

Module 4: The Novel – *Animal Farm*
Topic 6 Content: Irony in *Animal Farm* by George Orwell Notes

IRONY IN ANIMAL FARM BY GEORGE ORWELL

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You already know quite a bit about the different types of irony. Now, explore how all three types are depicted in *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. Click on each of the buttons shown here to read and hear a selection from the story. Try to guess which type of irony is portrayed in the selection. Then, click the **EXPLANATION** button to learn more.

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CHAPTER 5

Snowball is chased from the farm by the dogs, and Napoleon assumes leadership.

Afterwards Squealer was sent round the farm to explain the new arrangement to the others.

"Comrades," he said, "I trust that every animal here appreciates the sacrifice that Comrade Napoleon has made in taking this extra labor upon himself. Do not imagine, comrades, that leadership is a pleasure! On the contrary, it is a deep and heavy responsibility. No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal. He would be only too happy to let you make your decisions for yourselves. But sometimes you might make the wrong decisions, comrades, and then where should we be?"

EXPLANATION

In Chapter 5, Snowball is chased from the farm by the dogs, Napoleon assumes leadership. Here is a selection from the novel:

Afterwards Squealer was sent round the farm to explain the new arrangement to the others. "Comrades," he said, "I trust that every animal here appreciates the sacrifice that Comrade Napoleon has made in taking this extra labor upon himself. Do not imagine, comrades, that leadership is a pleasure! On the contrary, it is a deep and heavy responsibility. No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal. He would be only too happy to let you make your decisions for yourselves. But sometimes you might make the wrong decisions, comrades, and then where should we be

Which type of irony is demonstrated in this selection? Try to make your own decision and then click **EXPLANATION** to learn more.



VERBAL IRONY

Though Squealer urges the animals to believe that leadership is not a pleasure to Napoleon, the exact opposite is true. In addition, when Squealer tells the animals that Napoleon would rather that the animals on the farm make their own decisions, it is verbal irony because he knows that this is in direct contradiction to Napoleon's wishes.

This selection from *Animal Farm* depicts verbal irony. Though Squealer urges the animals to believe that leadership is not a pleasure to Napoleon, the exact opposite is true. In addition, when Squealer tells the animals that Napoleon would rather that the animals on the farm make their own decisions, it is verbal irony because he knows that this is in direct contradiction to Napoleon's wishes.

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CHAPTER 9

Boxer is dying and the pigs send him to be turned into glue. The other animals see the van that comes to get Boxer clearly marked as a Glue Boiler van.

But the explanation was really very simple. The van had previously been the property of the knacker, and had been bought by the veterinary surgeon, who had not yet painted the old name out. That was how the mistake had arisen.

The animals were enormously relieved to hear this. And when Squealer went on to give further graphic details of Boxer's death-bed, the admirable care he had received, and the expensive medicines for which Napoleon had paid without a thought as to the cost, their last doubts disappeared and the sorrow that they felt for their comrade's death was tempered by the thought that at least he had died happy.

EXPLANATION

In Chapter 9, Boxer is dying and the pigs send him to be turned into glue. The other animals see the van that comes to get Boxer clearly marked as a Glue Boiler van. Napoleon sends Squealer to speak to the animals. Here is a selection from the novel:

But the explanation was really very simple. The van had previously been the property of the knacker, and had been bought by the veterinary surgeon, who had not yet painted the old name out. That was how the mistake had arisen.

The animals were enormously relieved to hear this. And when Squealer went on to give further graphic details of Boxer's death-bed, the admirable care he had received, and the expensive medicines for which Napoleon had paid without a thought as to the cost, their last doubts disappeared and the sorrow that they felt for their comrade's death was tempered by the thought that at least he had died happy.

Which type of irony is demonstrated in this selection? Try to make your own decision and then click **EXPLANATION** to learn more.



DRAMATIC IRONY

While the animals believe that boxer died in a hospital under the best possible care, the reader knows that he was actually sent to be slaughtered and made into glue. In this case, the audience knows more than the characters in the novel.

This selection from *Animal Farm* depicts dramatic irony. While the animals believe that boxer died in a hospital under the best possible care, the reader knows that he was actually sent to be slaughtered and made into glue. In this case, the audience knows more than the characters in the novel.

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CHAPTER 10

The pigs have started to walk on two legs. One evening, the animals notice that the pigs are having a dinner party with several of the area farmers.

There, round the long table, sat half a dozen farmers and half a dozen of the more eminent pigs, Napoleon himself occupying the seat of honour at the head of the table. The pigs appeared completely at ease in their chairs. The company had been enjoying a game of cards but had broken off for the moment, evidently in order to drink a toast. A large jug was circulating, and the mugs were being refilled with beer. No one noticed the wondering faces of the animals that gazed in at the window.

EXPLANATION

In Chapter 10, the pigs have started to walk on two legs. One evening, the animals notice that the pigs are having a dinner party with several of the area farmers. Here is a selection from the novel:

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Which type of irony is demonstrated in this selection? Try to make your own decision and then click **EXPLANATION** to learn more.



SITUATIONAL IRONY

In the beginning of the novel, humans were seen as evil by the pigs. As the novel progresses, the pigs act more and more like the humans that they fought so hard to expel. The actions of the animals have the opposite effect of what was intended.

This selection from *Animal Farm* depicts situational irony. In the beginning of the novel, humans were seen as evil by the pigs. As the novel progresses, the pigs act more and more like the humans that they fought so hard to expel. The actions of the animals have the opposite effect of what was intended.