

# Animal Farm: Clover

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Clover is a stout, motherly mare approaching middle age who never quite got her figure back after her fourth foal. She is one of the farm's most steady workers and one of its most emotionally perceptive animals. Where Boxer responds to doubt by suppressing it, Clover allows doubt to settle and remain in her. She perceives more clearly than almost any other working animal on the farm. She acts on almost none of it.

This combination of perception and paralysis makes her one of the novel's most important characters. She represents the majority of people living under authoritarian rule: those who know something has gone wrong, who feel the wrongness of what is happening, but who lack the language, the organisation, and the framework to do anything with what they feel.

## Who She Is

Clover is the novel's emotional conscience. Her interior perspective is given directly to the reader in the chapter following the show trial executions, and what she feels is exactly what the reader should feel: bewilderment, grief, and the conviction that this is wrong even without being able to say exactly how. Orwell writes of her that "if she could have spoken her thoughts, it would have been to say that this was not what they had aimed at."

The problem is the conditional. She cannot speak her thoughts. She does not have the language. Orwell is making a precise argument here: the deprivation of education costs not just the ability to read altered commandments but the ability to name and therefore resist what is being done. Clover knows. She cannot say what she knows, so her knowledge produces grief rather than action.

She is also a maternal figure throughout the novel: she shelters a brood of orphaned ducklings in the crook of her foreleg during Old Major's speech, and she is protective of the weaker animals. Her care for Boxer is genuine and deep. His betrayal is perhaps the hardest thing the novel makes her witness.

## Her Arc

**The early farm:** Clover works hard and enthusiastically after the Rebellion. She checks the commandments when something seems to have changed, takes other animals to read them when she cannot herself, and registers, each time, that the qualifier was apparently always there. She suspects. She accepts.

**The show trials:** When Napoleon's dogs execute the confessing animals in the yard, Clover's response is the most extended internal perspective Orwell grants any character. She gazes over the farm and thinks about what they had hoped for: a society without hunger, without cruelty, where the strong protected the weak. Instead there are executions and dogs growling at every expression of dissent. The gap between the promised future and the present is completely clear to her. She responds by beginning to sing "Beasts of England" very quietly. It is all she can do. Napoleon then bans the song.

**The commandments:** Clover is the animal who most often senses that something has changed and asks Muriel to read the commandments aloud. She registers the additions but does not have the confidence to insist on her own memory against the written word. Each time she suspects; each time Squealer's explanation closes off the question.

**The final scene:** Clover is one of the animals watching through the farmhouse window as the pigs and human farmers play cards. She is among those who first see that the pigs' faces are changing, becoming impossible to distinguish from the humans'. She cannot tell pig from man.

## Key Quotes

Quote	Chapter	Significance
"If she could have spoken her thoughts, it would have been to say that this was not what they had aimed at when they had set themselves years ago to work for the overthrow of the human race."	7	Orwell's direct access to her interior; the clearest statement in the novel of the gap between what was promised and what was delivered
Her silent singing of "Beasts of England" after the executions	7	Action replacing speech when speech is impossible; the only response available to her

## Narrative Techniques

**The view from the hill:** The passage after the executions, where Orwell grants Clover an extended internal monologue, is the most explicitly emotional passage in a deliberately unsentimental novel. Orwell normally maintains narrative distance; here he steps into Clover's consciousness and gives the reader what she feels. The effect is to make the reader's own emotional response identical to hers: the grief and the bewilderment and the inability to name exactly what has gone wrong.

**The inability to articulate:** The conditional tense of the key quote, "if she could have spoken her thoughts," is everything. She has the perception but not the language. Orwell's argument is not that working animals are too simple to understand oppression, it is that they have been denied the linguistic tools to make their understanding into resistance.


**The silent song:** Clover sings "Beasts of England" after the executions not as a call to action but as an expression of grief. The song is the only form of protest available to her, and Napoleon removes even that. This is the structure of censorship under an authoritarian regime: not just prohibiting action but prohibiting the forms of feeling that might produce action.

**Presence at key moments:** Clover is positioned at the novel's emotional turning points: Old Major's speech (sheltering the ducklings), the show trials, the barn wall checks, the final window scene. She is the consciousness through which the reader measures how far the farm has fallen from what was promised.

## Thematic Significance

Clover demonstrates that awareness alone is not enough to produce resistance. She knows something is wrong; she cannot act on it. The novel through her asks what is required beyond awareness: organisation, language, education, institutional structures that protect dissent. All of these have been removed from the animals, one by one, by Napoleon.

She can also be read as representing women under the Soviet system: told that the revolution had liberated them while continuing to bear most of its burdens. Her maternal role, her emotional intelligence, and her structural powerlessness are all part of this reading.

 **Exam Tip**

Clover is essential for questions about the emotional impact of the revolution's betrayal, or about the limits of awareness without power. For the betrayal of idealism: use the Chapter 7 passage after the executions, where Orwell directly represents her interior response to what has happened. For education and power: contrast her with Benjamin (who can read but chooses not to act) and Boxer (who cannot read and does not perceive). Always note that Orwell gives her the novel's most direct emotional statement but also makes clear that emotion without language and organisation cannot change anything.

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