

ACTIVITY 1.19 continued

8 As students are reading, monitor their progress. Be sure they are engaged with the text and annotating unknown words and events, responses, and reflections. Evaluate whether the selected reading mode is effective.

ACTIVITY 1.19 continued

Reading with a Cultural Criticism Lens

My Notes

some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when I heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of “Go away, child! Go away this instant!” and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man’s dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian⁵ coolie,⁶ almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back, and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast’s foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend’s house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant.

Chunk 3

5 The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole white population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant—I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary—and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metaled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet plowed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side toward us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd’s approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them, and stuffing them into his mouth.

6 I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant—it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery—and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of “must” was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not want in the least to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

⁵ **Dravidian:** belonging to an ancient race in India

⁶ **coolie:** servant

SCAFFOLDING THE TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

5. Craft and Structure (RI.11–12.5) Paragraph 4 ends very differently than it starts. Describe how the narrator reveals the important details in the paragraph. How do the details at the beginning—and the narrator’s reflections on them—differ from the details at the end? How do those differences affect you as a reader?

6. Key Ideas and Details (RI.11–12.1) What is the narrator’s attitude toward shooting the elephant in paragraphs 5 and 6? Provide evidence from the text to support your answer. How does the narrator describe the elephant’s behavior and the importance of the animal in Burma? What does he say about his intentions?

Chunk 4

7 But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes—faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hand I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I would have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the **futility** of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed crowd—seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib.⁷ For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to “impress the natives,” and so in every crisis he has got to do what the “natives” expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing—no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

Chunk 5

8 But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a large animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to the experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing; he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

9 It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But I also knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of “natives”; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on, and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do.

⁷ **sahib**: native term for a European gentleman

My Notes

futility: uselessness

9 Depending on the reading mode, you may want to pause after Chunk 4 to lead a class discussion of situational irony. Ask students to identify significant examples of the narrator's reflection on the events, and discuss their significance to the work as a whole.

10 You may continue the class discussion after Chunk 5, this time focusing on the position of the narrator regarding the shooting of the elephant and what that action suggests about the nature of power in the context of imperialism.

SCAFFOLDING THE TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

7. Key Ideas and Details (RI.11–12.1) What makes the narrator change his mind about shooting the elephant? What does he understand about himself—as an Englishman and a white man—at the moment of this decision? Return to paragraph 7. Find the sentence in which the narrator states that he realized he will shoot the elephant. What leads up to that realization?

8. Key Ideas and Details (RI.11–12.2) The narrator formulates a logical plan of action in paragraph 9 that will allow him to avoid shooting the elephant, but he does not follow it. Why not? What persistent thought or worry causes him to prepare to shoot the animal? Think back on what the narrator had “realized” earlier. How does that realization shape his thinking in this paragraph?

ACTIVITY 1.19 continued

21 For the writing prompt, ask students to expand on the **quickwrites** they wrote at the beginning of the activity based on their greater understanding of a reflective essay.

Leveled Differentiated Instruction

In this activity, students may need support writing a narrative about a significant life event.

L2–L3 **Narrative Analysis and**

Writing graphic organizer as a prewriting activity for their reflective essay. Have students use the graphic organizer as a guide to tell their story to a partner. Then have them support one another in adding details to their narratives.

L3–L4 **Narrative Analysis and**

Writing graphic organizer as a prewriting activity for their reflective essay.

L4–L5 Prior to writing, have students brainstorm a list of vivid and precise language to use to describe their event. Have students share with a partner and support one another in adding to their lists.

22 When the drafts are completed, ask students to **think-pair-share** what they have written. Ask pairs to mark each other's texts to identify event, response, and reflection. Have them also comment on any details that are vague or unclear or language that is imprecise. Provide additional writing time for students to revise the draft and add any missing components or to ensure that the details they provide are vivid and their language is precise.

23 Remind students to read and respond to the Independent Reading Link from the beginning of this activity.

ASSESS

Monitor the Check Your Understanding discussions to confirm that students can correctly identify the three elements of a reflective essay. Evaluate students' responses to the writing prompt, checking that they have included all three requirements.

ACTIVITY 1.19 continued

Reading with a Cultural Criticism Lens

My Notes

Language and Writer's Craft: Formal and Informal Style

You have learned that a reflective essay is a type of personal narrative in which the writer reflects on the significance of an incident or set of circumstances. Because such an essay reveals a writer's unique feelings and perceptions yet also addresses universal issues and insights, the narrator may use a writing style that combines personal and formal elements.

Note how Orwell strikes a balance between the two styles in this example:

Orwell's language and style demonstrate his political intelligence and awareness of the cruelty of imperialism: "hatred of the empire," "unbreakable tyranny," and "upon the will of the prostrate peoples." He conveys a more personal and emotional style when he uses less formal language, such as "evil spirited little beasts" and "into a Buddhist priests' guts."

"All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts."

PRACTICE Find another passage in the essay that demonstrates a mixture of formal and personal writing styles. Underline the passage in the text, and in the My Notes space, explain how the author uses both styles to achieve balance and convey meaning.

Narrative Writing Prompt

Using your quickwrite from the beginning of the activity, write a reflective essay about a significant event in your life that taught you a meaningful lesson. Be sure to:

- Include a clear event, response, and reflection.
- Describe the event and response fully and clearly, using vivid and precise language.
- Use language to create a balanced, appropriate style for the task.
- Use transitions to link the major sections of the text.

ADAPT

If students need additional help with the reflective essay organizational structure, provide an outline of an essay that includes all three components. Choose a relatively short

essay that can be read and analyzed in a brief reteaching exercise. You might want to use an online document sharing site where students can collaboratively annotate a reflective essay using different colors to indicate the events, responses, and reflections.