

The theme of choice in "shooting an elephant" by george orwell

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Unexpected alternatives one is made to make can have long-lasting problems. In "Shooting an Elephant," by George Orwell, the main character the police officer must make a choice that will choose less of two evils carry with pride or go with shame. This choice that the officer makes will bother him in his mind and body.

The theme of this story takes place at some time during the five unhappy years the officer spends as a British enforcer of the law in Burma. He dislikes his place in life when faced with an internal predicament. Well he kills the elephant for pride or well he let it live so he can be brought down with shame by the indigenous. This unhappy sour officer dislikes the Burmese he dislikes his law enforcing job he is also not a fan of British imperialism. The officer is completely alone with his internal thoughts since he cannot attach his idea's that "imperialism was an evil thing" with his countrymen. He sees the British rule as a disgrace of his own culture, because he observes firsthand the cruel imprisonments and whippings that the British use to lay upon their control. Nor can he talk to the Burmese because of the "utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East." This "utter silence" results from the reasoning behind imperialism. Which is, my culture is more superior in every way, and it will overtake yours. My culture's intelligence, power and influence shall never be judged. A wall, invisible but impenetrable, stands between the British and the Burmese. His hatred for the Burmese is caused by their distasteful feelings against the oppression of the British. The officer is stuck between his hatred of the empire his rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible." Helping to oppress the Burmese causes him to feel guilty and to hate his job "more bitterly than I

can perhaps make clear." While standing in this quagmire of hatred, The officer encounters one of the defining moments of his life. Each person must make hard judgments in the mazes of everyday life.

Decisions that seem questionable at the time may have its affects in one's life for years. Sometimes the choice is whether to meet the expectations of others or to meet the expectations of the conscience. One's maturity is measured when one encounters the elephant and decides to shoot it to please the crowd, or to not shoot it and appear to be weak. Either choice may follow one to the grave.