

Abitur **MEHR
ERFAHREN**

Englisch

Gymnasium · Gesamthochschule

Hessen

ab 2026

Das musst du können:

STARK

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Verfasst von:

Rainer Jacob: “Shooting an Elephant”, “My Son the Fanatic”,
“The Embassy of Cambodia”, *The Circle*, *Macbeth*

Sonja Corleis: *Gran Torino*

Vorwort

Liebe Schülerinnen und Schüler,

dieses handliche Skript bietet Ihnen umfassende Informationen zu allen **verbindlichen Materialien** (Pflichtlektüren und -film), die Sie für die **Abiturprüfung ab 2026** im Fach Englisch kennen müssen. Das **Drama *Macbeth*** ist nur für Schülerinnen und Schüler des Leistungskurses relevant.

Dank der knappen, übersichtlichen Darstellung eignet sich das Skript besonders zur Auffrischung und Wiederholung des Prüfungsstoffs kurz vor dem Abitur:

- Zu jedem Werk finden Sie die wichtigsten **Fakten**, eine **Zusammenfassung der Handlung** und eine Übersicht über die zentralen **Figuren**.
- Unter „Themes and interpretation“ können Sie **Interpretationsansätze** zu den Werken nachlesen, die Ihnen bei der Bearbeitung von möglichen Abituraufgaben helfen können. Auch finden Sie hier die wichtigsten historischen und politischen Hintergründe.
- Zahlreiche **Schaubilder** und **Beispiele** helfen Ihnen, sich das Gelernte besser einzuprägen.

In einer der Textaufgaben wird von Ihnen verlangt, inhaltliche Aspekte aus dem Prüfungstext (den Sie im Abitur erstmals zu Gesicht bekommen) zu den verpflichtenden Materialien (die Sie aus dem Unterricht kennen) in Bezug zu setzen. Mit einer guten Textkenntnis können Sie hier Pluspunkte sammeln.

Viel Erfolg beim Lernen mit diesem Skript und im Abitur!

3 Characters

The first-person narrator

- **main character** of the story, **young British police officer** serving in the Indian (Imperial) Police in Burma (now Myanmar)
- rather **inexperienced**, only holds this responsible position because he is a **White European**
- **ambivalent and rather strained relationship** to the Burmese population
- **hates them** for being hostile and harassing Europeans, but, at the same time, **feels pity** for them because of the brutal oppression by the British
- rather **unprepared** when the locals demand help with a mad elephant that is at large
- as a representative of the British Empire and the only person to own a gun, he has to act
- because of his **professional inadequacy and insecurity**, he is never in control of the events
- rising pressure from the Burmese crowd puts him in a **moral dilemma**
- cannot confront the crowd and stop the cruel action which he believes is wrong
- feels forced to **play the role of the omnipotent White man**
- to prove his superiority he succumbs to the demands and expectations of the greedy crowd and commits an act which **violates his beliefs and convictions**
- as a result, the **oppressor** has become **the oppressed**

The Burmese crowd

- the Burmese people who follow the narrator keep a close watch on the young officer's movements
- act as a **catalyst**, changing the young officer's initial intention to spare the animal into needless and brutal aggression
- **lust after a spectacle and greedy** for the elephant's meat, they force the policeman to act against his conscience

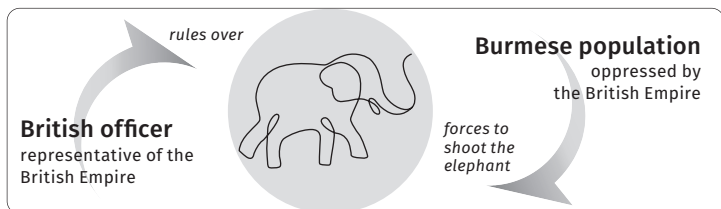
4 Themes and interpretation

4.1 The evils of colonialism

In "Shooting an Elephant", George Orwell illustrates the evils of colonialism, which corrupts both the oppressor and the oppressed, drawing on his **personal experience** while serving in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma (now Myanmar). The country had become part of the **British Empire** in 1886 and was administrated as a **British colony**. Orwell uses the essay to express and illustrate his anti-imperialist opinion in general and specifically his condemnation of the British Empire.

Depiction in the story

- The narrator makes it clear "that imperialism [is] an **evil thing**".
- Although he defends the Empire at one point, comparing it favourably to its possible successors ("it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it"), he deplores the **cruel treatment** of the colonial subjects.
- He feels pity for the Burmese population because of the **brutal oppression** they suffer but hates them for the **hostile behaviour** they show towards the British.
- Because of the **pressure** the crowd puts on him he cannot follow his natural impulse and spare the elephant.
- He **acts like a puppet** to satisfy the crowd's lust for a spectacle.
- The oppressed Burmese compel the young policeman to shoot the elephant **against his own inner convictions**.
- Thus, the Empire – and Imperialism in general – **degrades and corrupts both the governors and the governed**.



4.2 Symbols

Elements in the text can be interpreted as symbols hinting at more general ideas and concepts. Although there is no final solution and the symbols are often inconsistent, it is possible to attribute some symbolic meaning to the main character and the elephant. The awkward and hostile relationship between the rulers and the ruled generated a typical kind of behaviour among British officials in the colonies. Generally, the Europeans had no personal contact with the local population but kept to themselves, preserving their particular English way of life and developing a special kind of **expatriate lifestyle**. Seeing themselves as the undisputed lords of the world, many British people looked down on the indigenous population and showed blatant racist tendencies. It was important for the British “to play the White man” and always to keep a safe distance from the “uncivilised natives”.

Depiction in the story

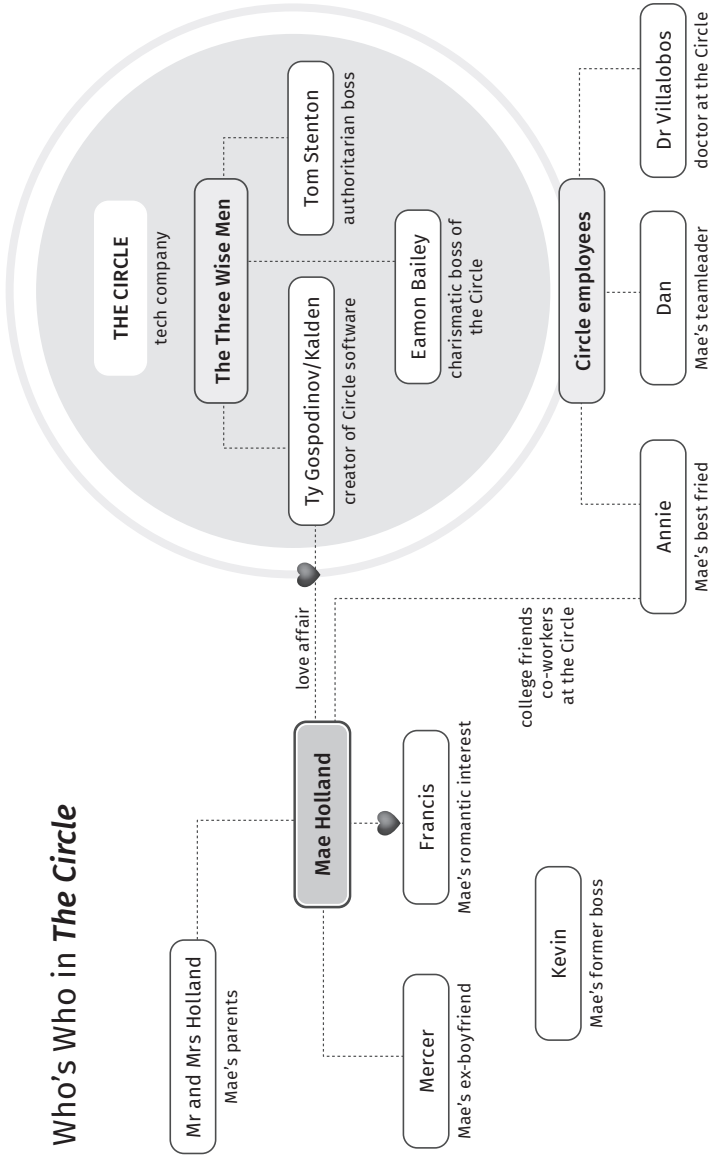
The **police officer** could be viewed as a symbol of the British rulers’ moral decline and loss of freedom to make decisions:

- The narrator **rejects the British Empire** despite being a part of it.
- He condemns “the dirty work of Empire” and feels “an intolerable **sense of guilt**”.
- Despite his **reservations** and aversion to killing the peaceful creature, he **gives in** to the demands of the greedy crowd.
- Although the animal is **no longer a threat**, he shoots it to impress the Burmese crowd.
- He is **afraid of losing his face** and being laughed at by the Burmese people, so he **acts more violently than necessary**.

When the White man turns tyrant, it is his own freedom that he destroys. He wears a mask and his face grows to fit it.



Who's Who in *The Circle*



4 Themes and interpretation

4.1 The menacing future of social networking

In his **dystopian novel** *The Circle*, Dave Eggers explores the dangers connected with the continual rise of social media. He illustrates (and satirises) a possible further advance of social networking platforms and warns of the prospective negative consequences should the advanced technology fall into the wrong hands. In a not-too-distant future, a powerful internet company like the Circle would be able to **control society in a totalitarian way**. Circle programmers create invasive software programmes, such as Demoxie, LuvLuv, PastPerfect and Childtrack, among others, which were originally meant to benefit the public, but, as it turns out, cause more harm than good. The software enables the executives of the Circle to control and manipulate every individual. In Eggers' view, the most revolutionary and destructive consequences for human society include: total transparency of any individual, lack of privacy and personal communication and an adverse impact on the public's political participation.

Total transparency

The situation in Eggers' novel is a reversal of the scenario in George Orwell's dystopia *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: the constant and **total surveillance** by Big Brother is replaced by total transparency, i. e. everything is made public on the web voluntarily: users' social media profiles, their payment systems, their various passwords, their email accounts, usernames, preferences, every last tool and every manifestation of their interests.

Depiction in the novel

- When Mae starts her job at the Circle, she learns that nothing is deleted.
- Everything is made public, nothing is private.
- Keeping a secret constitutes a crime.
- Dissenters have to fear for their existence, they are persecuted and executed.

- the Circle’s philosophy behind this approach: “... if everyone’s tracked [t]hen there’s no crime. No murder, no kidnapping, no rape. No kids ever victimized again. No more missing persons.”

“All that happens must be known.”

(Bailey)

Lack of privacy

The most obvious consequence of total transparency is the lack of privacy. The removal of the barrier between the public and the private sphere can be more menacing than **constant surveillance**. The publication of personal details may cause **embarrassment and despair**. Consequently, people must have the right to decide what and how much of their data is posted and made public.

Depiction in the novel

cyber shame and harassment

- Mae and Mae’s parents feel shame and distress when videos showing them in very intimate situations are published worldwide.
- Mercer receives **hate mail** after information about his business is published online.
- Annie’s confidence is shaken when dark family secrets are exposed by the genealogy programme.

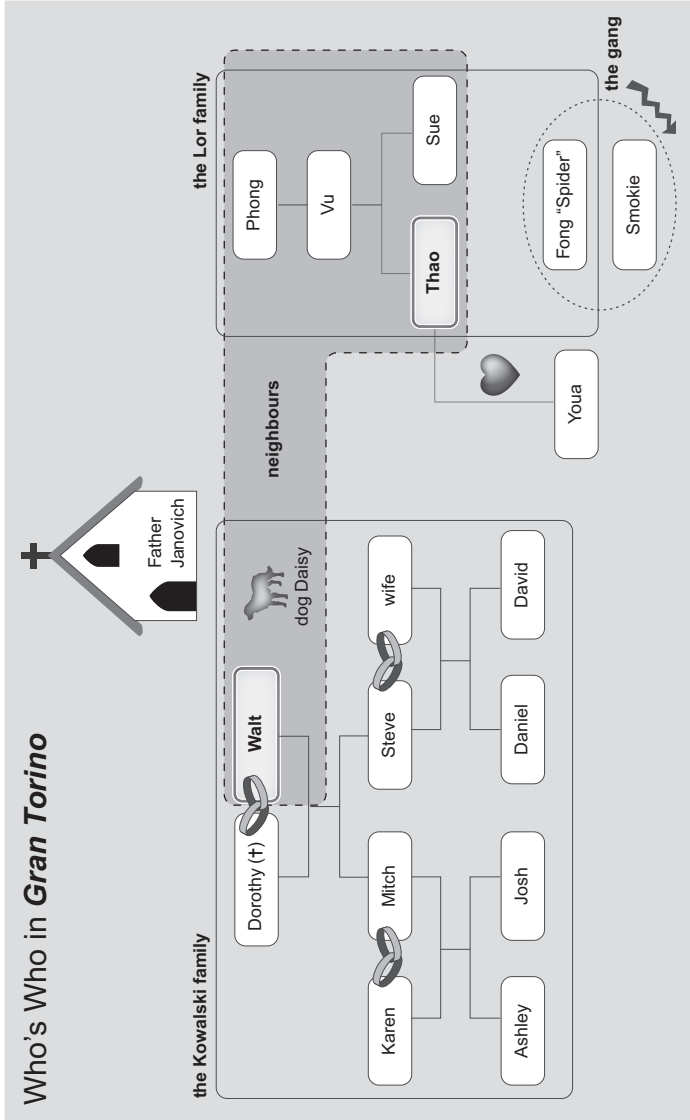
violation of human rights

- The document which Kalden gives to Mae claims, “We must all have the right to anonymity”.
- Mercer writes to Mae, “We are not meant to know everything, Mae”.

“Privacy is theft.”

(Bailey)

3 Characters



3.1 Main characters

Walt Kowalski

- **nickname:** Wally (by Sue, form of endearment)
- **age:** in his 70s
- **ethnicity:** European American, descendant of Polish immigrants
- **health:** suffers from severe illness, probably lung cancer
- **job:** Korean War veteran, worked in a Ford factory
- **interests:** cars, repairing things, keeping house and garden in order, his dog Daisy, smoking, drinking
- **character traits:** self-reliant and determined, conservative and tidy-minded, grumpy, hostile and racist, conscience-stricken and lonely
- **relationship with other characters:** loving marriage with Dorothy (recently deceased), difficult relationship with his sons and their families, “manly” banter with Martin, the barber, Tim, the construction supervisor, and other drinking buddies, develops respect for Father Janovich whom he rejects and ridicules at the beginning, gradual friendship with Thao and Sue, who become like a substitute family, feels responsible for them, finally sacrifices his life for them

Thao Vang Lor

- **nickname:** Toad (by Walt, who does not make an effort to pronounce his name correctly, first an insult, then almost a form of endearment)
- **age:** about 16
- **ethnicity:** Hmong
- **job:** does not go to school, later gets a job at a construction site
- **interests:** cars, handiwork
- **character traits:** shy, self-conscious, insecure, gains self-confidence by working and through friendship with Walt
- **relationship with other characters:** lives with sister, mother, grandmother, but is not seen as “man of the house”, pressured by cousin Fong to join his gang, in love with Youa, torn between two worlds of White America and traditional Hmong culture, gradually becomes friends with Walt and learns a lot from him

Sue Lor

- **age:** a little bit older than Thao
- **ethnicity:** Hmong
- **job:** goes to school/college
- **character traits:** self-confident, outspoken, intelligent, witty
- **relationship with other characters:** feels responsible for her brother, speaks up against Smokie and Spider, but gets beaten and raped by the gang, sees Walt's good heart beneath his hostile behaviour, well-adapted to American society

Father Janovich

- **age:** 27 (according to Walt)
- **ethnicity:** European American
- **job:** Catholic priest
- **interests:** his parish, philosophical questions about life and death
- **character traits:** young and inexperienced, persistent, really cares for the people in his parish
- **relationship with other characters:** was close to Dorothy Kowalski, learns a lot from Walt and gains his respect

3.2 Minor characters

Fong ("Spider") and Smokie

- ringleaders of violent Hmong gang
- Fong is Sue and Thao's cousin

Mitch, Karen, Ashley and Josh Kowalski

- Walt's son and his family
- difficult relationship with Walt
- feel like Walt is never content with and always disappointed in them, but they are rather materialistically interested in Walt

Steve, wife, Daniel and David Kowalski

- Walt's other son and his family
- little contact to Walt



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www.stark-verlag.de
info@stark-verlag.de

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