

Choices between right and wrong in george orwell's shooting an elephant



**ASSIGN
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Writer George Orwell, in his narrative essay, "Shooting an Elephant", describes a police officer, in Burma, shooting an elephant and his internal struggle with the shooting of it. Orwell's purpose is to create duality and emphasize the choices between right and wrong. He uses a contradictory tone in order to create similar feelings in his readers. His use of narrative structure helps readers to get in his character's head and better see the duality of human nature when choosing between right and wrong. In the exposition, we learn the split personality of the main character. He is a police officer for the British Empire, yet he thought that "imperialism was an evil thing". But, on the other hand of the other hand, he says that he wants to gouge a Buddhist priest (one of the Burmese people). This shows how he goes back and forth, trying to figure out what is right and what is wrong. He doesn't know whether the British are better, or the taunting Burmese. And we as readers get a glimpse inside his head to see this battle.

Another great example of the duality in the narrative structure is in the rising action. It starts when he is having an internal battle about shooting the elephant. "As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him.... suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all.... I had got to shoot the elephant.... But I did not want to shoot the elephant.... It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him." His internal battle about shooting the elephant adds to the duality of the piece. He does not know what is right or wrong. Is it right to shoot the elephant, or wrong? Orwell's narrative structure lets us in the character's head so we can see this battle. Finally, we see all of the European duality in the dénouement. The older cops said that he did the right thing, the younger

ones said, " it was a...shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie because an elephant was worth more than any...Coringhee coolie."

Readers also see the main character's internal conflict with whether it was right or not to kill the elephant. He tries to justify it by saying, " I was glad that the collie had been killed; it put me legally in the right, and gave me sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant." But, his moral conscious still thinks it is wrong because the last sentence of the essay says, "...I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool." So, even at the end of the narrative piece, he is still struggling with whether it was right or not to shoot the elephant. And with the narrative structure of the essay, we are able to see that. Orwell allows us inside the character's head with his narrative essay. If it was a normal essay, we wouldn't get the same effect of being inside the characters mind and seeing his internal struggles. So, through his narrative structure, Orwell clearly conveyed duality and the struggle between what is right and what is wrong.