

# CHARACTERS IN ANIMAL FARM

## Worksheet 1

The animal characters in *Animal Farm* were created by using a combination of trained live animals, the animatronics of Jim Henson's Creature Shop and the digital animation techniques of Cinesite. Great consideration was given to making sure each animal had the right look for the character they were to play. Each of the principal characters were as carefully cast as if they had been human actors; the first step in the process being a team of animal trainers searching out real animals - several of the stars had to be cast on their parents' looks in order to make sure they were the right age and appearance when filming took place. The technicians then used photos of these to create their animatronic doubles right down to placing the eyelashes by hand. Finally, computer-generated animal characters were added to create a seamless flow between the live-action and the models.

Creating a certain look for each animal was very important in the film because the animals take on roles and personalities normally associated with humans. When we are first introduced to someone, either in a film or in real life, we often make assumptions about their character and personality based on what they look like, for example people who wear glasses are seen as intelligent, red-haired people are thought to be short-tempered. We use a combination of facial expression, physical characteristics and body language to do this.

What associations do we make about the following physical characteristics?

blonde hair • scars • close-set eyebrows • long fingers

What are the implications of making such assumptions?

- For each of the principle characters (human and animal) in *Animal Farm*, think of three words to describe them. Then use your knowledge of the film to say how their physical characteristics suggest their character. Be as detailed as you can.
- How do the clothes, make-up and hairstyles of the humans in *Animal Farm* help us form an impression of character? Comment on Napoleon's clothing at the end.
- How do the voices of both the human and animal characters lead us to form an expectation of character and role? You will need to consider the use of regional accent and tone of delivery. Characters to focus on could include: the chickens, Jessie, Squealer, the rat, Boxer and Old Major. Try to compare and contrast where possible.
- As you know, certain of the characters in *Animal Farm* represent real-life people. Compare the way they look in the film with photos from real life. What similarities and differences do you see?
- Certain animals are often associated with character traits; for example foxes are seen as being sly. Why do you think this is? Do the animals in *Animal Farm* all conform to these expectations? What about the animals in other films?
- How many similes and metaphors can you think of which are based on animals? What characteristics are attributed to animals in fairy stories and fables, such as the famous Aesop's?
- Names are another way in which we form a first impression about someone, animal or human. For example we would not expect a cat called Fluffykins to be vicious. Consider the names of the characters in *Animal Farm*. How do these lead our expectations and are we proved right?
- Create two new animal characters to feature in the story of *Animal Farm*. Describe, draw or collage their appearance and explain what part they play in the action. What do we see them doing or saying? Explain your choices.

# ADAPTING TEXT

## Worksheet 2

Adapting a novel for the screen brings many challenges. One of these is that any long passages of speech must be cut down. This is for two reasons; firstly, the average length of a film is only about two hours (even less in the case of *Animal Farm*) and there simply is not enough time to include all the detail of the novel. Secondly, and more importantly, film is a visual medium, so what we see has more impact than what we hear. In *Animal Farm*, Old Major makes a very important speech to the animals in the barn before The Revolution takes place. It is necessary that we understand and remember what is being said in order to recognise the way in which his ideas are distorted later on in the story. In George Orwell's novel, this speech constitutes over four pages of text. If we had simply seen Old Major speaking this on screen, the audience watching the film of *Animal Farm* would have found this difficult to follow, because we cannot re-read something in film in the same way as we can in a book. We would also have become bored, and our attention would start to wander, as we grew tired of looking at the same image.

The scriptwriters for *Animal Farm*, Alan Jones and Martyn Burke, were faced with the task of cutting Old Major's speech for the film, conveying all the important ideas and retaining an appropriate style for the occasion. Here is a transcript of the speech as it appears in the film:

*'My friends I do not think I will be with you for many days more. I've had a long life, and now it is my duty to pass onto you such as I understand of the nature of our lives. Animalkind is born to a miserable, laborious and short existence. We are given only just enough food as will sustain the breath in our bodies and when our usefulness has come to an end, we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. And who, pray, is responsible for our suffering?*

*Man. Man is our enemy...*

*Remove man, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished forever.*

*Remove man, and the produce of our labour will be our own.*

*Remove man, and overnight we will become free and equal...*

*We must never come to resemble man in any way, or engage in trade.*

*Amongst us animals there must be unity and comradeship. All animals are friends. All humans are enemies.*

*Now, my friends, I will tell you about the end of my dream and the song that came to me. It's a song you must learn. It's a song of justice and freedom.'*

- In the film, Old Major's speech is not delivered continuously. What do we see and hear punctuating it and what effect does this have?
- Re-read Old Major's speech in Orwell's novel (Chapter 1, pages 3 - 7). What percentage of the text appears in the screen version?
- Make a list of the points which Old Major makes in his speech in the novel. Do these all appear in the screen version? Are these in the same order?
- Compare the language of the two versions. What vocabulary is used? What is repeated? In what way and to what effect? How does he try to establish a bond with his audience?
- Consider the use of punctuation in the speech. How does this contribute to the overall effect?
- When making a speech, the way in which it is delivered has a great effect on the impression it makes on the audience. Watch Old Major's screen presentation and mark on your copy what he emphasises and how.
- Which version of the speech do you find most effective? Explain your answer.
- Compare Old Major's speech (both novel and film) to printed or spoken speeches by prominent political figures. What techniques do you observe in terms of style and presentation? Write your own speech on something you feel strongly about, based on what you have just learned.
- The words of Beasts of England have been altered for the screen. Compare the two versions.

### **Beasts of England**

Beasts of the world we shall unite  
Rise up and ready for the fight  
Soon or late the day will be  
When man's defeated and we are free

***Soon or late the day will be  
When man's defeated and we are free***

Our limbs be tired and worn  
Our dreams will not be broken  
And our hearts will not be torn

***Our dreams will not be broken  
And our hearts will not be torn***

# THE POWER OF THE MEDIA

## Worksheet 3

When George Orwell published his novel *Animal Farm* in 1945, television was still in its infancy and few homes were privileged to own a set. Although the power of television as a media tool had not yet been exploited, film had been used to great effect as a propaganda tool in the preceding years of the Second World War.

In the screen version of *Animal Farm*, the animals encounter a television set when they enter the Jones' house for the first time, following The Rebellion, and the pigs are quick to realise that this interesting appliance could be of use to them.

- To what uses do the pigs put television and at what points in the narrative? What techniques are used to have the same effect in the novel? Is this a fair comment on modern society? Can you think of instances where television is used to manipulate?
- How and when is film used in the narrative? What are the advantages of using film in these situations?
- Consider the film we see of Napoleon at the end of the film. Does it remind you of archive film you have seen? Why has it been included?
- Technology, the invention of humans, is often seen as a negative influence. What other examples of technology do we see in the film? Who uses them and to what effect?

HALLMARK ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS "ANIMAL FARM"

KELSEY GRAMMER IAN HOLM JULIA LOUIS-DREYFUS JULIA ORMOND PETE POSTLETHWAITE PAUL SCOFIELD

PATRICK STEWART PETER USTINOV WITH PETE POSTLETH WAITE APPEARING AS JONES

CREATURE EFFECTS BY JIM HENSON'S CREATURE SHOP DIGITAL VISUAL EFFECTS AND ANIMATION BY CINESITE (EUROPE) LTD.

MUSIC CONDUCTED AND COMPOSED BY RICHARD HARVEY EDITOR COLIN GREEN PRODUCTION DESIGNER BRIAN ACKLAND-SNOW

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIKE BREWSTER EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ROBERT HALMI, SR PRODUCED BY GREG SMITH

SCREENPLAY BY ALAN JANES AND MARTYN BURKE BASED ON THE NOVEL BY GEORGE ORWELL DIRECTED BY JOHN STEPHENSON

ORIGINAL SDUNOTRACK (AVAILABLE ON VARESE SARABANDE COMPACT DISCS)

# CHANGING THE NOVEL FOR THE SCREEN

## Worksheet 4

Both the beginning and the end of the novel have undergone changes for the screen version:

### **Setting the scene**

The beginning of the film sees Jessie among the ruins of *Animal Farm*, in what we later understand is a flash forward to the end of the story. She is established as the narrator and protagonist of the film, an important departure from Orwell's novel. We then go back in time to the days when Jones is still in charge at the farm.

- In the novel, we learn about the characters as the author describes them, their appearance and personalities. How are we given this information in the film?
- What is the effect of having Jessie as the narrator? Why do you think she, in particular, was chosen to have this role?

### **Closing the tale**

Orwell's novel ends on a dramatic note as the pigs and humans fight over a game of cards. As the animals look through the window of the farmhouse at the faces of the players, they cannot distinguish which are pigs and which are men. We are left to draw our own conclusions.

In the screen version, we see this scene take place but the narrative continues beyond this to the total ruination of the farm and the eventual arrival of the new owners.

- Why do you think the ending of the film has been changed? What effect does this have and which do you prefer?
- Watch the final scenes of the film again. Make a note of all the elements of film language which are used to indicate:
  - a) a positive atmosphere
  - b) a negative atmosphereBe as detailed as you can in your comments

Film Education is a registered charity supported by the film industry in the UK. Its aims are to develop the use of film in the school curriculum and to facilitate the use of cinemas by schools.

To this end it publishes a variety of free teaching materials, produces educational television programmes, runs a range of workshops, events and INSET, organises screenings and National Schools Film Week.

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