

# Animal Farm: Squealer

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Squealer is a small, fat pig with twinkling eyes and a shrill voice. He is described at his introduction as able to turn black into white, and this is precisely what he does throughout the novel. He is Napoleon's spokesman and the farm's chief propagandist, the animal who makes Napoleon's power not just possible but sustainable. Without force alone, Napoleon could rule; without Squealer, he could not maintain the animals' belief that the revolution they are living under is the revolution they were promised.

He is not the most powerful character in the novel, but he may be the most important to Orwell's argument. The Dogs enforce obedience; Squealer manufactures consent.

## Who He Is

Squealer does not create Napoleon's power. He explains it, justifies it, and when necessary reinvents the history that might challenge it. His talent is for taking any fact, any failure, any atrocity, and reframing it until it sounds like progress or necessity. He can make the animals believe they misremembered, that things were always this way, that the alternative is worse.

He is also physically described in a way that captures something about the nature of propaganda: he is small, bright-eyed, and tends to skip from side to side as he talks. He is both clever and slightly ridiculous, which is the right register for what Orwell is saying: propaganda works, but it is also, on reflection, embarrassing to be taken in by it.

His intelligence is entirely directed at maintaining a system that benefits the pigs and harms everyone else. This is Orwell's point about intelligence without ethics: it does not produce goodness. It produces whatever the intelligent person is motivated to produce.

## His Arc

**The first rationalisation:** After the Rebellion, the pigs keep the milk and apples for themselves. Squealer explains that pigs are brainworkers and that the milk and apples contain substances necessary to maintain their brainpower. If the pigs' brains fail, Mr. Jones will come back. The argument is unanswerable in the animals' position: they cannot verify the biology, and the threat of Jones's return is real. This is the model for every subsequent intervention.

**Rewriting Snowball:** After Snowball's expulsion, Squealer systematically revises his role. Snowball did not lead the charge at the Battle of the Cowshed; Napoleon led it. Snowball was not a hero; he was a traitor in league with Jones from before the Rebellion. The animals dimly

remember differently, but Squealer assures them they are mistaken and that Napoleon has documentary proof. The documents are never shown to the animals, most of whom cannot read them anyway.

**The commandments:** Each time the pigs violate a commandment, Squealer amends the painted text in secret at night. When the animals question whether the commandment always said "No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets," Squealer confirms that of course it did, they simply forgot the qualifier. Muriel reads it out: there it is. The commandments change by addition, one cautious qualifier at a time: without sheets, without cause, to excess.

**The statistics:** Squealer produces figures showing production up by two hundred percent, or five hundred percent, or more. The animals do not believe these figures entirely. But they cannot disprove them, because they have no access to any independent source of information. This is the precise mechanism Orwell is describing: propaganda succeeds not only because of the propagandist's skill but because the conditions have been created in which alternatives are unavailable.

**After the purges:** When the show trials produce public confessions and executions, Squealer explains that the executed animals had confessed to crimes, that their confessions are documented, and that furthermore Animal Hero, First Class, which Snowball was awarded, was in fact a forgery. He also notes that the commandment forbidding killing has always included the phrase without cause, and that there was cause.

## Key Quotes

Quote	Chapter	Significance
"Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones to come back?"	Throughout	His all-purpose silencer; frames every question as a choice between the present and something worse
"Tactics, comrades, tactics!"	5	His explanation for Napoleon's having apparently reversed position on the windmill; the absence of principle made to sound like strategy
"No one believes more firmly than Comrade Napoleon that all animals are equal."	5	The most explicitly contradicted statement in the novel; simultaneously true (as a belief about Napoleon's rhetoric) and entirely false

## Narrative Techniques

**The nighttime alterations:** Squealer's visits to the barn wall with paint and ladder are implied rather than directly shown. The reader understands what is happening; the animals do not. This sustained dramatic irony runs across multiple chapters, and its most concentrated moment comes in Chapter 8 when the animals find him stunned on the ground next to a lantern, a paintbrush, and white paint. Even here, no animal draws the obvious conclusion.

**The unanswerable question:** "Surely you do not want Jones to come back?" cannot be answered with yes. It reframes every challenge to Napoleon's authority as support for his worst enemy. This is the classic logic of authoritarian politics: the state makes the claim that any criticism of the system is implicitly a call for its worst alternative.

**Voice and body language:** Orwell gives Squealer a physical style of persuasion, the skipping from side to side, the shrill voice, the twinkling eyes, to suggest that propaganda is partly a performance. He does not simply state; he enacts. The animals respond to his manner as much as his content. This makes him harder to resist: the performance creates an atmosphere of reassurance before the argument begins.

**Presence during scenes of violence:** Squealer consistently appears after acts of violence to explain them. When the dogs tear the pigs apart, he arrives at night to tell the animals the condemned had confessed. He does not prevent violence but he neutralises the memory of it. His function is retrospective: he cannot stop the animals from witnessing, but he can prevent what they witnessed from becoming thought.

## Thematic Significance

Squealer is Orwell's argument about the relationship between language and power. He demonstrates that controlling language is not secondary to controlling the means of production or the instruments of force: it is equivalent to them. A regime that can alter what the population believes to be true does not need to justify every decision; it redefines the decision after the fact.

He also embodies what Orwell saw as one of the particular dangers of his era: the willingness of intelligent people to place their abilities in the service of systems they know to be unjust. Squealer is not deceived. He knows what the commandments originally said. He knows what Snowball did at the Battle of the Cowshed. His intelligence is a deliberate choice directed at a system whose victims are the other animals.

 **Exam Tip**

Squealer is essential for any question about language, propaganda, or the relationship between power and truth. For language: trace the amendment of the commandments chapter by chapter to show the mechanics of how language is corrupted. For propaganda: examine the unanswerable question as a technique and connect it to the structural conditions (illiteracy, absence of independent information) that make it work. For power: argue that Squealer represents a different kind of power from Napoleon's force, one that shapes what people can think rather than just what they can do.

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