**The Sporting Spirit by George Orwell**

In The Sporting Spirit by George Orwell we have the theme of pride, nationalism, jealousy, hatred and passion. Taken from his Shooting an Elephant collection the reader realises after reading the essay that Orwell may be exploring the theme of pride and nationalism. Orwell argues that the sport played by either side may not necessarily be of the utmost importance. Be it football, boxing or cricket. The driving factor is not to be beaten by another nationality as by doing so one may lose face. It is also possible that Orwell is suggesting that sport is taken far too seriously. Particularly in urban areas where individuals may not have an outlet for their energies. The fact that the Arsenal team is mentioned by the Russians as being an all-England team is also interesting as it highlights for the reader the fact that Arsenal do not wish to be beaten by a foreign team. Hence using the best player’s available to them from other teams. Likewise it is as though the element of fun has been taken out of playing sport with those who attend sporting events trying their best to disrupt the opposition.

Orwell also argues that there is an element of savagery among those who attend sporting events. Something which some critics might suggest is an example of excessive pride for one’s own team. The Olympic Games held in Germany in 1936 are also placed under a spotlight by Orwell. With many historians looking upon the Games as being a propaganda event for Hitler and Nazism in general. Again the fun that one may have playing football or any other sport on the local green is no longer. Orwell also suggests that sport has become a big business and as such the owners of teams dictate what happens. Again no longer is sport seen as being a fun thing to participate in. Those who play football for example are mere pawns of the owners of the football club. As too are the fans who pay the ticket price to watch the game. Orwell’s introduction of boxing as an example to back up his point is also significant as he views those who box against someone of a different colour as being purveyors of white supremacy. When a white boxer wins. It proves in their eyes that the white race is far superior to the black race. Boxing in particular appears to bring out jealousy and hatred among those who watch it.

Orwell also disagrees with women attending boxing matches on the grounds that they get too emotional. Though some readers might suggest that this is true it is more likely that a female spectator is allowing herself to be passionate about the sport she is viewing. Orwell’s theory that women are too emotional doesn’t really have any logic behind it and in today’s terms may be viewed upon as sexist. Though this may not have been Orwell’s intention and he was only drawing from personal experience during his time in the army. Overall Orwell does not shine a flattering light on the spirit of sport. He sees no positives for it once it becomes a divide between different towns, cities or countries. If anything Orwell compares the participation in sport as being similar to war without the weapons. Such is the actions of both the participants and those who attend the sporting events. In Orwell’s eyes there is no such thing as friendly rivalry. The business of sport is far more serious and dangerous.

It may also be a case that Orwell is suggesting that individuals have misplaced loyalty or pride to their teams or favourite sportsmen. They are after all only playing a game. Even if that game is taken very seriously by all concerned. In Orwell’s world it is better to put the fun back in sport and not have the emotional involvement that comes at sporting events. To not be concerned about who should win or who should lose or what the meaning of winning might be for those at the event. However it is human nature to idolize a football team, a boxer or a cricket team. One wants their team or sporting hero to win at all costs. Which may be the problem. By having Arsenal play an all-England team they are in many ways cheating in order to prove themselves better than they really are. The motivation being to not lose face to a foreign team as there is a matter of national pride at stake. In some people’s eyes it is better to cheat and win than lose with dignity. People don’t remember who came second or who lost. In life it is only the winners who are remembered and who have bragging rights for the time being.