

# Animal Farm: Mr. Pilkington

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Mr. Pilkington is the easy-going, gentlemanly farmer who owns Foxwood, a large, overgrown and old-fashioned farm on one side of Animal Farm. He is described as preferring to spend his time hunting and fishing rather than managing the farm, so Foxwood is badly run. He is the Western capitalist powers given a single face.

## Who He Is

Pilkington is genial, unreliable, and self-interested. He and Mr. Frederick are rivals and dislike each other intensely, which is one of the things that initially prevents concerted action against Animal Farm. He is willing to spread rumours about the farm's chaos and encourage his own animals to believe the worst about it, but he will not take military action alone.

His defining quality is accommodation: he is ultimately willing to do business with whoever is in power, provided the arrangement is profitable. By the novel's final chapter, Animal Farm under Napoleon is clearly stable, controlled, and productive, which means Pilkington has no further ideological objections to cooperation.

## His Arc

**Initial hostility:** Like Frederick, Pilkington spreads rumours about Animal Farm in its early years: that the animals are starving, that they have started eating each other, that the farm has descended into chaos. These rumours are intended to prevent revolutionary ideas from spreading to his own animals. Nevertheless, "Beasts of England" spreads to Foxwood anyway.

**Napoleon's dealings:** Napoleon plays Pilkington and Frederick against each other for most of the middle section of the novel, appearing to favour one and then the other in the negotiations over the timber. Napoleon eventually sells the timber to Frederick, not Pilkington, receiving forged banknotes in return. Pilkington sends a note reading "Serves you right" when Frederick's men attack.

**The final dinner:** At the novel's end, Napoleon invites Pilkington and other human farmers to tour Animal Farm and attend a dinner at the farmhouse. Pilkington gives a speech praising the farm and expressing his hope that the era of hostility is over. He notes that the animals on Animal Farm work harder and receive less food than animals anywhere else in the county, and he and his companions intend to adopt similar methods on their own farms. He jokes that if Animal Farm has its "lower animals" to contend with, the humans have their "lower classes."

Both Napoleon and Pilkington play aces simultaneously. Both have been cheating.

## Key Quotes

Quote	Chapter	Significance
"If you have your lower animals to contend with, we have our lower classes!"	10	His after-dinner toast; the explicit parallel between the exploitation of animals and the exploitation of working-class humans; the distinction between Man and Animal has collapsed entirely
"Serves you right." (Pilkington's note to Napoleon after Frederick's attack)	8	His self-interest over any principle; he does not help Napoleon not out of hostility to Frederick but because Napoleon put himself in this position

## Narrative Techniques


**The double ace:** The card game ending with both Napoleon and Pilkington playing aces simultaneously is the novel's final irony. Both have been cheating. The image brings the novel's argument to its conclusion: the revolutionary regime has become so thoroughly identical to the capitalist system it claimed to replace that even its methods of corruption match exactly.

**The admiring speech:** Pilkington's praise of Animal Farm's productivity (harder work, less food) is precisely the wrong kind of praise from the animals' perspective. He is admiring the efficiency of their exploitation. His speech makes clear that the other capitalist farmers see Napoleon's regime not as a threat but as a model.

## Thematic Significance

Pilkington represents the Western democracies, particularly Britain, in their accommodation of Stalin after the Second World War. The historical parallel is to the Tehran Conference of 1943, where Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union met to discuss the post-war order. Orwell, writing in 1943--44, was deeply sceptical of this accommodation, seeing it as the Western powers legitimising a totalitarian regime in exchange for the appearance of stability.

His final speech makes the allegorical argument explicit: class exploitation and the exploitation of animals (or workers) are the same thing. The revolution on Animal Farm promised to end this; the revolution's outcome has made it more efficient.

 **Exam Tip**

Pilkington is most useful for questions about the final scene, class, or the allegorical level of the novel. For the final scene: his speech is the moment the allegorical argument is stated most explicitly -- exploitation of animals and exploitation of workers are the same. For class: his joke about lower animals and lower classes connects the two systems directly. For allegory: he represents the Western capitalist powers accommodating Stalin, and the final card game represents the mutual corruption of both systems.

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