

Understanding Modality: 'Shooting an Elephant'

Gap filling exercise

Tone:
apprehensive.

Work with a partner. Fill the gaps below with modal auxiliary verbs.

It was perfectly clear to me what I should ~~could~~ do. I ought to ~~en~~ to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behaviour. If he charged I could ~~would~~ shoot, if he took no notice of me it might ~~would~~ be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I 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 ~~would~~ 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 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 shouldn't ~~mustn't~~ be frightened in front of the 'natives'; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole 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 ~~not~~ laugh. That would never do. There was only one alternative. I shoved cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim.

more sure
about
horrible
consequences.

→ being
pressured.

→ trying to convince themselves.

George Orwell, 'Shooting an Elephant'