

Reaction to "a hanging" essay



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"A Hanging" by George Orwell had an overall grim mood, using vivid imagery and a harrowing subject to set a tone for the readers. Orwell served as a member of the British imperial Police from 1922 to 1927, and in those years he saw many criminals and many deaths. However, in this essay, the narrator seems more uneasy than others looking on at the hanging. This might be an essay depicting an event early in the career of young Orwell, however no one really knows for sure.

I believe that "A Hanging" used a dark mood to reflect the way that Orwell felt as he was watching the hanging, and allowed the readers to see it through the mind and eyes of Orwell. It is revealed by the title, the main reason for Orwell writing this story was because of a hanging he saw take place. As Orwell describes the hanging, the readers can feel just how debased he feels as he sees the man pass away so brutally. However, the hanging was not the only uncomfortable thing that Orwell viewed while in Burma. One of the main concerns throughout "A Hanging" was how Orwell viewed the re-education of the prisoners.

It was revealed throughout the essay, without a doubt, that Orwell did not think highly of how the prisoners were treated. The story's allegory throughout the story dealt with how uncanny it was that men, who have been on top of the food chain for their entire lives, were treated like animals in prison. An example of how the men were treated like animals can be seen when Drexel describes their jail cells. The biggest irony within "A Hanging" actually comes from when Orwell describes the men's jail cells as animal cages.

Man, the master of animals, who put their pets in cages whenever they wanted, is now the one being put to a cage on his master's will (the prison). He also depicts the scene of guards milking the prisoners to the hanging site by describing it as if the prisoners were animals as well. He told the readers that they hold on to the prisoners so tight that it's like "men handling fish which is still alive but may jump back into the water". Readers can tell that Orwell pays attention to everything surrounding him as well, right down to the smallest detail. Throughout the essay, the narrator brings to life everything from the color of a man's skin to the pitch of the bugle in the thin air of the arm. It is also evident in the story that Orwell seemed to not realize how real the hanging was until he saw that the nameless man who will be hanged evade a puddle to keep his feet dry. Orwell wonders to himself why this poor man would go out of his way to keep his feet dry when he was ultimately going to be killed in a few minutes. That is the exact moment when Orwell realized that it was not a blob of mass that was going to be sent to die, but instead a perfectly healthy human being whose life is going to be taken from him, and his family very shortly.

Orwell also made note that the man's body was working fine, and would be working fine all the way up the hanging block. Orwell thinks about how the man's body is very much alive, and how his "nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling: wrought the air with a tenth of a second to live". It seems that throughout the essay, Orwell challenged his readers to not solely read what he was saying, but to actually imagine what he was saying so they could truly understand how he was feeling in the arm prison.