

Chapter 1

Beasts of England



Summary

Orwell begins his 'fairy story' **allegory** on Manor Farm, at night. The cruel, drunk farmer, Mr Jones, has gone to bed. The animals attend a meeting in the barn called by wise elderly boar, old Major. Old Major has had a dream and 'wished to communicate it' to the others. Old Major stands on a platform at the front of the barn. He addresses the animals as 'Comrades' and explains that as he has not long to live, he needs to share his wisdom.

Old Major's speech emotively describes the animals' suffering and the need for revolution. Man is identified as their enemy and the solution is to remove him from power. The selfish nature of Man is stressed as well as his willingness to profit from the animals' hard work and produce. Old Major urges all animals to work together for the greater good explaining, 'All men are enemies' and, 'All animals are comrades'. Old Major finishes by reiterating that Man is the enemy saying, 'All the habits of Man are evil.' He asserts, 'All animals are equal.'

Old Major

Orwell establishes that old Major is respected by everyone. They are all happy to lose sleep to listen to him. This shows the power of the pigs at the start of the novel. Old Major is respected for his wisdom, majesty and kindness. He sits above the others on a stage; this implies that old Major is seen as superior to the other animals, making his statements about equality somewhat **ironic**. He speaks with impressive eloquence.

Old Major uses **rhetorical language** to inspire the animals to revolt.

DO IT!

Why do you think Orwell begins with a secret meeting in the middle of the night?

By addressing the animals using the collective noun, 'comrades', old Major unites his audience, encouraging them to ignore their differences and work together for the greater good.

The inclusive pronouns show he sees himself as one of them, which emboldens them.

"Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious and short."

The triple, 'miserable, laborious and short' emotively emphasises the current suffering of the animals under the rule of Man, encouraging them to rebel.