

Shooting an elephant or definition of imperialism

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



George Charalambous 03/05/2013 English 1030 Research Paper " If it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism, we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism now" according to Vladimir Lenin. George Orwell immediately begins the essay "Shooting an Elephant" by claiming his perspective on British Imperialism, and how this imperialism affected himself, his empire, and the Burma people. Though George Orwell is a British officer himself at the time in Burma , he claims that he is fully against the oppressors , who at the time are the British.

His personal experience, that he writes about with the elephant is metaphorical to imperialism and how he views the social issue. The author is the protagonist of the story and he shows the feelings toward the British Imperialism and Britain's justification for their actions in taking over Burma. Nowadays imperialism, transformed to capitalism and a lot of the characteristics are the same. Firstly, if we take a look to George Orwell's life he was born in 1903 in Bengal, in the British Colony of India, where his dad was working.

His mother though was the one that brought him to England at the age of one. While he was in primary school, and other greater levels his teachers made clear that he was disliked by some of them. He joined the imperial police in India, Burma after finishing his studies at Eton, without any prospect of getting a college degree because his family was insufficient to pay his tuition. He went back to England in 1928 having grown hating imperialism as shown by his first novel " Burmese Days ". Orwell and his family lived poor for many years even sometimes he was homeless.

He began working in BBC Eastern service after the end of world war two. His job there was to shape propaganda and wrote that he felt bad for working there but he did it only to survive. He was working mostly in programs to gain Indian support for Britain's war efforts. Despite the good pay from BBC he did not like what they were supporting and he resigned in 1943. Orwell was well known during most of his career for his journalism, both in books and British press. In his own words, he characterized himself as a democratic socialist, and he was strongly against fascism, imperialism and dictators.

George Orwell is a creative and competent writer, and he is a man that has a lot to teach and say about the world around him and around the world through his writings. He is such a writer. To begin with Orwell is the protagonist of "Shooting an Elephant". The author himself is saying that he is uneducated and young, at that particular time. From that saying, we realize that he did not really experience life or the world. He believed though that English people should not supply their ideas of life on other people through violence.

In the job he was doing he got to see all the dirty work of what his country was doing and what they were in charge of. That was something that really scarred him which he clearly shows in his 1984 last novel. You can see some of that resentment towards big imperialistic governments played out in almost all of his novel. George Orwell's opinion when he is in the military and can see clearly the UK imperialistic strategies to rule other countries. His argument was that England's military should not even be in India by that time.

United Kingdom government was saying that, what they were trying to do, was to develop better living standards for everyone but Orwell did not

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believe that, that was the cause. In this particular essay " Shooting an Elephant ", as I said previously , is the protagonist. The main incident of the story is when Orwell has to kill the elephant. He talks about his experience as a young British colonial policeman working in Burma in the 1920's. Orwell's is called out to do something about a tame elephant He clearly says in the story that he did not want to kill the animal.

In his mind, he just wanted to get close to the elephant but if it does not charge him or show aggression maybe he could just go away and everybody will be fine with it. But he realizes that the moment he started heading towards the elephant with his rifle, everybody from the crowd, start getting excited to see it dead. Those people in the crowd might want a show of entertainment, like something big get shot. On the other hand maybe they just wante thefoodbecause in the end of " Shooting an Elephant" it says that after they kill it, they stripped it's bones in eight pieces and they tok the meat..

Maybe though they just wanted the ivory. After he shots, people would fight to get first the ivory. Everybody had a differentmotivationand that is what made it hard for him to walk away at this point. He knew he was committed to shoot the elephant even though he did not want to do it. He did not want to be laugh at. People expected on him to do it and he had to do it. All these people were following him while he was going int this life experience for him. In Orwell's mind, he was the policeman , so he was in charge. He should be able to do whatever he wants reason obviously.

Instead the people and the government were pushing their will upon him and forcing him to do something that he does not want toand that seems like a
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contradiction to me. He really does not have the freedom to do what truly he wants to do in this situation because of England and what they put him in. One of the senses that I got from " Shooting an Elephant" was his inside struggle and thinking before and after the shooting. It was a mental struggle for Orwell back-and-forth. When he finally shoot the elephant, it does not die.

He shoot him again and again even in his mouth which is the most sensitive spot of an elephant, but still the animal do not die. It took thirty minutes for the elephant to die. The fact that the elephant had to struggle made the author to suffer more after his unwilling action. The elephant start bleeding and dying in a pain that could not even get up anymore, From the last lines of the story Orwell is focusing on the societal hierarchy and structure. This societal structure was influenced by the English colonialism and how things were run in England. They influenced Burnese people the same way and how they perceived other people.

Through the last lines the author points out again how ridiculous was what he was about to do and that the ultimate reason that he did it is because he did not want to get laughed at. We can obviously see the pain and anger towards England oppression. The background of George Orwell, and ultimate points of his biography, will help to understand a lot more about this essay " Shooting an Elephant". The story itself is enlightening but you can miss a lot of the important elements of this assessing. Orwell is most famous for writing " 1984". In " 1984" he pictures a future world fully controlled by television cameras, " the big brother".

He lived two lives. First life in Burma as a police officer and second when he goes back to England. His second life, is the life of a writer. In England he wrote "1984", and a collection of essays, which "Shooting an Elephant" is one of those essays. In "Shooting an Elephant" he uses a lot two words, imperialism and colonialism. Basically colonialism is when a country shows up in another country and says "you are too stupid to run your own country, so we are going to run it for you". Imperialism is the intent to try to control another country and ostensibly began to think of it as your own.

American and English governments have those tensions the last hundred years. In my opinion, what Orwell was trying to point out is that governments do not use colonialism for active humanitarianism, but the real reason why people show up in another country and colonialize it is for money and power. Extract large amounts of resources, sometimes out of the ground and sometimes physical bodies, like in 1940's for slavery. The question is why English people were in Burma? The British were all over South Africa and a big part of Asia that period. Gandhi was against the English colonialism and we can see that from a part of his work.

He tried to say to British "it is time for you to leave". That is important to understand in "Shooting an Elephant". George Orwell is writing to speak ironically about the experience he had. Orwell was looking back on it and wanted to share it with everyone, to show why imperialism is bad for societies. That is the reason he wrote "Shooting an Elephant". Again what is really important in this story is Orwell's great fear to get laughed at. This is the moment in the story when Orwell finally is able to kind of deconstruct the

mythology of imperialism and he talks about what is one thing that cannot happen if you are the person in charge.

He points out who really has the power in imperialism, even if the elephant was not causing danger to anyone, and even if he was the police officer. The peer pressure from the people is coming out of the fear of their government. People with power will always face peer pressure and do something that they did not want to do like George Orwell in this particular situation. Sometimes the people in charge do not have the real power but they work only from peer pressure. In conclusion, for me in a world that is constantly trying to make you something different and something you do not want to be, is a great accomplishment to be yourself.

The way in which George Orwell operated is as a dramatic and moving allegory of the imperialistic experience. The author actually discusses the shooting of the elephant, pointing out in a horrific detail the painful and slow death of a peaceful elephant by a British officer. This essay actually captures the violent reality of imperialism and colonialization. The life of an imperial police officer would be really hard. Orwell was brave enough to confess this experience and dilemmas when other people just accept it and become a part of it. CITATIONS: Lucideyproduction, . " Imperialism in the 20th Century. xomba. (2006): 1. Web. 12 Mar. 2013. . Lenin, Vladimir. " imperialism quotes. " Brainy Quote. (1982): 1. Web. 12 Mar. 2013. . Porter, Bernard. " British and American Imperialism's Compared . " History New Network. (2006): 11. Web. 12 Mar. 2013. . >.