

## George Orwell

George Orwell was born in Bengal in 1903, but his family moved to England in 1907.

He was very poor but could go to Eton because he was very good at school and won a scholarship. After taking a job in the Indian Imperial Police (1922-27), he did a lot of different jobs in London and Paris.

In 1937 he went to Spain to support the Communist Socialist Republic against General Franco's fascist rebel army. The failure of the resistance deeply affected Orwell's literary production. We'll see this influence in the analysis of his works.

He died in 1950.

Additional novel

## "Animal Farm" (1945)

Mr Jones is the owner of the farm. He is very cruel towards his animals because he exploits them by making them work too much.

The animals meet together to organise a revolution against their owner:

- the pigs are the most intelligent and revolutionary;
- the horses are very determined, but among them there is a female horse that is superficial;
- the donkey is old, doesn't speak too much but understands everything;
- the dogs have the task to control what happens.
- the sheep and the hens are the stupid animals that follow what they are told.

The animals make a revolution and take control of the farm. They write seven commandments:

- whatever goes upon 2 legs is an enemy;
- whatever goes upon 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.

"shall" is used in the sense of "must", like it happens in the Bible.

Snowball, which is a pig, represents Trotsky. He fights against Napoleon, a pig too, which represents Stalin. Napoleon wants to control everything and makes Snowball go away.

Meanwhile the pigs begin to exploit the other animals just like the old owner did.



### Additional novel

They live with all the comforts. They start to drink, they sleep in a bed and become friends with the owners of the farms next to their one. Since the horses appear to their power, they kill one of them.

Finally they change some of the ~~ten~~ commandments:

- whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy;
- whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend;
- no animal shall wear clothes;
- no animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets;
- no animal shall drink alcohol to excess;
- no animal shall kill other animal without purpose;
- all the animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.

At the end of the book the pigs live in the old owner's house. The other animals look at them while they are at the window. They are standing on two legs and the animals don't understand if they are pigs or

men!

The story is the metaphor for all the totalitarian regimes in the world.

## George Orwell's fiction

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Orwell's fiction shows a constant analysis of society and of its unchangeable characteristics. This is evident in one of his masterpieces, "Animal Farm" (1945). In this novel he uses animals to represent the attempt of human society to rebel to the unjust government. But the attempt leads to a totalitarian government which is formed by some members of the rebels. The author's choice to use animals as protagonists of the story is inspired by Swift's "Gulliver's travels". The only well-organised society that Gulliver found in his travels was the one dominated by horses; men were their slaves.

The story is set on a farm, as the title says. The animals of this farm are ill treated and exploited by their owner. So they meet all together and they decide to rise in open revolution. The idea of the revolution has come to the mind of Old Major, a pig. His speech to the other animal has the features of the speeches of any dictators. He describes himself as the bearer of good news, news of freedom and rebellion to get it. He has had a dream in which man didn't dominate the world and he has understood that the solution to their problem is the expulsion of men from their farm. So the revolutionary pigs succeed in convincing all the other animals to make a revolution: the intelligent horses, the dogs which are useful for their strength, the stupid sheep and hens which follow what they are told to do, etc. The donkey is the only animal that understands the futility of change.

Anyway the men are expelled and the animals are free to organise their own life. They write seven commandments, among which the most important are the prohibition to kill any of the animals and the equality of all of them. But soon the pigs start to get more power. In particular Napoleon (who represents a dictator like Stalin or Hitler) and Snow Ball (who represents an ideologist like Trotsky or Goebbels) start to prevaricate other animals' rights. Besides Napoleon uses the dogs to expel Snow Ball and to kill the horses which can't stand the dictator. So



one commandment is changed: now it's possible to kill an animal with a good reason.

At the end of the novel the pigs live just like men: they stay in the house and sleep in comfortable beds. In fact, peering through the window, the other animals see Napoleon and the other pigs standing on two legs, and they don't understand if they are men or pigs. And also the last rule is changed: "All the animals are equal, but some are more equal".

As we can understand from the summary, the novel is an authentic metaphor for any totalitarian government. Then Orwell understands that future dictatorship won't be anymore imposed directly, but through the medias.

This is the theme of "Nineteen Eighty-Four", a dystopian novel that sees totalitarian governments who control the whole world and that are continuously in war. A vision of a positive future world is called "utopia". Since this is a negative vision, it's called "dystopia". In fact the life of the individuals is controlled by video cameras and an exhausting propaganda torments everyday life. This is what we read in a passage from the novel in which Winston (who is the protagonist) tries to find a place in which he can't be seen by the video cameras. In the three powers which dominate the world (Eurasia, Eastasia and Oceania) society is organised by the Minister of Truth (which controls propaganda and cultural life), of Peace (which controls war), of Love (law and order), of Plenty (economic affairs). When Winston doesn't believe in the ideals of his country, he is captured and his mind is made to accept them and even love them. At the end he is fond of the Party and Big Brother with their total control of society.

"Nineteen Eighty-Four" shows Orwell's worry for the power of mass media that he had already seen in all the totalitarian governments of the world.

He had understood the future power they would have.