

Animal Farm

Critical Explanation of Passages

Chapter 1

Passage 1

I have had a long life, I have had much time for thought as I lay alone in my stall, and I think I may say that I understand the nature of life on this earth as well as any animal non-living. It is about this that I wish to speak to on.

Questions:

- (1) Fix the context of this passage.
- (ii) What does the Speaker want to convey to other animals?
- (iii) Relate the impact of this passage to the plot of the novel.

The Speaker is Old Major known formerly as Willingdon Beauty. The words themselves tell of his tiredness in life, having lived long, bearing many experiences, which have groomed him. He visualises his demise and deems it proper to advise the living animals on the howabouts of life, its vicissitudes. He had a dream a few days ago, and it is about this dream that he is going to speak. Though not certain as to the actual content of the intended speech, the preparedness of Old Major is the springboard that is going to set the plot of the novel in motion. Not only the animals, but the readers too are alert, eager to listen. This statement begins the drama of the novel. There is Shakespearean temper in this statement of Old Major because the beginning of action is sudden and striking as it is in the opening scenes of Shakespeare's plays.

Passage 2

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.

Questions:

- (i) State whether the animals are in the know of their real enemy before the emphatic declaration made in the passage? How do you base your opinion?
- (ii) Elaborate on 'hunger' and 'overwork' the animals suffer from.
- (iii) What is the Speaker's (identify the speaker) intention here?

Old Major ventilates his pent up emotion on the pretext of the travails of the animals. The farm in which they are all living is capable of providing a comfortable living for a dozen horses, twenty cows and hundreds of sheep. They all can live with dignity. But what happens in reality is that their labour is eaten up by the humans. Here, it is specifically the exploiter Jones, the Farm owner. The animals labour hard for man who denies them their dues. The animals are deceived, abandoned and pooh-poohed. The scene minus man will certainly result in restoration of dignity to animals. There will be alleviation of hunger and overwork.

The seed of discontentment is sown here to blast in the form of revolt in a short time in the future. From the state of not knowing of their exploitation and indignity at the hands of man, the animals reach the stage of being aware of how they are vulgarized by their owner. This awakening is the turning point in the initiation of the defacto action in the novel. What is to be noted is the subdued key of incitement by Old Major. A clever persuasive technique!

Passage 3

And even the miserable lives we lead are not allowed to reach their natural span.

Questions:

- (i) What is the cause for regret expressed here?
- (ii) How is 'misery' in animal life related to its natural span'?
- (iii) Describe briefly how man is an exploiter of the animal population.

Old Major's lamentation over man's infliction of misery on the animals reaches its zenith with this statement. Even in their misery, the animals are not allowed their go. Old Major is critical of man's leadership over animals despite his inability to produce anything as the animals do. Milk, eggs, and farm produce are all the works of animals and fowls and Man with his craftiness uses them to his advantage giving a little to the animals. The milk of cows has not fattened the calves. The eggs have not been allowed to hatch. Jones has capitalised all these for his betterment. Even the horses have not been spared their foals. Before their first year, they are sold out and thereby their mothers are rendered sterile in their mind. All these indignities and miseries the animals have borne so far just for poor rations. Not only this, the animals capable of providing meat are butchered within a year of their birth. Old Boar says he has been lucky to have survived for twelve years, a surprising longevity. The horses will be sent to the knacker who will boil them for foxhounds. Old Dogs would be drowned with bricks tied to their necks.

Thus, Old Major instils fear in the animals showing how they have been ignorant of their lot so far. The animals are thus geared up for their rebellion.

Passage 4

All men are enemies. All animals are comrades.

Questions:

- (i) How is man presented naked in his intentions with regard to animals?
- (ii) How according to Old Major, comradeship among animals can be achieved?
- (iii) How is this passage contributive to the feeding of the idea of rebellion in animals?

The end of Old Major's speech has its sledge on the anvil. Hence this exhortation. The only way to get rid of the misery of animals is to get rid of the tyrannies of man. In the course of the rebellion against man, he might advance an argument saying that man and animals have a common interest. This, the Old Major says, should never be believed. Man serves unto himself only. Unless there is perfect understanding among animals, there cannot be any comradeship and unity. Only with unity, man can be countered. To strengthen this point Major makes this emphatic remark and the foundation is perfectly laid for the animal rebellion.

Passage 5

No animal must ever live in a house, or sleep in a bed, or wear clothes, or drink alcohol, or smoke tobacco, or touch money or engage in trade. All the habits of Man are evil.

Questions:

- (1) Why is that animals are insisted on not to adhere to man's ways of life? (1) What implication is meant on the animal behaviour by this statement?
- (iii) How is hatred for man conveyed in this passage?

This passage is reflective of the animals' misanthropy if it could be termed so. This is a sort of dictate Old Major is giving the animals for dutiful adherence. Since man is a tyrant sipping the sap of

animals, he has to be deemed an arch enemy and the animals have to shun him lock stock and barrel. All his habits are to be kept off reach. House, bed, money, trade, alcohol and tobacco to which man has abundant access are to be avoided; Old Boar is of the view that whatever is connected with man is evil. This kind of exhortation goes to forge unity among the animals with a sense of equality among themselves. The animals are forewarned against infliction of pain on their own clan. A sense of oneness is thus instilled in animals so that their rebellion can be strong enough to thwart the secret viciousness of man.

Passage 6

The cows lowed it, the dogs whined it, the ducks quacked it.

Questions:

- (i) Identify the reason for the animals' excitement.
- (ii) How is the idea of freedom pictured as could be recalled in this passage?
- (iii) What could be the poetic reason for the bellowing, whining, bleating and quacking of the lines presented by Old Boar?

The narrator (George Orwell) who has so far, until two paragraphs before the end of the first chapter, dealt with the technique of 'showing', now begins to tell. That is, he intrudes into the scene of action. The song which Old Major regains in his memory during his sleep thrills the animals, so says Orwell. The internal rhythm together with ideas of man's ignominy at the hands of animals, and the bright future in store for them thrill them that each animal with its appropriate expressive sound sings it. Hence, the author says, "The Cows (bel) lowed it, the sheep bleated it, the horses whined it, and the ducks quacked it". It is for the reader to hear in his mind's ears as to how it would sound if a cow were to sing it in its bellowing voice. Instead of an agonising experience even at the thought of rebellion, there is exultation even in protest provided by the rhythmic number from the Old Boar.

Chapter two:

Passage 1

These three had elaborated Old Major's teachings into a complete system of thought, to which they gave the name of Animalism.

- (1) Who are responsible for converting Old Major's teachings into a thought system called Animalism?
- (ii) What is Animalism?
- (iii) How do other animals react to the proposal of systematized Animalism?

Napoleon, the fierce looking Berkshire boar known for pushing his way, Snowball another boar known for its vivacity, and Squealer known for his manipulating skill are responsible for changing Old Major's teaching into a systematized body of knowledge called Animalism.

Animalism has its roots in the song that Old Major sings after retrieving it from his memory. Man who is a tyrant in treating animals will be defeated. Consequently, the animals will be relieved of their clippings. The animals will rule and cultivate their own land that will result in plentiful produce. All animals have to be comrades. All these consolidate and constitute Animalism.

Initially, the animals exhibit stupidity and apathy. Some animals turn sentimental on hearing about Animalism. They say that Jones is their master feeding them. They are afraid of starvation if Jones were to be thrown off. Some animals say that they need not worry for life if they were to die. If the

rebellion is going to be a sure event, what meaning could be there whether the animals work or not for it. This is the reaction of some animals.

Passage 2

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.

Questions:

- (i) Who are under reference here?
- (ii) What is their general behaviour?
- (iii) Why do the animal meetings always end with 'Beasts of England?'

The cart-horses Boxer and Clover are referred to here. These horses are incapable of any original thinking. However, they have taken the pigs Napoleon, Snowball and Squealer-for granted for their wisdom. Whatever the pigs say, the horses hold as dogma and faithfully convey the same to the other animals by simple arguments. They do not abstain from any meetings and sing with spiritedness the Beasts of England'.

The Beasts of England' is the song that can be called the animal anthem. This is sung to perpetuate the spirit of rebellion. It pepes the animals up for greater action soon.

Passage 3

And so, almost before they knew what was happening, the Rebellion had been successfully carried through; Jones was expelled, and the Manor Farm was theirs.

Questions:

- (1) What cause leads to the Rebellion to take place, much earlier?
- (ii) Describe how does it take place. (iii) Do you feel the expression ... "the Manor farm was theirs" is an emphasis of finality? If so or if not so, why?

Starvation and carelessness of Jones for the animals spark off the assault the animals resort to. This in turn ironically assumes the tone of rebellion. Jones falls into too much drinking owing to his huge loss of money in a lawsuit and this results in his negligence of the Manor Farm. Sometime in June, on a Saturday Mr. Jones goes out and is not home till Sunday afternoon. After coming, he slides down on the drawing room sofa for a deep sleep. The animals, which remain unfed, lose their temper. A cow breaks the door of the store-shed with her horn and the animals have their go from the bins. When Jones's men come to control them, the animals begin butting Jones and his men so violently that they all flee. Mrs. Jones takes to her heels through another gate. The animals in all glee shut the gates of the farm on all sides and take control of the farm. Thus, the rebellion breaks out without the animals realising that it is a rebellion. Hunger and negligence form the base for the rebellion.

That the Manor Farm comes under the hold of the animals is an expression of finality. This is because, as the narration proceeds, we find no trace of Jones and his men coming to retrieve the farm. This means that they are beleagued. The animals find themselves on the open ground in all joy. Hence, there is a final win for the animals.

Passage 4

They explained that by their studies of the past three months the pigs had succeeded in the reducing the principles of Animalism to Seven Commandments.

Questions:

- (i) What do you deduce about the behaviour of the pigs?
- (ii) What does Animalism encapsulated into seven commandments tell of the pigs?

The pigs' saying that they had been learning to read from the book they found among the rubbish is indicative of their malicious mind. Their crafty mind comes to light from the incident. It is to be noted that they have not divulged their learning process to any other animal. Hence, the seed of rebellion has been working within them to assume the position of power, which requires some degree of learnedness.

The welfare of animals and the sustenance of their interests known as Animalism are cloistered within the seven commandments by the efforts of Napoleon and Snowball. These Commandments say that the pigs are not only 'carriers' but also intelligent thinkers with visionary gleam. All things that are connected with humans are declared prohibitions—bed clothes and alcohol. Man is an enemy. All animals are equal. These dictates sound democratic. Democratic thinking in animals (pigs) shows that they have become cultured and civilized.

Chapter Three

Passage 1

I will work harder -Which he had adopted as his personal motto.

Questions:

- (i) What makes the declarer to take to this resolution?
- (ii) What impact does this declaration have on the psyche of other animals?
- (iii) Does the statement forebode anything about the possible spinning out of things in the future?

The harvest, on being undertaken by the animals themselves poses many difficulties. The animals have to tread it out in ancient style and blow away the chaff with their breath. Since the job is difficult, the pigs with their intelligence choose to do it and the male horse Boxer with his tremendous muscle power sees that it is done. This makes Boxer resolve the way he does. Though it is difficult to say that Boxer's resolve influences other animals, it could easily be deduced that the working of other animals according to their capacity without being told is a sure indication of the impact of Boxer's determination to work harder, and even more in future.

Boxer's determination to work harder and the pigs making the hard work a crisis-blaster clearly indicate that the days ahead are going to be tough and will have to be conquered only by hard work.

Passage 2

He would trace out A, B, C, D in the dust with his great hoof, and then would stand staring at the letters with his ears back, sometimes shaking his forelock, trying with all his might to remember what came next and never succeeding.

Questions:

- (1) Who is under reference in this passage? What makes the 'he' do what he does?

(ii) What impression do you get of the scene?

Boxer is the animal referred to here. There is an effort in the Animal Farm to make all the animals literate. In this effort all animals take part and make the scheme a great success.

Every animal has its own capacity in the learning process. The Dogs learn to read perfectly well. The sheep read out to others too. The pigs and Benjamin, the donkey are able to read well. These efforts on the parts of animals make them aware of what goes on around them.

Passage 3

Four legs good, two legs bad.

Questions:

(i) What is the necessity for this maxim?

(ii) How does Snowball justify this simplified commandment?

The farm animals barring a few are not able to learn the seven commandments despite the reading and writing classes. Particularly the sheep, hens, and ducks find it difficult to learn the commandments. Hence Snowball after much thinking makes the single maxim.

Snowball is of the view that once this maxim is learnt, the animals and birds can be free from human influences. According to Snowball this single maxim is the crux of Animalism. He further says that though birds are two legged, their wings are organs of propulsion. Hence they are free from manipulation. Therefore, birds with their two legs and two wings are to be regarded four-legged. The mischievous element in man is his hand.

Passage 4

The whole management and organisation of this farm depends on us. Day and night we are watching over your welfare.

Questions:

(1) Explain the context in which this statement is made. Who makes it ?

(ii) What does the passage inform us about the impending designs to shape up the Animal Farm ?

Squealer is the representative of Snowball and Napoleon. He makes this statement in an effort to convince the other animals as to the mysterious disappearance of milk and apples. The animals other than pigs think that all would get an equal share of these. But, to their shock they learn that the windfall apples are to be brought to the harness room for the exclusive consumption of pigs. Over this the animals murmur. To convince them Squealer is sent to make statements. This passage is the key statement that Squealer makes.

Saying that the entire management hinges on the ability of pigs, Squealer tries to assuage the other animals about the justification in the pigs' consumption of milk and apples. The pigs need energy to work hard failing which the Animal Farm and eventually its welfare would collapse. The threat of Jones coming back is used by the pigs to keep the other animals from

their pronouncement of protest. All these hint at the hideous designs of the pigs to sway the fortunes of the farm to their advantage and to keep the other animals in fool's paradise.

Chapter 4

Passage 1

At heart, each of them was secretly wondering whether he could not somehow turn Jones's misfortune to his own advantage.

Questions:

- (i) Is there more than what is apparent in this passage?
- (ii) Explain how the misfortune of Jones is a cause of both worry and happiness to his counterparts.

Yes, George Orwell here is implicit in his dig at the centres of Communism and Fascism. Germany and Russia despite their pact of co-operation turned hostile and tried to make use of the other's disadvantage to its own advantage respectively. The message of rebellion through the pigeons of the Animal Farm to the animals across the country incite the animals in Foxwood and Pinchfield to turn defiant. Hence the owners Pilkington and Frederick are worried. But the misery of Jones at the hands of the animals in his farm gives pleasure to them. In case the rebellion spreads, Pilkington and Frederick would lose their mental equipoise because of their easy going nature and lawsuits respectively.

Passage 2

This was what came of rebelling against the laws of nature, Frederick and Pilkington said.

Questions:

- (i) Is what is referred to fiction or fact?
- (ii) Explain the circumstances that lead to the statement.
- (iii) How is the situation viewed first, and how does the view alter its course?

It is all fabrication from Frederick and Pilkington, who in order to get over their own fear of their farm animals jumping to revolt, go about saying that in the Animal Farm there is cannibalism. The punishment is that the animals there torture one another with red-hot horseshoes and have their females in common. This is just to terrorise their own farm animals from revolting.

Both Pilkington and Frederick are very much concerned about their farm animals learning about the rebellion in the Animal Farm. That the animals there manage their own affairs is initially a matter of scorn for them. They laugh it out primarily with pretension. They go about saying that the Manor Farm (they do not tolerate the name Animal Farm) animals are starving to death owing to their revolt. But when they are affirmed of the fact that the animals there do not starve, they go about spreading slanders that the animals of the Manor Farm are indisciplined, punish one another with red-hot horseshoes and indulge in cannibalism.

The situation of rebellion in the Manor Farm (Animal Farm) is treated lightly initially. But when the reality is hard to digest Pilkington and Frederick begin spreading lies about the infliction of misery that the animals there undergo for going against the laws of nature, the law being that animals should always be of service to the humans.

Passage 3

The blackbirds whistled it the hedges, the pigeons cooed it in the elms, it got into the din of the smithies and the tune of the church bells. And when the human beings listened to it they secretly trembled, hearing in it a prophecy of their future doom.

Question:

- (1) What is the reason for the excitement of the birds and the shock of the humans?
- (ii) What do you understand of the outcome of the incident leading to excitement in birds and shock in humans?

The revolt in the Animal Farm results in Snowball's introduction of a liberation song entitled "Beasts of England". The rhythm and rhyme and ideas in the song so captivate the animals and birds in the Animal Farm that they go about chanting it. Particularly the birds find it exciting and sing it wherever they fly. But, the song which turns popular sends down fear in humans, particularly the farm owners, about their own future in the event of animals assuming power to manage themselves.

Liberation from bondage is what appears to be imminent for the animals in other farms. This is borne out by the birds of the Animal Farm chanting it everywhere. Damnation is impending to the humans as they would be rid of their power over the animals. Hence their fear. Truly, there seems a promise of a topsy-turvy situation.

Passage 4

I had no intention of doing that I forgot that I was wearing iron shoes. Who will believe that I did not do this on purpose?

Questions:

- (1) Explain the occasion that makes the regret of the sayer.
- (2) What is your opinion about the sayer ?

This is the regret voiced by Boxer on seeing a boy of the Foxwood Farm falling face down in the mud on being stamped by his iron-shoe hooves. All animals, despite their retreat go after Jones and his men and attack them as would be possible within their own fashion. This sends the men panicky. In the yard a boy is on his face down and Boxer tries to turn him over with his iron-shod hooves. Boxer on seeing the boy motionless becomes sentimental and broods saying about his being oblivious of wearing iron shoes.

Passage 5

It was decided to set the gun up at the foot of the flagstaff. like a piece of artillery, and to fire it twice a year - once on October the twelfth, the anniversary of the Battle of the Cowshed, and once on Midsummer Day, the anniversary of the Rebellion.

Questions:

- (i) Explain the propriety of the decision found in the passage.
- (ii) Describe the military decoration prior to the decision to have the anniversary of the Battle of Cowshed.

The battle between the animals and the humans having ended, the former gather to celebrate the victory. The battle is called the Battle of Cowshed, signifying the importance of the cowshed from where the ambush had taken place. As a mark of remembrance over the superiority of their mind and muscle power over the gun, the animals decide unanimously to mount the gun of Jones at the foot of

the flagstaff. Jones had his gun pulled off in the melee of the battle. It is decided to fire the gun as a mark of remembrance of the battle and the rebellion that led to the battle.

As regards the military decoration, there are two classes: Animal Hero, First Class and Animal Hero, Second Class'. Because of Snowball's strategy, and Boxer's might in the battle, both are conferred on the former title. A sheep that fell to the gunshot of Jones is remembered movingly, and the conferment of the second honour is done posthumously on the sheep.

Chapter Five

Passage 1

Windmill or no windmill, he said, life would go on as it had always gone on-that is badly.

Questions:

- (i) Who is the commentator?
- (ii) Describe the situation that leads to this comment.

Benjamin, the donkey is the commentator. He does not take any side and with a sense of abandonment, he comments like this:

There grows and heats up a controversy over the erection of the windmill. Snowball and Napoleon differ and the animals take sides. The situation is that there is a necessity to leave the proposition for voting. Each side has its slogan. Since Snowball's suggestion is towards lessening the work, the slogan is "Vote for Snowball and the three day week". Napoleon's insistence is on increase of food production. Therefore, his faction's slogan is "Vote for Napoleon and the full manger". Benjamin, the donkey is disinterested, does not expect any immediate reform, and is resigned to bad life. Hence his comment.

Passage 2

By the time he had finished speaking there was not doubt as to which way the vote would go.

Questions:

1. Describe the situation involved.
2. What impact does the speech make on the animals? Describe briefly the nature of speech.

- (1) The erection of the windmill as is suggested by Snowball incites Napoleon who has a secret fear of Snowball's popularity. Snowball tells the animals about the advantages the windmill would bring about. But Napoleon gives just a bland negative as his argument and persuades the animals not to vote in favour of the erection of the windmill. Then Snowball stands up and waxes eloquence and the animals are carried away. Snowball enlightens the animals that electricity from the windmill could operate threshing machines, ploughs, harrows, rollers, and reapers and binders besides supplying every stall with its own electric light, hot and cold water and an electric heater. His speech makes it very clear as to the ways the votes will go.
- (2) The animals are swept off by Snowball's speech because his touch on various aspects of the use of electricity goes beyond chaff-cutters, and turnip-slicers. The animals being fickle minded, support both Snowball and Napoleon when they speak. But Snowball's rhetoric on

the uses of electricity make the animals spell-bound and hence it appears that Snowball would win in supportive voting.

Passage 3

Discipline, comrades, iron discipline! That is the watchword for today. One false step, and our enemies would be upon us.

Questions:

- (i) Explain the context in which this statement is made.
- (ii) Comment on the tone in the passage.

Squealer, the spokesperson of Napoleon comes out to the other animals. He, due to instigation from Napoleon, meets the animals to assuage them on the need to drive Snowball away. When the animals say that Snowball fought valiantly in the Cowshed battle, Squealer insists that more than bravery, it is discipline that is of utmost importance. Squealer charges Snowball of crimes without amplifying them. He just says that Snowball's participation in the battle is much exaggerated. He insists that obedience and loyalty are more important than bravery and Snowball displayed no loyalty. Squealer thus justifies Snowball's expulsion by the dogs.

Squealer's tone is reflective of Napoleon's dictates. The charge that Snowball did not have obedience means that he did not obey Napoleon. This means that the leadership of Snowball is never accepted by Napoleon who thinks that he alone is and can be the leader. Napoleon's ego is hurt by Snowball's daring disregard of his intended leadership. Moreover, Napoleon through Squealer accuses Snowball of transgressing the borders of discipline. Totally these lines without any supportive evidence assault Snowball for a crime that has not been committed. These lines further establish that by propaganda even a falsity can be made to look truthful. Snowball is here presented as if he has committed a great blunder involving discipline. The animals' foolishness is capitalised with the argument that the Sunday meetings would bring Jones back farm.

Passage 4

This, said Squealer, was something called tactics. He repeated a number of times, 'Tactics, comrades, tactics !' skipping around and whisking his style with a merry laugh.

Questions:

- (i) What do you feel about the presentation of the picture Napoleon's doings ?
- (ii) What is satiric about the passage?

The other animals in the farm despite their foolishness understand that something is wrong about what is being done by Napoleon. This in turn is understood by Napoleon who sends his stooge Squealer to justify his actions. Accordingly, Squealer informs the animals that the reason for planning to erect the windmill, which was initially, opposed by Napoleon, is that it was originally proposed by Napoleon himself but stolen from his papers by Snowball. To a question from some unknown animal as to the motive of Napoleon's objection to the windmill, Squealer says that it is all tactics-strategy, a kind of trickery in administration.

George Orwell is caustic about how a false propaganda among the ill informed will take roots to erase and efface the truth out of their minds. It is a dig at communism taking roots in Russia, and how

it is going off the rails. The actual human welfare is left in the lurch and administrative survival under falsities is taking the prime hold.