

Animal Farm — Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1

The story opens on Manor Farm, owned by Mr. Jones, a heavy-drinking, irresponsible farmer. One night, after carelessly locking up the farm without properly securing all the hen-house openings, Jones retires to bed with his wife. With the humans out of the way, all the animals of the farm quietly make their way to the big barn, summoned by word that Old Major — a prize-winning, highly respected boar of twelve years — wishes to share a dream he has had.

Old Major is described as majestic and wise in appearance, commanding immediate respect from the other animals. When all have gathered, he launches into a passionate, visionary speech. He tells the assembled animals that his long life has given him much wisdom, and he wishes to share it before he dies. He argues that the lives of animals are "miserable, laborious, and short" — that they are born into slavery, worked to exhaustion, fed just barely enough to keep them productive, and then slaughtered or discarded when they are no longer useful. He points out that England is a rich and fertile land, more than capable of providing abundantly for all its animals, yet none of them ever see the fruits of their own labor. Everything they produce is stolen by Man.

Major's central argument is that Man is the common enemy. Man produces nothing himself — he consumes everything and produces nothing. Remove Man from the equation, Major insists, and animals would live in comfort and freedom. He urges the animals to work toward Rebellion, though he admits he does not know when it will come. He warns them against ever adopting Man's vices — never to live in a house, sleep in a bed, wear clothes, drink alcohol, smoke, touch money, or engage in trade. Most critically, he insists that no animal must ever tyrannize another animal. All animals are equal and must treat one another as comrades.

To cement his vision and give the animals something to rally around, Major then teaches the gathering a song he remembered from his own distant youth — "Beasts of England." The song is a rousing, utopian anthem describing a future golden time when animals will be free of human tyranny, when the fields and harvests will belong to the animals themselves, and when rings, harnesses, whips, and spurs will be things of the past. The animals take to the song immediately and with tremendous excitement, singing it over and over in unison. The noise wakes Jones, who fires his gun into the darkness from his bedroom window, assuming there is a fox in the yard. The animals scatter back to their sleeping places, and the night ends.

Chapter 2

Old Major dies peacefully in his sleep just three nights after his speech, but his words have lit a fire among the animals. Over the following months, the more intelligent animals — chiefly the pigs — begin to organize and develop Major's general ideas into a more complete philosophy, which they call **Animalism**. The three most prominent figures in this effort are **Snowball**, **Napoleon**, and **Squealer**.

Snowball is vivacious, quick-thinking, and eloquent. Napoleon is large, fierce-looking, and quieter, but with a reputation for getting what he wants. Squealer is small and rotund, a brilliant talker capable of making the most questionable arguments seem persuasive — the other animals say he could "turn black into white." Together, these three hold secret meetings at night in the barn, teaching the other animals the principles of Animalism.

Not all animals are receptive. **Mollie**, a pretty young mare who loves ribbons and sugar, asks nervously whether there will still be sugar and ribbons after the Rebellion — she is more concerned with personal comfort than political ideals. **Moses**, a tame raven kept by Jones, causes a different kind of problem: he preaches constantly about a magical land called **Sugarcandy Mountain**, a paradise in the sky where animals go after death and where sugar grows on the hedges. The pigs work hard to dispel these stories as nonsense designed to keep animals content with their suffering. On the other hand, **Boxer** and **Clover**, the two great cart horses, are enthusiastic and devoted pupils, even if they struggle somewhat with reading and abstract ideas.

Jones, meanwhile, is in serious personal decline. He has lost money in a lawsuit and has taken even more heavily to drink, and the farm is falling into neglect. His men are lazy and dishonest, and the animals are increasingly underfed. One day in late June, Jones forgets to feed the animals entirely. Hunger finally pushes the animals past their limit — they break into the store-shed to get food. When Jones and his men arrive with whips to drive them back, something unexpected happens: the animals turn on them. The rebellion that Major had envisioned — and that the pigs had been carefully preparing for — erupts spontaneously and violently. Jones, his wife, and his men are chased out of the farm and off the property entirely, faster and more easily than anyone had anticipated.

The animals are euphoric. They immediately set about destroying every reminder of their oppression — whips, nose rings, blinkers, chains, the cruel knife used to castrate the pigs and dock the dogs' tails. They agree to preserve the farmhouse as a museum, since it represents human life and should not be lived in. Manor Farm is officially renamed **Animal Farm**. Snowball and Napoleon paint the seven core principles of Animalism on the wall of the big barn in large white letters — the **Seven Commandments**:

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.

5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal.

Afterward, the animals move to bring in the hay harvest. When they return that evening, they notice that the cows' milk — which had been collected that morning — has mysteriously disappeared. The chapter ends on this quietly ominous note, with no one explicitly acknowledging who took it.

Chapter 3

The harvest that summer is the most successful Manor Farm has seen in years. The animals throw themselves into the work with extraordinary energy and enthusiasm, driven by the knowledge that everything they produce belongs to them. Every animal contributes according to their ability. **Boxer** distinguishes himself above all others — his enormous strength and fanatical dedication make him indispensable. He rises earlier than anyone, works longer than anyone, and adopts the personal motto: "**I will work harder.**"

The farm settles into a weekly routine: work on weekdays, rest on Sundays. Each Sunday morning, the animals gather beneath the flagpole in the farmyard, where **Snowball's newly designed Animal Farm flag** — a green field with a white hoof and horn painted on it — is ceremonially raised. Snowball explains that the green represents England's countryside, and the hoof and horn symbolize the future Republic of Animals. After the flag ceremony, the animals hold a general meeting in the barn where the upcoming week's work is planned and resolutions are debated.

The pigs, by now clearly established as the intellectual leadership of the farm, organize various committees: the Egg Production Committee, the Clean Tails League, the Wild Comrades' Re-education Committee (aimed at taming the rats and rabbits), and others. Most of these initiatives fail, but the general atmosphere remains enthusiastic. Snowball works hard to teach all the animals to read and write. The results are mixed — the pigs learn quickly and fluently; Boxer and Clover manage to learn the alphabet but struggle with anything beyond that; many of the less intelligent animals, like the sheep, ducks, and hens, can barely manage more than a single letter.

To help the animals who cannot memorize all Seven Commandments, Snowball devises a simpler summary: "**Four legs good, two legs bad.**" This is enthusiastically taken up by the sheep, who bleat it at every opportunity, sometimes for hours on end.

However, a troubling development emerges quietly. The pigs announce that all the milk and windfall apples will be reserved exclusively for the pigs themselves. When some animals raise objections, Squealer explains smoothly that pigs are the brainworkers of the farm and that their intelligence requires brain-sustaining food. Without the pigs, he argues, Jones would come back — and surely, he asks, nobody wants that? This silences all protest.

Meanwhile, Napoleon has been quietly raising the nine puppies of the farm's two dogs, Jessie and Bluebell, in seclusion in a loft above the barn. He tells the other animals this is simply for their education.

Chapter 4

News of the Rebellion at Animal Farm has spread across the surrounding countryside, carried by the pigeons that Snowball and Napoleon have been sending out as messengers. Animals on farms throughout the county are becoming restless — they have begun singing "Beasts of England" in the fields and displaying small acts of defiance against their owners. Neighboring farmers are frightened and angry, though they are reluctant to admit their anxiety, preferring instead to claim that the animals at Animal Farm are miserable and that the whole experiment is bound to collapse.

Two farmers in particular are relevant to Animal Farm's story: **Mr. Pilkington** of Foxwood, a large but badly neglected farm, who spends most of his time fishing and hunting, and **Mr. Frederick** of Pinchfield, a smaller but well-maintained farm, who has a reputation for driving hard bargains and treating his animals cruelly. The two men despise each other, yet both feel threatened by Animal Farm. They spread rumors that the animals there are engaged in all manner of immoral behavior and that the farm is on the brink of collapse. Neither rumor is true, but they serve to contain the spread of Animalist ideas.

In October, Jones attempts to retake his farm. He and a group of men from the neighboring farms advance on Animal Farm armed with sticks and a gun. However, Snowball — who has been studying a book on the campaigns of **Julius Caesar** found in the farmhouse — has anticipated the attack and devised a careful military strategy. The defense of the farm proceeds in planned phases: first, the pigeons harass the men from the air; then the geese snap at their heels; then a small advance party of animals attacks and retreats, drawing the men into the yard where the main animal forces, led by Snowball, charge from ambush. The men are routed — gored, kicked, bitten, and trampled.

The battle is not without cost: one sheep is killed, and Snowball is wounded by Jones's shot. Boxer, thinking he has killed a stable boy who fell and lay motionless, is horrified and deeply distressed, saying he has no wish to take any life, even human. Snowball tells him coldly that the only good human is a dead one. The stable boy later recovers and escapes.

The animals celebrate their victory, which they name the **Battle of the Cowshed**. They hold solemn graveside eulogies for the fallen sheep and create military decorations — "**Animal Hero, First Class**" — awarded to Snowball and Boxer, and "**Animal Hero, Second Class**" awarded posthumously to the dead sheep. Jones's abandoned gun is installed at the foot of the flagpole, to be fired ceremonially twice a year: on the anniversaries of the Rebellion and the Battle of the Cowshed.

Chapter 5

The winter arrives harsh and difficult. Mollie has become an increasing problem — she arrives late to work, makes excuses, and has been seen speaking to humans over the hedge of a neighboring farm. When Clover confronts her after finding ribbons and lumps of sugar hidden in her stall, Mollie denies everything but looks guilty. Shortly after, she disappears from Animal Farm entirely, and is later spotted in town pulling a cart for a human owner, well fed and wearing ribbons in her mane. The other animals never speak of her again.

Snowball and Napoleon's rivalry intensifies throughout the winter. On nearly every matter of policy and planning, they take opposing sides. Snowball is the more creative and persuasive of the two, consistently winning over the other animals with brilliant speeches. Napoleon is less comfortable in open debate and prefers to work behind the scenes. Their biggest disagreement is over **the windmill**. Snowball has drawn elaborate plans for a windmill to be built on a knoll overlooking the farm. He argues that it could generate electricity, providing light and heat to the stalls and eventually powering labor-saving machinery that would reduce the animals' working week to three days. Napoleon dismisses the plan as nonsense, a distraction from the more urgent business of food production, and on one memorable occasion, examines Snowball's diagrams, then urinates on them and walks away.

The question of the windmill divides the animals into two factions. It comes to a head at a public meeting when Snowball delivers his most passionate speech in favor of the windmill. Napoleon listens in silence, then rises, makes a peculiar high-pitched sound, and the nine enormous dogs he has been raising in secret come thundering into the barn. They chase Snowball around the yard and off the farm entirely, chasing him through a gap in the hedge and into the road beyond. Snowball is never seen at Animal Farm again.

Napoleon immediately announces that Sunday meetings are abolished. From now on, all farm decisions will be made by a special committee of pigs, presided over by Napoleon himself. When some animals timidly protest that this contradicts the principles they had voted for, Squealer visits each of them privately to explain that Napoleon is making a great sacrifice taking on the burden of leadership. He uses his now-familiar refrain: surely no one wants Jones to come back?

Napoleon soon announces that the windmill will be built after all — adopting the plan he had opposed and driven Snowball away over. Squealer explains that Napoleon had never really been against the windmill; his earlier opposition had been a clever tactical maneuver. Boxer, characteristically, accepts this and adds "Napoleon is always right" as a second personal motto alongside "I will work harder." The attack dogs now flank Napoleon everywhere, wagging their tails at him just as they once had at Jones.

Chapter 6

The animals work extraordinarily hard throughout the following year — effectively like slaves, though they tell themselves they are working for their own benefit. The bulk of the labor beyond the harvest is devoted to building the windmill: quarrying stone from the ground by the laborious method of having animals push boulders to the edge of a cliff and let gravity do the breaking, then dragging the pieces to the construction site. Boxer especially exhausts himself, waking before anyone else and often working alone in the evenings by the light of the moon.

Napoleon announces that Animal Farm will now begin trading with neighboring human farms — purchasing machinery needed for the windmill and other projects. A solicitor named **Mr. Whymper** is hired as an intermediary agent. The animals are uneasy at this development — hadn't one of the original commandments forbidden contact with humans? They check the barn wall, but the commandment seems only to prohibit trade for commercial gain on behalf of individual animals — trading on behalf of the farm is apparently acceptable. The animals feel proud, if uncertain.

The pigs move into the farmhouse and begin sleeping in the beds. When some animals recall that sleeping in beds had been expressly forbidden, they go to check the wall. The Fourth Commandment now reads: **"No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets."** Squealer assures them this is exactly what had always been written, and that a pile of straw is technically a bed too, so what is the difference?

Then, one morning after a violent overnight storm, the animals awake to discover that the partially completed windmill has been destroyed — the walls blown down. Napoleon, without any investigation, immediately declares that Snowball is responsible. He announces a death sentence on the absent Snowball and awards him the newly created title of "Enemy of the People." The animals accept this explanation, and reconstruction of the windmill begins — this time with walls twice as thick.

Chapter 7

The winter is bitterly cold and food is desperately short. The animals struggle to rebuild the windmill while enduring near-starvation conditions. Napoleon is anxious about the outside world's perception of the farm's difficulties. When Mr. Whymper comes for his weekly visit, Napoleon has the nearly empty food bins filled with sand and covered with a thin top layer of grain, creating the illusion of abundance. Whymper is deceived and spreads the word that Animal Farm is thriving.

Rumors begin to circulate that Snowball has been sneaking back onto the farm at night — spoiling the milk, breaking eggs, chewing the roots in the garden, and generally creating mischief. Napoleon announces that Snowball has been in league with Jones from the very beginning, and that documents prove this. He revises the history of the Battle of the Cowshed: Snowball, far from being heroic, was actually secretly fighting for Jones's side. When some older animals try to remember that they themselves had seen Snowball wounded and bleeding in the battle, Squealer dismisses their memories as tricks played by Snowball through his secret influence.

The hens are ordered to surrender their eggs for sale to a Willingdon dealer — Napoleon needs the income to buy food supplies to last through the summer. The hens rebel, smashing their eggs rather than surrendering them. Napoleon responds by cutting their rations entirely until they capitulate. Nine hens die before the rebellion collapses.

Then Napoleon stages a mass purge. He summons all the animals to the yard. Four pigs who had previously spoken up against Napoleon's policies come forward and confess — under circumstances the text presents as obviously coerced — that they had been in secret contact with Snowball and plotting with him to sabotage the farm. Napoleon's dogs tear them apart on the spot. Other animals then come forward to confess to various crimes — consorting with Snowball, spreading seditious ideas, stealing food. Each confession is followed by immediate execution. The yard fills with the bodies of slaughtered animals.

The surviving animals are deeply shaken. Huddled together on a hillside, Clover tries to hold onto the memory of Major's vision — had this been what they had worked toward? Had the dream been for a world of slaughter and fear? But she cannot quite articulate her disquiet and falls back on loyalty and hard work.

Squealer then announces that the singing of "Beasts of England" is henceforth banned. Since the Rebellion has been achieved and Animal Farm is now a just society, the song is no longer relevant. In its place, a new anthem composed by Minimus — simple, short, and pledging loyalty to Animal Farm — will be sung instead.

Chapter 8

The Sixth Commandment — "No animal shall kill any other animal" — now reads: **"No animal shall kill any other animal without cause."** The animals who check the wall convince themselves they must have simply misremembered it.

Napoleon has retreated almost completely from public life, being seen only rarely and surrounded always by his dogs. He is referred to by new titles: "Our Leader, Comrade Napoleon," "Father of All Animals," "Terror of Mankind," and others. The pig Minimus composes an ode in his honor. His personal preferences are announced as though they were news of world importance.

Napoleon shifts his trade allegiance. Having previously dealt with Mr. Pilkington, he now announces an agreement with Mr. Frederick of Pinchfield, from whom he will receive a very high price for a large quantity of timber. He has Snowball's supposed treachery reassigned to Pilkington's farm — it is now Pilkington who has been sheltering the enemy. The animals of Animal Farm are whipped up into hatred of Pilkington and enthusiasm for Frederick, then equally rapidly asked to reverse this position when it serves Napoleon's purposes.

The timber is sold, but the banknotes Frederick provides turn out to be forgeries. Napoleon is publicly furious and declares Frederick an enemy. Days later, Frederick arrives with a group of armed men and attacks the farm. The newly rebuilt windmill — which had taken months of grueling labor — is packed with explosives and blown up. The explosion is deafening and devastating. The animals are momentarily paralyzed with grief and horror, then charge the humans in a fury, driving them from the farm, though at serious cost: several animals are killed and many more wounded. Boxer is shot in the leg and limping badly. Squealer declares it a great victory, which baffles the animals who look at their destroyed windmill, but they accept the reframing.

Napoleon has recently discovered whisky in the farmhouse cellar. After a night of consuming it and appearing to be dying, he makes a rapid recovery. The Fifth Commandment is checked: it now reads **"No animal shall drink alcohol to excess."** Napoleon announces a barley planting program — a crop useful primarily for brewing.

Chapter 9

Boxer's injured hoof heals slowly over the winter, but he refuses to take any time off. He drives himself harder than ever — now visibly aged, the spring gone from his step, his great strength beginning to fade. He comforts himself by thinking of his approaching retirement at age twelve, when Animal Farm's rules entitle animals to a pension of light work, a generous pasture, and all the food they need. He works on the windmill reconstruction and also on the construction of a new schoolhouse — for the young pigs, who will receive a proper education.

Life on the farm is harder than ever. Rations are reduced for all animals except the pigs and dogs. Squealer produces elaborate tables of statistics proving that rations are higher than they have ever been — higher than they were under Jones, higher than the previous year. The animals' inability to verify these figures leaves them disarmed.

Moses the raven returns to the farm after years of absence, perching on the same stump as before and preaching again about Sugarcandy Mountain. The pigs allow him to remain, even giving him a daily ration of beer despite his refusal to do any work — a strange indulgence for a regime that supposedly opposes the supernatural, but one the animals find quietly comforting.

Animal Farm is proclaimed a **Republic**, and Napoleon is elected President unanimously — he being the only candidate.

One afternoon, Boxer collapses while hauling stones to the windmill site — he has fallen in a heap, and cannot rise. Clover and Benjamin rush to him. Benjamin, who had always refused to read aloud for anyone, reads the side of the van that arrives a few days later to take Boxer to the "hospital" in Willingdon. The lettering on the van's side reads: "**Horse Slaughterer and Glue Boiler.**" The animals scream and cry out to Boxer as the van drives away, and he feebly attempts to kick his way out, but the van disappears.

Squealer later reports that Boxer died in hospital in Willingdon, surrounded by every comfort, with the veterinary surgeon attending him at the last. The van, he explains, had formerly belonged to a horse slaughterer but had been purchased by the veterinary surgeon and the old lettering had not yet been painted over. The animals largely accept this, wanting to believe it. A memorial banquet is held in Boxer's honor, at which the pigs consume a newly purchased case of whisky.

Chapter 10

Several years pass. The farm has grown and outwardly prospered — more fields have been acquired, the windmill is operational, and new machinery has been installed. But the animals who remember the Rebellion are old now or dead. Jones himself has died, in a home for alcoholics. Snowball is a fading memory, and what memories linger have been shaped entirely by Napoleon's propaganda. The young animals who have grown up under Napoleon know nothing else and accept Animalism's doctrines as eternal truth without questioning them.

For all the farm's apparent prosperity, the animals' lives have not improved. Aside from the pigs and dogs, every animal still lives in the old conditions of hunger, hardship, and disappointment, doing the same labor, eating the same meager rations, sleeping in the same bare stalls. The pigs and dogs have multiplied and the ruling class has grown — they do no manual work, spending their days in the farmhouse handling paperwork and administration. The promised labor-saving machinery has not reduced the animals' hours of work.

One day the animals are astonished to see the pigs emerge from the farmhouse walking upright on their hind legs. Napoleon himself appears, walking erect, carrying a whip. The sheep, evidently retrained in secret, burst into a new chant: **"Four legs good, two legs better!"** When Clover and Benjamin go to check the barn wall, they find that the Seven Commandments have been erased entirely. In their place is a single commandment: **"All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others."**

The pigs now carry whips, wear human clothing, read newspapers and magazines, talk on telephones, and smoke pipes. A delegation of neighboring farmers arrives to tour the farm, which they pronounce admirably efficient. At a grand dinner party in the farmhouse that night, both pigs and humans make speeches congratulating each other on the new alliance. Napoleon announces that the name "Animal Farm" is abolished and the farm will revert to its old name: **Manor Farm**. The word "comrade" is to be discontinued.

From outside, the other animals peer through the farmhouse windows and watch the pigs and humans seated together at the same table, playing cards, eating, and drinking. A quarrel breaks out over the game — both a pig and a human appear to have played the same card simultaneously. The watching animals look from pig to man and from man to pig, and back again, and find that they can no longer tell which is which.