

ENGLISH ADVANCED

George Orwell

Orwell's essays present universally resonant ideas and values, such as truth, individual integrity and freedom, to create a memorable and persuasive experience. The integrity of Orwell's essays and the absolute conviction and commitment they express, has allowed them to endure in a contemporary context, whilst still retaining their essential value. This essential and enduring value comes from Orwell's understanding of the capabilities of language and its potential for use and abuse by individuals, particularly in a political arena. His ability to communicate in clear and accessible language allows his ideas to seep into the reader's consciousness and stay there, thus instilling them with Orwell's fundamental humanism.

Orwell's strong sense of compulsion to write is explored in 'Why I Write'. He creates an intimate connection with the reader through the use of first person and by sharing deeply personal aspects of his lonely childhood, "I think from the very start my literary ambitions were mixed up with the feelings of being isolated and undervalued". By doing this he not only contextualises his motives for writing, but creates empathy within the reader as they relate to him on a personal level. By establishing this connection on a seemingly personal level, Orwell's message is retained in the consciousness of the reader, engaging their attention. He then uses this connection to emphasise to the reader his motives for writing, to make 'political writing into an art'. He uses sub headings to organise his work in a logical and seemingly objective manner, and substantiates his arguments with specific examples, concluding that 'every line of serious work I have written since 1936 has been written... against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism'. Orwell makes his motives clear, and by doing this, his honesty and integrity are preserved, thus increasing the reader's trust in him, which is furthered through his self-deprecating tone.

In 'Politics and the English Language', Orwell's main concern is the 'decadence of the English language', and it is with this in mind that he attempts to persuade the reader that the fight against bad prose is not 'frivolous'. Through the use of the formal, impersonal 'one', he builds the argument, and then through the use of first-person he acknowledges the need for personal responsibility and admits personal fallibility. Through the use of 'we' he includes that reader in that responsibility. Through the use of persuasive techniques such as generalisations and rhetoric, Orwell effectively argues his point, which is given further integrity through his use of evidence and the use of footnotes to add additional explanation, whilst not becoming tangential in the essay. He uses humour to make for an enjoyable experience, allowing the reader to more readily absorb his values and ideals. The use of humour is extremely effective in captivating the audience's attention and Orwell is conscious of this as he incorporates wit, irony and sardonic humour such as "he cannot say outright, 'I believe in killing off your opponents when you can get good results by doing so'". Once he has their attention he then provides them with simple rules such as 'never use a long word where a short one will do' to provide the reader with an action that they can apply with a conscious, moral effort which will be effective in putting bad English 'into the waste basket, where it belongs'.

Orwell effectively utilises the conventions and techniques of the essay to create a memorable piece that both captivates and inspires the reader. His desire to reach the common man makes the essay a highly appropriate medium. Its transparency and clarity, coupled with its brevity and easily accessible form, has allowed Orwell to target his readers in the most effective manner. His use of plain style, using direct language free of 'purple passages' allows the reader to fully grasp what is being said in a way that they understand. This allows his message to be effectively conveyed in a way that influences the reader and their decision to accept personal responsibility in the fight against the misuse of language.

Orwell states that the 'greatest enemy of honest language is insincerity', by personifying language, he shows his understanding of the power of language and its potential to be used to 'make lies sound truthful and murder respectable'. It is this that has provoked his attempts to promote the

rehabilitation of language. He acknowledges that this requires moral effort, but he clearly instils hope in his reader that it is in fact possible. As Orwell states in 1984, "Who controls the past... controls the future: who controls the present controls the past," we are reminded that as the people who use language, it is our responsibility to take control of it, and in doing so the 'slovenliness' of our language will not subvert our need for language to 'communicate, not conceal' the truth. Even in today's society, Orwells message rings true, Julian Assanges pursuit of truth and honesty has caused political backlash, daily we hear of 'climate control' and 'collateral damage'. Orwell's essays equip us to see through the 'lies, evasion and follies' and pursue the truth. The ability of Orwell's essays to seep into the minds and actions of the reader promotes his ideals of honesty, integrity and individual responsibility despite the contextual divergence of current society, which is a testament to the integrity and relevance of his work.