

Lord of the flies text
response – symbols
of civilization essay
sample



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When faced with an unknown situation, people tend to model what they've been taught in order to conquer problems. Ralph, at first unkind and uncaring, proves how civilized and orderly he is. Piggy, who's name matches his physical appearance, demonstrates how intellectual he is as he helps the boys come up with many of their great ideas. Jack, who at first seemed sympathetic, turns out to be barbaric and uncivilized. These boys in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, as they form a civilization, allegorically represent different aspects of human society.

Ralph, the hero of the story, symbolizes the civilized and orderly aspects of society. He proposes they form a democracy when electing a leader. Back home in England, he must be accustomed to a democratic government so on the island he tries to recreate that and gets elected chief. Ralph models his ideas on what he's seen others do. He borrows from his school experiences when pleading with the boys: "Another thing. We can't have everybody talking at once. We'll have to have 'Hands up' like at school... We'll have rules".

Ralph is also shown as a sympathetic and caring person, as when he compassionately apologizes when Piggy is "hurt and crushed". Ultimately, Ralph is a good leader because "he asks the group how to govern itself. He sets up a democracy in which the boys share leadership and everyone is able to voice his opinion". Ralph acts more as a president than an absolute monarch; he takes into account what the others think and uses that to form a just society, demonstrating that he is the more civilized out of the other boys.

Piggy, Ralph's sidekick, portrays the intellectual part of society. Piggy is the first one to propose that they use the conch "to call the others and [h]ave a meeting". He applies his intelligence to bring everyone together but because of his appearance he's not taken too seriously, being mocked as a "Fatty". Even his name is meant to be derogatory: "Piggy". His physical appearance is almost opposite of Ralph's, Piggy is a bit more obese, causing him to be a quick target for the others. Despite his size, Piggy still finds ways to assist the group. Jack proposes, "His specs – use them as burning glasses". Piggy is the reason they have a signal fire which symbolizes hope of rescue. So without Piggy there would be no hope and hope is what makes a civilized society restrain from becoming barbaric. Unfortunately, Ralph is the only one that is able to acknowledge the need for an intellect in society, but laments that if Piggy is told to "shut up" whenever he speaks.

Jack feels that Piggy shouldn't have a say in things since he and Ralph are chief, even though "[t]he most intellectual and logical of the group is Piggy, who lacks a mature or responsible nature". Although Piggy is able to come up with a couple brilliant ideas, he's irresponsible in the fact that he's unrealistic which is seen when he says, "I've been thinking... about a clock. We could make a sundial... And an airplane and a TV set... and a steam engine". Piggy wishes to recreate things that he has at home but that isn't entirely possible because of the lack of resources which shows that although he's quite smart and a society can't stand on its own without that intelligent aspect, he's not as mature as Ralph. Jack, the antagonist, portrays the barbaric aspect of society.

He comes off strongly to the others, especially Piggy who is “intimidated by [Jack’s] uniformed superiority and the offhand authority in [Jack’s] voice”. Jack’s presence in society is very intimidating and superior which causes many to fear and obey him as many would an absolute monarch. Although Jack seems powerful at the beginning he still shows signs of empathy when “[h]e raise[s] his arm in the air [to kill the pig but, instead] pause[s], [as] the pig continue[s] to scream... Th[at] pause was only long enough for [him] to understand the enormity the downward stroke would be”. Jack realizes that killing the animal would be an outrageous thing to do because he’s never had the blood of another’s on his hands and he knows that the pig has the ability to feel pain as well. But, after this one incident Jack is determined to regain himself and catch meat for the boys and this drive leads him towards corruption.

Ralph says to Jack, “You let the fire out” only to which Jack who was so caught up in the moment to care replied “We can light the fire again. You should have been with us, Ralph. We had a smashing time”. Jack is far too focused on hunting; he couldn’t care less about getting rescued because he feels a sense of power and superiority as he hunts. People such as Jack don’t think about what’s going to happen, their main focus is power. As Jack focuses more and more on hunting and power, he turns into a monarch. He ties up people and punishes them for no reason but his own entertainment. “His is cruelty without remorse illustrates the worst part of human nature”.

The aspects of our society are cleverly represented by the characters in Lord of the Flies. Jack, the most barbaric of the boys, shows how anything can corrupt someone and make them lose their sense of civilization. Piggy,
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because of his size isn't taken seriously despite his intellect, which can be seen greatly throughout our society. Ralph is elected because of his appearance and his democratic viewpoint which can be seen in our government today. This book makes the reader wonder about society as well as the inherent "human capacity for brutality".