



Old Major's Speech and Analysis

SPEECH

"Comrades, ... I do not think, comrades, that I shall be with you for many months longer, and before I die, I feel it my duty to pass on to you such wisdom as I have acquired. I have had a long life. I have had much time for thought as I lay alone in my stall, and I think I may say that I understand the nature of life on this earth as well as any animal now living. It is about this that I wish to speak to you.

"Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born; we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty.

No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth. ... Why then do we continue in this miserable condition? Because nearly the whole of the produce of our labour is stolen from us by human beings.

There, comrades, is the answer to all our problems. It is summed up in a single word--Man. Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished for ever... Only get rid of Man, and the produce of our labour would be our own. Almost overnight we could become rich and free. That is my message to you, comrades: Rebellion! ...

Major continued: "I have little more to say. I merely repeat: remember always your duty of enmity towards Man and all his ways. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend. And ... in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him. ... All the habits of Man are evil. And, above all, no animal must ever tyrannise over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal.

Adapted from: <https://wp.lps.org/akabour/files/2013/12/Old-Major%E2%80%99s-Speech-in-Animal-Farm.pdf>

ANALYSIS

A wise and persuasive pig, old Major inspires the rebellion with his rhetorical skill and ability to get the other animals to share his indignation. His speech about the tyranny of man is notable for its methodical enumeration of man's wrongs against the animals. Listing all of man's crimes, old Major rouses the other animals into planning the rebellion.

The flaw in old Major's thinking is that he places *total* blame on man for *all* the animals' ills. According to him, once they "Remove Man from the scene," then "the root cause of hunger and overwork" will be abolished forever. Clearly, old Major believes that Man is capable only of doing harm and that animals are capable only of doing good. Such one-dimensional thinking that ignores the desire for power inherent in *all* living things can only result in its being disproved. Also ironic is old Major's admonition to the animals: "Remember also that in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him." This warning is ignored by Napoleon and the other pigs, who, by the novel's end, completely resemble their human masters.

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/animal-farm/character-analysis/old-major/>