

Rationale

As an anxious young girl who is far too dependant on Lindt Chocolate at the best of times, I've always found reading the news difficult. I'd much rather sink into a comatose state in my bedroom, mumbling incoherently about the latest romance novel I've gleefully consumed whilst gobbling up the latest baked good my little sister has produced in one of her pre-teen fits of domesticity.

And yet, as a tokenistic public-speaking kid, that wasn't an option. Instead, I would sit at the breakfast table each morning, and at my desk each night, scrolling through seemingly endless articles about death and misery and destruction. No amount of Taylor Swift dance parties or double chocolate chip cookies could drown out the endless thrum of death counts from the ongoing global conflict, the rate of young girls reporting sexual assault, the innocent people murdered, scammed, raped, abused, extorted, or humiliated on a daily basis.

The news was a constant in my life. A constant source of anxiety, and fear, yet something I tirelessly went back to. The more I read, the more I figured I had to. If there were people starving on the streets, how could I possibly complain about how uncomfortable it was for me to read about it, whilst sitting in my warm house, with my stable food supply, and loving family?

But the more I read, the more I was baffled. How on earth could humans commit such atrocities? How does someone justify murder? Warfare? Assault? It seemed utterly nonsensical. The men and women fighting across the globe are just like me. They have hearts and minds and families and bones that rattle on the bus to and from work: so what's the psychological difference between those people and myself? I could never fathom murder. They could.

How does that work?

They aren't any less human than me. They think, and speak, and feel, and breathe. A man with a gun can justify killing a child, and yet, goes home to his infant daughter and kisses her calmly on the cheek before tucking her in. How could such a paradoxical person exist? How could thousands of them exist over centuries: whether it be Ancient Rome, or Nazi Germany, or the Gaza Strip?

After extensive research into the psychology of alienation, I utilized Orwell's essays on antisemitism as the backbone of my work, shaping my research around the sole concept that humans can justify any evil to another, as long as they view them as other. 'Other' very quickly transcends into lesser, thereby becoming synonymous with subhuman, and as such, worthy of death.

But the scary thing was, in not wanting to read the news, I was letting the same thing happen in my mind. I was alienating others. Saying those in warzones weren't like me. In situations of domestic abuse. Of terror. Of pain of suffering. That my situation could never be there's. I was actively alienating others, to avoid reading the horrific impacts of alienation.

And so this piece was born, in an effort to empower others to engage with the news, thereby preventing alienation from festering in our homes as it has in so many others. Utilizing a nuanced brand of plain English, I played with extended metaphors, cultural allusions, and motif to convey these otherwise isolated intellectual theories in an easily consumable manner.

If there's anything I've learnt from this article, it's quite simply that stories are the key to humans understanding each other. And as such, I attempted to take the audience on a narrative journey. A beginning, a middle and an end: recurring characters and themes to allow for my central thesis to shine through:

The news can empower you, if only you know how to use it.