

How far would you agree that "animal farm" is, as orwell himself described it, a ...

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Five down. A word that is used in dermatology. 6 letters. That's a tough one... what's dermatology? Itches... that doesn't fit. Scratch... I don't know.

I was pondering whether I should go over to that old man who was leaning against the fence. He had been there, in the same position, smiling and nodding at me for the last half an hour. Perhaps I should tell him to get a life? I sighed; I was so bored. Perhaps this is what waiting does to you?

Why was I doing this stupid crossword? I should be on the train now, on my way back to Cardiff; there I would be getting drunk out of my mind. What was I going to say to Rob? " Sorry mate, couldn't come to your stag do, the train came late?" What a lame excuse.

When would that stupid train come? The guard over there was looking happy, probably because he was enjoying watching all us commuters suffer. Perhaps I should show him what it's like, missing out on pints of free beer, strippers AND my best mate's stag do.

Paranoia had set upon me. I had already started to think everyone was out to get me, and perhaps I was right? No, I hastily corrected myself, they don't even know me. Why on earth was I paranoid? I mean, I used to take this journey everyday when I was a kid... but things change. I was far more aware of everything now.

At my feet, lay my briefcase; normally my portfolio would lie there, with all its sketches depicting life. For a brief second, I wished I could go back in time, and no longer feel the intensity of adulthood: having to work to

survive, owning a house etc. I closed my eyes wearily. The train still hadn't come.

Frustrated, my instincts told me to just wait, but, ignoring them, I marched over to the guard, and demanded to know when the train would arrive. He gave no verbal answer, and simply gestured at the electronic board above his head. He then walked off, presumably to help some old dear carry her luggage. Not.

The notice board told me that my train would be delayed indefinitely. Estimated time of arrival was at least 4 hours away, if not more. I slumped back down onto the red plastic, cheap station seating, and resigned myself to a long wait. I got out my mobile, and began to text Rob, apologising for not being there. My text contained many words of crude language.

As I began to text, I stopped. I remembered that I was at a station; where better to observe human life? Here, I could capture normal life, without having to draw forced behaviour. I looked across the crowded arcade. Businessmen, old people, women with severe hair-dos, punks, anarchists, goths, Asians, Africans... no one out of the ordinary. I didn't know quite what I was looking for, but I knew they would stand out.

Just as I looked past the Sainsbury's outlet, a woman burst in through the door from the high street, almost colliding with the 'Welcome to Paddington' sign. She was drenched to the bone, although I didn't know how; it wasn't even raining.

She had a peculiar look on her face, one of worry and exhaustion, yet somehow triumphant. She ran towards the platform, skidding several times, and ran straight to the guard. I could see her lips moving, but all I could hear was the crackly interference on the intercom. The guard walked off while she was still talking, and she was left standing there, alone.

I had never seen such a unique woman in my life. She had auburn hair, naturally highlighted in streaks with a dull ginger colour, bright green eyes almost like a cat, which were opened wide as if she was annoyed...

Her eyebrows lowered as I saw her eyes scan across the timetable. What train was she waiting for? I told myself I wouldn't get involved. She was beautiful, but I already had a girlfriend: a kind generous one at that. No, I didn't love this woman, but was just enthralled by her.

As she sat down, drips of water ran off her hair onto her top. She sat herself down on the adjacent bench to mine, and reached for her handbag. Her hand delved deep inside, and things went flying everywhere. Tissues scattered themselves all over her skirt, leaving bits of white fluff, which contrasted horribly with her blue and burgundy-striped skirt.

A lipstick gracefully went sailing out of the bag, flew through the air, until it landed back on the platform. It then slid itself underneath the barrier, on the very edge of the platform.

The woman flung more things out of the bag; the Vaseline came out, the lid fell off, and the contains went everywhere; a purse hit an old woman sitting

near her who then started mumbling; photos of children and other people; tickets for buses and trains; receipts for petrol, shopping and clothes; a calculator fell out and made a crack sound; a film, mint wrappers, pens... anything you can name was in there.

Unfortunately, still more things came out. A mirror went flying through the air, straight towards an old man. He looked up just before it struck him, and caught it. I presume he then made a comment about 9 years bad luck as he handed it back, though I couldn't hear him, as the intercom was going on about cheap luggage cases at G&R Cases.

Finally, she pulled out, with relish a mobile phone and a hairbrush. She began to brush her hair vigorously using the mirror. She placed it back in, then looked around in horror, at the scene of destruction that she had created. Annoyed (it seemed), she went around this part of the station, picking everything back up. I wanted to help, but I dared not; something was rooting me to the ground. Fear.

The woman finally replaced the lipstick back in her handbag, and looked around. Seeing the shops, she walked off towards them. I followed. As I walked towards the commercial side of the station, I made up a cover story. If she noticed I was following and asked me, I would say either

a) I thought you were someone else, or

b) I need to get some apples... wait, but why would I need to go to all the same shops as her?

I decided I would only use option a) if asked. She walked into Boots, and I followed. Why was I following her? I had no idea, but this woman interested me. Under the pretence of looking for a toothbrush, I watched her buy some Nurofen, shaving cream, Lynx deodorant, and a razor. Why did she need that? It was 'guy' stuff. Finally, she meandered over to the cosmetics area, where she dithered over buying a plum-coloured shade of finger paint stuff. What was it called again? Oh yeah, nail varnish. After about 45 minutes in there, she paid up using her card, and left.

During the next 11/2 hours, she went to the luggage shop, Woolworths where she purchased a large bag of pick 'n' mix, Sainsbury's to buy some pasta, and a florist. After coming out of the last shop with a bouquet of irises, she went back to the red plastic bench, and sat down. I waited for a while, and then followed suit. On my way back to the bench, I looked up at the notice board. Two hours before the train arrived.

The woman seemed to be getting nervous. She was straightening her skirt, getting rid of every little crease or dent. She sat there, looking agitated for a while. She sneezed suddenly, and looked around, cringing apologetically. Then a train pulled up into the station. This was the 19: 56 train pulling in, and she stood up, and ran towards the barrier.

People filed out, and the noise level in my head slowly grew, but I could not make sense of it. All I could hear was endless jumble; babbling, talking, but one conversation indistinguishable from another. I could hear this in the

background, but in the foreground there was silence, spare her breathing. A friendly old lady was trying to question me, but I could neither see nor hear her clearly. I was looking at her, but yet not seeing her.

It was the same with the rest of the passengers: they had no features in my head. All I could see were faces, with one face standing out: the woman's. Her face had features: exquisite ones, which appeared perfect to me. Everyone else was the same, blank, just going. Her face told a story, one that I was trying to learn.

I had become very overwhelmed by this woman. I watched her stand by the rail, lean over, clasping her hands with the rail between them. She stood on the lowest bar, held the bar with both hands and swung. She then leaned completely over the bar, got off it, and just held it with one hand.

As the stragglers among the passengers filed out, the train emptied, and her face began to express anguish. As the doors on the one side closed, and the boarding passengers got on, she looked distraught. She ran from one direction to another, trying to find a way to get to the other side of the bar, trying to find a guard. But there was no one to help her. As the train departed, confusion came upon her face. She then slowly sat back down on her seat, and, with a look of determination, looked like no one could make her move.

The train left, and the station became emptier. Most people had got on the last train, which had left for Greenwich. My train, however, was still

conspicuous by its absence. I should now be at the club with Rob and the rest of his mates, getting more and more drunk by the moment.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the woman getting out her mobile. It was quite an old model for a person her age: I thought she would have a 3310 at least, since she looked about 23. But no, she had a Sony, with a pullout aerial and tiny screen. She was hitting the keys at a moderate speed, obviously texting. I could just about make out the words 'Where are you' from where I was sitting. Then she hit one button hard, and sat back. I heard a faint beep; obviously the message had been sent.

The time kept ticking away on the big blue electric clock. The second hand seemed to almost be slowing down, though I doubted that. The timetable kept saying that my train would arrive in one minute less time than last minute, until it said my train would arrive in 45 minutes. However, by that point, I dared not raise my hopes, as it had said that so many times before I no longer believed it.

Time seemed to almost be coming to a standstill, when I heard a sharp horn go, and another train slowly came round the corner into the main station. The woman ran towards the bar again, a fresh look of happiness on her face, but in the corner lay a hint of dread? I wasn't sure. Her irises in her hand, she stood on the rail, leaning over. Her free hand had nothing to do: it darted from the rail to her pocket to her skirt, and then it held the irises, then back to the bar.

The passengers again stopped leaving, and the train was once again emptied. Through the windows a few silhouettes remained, so she looked like she still had a bit of hope. The final three passengers came out, and she fled from the bar, flinging down the irises onto the floor. From my seat, I could see her head held between her hands, and her chest was heaving gently: was she sobbing? She rummaged in her bag for a tissue, and, after wiping her tears away, gently picked up the irises from the ground, and held them in her arms.

An old woman, who had seen the plight of the woman and her irises both of which had begun to wilt forlornly, walked over to her, started talking to her about the plight of the rails nowadays (I was now within earshot) and gave her a vase of water for the irises. As she left, the woman began to smile again, seeing the flowers perk up.

After two more trains had come and gone, the woman's spirits had fallen almost irretrievably low and various texts, I saw her call someone, possibly the person who she was waiting for. She was muttering 'Pick up, damn you, pick up', and when the answer phone came on, she almost burst into tears. She left a heartrending message, and I saw her visibly choke back tears a few times. Then she hung up, and waited.

The woman's skirt was now crumpled, her top tearstained, the flowers dying, but hope of the person arriving kept a brave smile on her face. However, the smile was not for me, actually, it seemed almost everyone but. She didn't seem to even notice I existed.

Then I heard a message on the intercom:

'We are very sorry for any delays, but the 19: 56 train and the 17: 56 trains have been combined. They will shortly be arriving. We are sorry for any inconvenience. Please forward any complaints to the Railtrack Office in Cornwall. Thank you for your patience.'

Finally! My train was actually going to arrive! What's more, in only a few minutes! But one thing almost scared me: it had combined with the woman's train. Was it coincidence? Or sheer chance...

However, I had no chance to ponder this question as the train pulled in at that moment. The woman ran over to the rail, as I queued to get aboard. From my place in the queue, I was at a good vantage point to see whom the woman was going to reunite with, and the happy event itself.

A man got off the train, and the woman was waving at him madly. However, he looked around hurriedly, didn't appear to see her, and beckoned another woman off the train.

At that point, my woman started to look confused, as if feeling why hadn't he seen her? She was almost at the point of climbing over the rail.

The man who had got off the train, and woman with him grabbed each other, and kissed passionately. My woman looked aghast, shocked, and distraught all at once. She then took a sharp intake of breath. The man looked round and saw my woman looking distraught. The woman looked around, and

caught my glance. For an instantaneous second we understood each other, then it stopped.

I heard him trying to explain, but it was all for nothing. As I boarded the train, I saw the irises hit him in the face, the shopping hit the other woman, and my woman walked off into the darkness, in the direction of the oncoming trains. However, I had no time to find out what happened next, and the train slowly began to accelerate away. I realised that I had been staring at her unashamedly for the last 4 hours, and I felt I knew her; but all she knew of me was a second.

The last thing I heard before the sound of the train blocked out everything else was a screech: was it a scream, or simply the doors closing? I realised I would never know, and concentrated on looking forward to the journey: who knows what might happen?