

Animal Farm: Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1:

As the novella opens, Mr. Jones, the proprietor and overseer of the Manor Farm, has just stumbled drunkenly to bed after forgetting to secure his farm buildings properly. As soon as his bedroom light goes out, all of the farm animals except Moses, Mr. Jones's tame raven, convene in the big barn to hear a speech by Old Major, a prize boar and pillar of the animal community. Sensing that his long life is about to come to an end, Major wishes to impart to the rest of the farm animals a distillation of the wisdom that he has acquired during his lifetime. Old Major relates a dream that he had the previous night, of a world in which animals live without the tyranny of men: they are free, happy, well fed, and treated with dignity.

Chapter 2:

Three nights later, Old Major dies in his sleep, and for three months the animals make secret preparations to carry out the old pig's dying wish of wresting control of the farm from Mr. Jones. The work of teaching and organizing falls to the pigs, the cleverest of the animals, and especially to two pigs named Napoleon and Snowball. Together with a silver-tongued pig named Squealer, they formulate the principles of a philosophy called Animalism, the fundamentals of which they spread among the other animals. The animals call one another "Comrade" and take their quandaries to the pigs, who answer their questions about the impending Rebellion. The Rebellion occurs much earlier than anyone expected and comes off with shocking ease. Mr. Jones has been driven to drink after losing money in a lawsuit, and he has let his men become lazy, dishonest, and neglectful. One day, Mr. Jones goes on a drinking binge and forgets to feed the animals. Unable to bear their hunger, the cows break into the store shed and the animals begin to eat. Mr. Jones and his men discover the transgression and begin to whip the cows. Spurred to anger, the animals turn on the men, attack them, and easily chase them from the farm.

Chapter 3:

The animals spend a laborious summer harvesting in the fields. The clever pigs think of ways for the animals to use the humans' tools, and every animal participates in the work, each according to his capacity. The resulting harvest exceeds any that the farm has ever known. Only Mollie and the cat shirk their duties. The powerful and hard working Boxer does most of the heavy labor, adopting "I will work harder!" as a personal motto. The entire animal community reveres his dedication and strength. Of all of the animals, only Benjamin, the obstinate donkey, seems to recognize no change under the new leadership. Snowball establishes a number of committees with various goals, such as cleaning the cows' tails and re-educating the rats and rabbits. Most of these committees fail to accomplish their aims, but the classes designed to teach all of the farm animals how to read and write meet with some success. By the end of the summer, all of the animals achieve some degree of literacy.