

# Before You Read

## *Animal Farm* Chapters 1–4

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

Why do you think revolutions occur? What circumstances would lead people to overthrow the daily political and economical structure of their lives?

#### List It

With a partner, identify two or three revolutions that occurred more than ten years ago. What circumstances, if any, do these revolutions have in common? What sorts of goals were the revolutionaries seeking to accomplish? In retrospect were the revolutions successful?

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out about farm animals who decide that revolution is the necessary course.

### BACKGROUND

#### Did You Know?

Many of the ideals behind the Soviet revolution were based on the writings and teachings of Karl Marx. A German intellectual who lived in the mid-1800s, Marx believed that societies are divided into two segments, a working class and an owner class. The working class creates all the products, while the owner class enjoys all the benefits of these products. This class division leads to inequality and oppression of the working class. Marx's objective was to create a classless society in which the work is shared by all for the benefit of all, and he believed revolution was the way to achieve this goal.

In leading workers toward revolution, Marx used slogans like "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." He also urged people to give up their religion, which he believed gave them false hope for a better life in heaven. The character of Old Major in *Animal Farm* is sometimes interpreted as a representation of Karl Marx. Major's speech in the novel's opening chapter reflects many Marxist ideas, from the opening "Comrades," a typical form of address in the former Soviet Union, to the revolutionary song he teaches the other animals.

#### Character Types

A fable is a narration intended to enforce a useful truth. Fables have two important characteristics. First, they teach a moral or lesson. In *Animal Farm*, the moral involves Orwell's views about Soviet politics. Second, the characters are most frequently animals. These animal characters often function as a satiric device to point out the follies of humankind. Though Old Major, Snowball, and Napoleon may represent Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, and Joseph Stalin, many of the story characters are much more general. Some animals are grouped together as a single character—"the sheep," "the hens," and "the dogs." Orwell also capitalizes on the traits generally associated with particular animals, such as sheep as followers and dogs as loyal.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

**cannibalism** [kan'ə bə liz'əm] *n.* practice of eating one's own kind

**cryptic** [krip'tik] *adj.* intended to be mysterious or obscure

**gambol** [gam'bəl] *v.* to skip about in play

**ignominious** [ig'nə min'ē əs] *adj.* shameful; dishonorable

**indefatigable** [in'di fat'ə gə bəl] *adj.* untiring

**parasitical** [par'ə sit'i kəl] *adj.* like a parasite; gaining benefits from a host it injures

# Active Reading

## ***Animal Farm* Chapters 1–4**

The major characters in *Animal Farm* are introduced in the first four chapters. As you read, think about the purpose of each of Orwell's characters. Complete the chart by noting details that describe each character or by listing key actions.

Character	Characteristics / Actions / Purpose
Old Major	gets the revolution started; inspires hope for real change

# Responding

## *Animal Farm* Chapters 1–4

### **Personal Response**

What is your reaction to the animals' revolution?

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Do you sympathize with the animals' complaints and goals? Why or why not?

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### **Analyzing Literature**

#### **Recall and Interpret**

1. Describe how the Rebellion takes place. How does the animals' behavior during the Rebellion suggest both human and animal characteristics?

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2. How do the pigs gain the rights to the cow's milk? Why do the other animals allow this to occur? What does this event suggest about the power hierarchy on the farm?

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3. How does the original vision of Animalism become the slogan "Four legs bad, two legs good"? In your opinion, do the animals want rules with simple language? What kind of language do the pigs use?

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# Responding

## *Animal Farm* Chapters 1–4

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. What technique does Orwell use to cast doubt on the likelihood of a successful revolution?

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5. Characterize Snowball as a leader. Do you think his reaction to the stable-boy's death is the appropriate reaction to have during a revolution?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Battle Log

The animals recognize the Battle of the Cowshed as a pivotal moment in the Revolution. What effects did the battle have on the animals, individually and as a group? On your own paper, write a short battle log describing the events and evaluating the animals' behavior. Share your battle log with a partner and compare your evaluations of the events and the effects on the animals.

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

While addressing a serious topic on one level, the plot of *Animal Farm*, when taken literally, is also hilariously funny. Divide Chapters 1 through 4 among the members of your group. Identify passages or scenes you find especially funny. Briefly role-play these scenes and then discuss how Orwell creates humor. Present one or two of your scenes to the rest of the class.

##### Music Connection

Write a revolutionary song like *Beasts of England*. Choose one of the revolutions you identified in the **Focus Activity** on page 12. Learn a little more about the surrounding historical events, then build an analysis of the rebels' emotions. Set your song to original music or to that of a popular song. If possible, record or perform the song for the class.



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