

## Satire and symbols

When discussing the language used by an author, you can explore vocabulary, use of techniques such as metaphor, simile, dialogue, sound patterning and imagery, symbolism, irony and other features.

An author's style is the individual way in which s/he writes, which makes the work recognisably theirs. For example, Orwell is often said to have a 'journalistic' style, which makes his writing similar to reportage.

### Activity 1

Work with a partner and examine the extract from Chapter 1 below:

'The two cart-horses, Boxer and Clover, came in together, walking very slowly and setting down their vast hairy hoofs with great care lest there should be some small animal concealed in the straw. Clover was a stout motherly mare approaching middle life, who had never quite got her figure back after her fourth foal. Boxer was an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as any two ordinary horses put together. A white stripe down his nose gave him a somewhat stupid appearance, and in fact he was not of first-rate intelligence, but he was universally respected for his steadiness of character and tremendous powers of work.'

- Highlight all the adjectives and adjectival phrases in this extract.
- What does your highlighting suggest about Orwell's language and style?
- What does the first sentence imply about the carthorses?
- Would you describe Orwell's language here as simple or complex? Why?

### Activity 2

Look at Orwell's use of dialogue in the following extract from Chapter 2:

'The stupidest questions of all were asked by Mollie, the white mare. The very first question she asked Snowball was: "Will there still be sugar after the Rebellion?"

"No," said Snowball firmly. "We have no means of making sugar on this farm. Besides, you do not need sugar. You will have all the oats and hay you want."

"And shall I still be allowed to wear ribbons in my mane?" asked Mollie.

"Comrade," said Snowball, "those ribbons that you are so devoted to are the badge of slavery. Can you not understand that liberty is worth more than ribbons?"

Mollie agreed, but she did not sound very convinced.'

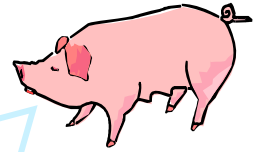
- What do we learn about each of these animals from what they say?

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### Activity 3

Orwell is very good at portraying the kind of propaganda that rulers use to answer criticisms. Read the extract from Chapter 3 below. It is Squealer's explanation of why the milk and apples are being reserved for the pigs.

‘“Comrades!” he cried. “You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples. I dislike them myself. Our sole object in taking these things is to preserve our health. Milk and apples (this has been proved by Science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig. We pigs are brainworkers. The whole management and organisation of this farm depend on us. Day and night we are watching over your welfare. It is for YOUR sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples. Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back! Yes, Jones would come back! Surely, comrades,” cried Squealer almost pleadingly, skipping from side to side and whisking his tail, “surely there is no one among you who wants to see Jones come back?”’



Work with a partner and answer the following:

- How does Squealer anticipate and deal with the accusation that the pigs are creating a privileged class?
- How does he use pseudo-scientific ‘facts’ that apparently back him up?
- What reason does he give for the pigs needing milk and apples?
- How does he make the pigs sound selfless and dedicated?
- What threat does he finally use that he knows will clinch the argument?

### Activity 4

Orwell uses rhymes in the novel to express the very different ideas of Old Major and Napoleon.

Make copies of ‘Beasts of England’ and Minimus’s poem, ‘Comrade Napoleon’ and place them side by side. Then discuss with a partner what differences you find between them and what point you think Orwell is making.

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### Activity 5

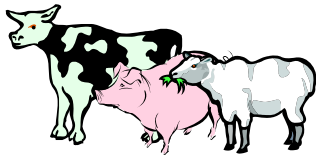
Symbols play an important role in establishing a communal identity in Animal Farm. They are also associated with the political systems which Orwell is satirising in the book.

Work with a partner and discuss what the following symbolise **a)** on the farm and **b)** in the world as a whole.



The flag – the hoof and horn on a green background

Animal hero – first and second class medals



The song 'Beasts of England'

The windmill



### Activity 6

Orwell uses rhetoric in the mouth of Old Major who first proposes the rebellion. He is a dreamer who communicates his vision of the future using classic rhetorical techniques.

Copy his speech from Chapter 1 and highlight the techniques he is using. Use the list below and identify any others that you find.

- rule of three – building up a set of three repeated ideas or phrases, with slight differences
- inclusion – the use of 'you', 'we', 'us', 'our' etc. to unite the audience with the speaker
- rhetorical questions
- repetition of words / phrases
- use of emphasis – exaggerated words for effect
- catchphrases – short memorable phrases e.g. 'all men are free'
- presenting an alternative way or view
- using comparison and contrast.

Work with a partner and use different coloured highlighters to select the various techniques you find. Using the result of your highlighting, discuss the effectiveness of Major's speech.

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### Activity 7

Another technique that Orwell uses in *Animal Farm* is irony. The novel is often referred to as a satire because of the way in which it uses animals to express the author's views about the Soviet Union and similar regimes. Within this satirical framework there are many ironies that Orwell uses to make his point.

Look at the extracts below and discuss with a partner how irony is being used and what point the author is making through this technique.

'All the animals capered with joy when they saw the whips going up in flames.'

**Chapter 2**

'The other animals understood how to vote, but could never think of any resolutions of their own.'

**Chapter 3**

'Snowball made a little speech, emphasising the need for all animals to be ready to die for Animal Farm if need be.'

**Chapter 4**

'It was noticed that they wagged their tails to him in the same way as the other dogs had been used to do to Mr Jones.'

**Chapter 5**

'It was noticed that whenever he seemed on the point of coming to an agreement with Frederick, Snowball was declared to be hiding at Foxwood, while, when he inclined towards Pilkington, Snowball was said to be at Pinchfield.'

**Chapter 7**

'As his last act upon earth, Comrade Napoleon had pronounced a solemn decree: the drinking of alcohol was to be punished by death.'

**Chapter 8**

'... the word went round that from somewhere or other the pigs had acquired the money to buy themselves another case of whisky.'

**Chapter 9**

'All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others.'

**Chapter 10**

Using your findings from these activities, how would you describe Orwell's language and style?