‘Animal Farm’ (1945) – a dystopian allegory or ‘fairy tale’ by George Orwell
‘Animal Farm’ revision guide

written by Year 10 English students in spring 2011 for
the May 2012 OCR English Literature exam

As you will see from the OCR marking guides on the next page, the exam
board wants you to be able to write about language, structure (plot
development), themes, setting, social, cultural and historical contexts.

The following pages are related to these aims and
their content has been produced by students who will sit this
GCSE exam in 2012.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive guide; it cannot and does not
cover every idea, theme, character or interpretive point. However, any
comments on the content, such as suggestions for changes or additions,
can be emailed to damms@williamellis.camden.sch.uk
Expect this type of question:

• In what way does Orwell powerfully depict the relationship between the pigs and the other animals in this extract? [24]  (from a specimen paper)

• How does Orwell vividly portray the importance of the sheep and dogs in *Animal Farm*? Remember to support your ideas with details from the novel. [24]  (from a specimen paper)
The plot – a refresher guide

As you know, the novel does not have chapter titles. However, the list below by Laith and Gustavo may help to remind you of what happens in each part of the novel.

Suggestions for Chapter Titles:

- Chapter one: Seeds of Rebellion
- Chapter two: Revolution
- Chapter three: Faulty Start
- Chapter four: Battle for Freedom
- Chapter five: Unwanted Change
- Chapter six: The Rules Are Changed
- Chapter seven: End of the Rebellion
- Chapter eight: Defending What’s Left
- Chapter nine: Republic of Work
- Chapter ten: Familiar Ground
Themes

Theme 1: Dangers of blind faith

Some examples of key moments:

- Chapter 2, page 10: Moses spreads rumours of Sugarcandy Mountain (heaven); some animals believe it, pigs struggle to persuade otherwise.
- Chapter 2, page 11: Clover and Boxer believe the principles of Animalism without really thinking about the theory.
- Chapter 2, page 16: Napoleon tells the animals to follow Snowball to the field to do the harvest, leaving him with the milk; the milk disappears.
- Chapter 3, page 23: Squealer says that the pigs do all the 'brain work', therefore they deserve the milk and the apples.
- Chapter 5, pages 34-35: Snowball paints a beautiful picture of how life would be better when they build the windmill, but nobody knows if this is even possible.
- Chapter 5, page 37: all the animals believe Squealer's story about how Snowball is a criminal and that his part in the Battle of the Cowshed was much exaggerated.
- Chapter 5, page 38-39: Napoleon convinces the animals that the windmill was his idea.
- Chapter 6, page 42: Napoleon tries to say that trading with the other farms is only to obtain necessary resources, but the reader knows the money made will most likely go to the pigs.

By Gustavo, Laith and others
Themes

Theme 2: Abuse of language

- In 'Animal Farm' there is much corruption originating from the pigs as the story progresses. To start with they are ordinary animals that are upset with their living conditions. Old Major (who is the leader of the farm animals and is represented as the wisest and the most trustworthy) represents Karl Marx, the father of Communism, which is translated to 'Animalism' in the novel. Old Major says that the oppressed animals should rise up and take the farm over, following the principles of Animalism, but their greed takes hold of them. We see those with power begin to change from thinking of each other to themselves, which changes Animal Farm for the worst.

- The corrupt pigs start off by stealing dogs and then training them so that they can use them for evil and corruption. The other animals can't easily protest because the dogs will deal with them. Secondly, the animals are silenced by the trained sheep's bleating of "four legs good, two legs bad" at key moments. Thirdly, the pigs, and their 'henchmen', break the commandments that are the backbone of Animalism. Breaking the commandments over time slowly becomes a habit and the pigs become more corrupt because they are tempted by their authority and power. Significantly, they break the commandment of "no animal shall kill any other animal" by adding "without cause". This is another way the pigs gain control of the farm. There are many different reasons that are then used to justify a death penalty. Likewise the commandment which stated that "No animal shall drink alcohol" is changed by adding "to excess". This was added when the pigs found the larder in the cellar and took a liking to this new taste; opportunism characterizes their behaviour. In my opinion this is the point where the pigs become worse and more corrupted. They wear suits, they drink alcohol, they trade with humans and, finally, they come up with the paradoxical statement that they are 'more equal' than all the other animals, which is arguably the greatest violation of the commandments.

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."
Theme 3: Propaganda

The use of propaganda in 'Animal Farm' is either very subtle and is gently probing into your skull until it is clearly set in your head, or it is a blatantly obvious example of propaganda. Certain characters in the novel are seen as "ideal" workers but their flaws include an inability to recognise or challenge propaganda until it is too late. For example there is Boxer, who works his utmost and is commended only by words. We are told that “His two slogans, 'I will work harder' and 'Napoleon is always right,' seemed to him a sufficient answer to all problems.” These maxims of Boxer make him Napoleon's ideal worker, but Boxer angers Napoleon when he states the following after it is announced that Snowball was treacherous in the battle to rid Animal Farm of humans:

""I do not believe that," he said. “Snowball fought bravely at the Battle of the Cowshed. I saw him myself. Did we not give him 'Animal Hero, first Class,' immediately afterwards?"

This results in the dogs attempting to attack Boxer during the executions, but they fail miserably as they greatly underestimate Boxer's strength.

An example of blatant propaganda is when Napoleon’s picture is painted on the wall of the barn, but there are many more, such as Squealer’s controlling speeches (Squealer represents the Soviet propaganda machine), the banning of the anthem 'Beasts of England' and its replacement with a new song by the pig poet Minimus celebrating Napoleon, the titles, such as Ducklings' Friend, that become linked with Napoleon (parodying Stalin's ridiculous titles), the so-called 'Spontaneous Demonstrations' and the churning out of euphemisms to mask reality (for example food rations are 'readjusted' rather than 'reduced').

By Raph Dalton, and others
Imaginative writing: a piece of counter propaganda in the form of text for a leaflet

The original commandments put forward by Old Major:

- Whatever goes on two legs is an enemy.
- Whatever goes on four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
- No animal shall wear clothes.
- No animal shall sleep in a bed.
- No animal shall drink alcohol.
- No animal shall kill any other animal.
- All animals are equal.

Napoleon's new and 'improved' commandments:

- FOUR LEGS GOOD, TWO LEGS BETTER!

Here I am reminding you of the original seven commandments that symbolise the entire meaning of Animalism: unity of all animals. This is what the revolution was about, comrades. Napoleon is attempting to eliminate this new-found freedom which we had established. This leaflet fellow animals, is not an attack on Napoleon, it is an enlightenment as to what is happening on our farm. I do not need to tell you what is wrong and what has changed on the farm, for you already know it; you need just think back to before Napoleon's lies that have prevented you from thinking for yourself. Napoleon is many things, but most of all he is a hypocrite; think, animals, how many of the original seven commandments above has he broken? Think, are you all equal? Do you feel as though Napoleon and the pigs are leading you? Does this not go against the point of the revolution? I understand this may be tough for you to comprehend, comrades, as every animal seems to be telling you to believe a different story, but look at the story which provides evidence: it is here to see, your 'leader' has broken every single rule of Animalism. With him you may just as well be led by Jones, comrades!

Napoleon, I believe although I cannot be sure, was working with Farmer Jones from the start. Old Major's speech, if you remember, was a direct attack on him. Yet we failed to listen. Here I have attached a quotation from Old Major's speech for which you all were present, and yet we failed to listen to his words: "...never listen when they tell you that Napoleon and the animals have a common interest, that the prosperity of the one is the prosperity of others. It is all lies. Napoleon serves the interests of no creature except himself. And among us other animals let there be perfect unity, perfect comradeship in the struggle. Napoleon is an enemy."

This in fact proves that Napoleon has never had well meaning towards us animals, and has been plotting against us from the start: he and man do not believe in equality, do not believe in freedom or the welfare of any animal but himself. For those who understand this and want to live by the real way of Animalism, free from harm, hunger and humans, tell every bird, dog, cow, horse, sheep, rat, cat, pig that you see about the farm. Get them to listen. For you I just have one change to put to the commandments:

- All animals are equal, except Napoleon.

by anon.
Dear Readers,

I have been asked to write for this pamphlet telling my story, first hand, of the horrors I witnessed on Animal Farm. I bet you have all heard tales of the riches and feasts the animals have there. Alas, that is not the case. For all animals, except Napoleon and his disciples of course, work long days with barely any reward. Whether the sun is blazing or the hail is hailing those animals are forced to work, while their so-called ‘Comrades’ (the pigs), stay in the luxury of Jones's home. Napoleon's reign is one of terror: every animal is scared of speaking their mind, for the ones who do are never seen again. Ducks are turned in to pâté, cows turned into burgers and Boxer, my dear old friend, was discarded to make dog’s food and glue. You animals all think Animal Farm is a place of sanctity and pleasure. Oh, how you are wrong! Dogs patrol the farm for anyone who is slacking, while the pigs relax and enjoy their day. The comrades there are not happy, they are not free and they are certainly not, at least in the eyes of Napoleon, equals.

Here we have a statement from Mr. Pilkington, owner of a neighbouring and rival farmer.

Dear Readers,

That Napoleon is a nasty piece of work: he's a sneaky, scheming animal. I personally would never usually do business with one of those types, but money comes first and he did make me a very, very generous offer. (Even though I'm not supposed to say that.) Anyway Animal Farm is a bad place for animals! Don't go there, you'll die!

by Angus Grove
Characters and characterization

Character links – and the importance of the historical context by Max Russel

**Stalin** is represented by Napoleon, and his character traits emerge after the revolution. He believes he is the natural successor of Old Major and uses unlawful methods to get into power. He starts to kill anyone who opposes his views and uses propaganda to stay in power. He also corrupts Old Major’s views of Animalism and *improves* them.

**Trotsky** is represented by Snowball who is a thinker and idealist. He has good intentions for the population but is forced out of power by Napoleon, which represents the exile of Trotsky. In the Battle of the Cowshed he acts as the General and this represents the power he had with the Russian army.
Character links - and the importance of the historical context, cont.

**Lenin and Marx** may be represented by Old Major who is the character that brings the idea of Animalism to Manor Farm. After his death he is still worshipped as the farther of Animalism and when his skull is put on display it represents Lenin’s tomb in real life.

**Collective Farmers** are represented by the chickens on Animal Farm who decide to drop their eggs from the barn than rather let them get into the hands of the leaders. This links with the collective farmers in Russia who burnt their crops so the government could not take them.

**The Propaganda Machine** is represented as Snowball who covers up all Napoleon’s faults that go against Animalism and make sure the animals’ attention is focused on the enemy and on the positive features of their society. Snowball also feeds the animals lies and false statistics, just as they did in the USSR to uplift the population’s spirits and make sure they were obedient to the regime.
Old Major by Connor Clark

Lenin and Marx are perhaps represented by Old Major in 'Animal Farm'. Old Major is an inspiration and a role model to all the other characters. At the beginning of the novel he rounds up all the other animals in the barn for a group discussion. He starts by saying:

“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 it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. 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.”

By Old Major saying this it shows that he wants to change the future of the animals on Animal Farm before he is gone. Old Major continued to speak about the miserable life and living conditions they have suffered. He sums it up by saying, “It is summed up in a single word - Man. Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished forever”. By him emphasising the word “Man” it is shown to the animals that man is the cause of this situation and without him (Mr Jones) life would be easier and worth living. Also by the other animals looking up to Old Major it shows that they want to make a change and have never thought of it in this way before, just believing that their way of living was normal.

Soon after Old Major says this he moves on by saying “This needs to change!” As he says the other animals are puzzled as they think it’s impossible to change anything as people on two legs are their leaders. However Old Major moves on by talking about the revolution. The animals may continue to be puzzled at first, but like what they are hearing. Not long after Old Major dies, and to the animals it look as if everything that he said will now never be achieved. However it does not take long for two potential leaders to try and jump into power.
Key Characters

Napoleon by Connor Clark

Napoleon represents Stalin. He wants what’s best for himself and does not think about the other members of society. In fact, Napoleon becomes a tyrant, like Stalin.

Napoleon is hypocritical, for example when he interrupts in Snowball’s speech and says that his idea of the windmill is worthless. However, shortly after, we see that Napoleon decides to use Snowball’s idea and get the group on his side. As the dogs chase Snowball out of the barn Napoleon leaps into power, and takes his chance to rule Animal Farm. I believe that the other animals decide to accept the fact the Napoleon is going to be their leader as they are in fear of the dogs. It is as if they are forced to agree with Napoleon’s decisions.
Key Characters

The pigs by Sebri

In ‘Animal Farm’, from the start of chapter 1, Old Major is introduced. He is the wise old boar who decides to give his speech in the barn. Old Major perhaps represents a combination of Marx and Lenin, the men who introduced Communism. His speech, just before his death, encourages the animals to rebel against Farmer Jones.

Snowball is one of the older pigs in the group and he is one of the organisers of the rebellion. After they kick Jones out, he still wants to continue the rebellion for Old Major's sake. Snowball represents Trotsky, who was one of the leaders of the October Russian Revolution and the leader of the Red Army.
Napoleon is the villain in Animal Farm. Napoleon, the pig, is really the central character on the farm. He is obviously a metaphor for Stalin. (Comrade) Napoleon perhaps also represents the human frailties of any revolution.

Squealer is first described as a manipulator and persuader. Squealer is also thought by some to represent Goebbels, who was the minister of propaganda for Germany, and also the Russian newspaper Pravda. When Squealer masks an evil intention of the pigs, their plans can be carried out with little resistance.
Key Characters

The dogs and cows by Adeel Ahmed

The dogs represent the military/police. In the beginning of Animal Farm, they voted against accepting the rats and rabbits as 'comrades'. However, after the revolution, nine 'pups' are stolen by Napoleon from their mothers. Later in the book, these pups grow and are fully trained by Napoleon, and we are told 'they were huge dogs, and as fierce-looking as wolves'. These 'nine enormous dogs' protect Napoleon and are made Napoleon’s private bodyguards and so no one dares to speak against him, being 'too amazed and frightened to speak'.

Cows represent the peasants/farmers. The cows are gullible and are simply controlled by the pigs. The pigs gain the rights to the cows’ milk by simply convincing the other animals that they need the milk in order be intelligent and stay healthy, so that they can continue to manage the farm. Also they threaten the other animals that Jones might come back if they don’t manage the farm properly. The animals allow this because they believe that the pigs have the skill to keep them safe from Mr. Jones and his men.
The cat in 'Animal Farm' is very fickle and unreliable: it changes its mind a lot. It is also very lazy and runs away when there is work and comes back for dinner. The cat seems to represents some of the more 'shady' members of Russian society, but it is unclear exactly who Orwell had in mind. (Con men?)

The cat is only mentioned twice in ch.1 (page 3): "Last of all came the cat, who looked round, as usual, for the warmest place, and finally squeezed herself in between Boxer and Clover; there she purred contentedly throughout Major's speech without listening to a word of what he was saying." In the vote about whether the rats were allies or not the cat voted on both sides. The best words to describe the cat are probably cunning and maybe deceitful. It votes on both sides and doesn't listen to the political speeches.

The cat is not involved not that much anymore and disappears before the purges.
Key Characters

Benjamin by Danyar and others

Chapter 1

Benjamin (the donkey) is the oldest animal on the farm, and the worst tempered. He seldom talks, and when he does it is usually a cynical remark, for instance he would say that God had given him a tail to keep the flies off, but that he would sooner have had no tail and no flies. Alone among the animals on the farm he never laughs. If asked why, he will say that he sees nothing to laugh at. Nevertheless, without openly admitting it, he is devoted to Boxer: "the two of them usually spent their Sundays together in the small paddock beyond the orchid, grazing side by side and never speaking." As you would expect donkeys to be, they are the quiet beasts of the field. They are sometimes depicted as glum and innocent, but Benjamin is quietly aware. The narrator tells us that "Benjamin could read as well as any pig, but never exercised his faculty. So far as he knew, he said, there was nothing worth reading."

Chapter 3

After the rebellion, the other animals want to know what Benjamin thinks of the new organization of Animal Farm. The only thing that he'll say is, "Donkeys live a long time. None of you has ever seen a dead donkey." Benjamin has long-term vision; he seems to operate on a different time-scale than everyone else, so doesn't become excited over what he sees as passing phases.

Chapter 8

When he realizes that the humans are going to blow up the windmill, the narrator tells us, "Slowly, and with an air of almost amusement, Benjamin nodded his long muzzle."
Chapter 9

We see Benjamin’s superior knowledge in this chapter. The narrator tells us that as Boxer is led away in the knackers’ yard van “It was the first time that they had ever seen Benjamin excited—indeed it was the first time that anyone had ever seen him gallop.” Even then, the other animals think that Benjamin simply wants them to say farewell to Boxer. Benjamin has to explain to them that Boxer is on his way to be slaughtered.

Chapter 10

After Boxer’s death, the old donkey is “more morose and taciturn than ever.” When the other animals want to know whether things were better before or after the Rebellion, he replies with a characteristically cynical answer, “things never had been, nor ever could be much better or much worse – hunger, hardship, and disappointment being, so he said, the unalterable law of life.” One may wonder to what extent Benjamin’s bleak viewpoint is a result of his own guilt. Perhaps he can’t help but think that perhaps if he had spoken up against the pigs sooner, then Boxer would not have worked himself to breaking-point and been sold off to the knackers. Perhaps, though, he represents those who do nothing to change life, seeing their own actions as meaningless.

Conclusion

Benjamin is philosophical and removed, and always speaks with an all-knowing air. Yet simply by writing ‘Animal Farm’, Orwell creates a sharp distinction between himself and Benjamin. Both see injustice, but Orwell speaks out against it rather than letting it unfold with a sense of resignation and dark amusement.

Annotating an extract

"And remember, comrades, your resolution must never falter. No argument must lead you astray. Never listen when they tell you that Man and the animals have a common interest, that the prosperity of the one is the prosperity of the others. It is all lies. Man serves the interests of no creature except himself. And among us animals let there be perfect unity, perfect comradeship in the struggle. All men are enemies. All animals are comrades."

At this moment there was a tremendous uproar. While Major was speaking four large rats had crept out of their holes and were sitting on their headquarters, listening to him. The dogs had suddenly caught sight of them, and it was only by a swift dash for their holes that the rats saved their lives. Major raised his trotter for silence. (Chapter 1)

Their most faithful disciples were the two cart-horses, Boxer and Clover. These two had great difficulty in thinking anything out for themselves, but having once accepted the pigs as their teachers, they absorbed everything that they were told, and passed it on to the other animals by simple arguments. They were unflinching in their attendance at the secret meetings in the barn, and led the singing of 'Beasts of England', with which the meetings always ended. (Chapter 2)
Annotating an extract and then writing a response

On these pages, you will see annotated extracts from the book, followed by paragraphs using the ‘PEE’ principle. All of these examples are by Rajiv Choudhury.

"And remember, comrades, your resolution must never falter. No argument must lead you astray. Never listen when they tell you that Man and the animals have a common interest, that the prosperity of the one is the prosperity of the others. It is all lies. Man serves the interests of no creature except himself. And among us animals let there be perfect unity, perfect comradeship in the struggle. All men are enemies. All animals are comrades."

Student’s paragraph: Old Major is a tremendous source of inspiration for all the animals. He is an excellent speaker and employs great rhetorical devices, for example using command words such as “must” and pinpointing the enemy, as in “all men are enemies”. Also he involves all in unity: “all animals are comrades”. Therefore all listen intently to his words; he is the foundation for everyone’s ideology.
Annotating and writing a response cont.

At this moment there was a tremendous uproar. While Major was speaking, four large rats had crept out of their holes and were sitting on their hindquarters, listening to him. The dogs had suddenly caught sight of them, and it was only by a swift dash for their holes that the rats saved their lives. Major raised his trotter for silence.

Student’s paragraph: The animals all appreciate Old Major sharing his wisdom and the “tremendous uproar” shows approval and gratitude. Rats even “crept out of their holes” to listen. However, it is also the first flaw as no one even considered the rats before. Fortunately Major decides upon a tactful solution and calls for a vote; the animals fairly decide to involve the rats.

They were just coming down the stairs when Mollie was discovered to be missing. Going back, the others found that she had remained behind in the best bedroom. She had taken a piece of blue ribbon from Mrs. Jones’s dressing-table, and was holding it against her shoulder and admiring herself in the glass in a very foolish manner. The others reproached her sharply, and they went outside. Some hams hanging in the kitchen were taken out for burial, and the barrel of beer in the scullery was stove in with a kick from Boxer’s hoof, otherwise nothing in the house was touched.

Student’s paragraph: Major had stated animals should not imitate humans in any way but already Mollie has shown there is temptation. She took “blue ribbon from Mrs. Jones’s dressing-table” and although at the time other animals “reproached her sharply” the temptation remains and eventually is succumbed to. The pigs begin to wear clothes, develop an alcohol habit and sleep in the house.
Their most faithful disciples were the two cart-horses, Boxer and Clover. These two had great difficulty in thinking anything out for themselves, but having once accepted the pigs as their teachers, they absorbed everything that they were told, and passed it on to the other animals by simple arguments. They were unfailing in their attendance at the secret meetings in the barn, and led the singing of 'Beasts of England', with which the meetings always ended.

Student’s paragraph: Problems appear to be emerging or possible consequences as many animals are gullible and naïve and there is a natural hierarchy between them. At the “top” of this hierarchy are the pigs as they are superior in their knowledge; this shows they are the probable leaders and this goes against Major’s teachings. Also Boxer and Clover (not the only two) have “great difficulty in thinking anything out for themselves” this means they can potentially be exploited. With his excellent examples, and rhetorical devices employed, the speech becomes extremely motivational and inspirational. There is a general consensus to accept “the pigs as their teachers” which is unfortunate as any corruption from the pigs will result in all round corruption.