

# Connections between orwell



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AP3 English16 August 2011A Taste of Freedom: BittersweetIt is common belief that if a child is denied sweets at home, this child will over indulge when sweets are presented outside of the home, and have no boundary or concept of when to stop eating. This type of over indulgence is exemplified in a collection of works by George Orwell. George Orwell's novel 1984, published in 1949, is his depiction of what the world will be like in the year 1984. His essay "Shooting an Elephant", first published in 1936, is a real life story of his encounter with a rogue elephant while living and working as a British police officer in Myanmar. Both of these works share an idea in common. If freedom is completely denied, the subject will know not when to stop and become chaotic when freedom is presented. The Thought Police in the novel 1984 are a secret law enforcement agency that watches closely over each citizen of Oceania.

Not a single movement, word, or thought is missed or untraceable. Their job is to prevent rebellion against the government because it could result in loss of power. O'Brien, a powerful inner party member, tells Winston, the protagonist of the story, that "The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power" (217). The Party will go to great extents to have control over all citizens' minds. This way, the citizens have no concept of what freedom is. If there is no knowledge of freedom, there is no desire for it, thus making a rebellion nearly impossible.

This idea is actually very similar to Plato's Allegory of the Cave in that ignorance creates subservience and peace. The Party in 1984 strips

their outer members of all knowledge that may be used against the Party. They even try to make it seem as though love should not exist at all.

Winston still has his own thoughts, and he knows that he is in love Julia, a girl he often meets up with. Such relationships are prohibited, so they find a room in an old man's shop to meet. Winston thinks to himself, It was inconceivable that they could frequent this place for more than a few weeks without being caught. But the temptation of having a hiding place that was truly their own, indoors and near at hand, had been too much for both of them. (1984, 115) The above quote clearly portrays that a little bit of freedom is changing the way the gears turn inside Winston's brain.

He cannot restrain himself from this new temptation and does not know how to handle the freedom of having a place not being watched. Usually he is very cautious and thoughtful of his actions, but he comes to this hideout daily, which is rather reckless. He acknowledges that he is risking everything for this tiny taste of freedom. After a meeting with Inner Party member O'Brien, Winston is convinced that the Party could be overthrown. A few days later, Winston and Julia are arrested by the Thought Police in their secret room and sent away to the Ministry of Love. The previous meeting had been a sting operation to arrest Winston for Thought Crime.

Winston let the thought of freedom get the best of him and he defeated himself. Being a police officer, and working for the imperialistic government of England, Orwell was an obvious target and was baited (Shooting an Elephant, 293) by the citizens of the small town of Moulmein in his essay Shooting an Elephant. His job was to carry out what

must be done. The plot is nothing like 1984, and he doesn't really need to worry about many major political or governmental issues arising. According to Orwell, "No one had the guts to raise a riot" ("Shooting an Elephant", 293).

His main issue is dealing with the teasing and taunting of the citizens, especially the Buddhist priests. Orwell is caught in a tough position. There is a tamed elephant which is "ravaging the bazaar" ("Shooting an Elephant", 294). It kills a man and destroys many huts, making it a danger to society.

This elephant has been trained and kept tied up in chains. When finally he acquires freedom, it is overwhelming and new. The elephant does not know what to do so he created chaos. The elephant is killed to protect the town. In this, it is his true ignorance of freedom that leads to his downfall.

The elephant is not only symbolic of its own freedom, or lack of it, but also of the freedom of the Burmans. The chains that the tamed elephant had been attached to represent the restrictions applied to the people by the imperialism from Britain. They do not have the right to govern their own country.

When Orwell fires the rifle and kills the elephant, it is symbolic of the freedom of the people being annihilated. This bull elephant is left "powerless to move and yet powerless to die" ("Shooting an Elephant", 299).

The poor elephant cannot even rest in peace, as the Burmans "stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon" ("Shooting an Elephant", 299). Orwell goes on more to discuss the danger of unlimited power, which is

the Party's sole aspiration in 1984. In "Shooting an Elephant", when he is debating whether to shoot the elephant or not, a dreadful epiphany enters his mind: "I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys" (Shooting an Elephant, 296). In shooting this elephant, he will not be doing what his gut instincts are shouting, loud and clear.

Orwell will simply be doing what the natives want to see. Even being in control and having much more freedom than the natives, Orwell does not have the freedom to walk away from this matter with his hands free of blood. Winston and the elephant are quite similar.

All animals have natural instincts. The elephant and Winston both know that freedom is what they deserve. The lack of freedom causes them to become a problem in society, and in the end they are both dealt with. Winston is completely brainwashed and reconfigured to believe everything the Party feeds him, and do every order they assign to him. The reader pities Winston because everything he remembers, he believes is false. Orwell writes, "He was troubled by false memories occasionally. They did not matter so long as one knew them for what they were" (1984, 243).

Whatever goes on inside his head, Winston pushes out. He is helpless and so changed from who he was before. The elephant is shot and brutally left to die.

The reader pities the elephant because the life is slowly being drawn from his motionless body; it takes him a half an hour after the initial wounds to die. Making the decision to kill this elephant obviously stuck to Orwell's

conscious. Orwell wrote "Shooting and Elephant" 13 years before 1984, and it is apparent that some of his writing styles and ideas were carried over. Stomach aches and cavities are common side effects of eating too many sweets. These symptoms are minor when compared to what happened to the subjects of the two stories. Winston and the elephant were denied sweet freedom by power hungry oppressors. When each victim got a taste of freedom, a concept previously unknown to them, they lost self control and became chaotic.

The powerful oppressors then took them down. They are destroyed. Even though they are technically destroyed by their oppressors, the characters essentially destroy themselves in their conspicuous over indulgence. Like a child denied of candy, any subject denied of freedom will over indulge when freedom is made available, and like the child's resulting self-inflicted stomach ache, the subject will destroy oneself. Works Cited

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Orwell, George. "Shooting an Elephant." 50 Great Essays. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Pearson Longman.

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