

On a farm run by animals, the pigs are the ruthless leaders. Boxer is an old work horse who has collapsed through old age and exhaustion. The pigs have said that they will arrange to have Boxer taken to a human hospital to recuperate and the other animals believe this. However, when the van arrives to take Boxer away, Benjamin, a donkey and the only animal that can read, sees the writing on the cart's side and announces to Clover (a horse) and the other animals that the pigs are actually sending Boxer to be slaughtered and turned into glue at the knacker's yard.

If he made a good recovery, Boxer might expect to live another three years, and he looked forward to the peaceful days that he would spend in the corner of the big pasture¹. It would be the first time that he had had leisure to study and improve his mind. He intended, he said, to devote the rest of his life to learning the remaining twenty-two letters of the alphabet. 5

However, Benjamin and Clover could only be with Boxer after working hours, and it was in the middle of the day when the van came to take him away. The animals were all at work weeding turnips under the supervision of a pig, when they were astonished to see Benjamin come galloping from the direction of the farm buildings, braying² at the top of his voice. It was the first time that they had ever seen Benjamin excited--indeed, it was the first time that anyone had ever seen him gallop. "Quick, quick!" he shouted. "Come at once! They're taking Boxer away!" Without waiting for orders from the pigs, the animals broke off work and raced back to the farm buildings. Sure enough, there in the yard was a large closed van, drawn by two horses, with lettering on its side and a sly-looking man in a low-crowned bowler hat sitting on the driver's seat. And Boxer's stall³ was empty. 10 15

The animals crowded round the van. "Good-bye, Boxer!" they chorused, "good-bye!"

"Fools! Fools!" shouted Benjamin, prancing round them and stamping the earth with his small hoofs. "Fools! Do you not see what is written on the side of that van?" 20

That gave the animals pause, and there was a hush. Muriel began to spell out the words. But Benjamin pushed her aside and in the midst of a deadly silence he read:

"'Alfred Simmonds, Horse Slaughterer and Glue Boiler, Willingdon. Dealer in Hides and Bone-Meal. Kennels Supplied.' Do you not understand what that means? They are taking Boxer to the knacker's!"⁴ 25

A cry of horror burst from all the animals. At this moment the man on the box whipped up his horses and the van moved out of the yard at a smart trot. All the animals followed, crying out at the tops of their voices. Clover forced her way to the front. The van began to gather speed. Clover tried to stir her stout limbs to a gallop, and achieved a canter. "Boxer!" she cried. "Boxer! Boxer! Boxer!" And just at this moment, as though he had heard the uproar outside, Boxer's face, with the white stripe down his nose, appeared at the small window at the back of the van. 30

'Boxer!' cried Clover in a terrible voice. 'Boxer! Get out! Get out quickly! They're taking you to your death!'

All the animals took up the cry of 'Get out, Boxer, get out!' But the van was already gathering speed and drawing away from them. It was uncertain whether Boxer had understood what Clover had said. But a moment later his face disappeared from the window and there was the sound of a tremendous drumming of hoofs⁵ inside the van. He was trying to kick his way out. The time had been when a few kicks from Boxer's hoofs would have smashed the van to matchwood. But alas! his strength had left him; and in a few moments the sound of drumming hoofs grew fainter and died away. In desperation the animals began appealing to the two horses which drew the van to stop. 'Comrades⁶, comrades!' they shouted. 'Don't take your own brother to his death!' But the stupid brutes, too ignorant to realise what was happening, merely set back their ears and quickened their pace. Boxer's face did not reappear at the window. Too late, someone thought of racing ahead and shutting the five-barred gate; but in another moment the van was through it and rapidly disappearing down the road. Boxer was never seen again.

Glossary:

¹ pasture - field

² braying – the cries made by donkeys

³ stall – animal bed

⁴ Knacker's – knacker's yard: a place where animals are killed then their bodies are made into glue.

⁵ drumming of hoofs – hoofs are horse's feet, drumming means to bang and kick one's feet wildly.

⁶ comrades – friends

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

Q1. [AO1] Read again the first part of the source, **lines 1 to 5**.

List **four** things from this part of the text about Boxer. **[4 marks]**

Q2. [AO2] Look in detail at this extract from **lines 6 to 16** of the source:

However, Benjamin and Clover could only be with Boxer after working hours, and it was in the middle of the day when the van came to take him away. The animals were all at work weeding turnips under the supervision of a pig, when they were astonished to see Benjamin come galloping from the direction of the farm buildings, braying² at the top of his voice. It was the first time that they had ever seen Benjamin excited--indeed, it was the first time that anyone had ever seen him gallop. "Quick, quick!" he shouted. "Come at once! They're taking Boxer away!" Without waiting for orders from the pigs, the animals broke off work and raced back to the farm buildings. Sure enough, there in the yard was a large closed van, drawn by two horses, with lettering on its side and a sly-looking man in a low-crowned bowler hat sitting on the driver's seat. And Boxer's stall was empty

How does the writer use **language** here to show us what Benjamin felt about Boxer being taken away?

You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

[8 marks]

Q3. [AO2] You now need to think about the whole of the source.

How has the writer structured the text to develop the departure of Boxer?

You could write about:

- What the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning of the text
- how and why the writer changes the focus as the extract develops
- any other structural features that you think help to develop the meeting

[8 marks]

Q4. [AO4] Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source, from line 17 to the end.

A teacher having read this text said: "I like how the writer helps my students to feel involved in this moment. It is as if they are at the farm with the animals."

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- write about your own impressions of the characters
- evaluate how the writer has created these impressions
- support your opinions with quotations from the text. **[20 marks]**