**Learning Targets**

- Analyze the ways in which an author conveys a perspective on imperialism through the interaction of individuals, ideas, and events in a reflective essay.
- Analyze the organizational structure of a reflective essay.
- Draft a reflective essay applying the organizational structure studied.

**Organizational Structure of a Reflective Essay**

A reflective essay is a kind of personal narrative in which the writer reflects on the significance of an incident.

- **Event or Incident**: The author describes some incident or set of circumstances.
- **Response**: The author describes his or her feelings and thoughts concerning the encounter. This is the initial response, without the benefit of reflection.
- **Reflection**: The author reflects on the incident. This reflection usually occurs sometime after the event or incident. In the reflection, the author often transitions from describing a situation unique to him or her to a discussion more universal in nature.

**COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS STANDARDS**

**Focus Standards:**

- **RI.11–12.1**: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- **RI.11–12.3**: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

- **RI.11–12.10**: By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

**Additional Standards Addressed:**

- **RI.11–12.4; RI.11–12.5; W.11–12.3a; W.11–12.3c; W.11–12.3d; W.11–12.3e; W.11–12.4; W.11–12.5; W.11–12.10; L.11–12.6**
Preview
In this activity, you will study George Orwell’s reflective essay “Shooting an Elephant” using Cultural Criticism and relate it to the topic of imperialism. After working with the text closely, you will apply what you have learned about the structure of a reflective essay to your own writing.

Setting a Purpose for Reading
• As you read the essay, put an asterisk (*) next to the central event, underline the narrator’s response to the event, and highlight the reflection.
• Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meaning of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
George Orwell (1903–1950) was born Eric Blair in what was then British India, where his father was a government official. After an education in England, Orwell worked in the Indian Imperial Police, though he left his position at the age of 24 to turn his hand to writing. Throughout his career, Orwell wrote, under his pen name, about the poor and working classes in Asia, England, and France. Working for the BBC during and after WWII, he wrote his two most famous works: Animal Farm, a satire of collectivism, and 1984, a stinging critique of totalitarianism. Orwell, who famously said, “Good prose is like a window pane,” is considered one of the most influential stylists of the 20th century. He wrote extensively on the art of prose, which he considered a powerful political tool.

Reflective Essay
Shooting an Elephant
by George Orwell

Chunk 1
1 In Moulmein, in lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people—the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was subdivisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way an anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. 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.

bazaar: a kind of market that is often found in North Africa or the Middle East

SCAFFOLDING THE TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS
1. Key Ideas and Details (RI.11–12.3) Based on details in paragraphs 1 and 2, what can readers infer about what the narrator is like as a person? How does he respond to the hatred of the Burmese? How does the narrator react to the young men’s “sneering faces” in paragraph 1? How does he describe his own feelings about the British Empire and his job in paragraph 2?
2. Key Ideas and Details (RI.11–12.3) How does Orwell use imagery in the first two paragraphs to create a contrast between the people of Burma and the narrator? What is the effect on the reader? Look for words that reveal the actions of the people of Burma and the actions taken by the British toward them.
2 All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I could chuck up my job and get out of it the better. Theoretically—and secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lockups, the gray, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of men who had been lashed with bamboo—all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. 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. Feelings like these are the normal by-product of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

Chunk 2

3 One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism—the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the subinspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got onto a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful in terrorem. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant’s doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone “must.” It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of “must” is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours’ journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody’s bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violence upon it.

4 The Burmese subinspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid huts, thatched with palm leaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that it had gone in another, and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful in terrorem. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant’s doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone “must.” It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of “must” is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours’ journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody’s bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violence upon it.

4. Key Ideas and Details (RI.11–12.3) Explain the sequence of events that leads to the narrator being called to “do something about” a rampaging elephant. Reread paragraph 3. Number each event that the narrator describes. What comments in the paragraph reveal different perspectives on those events?
Paragraph 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 unserving 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 metalled 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 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.

Paragraph 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 grandly motherly 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

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?
10. There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim. The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theater curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not know then that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from earhole to earhole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his earhole; actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

**Chunk 6**

11. When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick—one never does when a shot goes home—but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralyzed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time—it might have been five seconds, I dare say—he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly erect, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skywards like a tree. He trumpeted for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly toward me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

12. I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open—I could see far down into caverns of pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

**Chunk 7**

13. In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took the elephant half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dahs and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by afternoon.
14 Afterward, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans, opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any Coringhee coolie. And afterward I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

Second Read
- Reread the reflective essay to answer these text-dependent questions.
- Write any additional questions you have about the essay in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

1. Key Ideas and Details: Based on details in paragraphs 1 and 2, what can readers infer about what the narrator is like as a person? How does he respond to the hatred of the Burmese?
   The reader can infer that the narrator is a thoughtful, reflective person. He recognizes that, as a European and a police officer, he is a part of a loathed imperialist system: “Imperialism was an evil thing,” yet he is still hurt that the Burmese seem to hate him. They target him for insults and “hideous laughter” because he is a representative of the oppressive British empire. RI.11–12.3

2. Key Ideas and Details: How does Orwell use imagery in the first two paragraphs to create a contrast between the people of Burma and the narrator? What is the effect on the reader?
   The narrator is unsparing in his description of the Burmese; he describes “the sneering yellow faces of young men,” the spitting on European women in the bazaar, the stinking cages in the prisons, and the scars of the men beaten with bamboo. Yet the reader understands that even though the Burmese hate the narrator, he has sympathy for them and the conditions that they live in. He hates the empire as much as the Burmese do. RI.11–12.3

3. Key Ideas and Details: In paragraph 3, what does the narrator mean when he uses the word “enlightening”?
   He means that he experienced a moment of sudden understanding and clarity about “the real nature of imperialism” and “the real motives for which despotic governments act.” RI.11–12.1

4. Key Ideas and Details: Explain the sequence of events that leads to the narrator being called to “do something about” a rampaging elephant.
   A tame elephant had “gone ‘must,’” and after it had broken free from its chains, it “destroyed somebody’s hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit stalls.” It had also knocked over the local garbage collector’s truck. RI.11–12.3

My Notes

SCAFFOLDING THE TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

11. Key Ideas and Details (RI.11–12.2) What central idea about the value of life in imperial Burma is revealed by the “endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant” in the final paragraph? Look at the responses from each group the narrator identifies, as well as his own reflections. What underlying assumption about the lives of people and elephants do these ideas reflect?
5. **Craft and Structure:** Paragraph 4 ends very differently than it starts. Describe how the narrator reveals the important details in the paragraph.
   The paragraph follows the narrator’s train of thoughts as he goes about his job. It begins with an observation about the weather and how in the East, “a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events, the vaguer it becomes.” He then provides specific details about an old woman shooing away children and a gruesome description of a man who had been trampled by the elephant. RI.11–12.5

6. **Key Ideas and Details:** What is the narrator’s attitude toward shooting the elephant in paragraphs 5 and 6? Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.
   The narrator states clearly that he has “no intention of shooting the elephant” despite having the elephant gun because, at this point, the elephant is “peacefully” eating grass. In addition, the narrator understands that it is “a serious matter to shoot a working elephant...and one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided.” He has a healthy respect for the animal and its strength. RI.11–12.1

7. **Key Ideas and Details:** 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?
   Once the narrator realizes that thousands of people “expected” him to shoot the animal, he understands that he “would have to shoot the elephant after all” because he is “only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of” the crowd. As “the white man with his gun,” he must act the part of the “sahib” and “impress the natives” by killing the animal. RI.11–12.1

8. **Key Ideas and Details:** 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?
   The narrator is acutely concerned with not being laughed at by the local people. He states in paragraph 7 that “every white man’s [life] in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.” In paragraph 9, he worries that if the elephant attacked and killed him, “it was quite probable that someone would laugh,” and, the narrator concludes, “that would never do.” RI.11–12.3

9. **Key Ideas and Details:** What miscalculation does the narrator make as he prepares to shoot the elephant? How does his error affect what happens next?
   Because the narrator has never shot an elephant before, he “did not know” that he should “have aimed straight at his earhole.” Instead the narrator aims “several inches” away. The narrator’s mistake causes the elephant to die slowly and painfully. RI.11–12.1
ACTIVITY 1.19 continued

10. **Craft and Structure:** Reread Chunk 6 and mark the text for details describing the elephant’s collapse. What do these details reveal about the writer’s attitude?

   Students might mark any number of specific details that make clear the animal’s agony and the slowness of its collapse and death (“he sagged flabbily to his knees,” “mouth slobbered,” “desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly erect,” “legs sagging and head drooping”). The details show that the narrator regards the death of the elephant with a great deal of horror, regret, and even shame at having shot it. He might be drawing a parallel to the British treatment of the people of Burma. RI.11–12.6

11. **Key Ideas and Details:** What central idea about the value of life in imperial Burma is revealed by the “endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant” in the final paragraph?

   By sharing a range of opinions, the narrator reveals a cold view of the value of life under an imperialist system. Older Europeans say the narrator “was right” to shoot the elephant, but younger men say “it was a shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie,” an attitude that shows a stunning lack of respect for the lives of other human beings. The narrator himself explains that he took the animal’s life in order “to avoid looking like a fool,” which suggests his show of strength was motivated not by concern for human life but by his own fear of being shamed. RI.11–12.2

**Working from the Text**

12. Revisit the essay and write Levels of Questions—literal, interpretative, and universal—to prepare for a Socratic Seminar exploring the text further. Apply a Cultural Criticism lens and your knowledge of imperialism as you develop your questions.

13. Discuss your questions with your assigned Socratic Seminar group. During the discussion, be sure to:
   - Explicitly draw on your knowledge of imperialism as well as evidence from the text to support your ideas.
   - Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives and interpretations.
   - Use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

**Check Your Understanding**

Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant” is a reflective essay. Look at your annotations for the event, response, and reflection, and compare with a partner. In what order do these three elements occur?
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** Have students use the 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** Have students use the 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.

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.

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

**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.

**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 priests’ 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. 