

Orwell's shooting an elephant from the perspective of Kolb's four-stages essay



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Orwell's Shooting an Elephant focuses on a short story of a police officer who was forced to kill the animal. The story is a metaphorical representation of British Imperialism that limited people's freedom and rights.

From the perspective of Kolb's four-stage model, which defines four types of learning - thinking (Abstract Conceptualization), doing (Active Experimentation), feeling (Concrete Experience), and watching (Reflective Observation), the story focuses on the feeling (Concrete Experience), along with other less-represented learning styles that take place in the story.

At the very beginning of the story, the protagonist refers to reflective observation to describe the contextual background and explain historic context. Hence, while talking about the British government and people, the author notes, " There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans" (Orwell, 2003, p. 31).

Further deliberations are more reminiscent of the abstract conceptualization stage, during which the author makes generalized statements about Imperial power and criticizes the government in general. The stage of abstract conceptualization is strictly intertwined with reflective observation, which contributes to the assimilating style of cognizing the worlds. The style is particularly relevant because it accurately reflects the protagonists' greater attention to concepts and logical exposition of ideas.

Although the story focuses on enumeration and depiction of subsequent events, almost no references are made to the stage of active

experimentation. However, the climax of the story is reached as soon as the
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police officer sees the dead man that was smashed by the elephant. As soon as he sees it, the man “ sent an orderly to a friend’s house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle” (Orwell, 2003, p. 34).

As soon as the main hero resorts to action, the learning model forms a combination of active experimentation and concrete experience that guides the officer to the end of the story, with slight reference to the abstract conceptualization. In such a manner, the author transforms the hero’s learning style to the accommodation stage, according to which the police officer cognizes the events by means of intuition rather than by means of logic.

Hence, taking practical actions with no logical assumptions refer to the significant influence imposed on the hero by the British imperial power. This type of behavior model exposes the hero’s strong preference for a specific learning style. At the same time, by adjusting all stages to different situations, the author expects the audience to understand the story from various perspectives. Additionally, experimenting with different learning styles, the author also seeks to employ different approaches to achieve the objective.

In conclusion, Orwell’s Shooting an Elephant represents a sophisticated synergy of learning styles from a combination of concrete experience and abstract conceptualization and ending with active experimentation and reflective observations. Interestingly, the learning styles also provide a sufficient explanation for the themes and ideas reflected in the story.

This is of particular concern to the abstract conceptualization of imperialism, as well as reflective observation of the people's reaction to a new political order. One way or another, the model of concrete experience prevails because it suits best the description of hero's perceptions and attitudes to the political power and Imperial dominance. Hence, the essay's analysis from the perspective of Kolb's model provides another angle for evaluation.

Orwell, G. (2003). *Shooting an Elephant*. US: Penguin Books.