**Animal Farm: Issues to Discuss**

**1.** "Surely there is no one among you who wants to see Jones come back?" Throughout the animals' reign on the farm, Napoleon and Squealer dangle the possibility of Jones' return as a constant danger, keeping most of the other animals in fear, and thus, submission. Do you think that this was a valid threat? Do you feel that, overall, the animals were better or worse off once they were in control of the farm?

**2.** Throughout the novel, the natural characteristics of each animal figure heavily in their motives and pronouncements. How do the actions of Napoleon (a pig), Boxer (a horse), Benjamin (a donkey) and the dogs and sheep reflect the traits normally associated with the animal? Do your feel that Orwell purposely chose certain types of animals to assume certain roles?

**3.** Repeatedly, the animals sacrifice themselves in order to complete the windmill, only to see it destroyed time and again. What, if any, symbolic role does the windmill play? How do you account for the pigs' insistence that it be built and re-built?

**4.** On pages 3 - 10 of the novel, Old Major expresses his vision of a society free of human influence and control. Compare and contrast this against what eventually plays out on Manor Farm once the animals have taken over. What, if any, concepts or goals remain the same?

**5.** In one of the first scenes in the novel, Old Major sings Beasts of England, effectively bringing the animals together under a common purpose. Indeed, throughout the initial struggle against Man, it is a wildly popular and inspirational song. Yet later on, when the animals have successfully conquered the humans, Squealer, "attended by two dogs," announces that Beasts of England had been abolished and "was no longer needed." Why? Can you cite other examples where what was once held "sacred" and "necessary" to the common cause was later banished by decree?

**6.** Following the massacre of "guilty" animals at the hands of Napoleon and the other pigs, Clover reflects sadly on what she thought life should have been like on Manor Farm: "If she herself had had any picture of the future, it had been of a society of animals set free from hunger and the whip, all equal, each working according to his capacity, the strong protecting the weak, as she had protected the lost brood of ducklings with her foreleg on the night of Major's speech." Is Clover overly idealistic in feeling this way? Do you feel that such a community can exist?

**7.** Initially, the seven commandments issued by the animals were deemed unalterable, and symbolized a code by which the animals could live peacefully and equally among themselves. How and by what means were the commandments eventually changed? Choose and discuss one or two individual commandments. Who benefited in each instance and how?

**8.** **Animal Farm** is replete with subtle and not so-subtle lessons on blind conformity and the misuse of power. What are some of the lessons you've personally taken away from the novel regarding education of the masses, knowledge of history, idealist thought and class structure? Has the novel changed your worldview in any way?

**9.**Can you account for how the pigs ascended so quickly to power and dominion over all other animals? What key steps did they take, or more specifically, which elements did they make certain to control?

**10.** Although Napoleon is considered the absolute Leader of Animal Farm, it is Squealer who is most adept at conveying the "party line" to the animals, often convincing them to disbelieve their own eyes. What methods does Squealer employ to deceive and/or placate the other animals? How does the concept of memory (or lack thereof) figure in Squealer's pronouncements and dealings with them?

**11.** The novel ends with a chilling passage, wherein Clover notices something odd about the humans and pigs meeting in the farmhouse: "Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which. What is Orwell saying here? How do you interpret this final scene?

**12.** Discuss Napoleon's interaction with the humans after the animals have taken control of the farm. What does Napoleon's dealings with Whymper say about the self-sufficiency of the animals? What is at the root of Napoleon's interplay with Pilkington and Frederick?

**13.** In reading **Animal Farm**, Lord Acton's famous pronouncement "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" may come to mind. How and why is this statement applicable to the course of events in the novel?

**14.** When first published, **Animal Farm** was seen as a direct attack on Stalinism and the communist regime in Russia. In even a cursory reading, one can see direct parallels in the novel to actual players in Russian history. Is it your opinion, however, that **Animal Farm** is necessarily a rejection only of Communism? Against what other systems or situations are Orwell's observations applicable?

**15.** In the aftermath of the rebellion against Mr. Jones, Snowball and Napoleon emerge as the predominant figureheads-yet it is Napoleon who eventually consolidates and assumes power as unquestioned leader. Snowball, now banished from the farm, goes on to assume a newer and possibly more powerful role. Describe the differences between Snowball and Napoleon. What actions taken by Napoleon ensured his ascension to power and "victory" over Snowball? Why does Snowball play so heavily in the decisions and actions on Manor Farm even after he's no longer there?

**16.** Among the various characters in the novel, whom do you feel is the noblest or most worthy? Which animal would be best suited to lead a group against Napoleon and the pigs? What qualities would this animal need to possess to do so?

**17.** Why do Napoleon and Squealer consistently emphasize ceremony, tradition and rank? Do you feel that titles such as "Animal hero, second class," or the "Order of the Green Banner" (page 87) mean as much to the rest of the animals as they do the pigs?

**18.** Do you find it strange that Molly, the narcissistic and lazy horse, successfully leaves the farm and goes to live among humans, even though she is fully aware of the "evil" that Man represents? What deeper meanings or symbolisms do Molly's actions hold?

**19.** The animals successfully repel a second human attack on the farm. As a consequence of the battle, however, the windmill is destroyed. Squealer considers this outcome an unmitigated victory. Why is Boxer so reluctant to agree?

**20.** Benjamin, the dour and unflinching Donkey, frequently assumes a sort of "middle ground" regarding events on Animal Farm. He repeatedly states that "Donkeys live a long time," and that regardless of political outcomes, "life would go on as it always had-badly (page 41)." Discuss the symbolism of Benjamin and his various pronouncements. What role does this character serve in **Animal Farm**?