy, cruel, and often drunk, which means he does not look after his animals properly. Because he neglects them, the animals are unhappy and eventually rebel. He shows how a leader who ignores or mistreats the people under their control can cause suffering and unrest.

Old Major is an old, wise pig who inspires the animals to dream of freedom. He represents both Karl Marx, who developed the idea of communism, and Vladimir Lenin, who led the Russian Revolution. Communism is the idea that everyone should be equal and share resources fairly, like food or land. Old Major encourages the animals to think about ruling themselves instead of being controlled by humans. He is very important in Chapter 1 because he gives the animals hope for a better life and shows them that change is possible.

4. Chapter 1 – Summary & Extract

Summary:

The animals gather in the barn to hear Old Major speak. He tells them that man is their enemy and that all animals should unite to rebel. Old Major shares his dream of a future where animals are free and equal. He also introduces a song of rebellion called *Beasts of England*, which inspires the animals to imagine a better life.

Extract:

“Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of work are forced to work to the last atom of our strength. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth.”

Here, Old Major is explaining why the animals are unhappy. He introduces the idea of equality and freedom, which connects to the idea of **communism** – a society where everyone is treated fairly and shares resources.

5. Questions on Chapter 1

Comprehension Questions:

1. How do the animals feel about Farmer Jones?
2. What does Old Major say is the cause of the animals' suffering?
3. What vision of the future does Old Major give to the animals?
4. How do the animals respond to his speech?

Analysis Questions:

1. Why is Old Major's speech so powerful?
2. How does Orwell use Old Major's speech to criticise human society?

6. Creative Task

Imagine you are one of the animals listening to Old Major's speech.

Write a short diary entry describing how you feel about his message. Do you believe change is possible? What are your hopes for the future?

7. Glossary

- **Allegory** – A story where characters or events represent real people or historical events.
- **Dictator** – A leader with absolute power who often rules unfairly.
- **Rebellion** – An act of resistance against authority.
- **Communism** – An idea of a society where everyone is equal and resources are shared.
- **Corruption** – Dishonest behaviour by people in power.