

Extract: Animal Farm (George Orwell)

All the animals were now present ... When Major saw that they had all made themselves comfortable and were waiting attentively, he cleared his throat and began:

"Comrades, you have heard already about the strange dream that I had last night. But I will come to the dream later. I have something else to say first. I do not think, comrades, that I shall be with you for many months longer, and before I die, I feel it my duty to pass on to you such **wisdom**¹ as I have acquired. I have had a long life, I have had much time for thought as I lay alone in my stall, and I think I may say that I understand the nature of life on this earth as well as any animal now living. It is about this that I wish to speak to you.

"Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are **slaughtered**² with **hideous**³ cruelty. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth.

"But is this simply part of the order of nature? Is it because this land of ours is so poor that it cannot afford a decent life to those who dwell upon it? No, comrades, a thousand times no! The soil of England is fertile, its climate is good, it is capable of affording food in abundance to an enormously greater number of animals than now inhabit it ... 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. There, comrades, is the answer to all our problems. It is **summed up**⁴ in a single word—Man. Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished for ever.

"Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals ...

¹ Wisdom: (noun) the ability to use your knowledge and experience to make good decisions and judgments

² To slaughter: (verb) the killing of an animal for meat

³ Hideous: (adjective) terrible

⁴ To sum up: (phrasal verb) to express a concise idea of the nature or character of someone or something

Questions

1. What does Major want to speak about?
 - a) His dream
 - b) His wisdom
 - c) His death

2. Major thinks the animals have lives which are “miserable, laborious, and short” because ...
 - a) The poor soil cannot support them.
 - b) Of the actions of human beings.
 - c) This is part of the natural order of things.

3. Major says human beings are unique among Earth’s creatures because...
 - a) They take from nature but give back nothing in return.
 - b) They are the enemies of other creatures.
 - c) They have the right to rule over other creatures.

SEE ANSWERS OVERLEAF



COMPREHENSION B1: 4

Answers

1. b
2. b
3. a