**Discussion Questions for**

**“Shooting an Elephant” (1936)**

**By: George Orwell (b.1903-d.1950)**

1.What is the implied assumption in the first sentence?

2. Describe the nature of the voice in the opening paragraph. Is there any humor and irony?

3. What is Orwell’s attitude toward imperialism?

4. What is Orwell’s attitude toward the native peoples?

5.What is Orwell’s attitude toward his own position in Burma?

6. In the second paragraph, what is suggested by the qualifiers “and secretly, of course” and “if you can catch him off duty”?

7. Note Orwell’s language in paragraph 5. What are the rhetorical effects of “merely ravaging their homes” and “as it would be to an English crowd.”

8. In paragraph 6 Orwell states, “As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him.” Why, then, does he decide to shoot the elephant? Refer to specifics from the text.

9. In paragraph 11 Orwell states, “At last, after what seemed a long time – it might have been five seconds, I dare say – he sagged flabbily to his knees.” Explain what such a characterization of the time period suggests about Orwell.

10. Compare and contrast the description of the killing of the elephant as related in paragraphs 10-13 with that of the killing of the Indian as related in paragraph 4. Consider the rhetorical purpose of the descriptions.

11. The final paragraph presents Europeans’ views of the elephant killing. Explain the differences.

12. Discuss Orwell’s tone and attitude in the final paragraph.