

Character List

Animal Farm is written in the form of a fable, and therefore its characters are often less important for their individual characteristics as for the more general types and specific historical figures they represent. While Animal Farm satirizes totalitarian regimes in general, it also refers more specifically to the Russian Revolution of 1917, and for this reason many of its characters represent specific figures from those events.

Old Major: Old Major is the old pig whose visionary dream inspires the animals with their first concept of revolution. He may be compared to Karl Marx, whose ideologies and writings eventually led to the Communist Revolution.

Snowball: The brilliant, idealistic pig who, along with Napoleon, assumes a loose leadership at the beginning of the Revolution. His ideas are not always practical, but they are always grand and far-reaching. He is run off the farm by Napoleon and subsequently vilified by the common animals.

Napoleon: The aggressive, shrewd pig who, along with Snowball, becomes the early leader of Animal Farm. After he successfully eliminates Snowball, he gradually increases his personal power and privileges, while simultaneously tightening the control over the other animals. By seizing onto a populist revolution and turning it into his personal regime, he may be compared to his namesake, Napoleon Bonaparte of France.

Squealer: This young pig is the persuasive speaker who is the liaison to the common animals, always convincing them to accept Napoleon's latest infringements on their rights. In this role, he represents the propaganda machine of a totalitarian government.

Boxer: Boxer is the hardworking cart-horse who becomes the strongest devotee of the Revolution, standing behind Napoleon through all of the outrages he commits. He symbolizes the downtrodden peasants who are lied to and mistreated by political figures out for personal gain.

Mollie: Mollie is the young mare who runs away because she cannot endure the loss of her precious sugar lumps and colored ribbons. Her departure is seen by some of the animals as a betrayal. Mollie represents the fickle class of nobles who fled Russia after the Revolution.

Benjamin: Benjamin is the gloomy, cynical donkey who never embraces the Revolution or stands in opposition to it. He represents the human tendency toward cynicism, apathy, and the belief that "things will never change".

Moses: Moses the raven always tells the animals fantastical tales of Sugarcandy Mountain, a marvelous place where no animals have to work. Moses, however, is free to fly away, and comes and goes from Animal Farm as he chooses. He symbolizes organized religion in general, and the Russian Orthodox Church more specifically.

Farmer Jones: Farmer Jones is the man who originally owned Animal Farm, and who is overthrown by the animals at the beginning of the Revolution. He symbolizes corrupt and fatally-flawed governments that create societies ripe for Revolution.

Muriel: Muriel the goat is the farm animal who reads better than the rest of the "common" animals. Though she does not always understand the meaning of what she reads, she often reads the altered Commandments to the other farm animals, and so to the reader she may symbolize a revelatory force.

Clover: The mare who, along with Boxer, becomes a loyal and devoted believer in the Revolution. After the executions on the farm, Clover assumes a motherly position, to which the other animals retreat for comfort and understanding.

Pilkington: The neighboring farmer who Napoleon plays off Frederick in negotiations for the pile of timber. Pilkington's nonchalance and apathy toward the situation at large is a commentary on a specific type of decadent and unpolitically-minded British gentleman, as well as on the slow response of the Allies during World War II.

Frederick: The evil and cruel farmer to whom Napoleon eventually sells the pile of timber; he pays in forged bank notes, thus cheating Animal Farm. The rumors of exotic and cruel animal tortures he performs on his "farm" are meant to echo the horror stories emerging from Nazi Germany.

Whymper: Whymper is the man who acts as a trade agent for Animal Farm. His interests in the farm's affairs are purely business-minded, and his lack of concern for the animal rights issues behind the Animal Farm regime offer up a parody of the activities of countries which conduct business with communist regimes.