

## **The Character of Old Major - Transcript**

**Old Major:** 'Is it not crystal clear, then, comrades, that all the evils of this life of ours spring from the tyranny of human beings? What then must we do? Why, work night and day ... for the overthrow of the human race! That is my message to you comrades: Rebellion!'

**Presenter:** Now isn't that a stirring, eloquent speech from Old Major, the farm's prize boar?

He draws on his traits as an intelligent and well-respected member of the farm to inspire the rest of the animals.

He wins them around to his vision of an ideal life on the farm - free from humankind.

At the beginning of *Animal Farm*, author George Orwell has Old Major use rhetorical questioning - a strong speech-making technique to eloquently assert his viewpoint.

Like when he says: 'Is it not crystal clear?'

His use of inclusive language like 'our' and 'comrades' in the passage aims to involve them all in his ideas.

That inclusive language also echoes the vocabulary of socialist thinkers.

Old Major's character is drawn from two key socialist figures - Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the Russian Communist Party and Karl Marx, a 19th century German philosopher whose ideas (known as 'Marxism') imagined a society without classes or private ownership of businesses, like farms or factories - a society where wealth and resources would be shared.

These ideas are reflected throughout *Animal Farm*, in a philosophy Old Major calls 'Animalism':

**Old Major:** 'Why then do we continue in this miserable condition?

Because nearly the whole of the produce of our labour is stolen from us by human beings.'

**Presenter:** Here we see the heart of Old Major's problem with humans: Class and inequality.

He feels the animals are treated as less important - while humans like Mr. Jones the farmer enjoy the fruits of all their labour.

Old Major is so well respected that not long after he passes away in his sleep, the animals put his ideas into action: rising against their human overlords and taking the farm for the animals, they bring in a new era of animal rule, an era that will be soon be disrupted by the shady Napoleon.

To what extent is Old Major's vision realised through the events of the novella?

And what comment do you think the author may be making about class divisions and inequality?