

Lord of the flies: the darkness of man's heart

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William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is more than a tale about a group of boys stranded on an island during World War II. Life free from rules of society and adults seems like paradise, but it quickly turns into hell on earth. The boys face the ultimate challenge of remaining civilized without supervision or guidelines. Many elements are found within *Lord of the Flies*: breakdown of civilization, avoidance of truth, and assumed innocence. These elements appear to be the message Golding is trying to convey.

However, carefully analyzing the novel, the reader is able to detect symbolism. The author hides powerful messages behind his characters and other objects on the island. Through the use of symbolism, Golding reveals that humans detached from society's rules allow their innate evil to dominate their existence. By introducing the characters of Ralph and Piggy, Golding shows his first use of symbolism. He introduces them as well-bred British boys and uses them to reflect man's nature within society. Ralph represents civilized man, and Piggy symbolizes the intelligence of civilization.

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Ralph is elected leader because he has the appearance, common sense, and his possession of the conch makes him respected (Golding 22). Since he has been elected leader, he is able to enforce rules to govern the island. These rules include: building shelters, collecting drinking water, keeping the rescue fire lit, and proper sanitation (Golding 80-81). Even though Ralph has possession of the conch and is the chosen leader, he relies on Piggy's intellect. Piggy knows that their arrival on the island has something to do

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with the war (Fitzgerald and Kayser 82). He also knows the shell is a conch and its use.

Due to their plane crash, he realizes that there are other survivors on the island. Therefore, he instructs Ralph to blow the conch in order to gather the others (Fitzgerald and Kayser 81). Piggy is intelligent, but he has many shortcomings: unable to enforce rules, obese, asthmatic, lacks common sense and is unable to empathize with the group (Fitzgerald-Kayser 83), and unable to express his thoughts (Dicken-Fuller 15). Piggy's shortcomings solidifies him as an outcast and the subject of mockery; he is a product of civilization but incapable of becoming a leader.

It is no surprise that Golding allows these two to discover the conch shell, which is used to represent assembly and rational behavior (Dicken-Fuller 15-16) (Kinkhead-Weekes and Gregor 18). It was the discovery of the conch that brought Ralph and Piggy together, and their meeting is the first assembly. The first time Ralph blows the conch, the boys dispersed all over the island automatically respond and rush toward the sound, and the group is unified. Ralph sets a new rule regarding the conch: anyone with possession of the shell has the right to speak.

This requires the boys to act civilized during an assembly. Since the boys have been recently placed out of society, their mannerly conduct remains intact which allows them to respect the conch and obey the rules Ralph has set. As the novel progresses, civility fades and the reader realizes that the boys' true nature was covered by the rules of society. Golding uses Jack's character to represent the acceptance of primitiveness and disregard for

civilized behavior. When Jack allows his beast, his innate evil, to master him, he no longer has the desire to surround himself with civility.

Jack uses his savagery, power, persuasion, and hunting skills to entice others to join him in exercising their beasts. This causes the once unified group to separate: democracy and rational society led by Ralph and the dictatorship, barbaric tribe led by Jack (Selby 57). During the group's breakup, Ralph wishes for a sign from the adult world that will show him how to reassemble the group. Ironically, the sign given is a dead pilot falling from the sky. The dead pilot distinguishes war, death, and destruction (Dicken-Fuller 15).

The body also indicates literally and figuratively "fallen man" (Dickson13), and that the adult world's civilization is disintegrating just like the society on the island (Selby 58). Golding's introduction of Ralph and Piggy showcases how man attempts to cling to his genteel values, but Jack's breakdown shows that humans will eventually allow their nature as innate savages to govern their lives. Some may argue the validity of man's inborn wickedness by stating that man has been able to create prosperous civilizations throughout history.

Likewise, Ralph's civilization attempts to survive and thrive for a brief period. During that time, the boys were accustomed to following rules, but Jack's disobedience proves that man's barbarity, the beast, is not destroyed but it is instead hidden behind the rules of society. Golding uses the contrast of his characters Ralph, Piggy, and Jack to establish that with time, the darkness of man's heart will eventually emerge, master their life, and lead to the

breakdown of society (Fitzgerald and Kayser 78) (Baker 23). Golding's next essential use of symbolism is provided when the conch is smashed.

This action indicates the collapse of civilization and the acceptance of savagery. Ralph and Piggy adore the conch because it represents the order of civilization. When Ralph uses the conch, it forces the boys to act responsibly by reason and not irrationally by impulse. Since the conch is destroyed, there is no value of the rules that initially governed the island; the boys gradually morph into savages (Dickson 16). Since Jack has chosen to accept his beast, he does not care about the affect of shattering the conch (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 21).

Golding uses Jack to represent savagery through his description of Jack's hunting tactics and nakedness. In the opening chapters, Jack is the leader of the choir, and he and the choir are associated with darkness and violence. They are described as dark creatures with black caps and cloaks hide their faces (Dickson 26). Jack has a thirst for power and a desire to control others (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 41). Under his leadership, he encourages others to embrace their savagery as well; fear and temptation drives others to join his tribe.

The temptation he uses to entice others to join him is a feast. With the success of the feast, it gives Jack an additional menacing characteristic, a new persona called Chief. The creation of Chief feeds into Jack's thirst for power. (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 46). Since Jack is embracing his beast and willing to exercise dark desires and violence (Dickson 24), he needs followers that will relinquish their beasts as well. Jack's leadership allows his

followers to become hunters and to accept their savagery as well (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 28).

Golding uses Ralph and the contrast of Roger's character and to portray the emergence of his beast and the affect Jack has on his followers. Before giving in to his beast, Roger under the rules of civilization is able to throw stones at Henry intentionally missing "here invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life (Golding 62)." Roger intentionally misses because he knows his beast his beast is trying to direct his actions. He is only able to deter the impulse of actually hitting Henry by trying to remember what is considered right and wrong actions in society.

Instead of granting his beast full control, he tempts it. Golding describes the moment Roger completely yields to his beast. It was during the reenactment of the pig hunt, which was Ralph's first hunt. Jack and his hunters circle around the pig, Robert, and begin to poke him with sticks. The innocent reenactment becomes violent; Robert's screams of pain go unnoticed because their beasts overcome all of the boys. Roger is fighting to get closer, and Ralph is fighting to get near, to get a handful of flesh, the desire to squeeze and hurt was mastering (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 50).

Roger submits to his beast, and Ralph awakens his beast that he has been trying to suppress. Since Roger has lost traits of civility, he joins Jack's tribe and become known as ' Executioner and Torturer' (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 60) (Golding 180-181). When the tribe hunts, they cover their faces with "dazzle paint," creating a mask that liberates them from feeling guilty about the sinister acts they perform (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 33) (Page

120). The hunters begin hunting as a way to get food but this quickly changes. They become obsessed with bloodlust, killing as a sign of oppression (Page 120).

The killing of the sow nursing her piglets is an example of their bloodlust. She is vulnerable, but they force themselves upon her and kill her to act out their oppression (Dickson 15). Eventually, they hunt human prey: Simon, Piggy, and Ralph (Dickson 18). Simon's character symbolizes man's flawed nature. Golding uses Simon to symbolize a prophet and Christ-like character. Simon avoids exercising his beast by going into the forest and being alone. During this time, man's human nature reveals itself to him. Simon's prediction that Ralph will be rescued shows his prophet-like action.

Simon is the only character that understands that the beast is inside themselves, not just in evil forces and bad men but everyone (Page 115; Kinkhead-Weekes and Kayser 45). During his conversation with the sow's head it tells him " You knew, didn't you? I'm a part of you... (Golding 143). " He also climbs the mountain in order to confront the other external beast, the pilot. As Simon gazes into the marred face of the pilot, he is able to witness the evil of the adult world, which is the same evil that is within them. He unties the pilot from the rock; this shows that one must confront the beast in order to be free from it.

When he initially tries to voice his opinion about the beasts being within themselves, the group mocks him. He tries to reveal the truth about the beast again, but he is violently killed. When he stumbles out of the forest they act like animals they " leapt onto the beast, screamed, struck, bit, and

tore. No words no movement but the tearing of teeth and claws (Golding 153). " Simon's death not only shows how savagery has completely take over the boys, but it also shows how he represents a Christ-like figure, and if his revelation were accepted, it would give the salvation on the island (Dicken-Fuller 14; Fitzgerald and Kayser 85).

In order to avoid facing the truth of Simon's murder, the boys construct a tribal dance, which is used as a cover up to hide the guilt of murder. Out of fear, they create an image of an external beast represented by the Lord of the Flies, the sow's head (Page 115; Dicken-Fuller 14) and the pilot (Page 118). Piggy tries to give an intellectual explanation of the beast and fear. In Piggy's mind, there is no beast because they only created it out of fear. He also tries to rationalize Simon's murder by calling it an accident and saying that Simon shouldn't have been playing in the dark, stumbling out of the forest, and scaring them.

Even though he represents intelligence, Piggy is unable to see the beast for what it really is (Fitzgerald and Kayser 83). Due to the fact that Jack refuses to look at his inner beast, he believes the beast is a creature that can be won over by a sacrifice (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 45). Golding uses Simon's character, his death, and the tribal dance to signify that even though man reverts his darkness, he has to acknowledge it in order to be free from the beast. Through the use of symbolism, the characters resort to exercising their innate evil is exposed.

Critics believe that Lord of the Flies is a representation of a loss of innocence because Golding illustrates the surrender to savage impulses, murder, losing

one's identity, and corruption of the island through children. Their youthful innocence tarnishes as evil is allowed to permeate and transform them from English schoolboys to savage beasts (Dicken-Fuller 13). Their innocence becomes undeniably altered since they possess the ability to commit the immoral act of murder. Golding demonstrates through their actions that there wasn't really a loss of innocence because the children had the innate capability to sin.

Their inner darkness reflects through their outer appearance. They are content with their uncleanness; it has been accepted as normal (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 40). The murders of Simon and Piggy show that the boys have made the same decision that the adults in war have (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 47). Anytime the chant "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood" and the dance are in use the boys have a tendency to lose themselves (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor 51). They turn into savages overcome by the beast and they lose their identities. Jack loses his civilized identity when he wears the mask and has his tribe refer to him as "Chief. In the beginning of the novel, Percival Madison is introduced. He is able to recite his full name and address. By the end of the novel, Percival allows his inborn sinful nature to control him, and he doesn't remember his name. Not only does the beast corrupt the boys, but the island is corrupt as well. The island is described like the Garden of Eden: bright sun, lagoon, sweet air, and ripe fruits (Dickson 13; Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor). It appears to be an earthly paradise (Page 118). The boys are like Adam and Eve living in the Garden of Eden with the ability to sin (Dicken-Fuller 16).

The corruption of the island begins with the creepers. Creepers appear to snakes at night. Then eating too many fruits results with the schoolboys having diarrhea. Critics argue that literally eating too many fruits has this outcome, but it could represent that the boys' sinful bodies are no longer fit for the island, Garden of Eden (Dickson 20). During the hunting of Ralph, the island is set on fire. The island went from an earthly paradise to a burning hell (Dickson 13). Another symbolic meaning of the island's burning would be that its beauty is degraded by the boys' presence (Page 118).

In conclusion, being stranded on an island with no rules or supervision is initially viewed as an earthly paradise. Numerous ideas like the breaking down of society, ignoring the truth, and assuming the truth. In contrast, if one carefully dissects the novel, the use of symbolism is clearly present. Golding uses his characters and additional articles on the island to demonstrate that man is inherently immoral. Man's immorality is concealed by the rules governing society. Once man is liberated from rules, he will eventually allow his dark desires to dominate his being.