

Essay on name

[Life](#), [Death](#)



‘ Instructor’s Name’

Shooting an Elephant

Any piece of literature is better understood and better enjoyed, when the reader takes the effort to analyze its elemental components. The aim of this essay is to analyze the essay, ‘ Shooting an Elephant’ by George Orwell, and understand the author’s usage of ethos, pathos and logos appeal to convey his theme. The essay describes how a European, posted as a police officer in Burma, during the British imperial rule, killed an elephant which was acting wild. The essay dwells more about the reasons that led to the shooting of that great beast, rather than dwelling on the shooting itself. The Elephant had gone wild and had ravaged shops and killed a coolie. But during the time of shooting it had mellowed down and was quite harmless unless disturbed. The mahout of the elephant was the only person who could tame the beast, and he was twelve hours journey away from the spot. The author could have waited until he returned, but he had to take a call to shoot down the elephant, just to avoid being laughed at by the two thousand odd people who had gathered to witness the spectacle.

Ethos is a way of appeal in literature, which tries to convince the reader about a point of view by using the credibility of the characters. It appeals to the ethics of the reader, by providing examples and facts about the moral standing of the character, and his ethical reasoning for performing a particular action. Here in this essay, the death of a Coolie instigated by the madness of the elephant is the foremost ethos appeal by the author. It is after seeing the dead body of that coolie, the author summons for the elephant rifle. The destroying of huts and shops, the death of a human being,

and the fact that the author is the only armed person among a group of unarmed people, gives him the moral authority to kill the animal, which is supposedly dangerous. Also, the initial few sentences where the author explains his opinions on the ill effects of imperialism, and how he hated the fact that he had to carry the orders of an imperial empire, also renders credibility to his character. This credibility makes the reader believe the reasoning he gives for his actions.

Pathos is the appeal made to the emotions of the reader. A pathos appeal is an attempt to obtain an emotional response from the reader to a particular situation. By creating a vivid imagery about the elephant, and its playing in the paddy fields, the author appeals to the emotions of the reader. The reader is able to visualize the whole scenery of a large crowd gathering around a great mighty beast, which is otherwise tame except for this short burst of madness. By this appeal he makes the reader empathize with his reluctance to shoot the elephant. At the end, he delineates in detail how the elephant struggled in the last few minutes of its life, because the death was slow. The author by describing how he shot the animal multiple times to ensure it enjoys a swift death, appeals to the emotions of the reader, to emphasize that his decision to shoot the elephant was a painful one and one which he did not agree with, but yet had to go through with it.

Logos is the logical appeal made by the author to the reader. It is an appeal whereby the author gives logical reasoning for his characters' actions in a story. In this essay, the logic behind the shooting of the elephant is simple – the author wanted to avoid being laughed at by the huge crowd. This was a crowd which did not pass on an opportunity to mock a Whiteman, as

described in the initial part of the story. So against his better judgment, the author still carried on with shooting of the elephant, just to avoid looking like a fool in front of a crowd, which dished out insults at him almost on a daily basis prior to this incident. If he had failed to act in the way they expected him to act, then it would have given yet another reason to the crowd, for making the life of the author miserable for the rest of his term in Burma. Thus, by using all the three modes of appeal, the author drives home his point effectively. At the end he explicitly presents a larger theme by narrating the incident of the shooting of an elephant. The essence of his message through this story is that, an Anglo-Indian, serving in the East under the imperial rule, is more a puppet than a free man. His actions are directed towards living up to the image the people of East has about a Whiteman and his life is controlled by the 'natives' than the other way around. As he says, "He shall spend his life in trying to impress the 'natives', and so in every crisis he has got to do what the 'natives' expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it." (Orwell, 1936)

Works Cited

George Orwell. (1936). Shooting an Elephant. Web. Accessed on September 30, 2013. Retrieved from http://orwell.ru/library/articles/elephant/english/e_eleph