



# Animal Farm—George Orwell

## LESSON 2

### ENGLISH AND HUMANITIES 10

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#### PRESCRIBED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- recognize Boxer and other characters, including Benjamin and Clover, as symbols of labour and working people.
- appreciate some of the struggles of working people as a theme in literature.
- develop and write a paragraph demonstrating awareness of Boxer or others as a symbol(s) of labour.

#### LESSON TITLE

Animal Farm—George Orwell

#### TIME

Approximately 45 minutes.

#### OBJECTIVES

- to recognize Boxer and other characters, including Benjamin and Clover, as symbols of labour and working people.
- to appreciate some of the struggles of working people as a theme in literature.

#### INTRODUCTION TO TEACHERS

You might use this lesson as one of several to bring students to an appreciation of literary symbolism and theme in *Animal Farm*.

Boxer is the hardest worker on the farm, and a symbol of labour and working people. Many of the other animals are workers also, including Benjamin, and Clover. Benjamin is intelligent and literate but cynical, and Molly is caring and comforting.

During the course of his life, Boxer suffers from lung disease, split hooves, and long hours of overtime, for which he receives no appreciable overtime, sick leave, or paid time off, and no medical attention from a doctor or veterinarian.

He and the other working animals are also promised pensions and a plot of land on which to enjoy their retirement years.

He, like Snowball, disappears under strange circumstances, is murdered before he receives his pension, and the plot of land promised for retirement is used to grow barley.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Explain to the classroom the concept of symbolism—an object, a character, or an event that takes on more than its literal meaning through the course of the story. Generate examples from other works of literature and *Animal Farm*, such as Squealer's representing media, Molly's representing selfishness and materialism.
2. Make the following information available to students through notes on the board, an overhead, or other means:  
The following labour leaders in B.C. also disappeared or died under strange circumstances.
  - Frank Rogers—vice-president of the Fishermen's Union murdered by thugs said to be working for the CPR, for supporting a railroad workers' strike, 1903.
  - Joseph Mairs—sentenced to 18 months of hard labour for “unlawful assembly” during a mine strike. Died of tubercular peritonitis due to negligent medical attention, 1914.
  - Ginger Goodwin—organizer for mineworkers, shot to death near Nanaimo, 1918 (see elsewhere in guide for poem of Ginger Goodwin).
  - at Blubber Bay, Bob Gardinar, the vice-president of an International Woodworkers of America local, after a brutal strike, was arrested and so badly beaten, he later died. The officer who beat him got six months in jail, 1937.You may wish to include or substitute current, national, or international examples. See the web site [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org)
3. Invite students to recall and find in the text of the story the circumstances surrounding Boxer's death: What did Benjamin see printed on the side of the lorry that took Boxer away? What does he believe happened to Boxer? Where does Squealer say Boxer was taken? What is his explanation for Boxer not returning to the farm?
4. Invite students, in pairs or groups, to explore and list parallels between Boxer's disappearance and the circumstances around the deaths of others connected to labour. Snowball and others from the story might be included in the discussion also.
5. Invite students to explain and list possible motives for Boxer's disappearance, Snowball's disappearance, the disappearance and deaths of others in the story, and possible motives for the disappearance of the labour leaders mentioned above.
6. Invite students to discuss and list other aspects of Boxer's life as a worker.
7. Assign students the task of explaining Boxer as a symbol of labour in a well written paragraph.

## EVALUATION

Evaluate each student's paragraph out of five marks. Criteria includes: use of a topic sentence; clarity—good spelling and clear use of language; a demonstrated awareness of one or more similarities and one or more differences between Boxer's experiences and those of others, at least three points must be made; and a concluding sentence.

Also give a mark for notes and two marks for an edited rough copy.