

An analysis of greed in lord of the flies: an study of greed in the novel by will...

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Inherent Selfishness

People are selfish, and they need order. That is why government is an integral part of society. It urges civilians to follow the rules and prevent anarchy. Anarchy is the lack of order and stability in society, where no one follows the rules resulting in chaos. Thomas Hobbes, a British philosopher, believed that a strong leader was necessary to prevent chaos, and keep civilians in check since everyone is born selfish. William Golding had similar beliefs and proved this point in the timeless classic, *Lord of the Flies*. This novel takes place in the World War II era, where a plane transporting schoolboys gets caught in the midst of war, resulting in a crash landing. The boys on the island, who are without any adult supervision attempt to create a utopia. However they are not successful in their attempt to govern themselves, resulting in a chaotic mess. In the novel, *Lord of the Flies* by the honorable William Golding, Ralph, the main character, fails to govern the schoolboys effectively resulting in loss of life and the ultimate consequence of anarchy.

Hobbes believed that one leader with absolute power who acts in the best interest of its subjects is the most efficient way to be governed, however the boys on the island lack a powerful leader, which results in anarchy as all begin to disobey the law. After being brought up in England as it was going through a time of civil unrest, Hobbes concluded humans were inherently selfish. Thomas Hobbes thought it was vital to have a strong leader so that people would obey laws and not go back to their natural state. Hobbes argued that if there were no absolute authoritative figure, the civilian's self-

interest would take over, and their actions would not be for the benefit of society, but would only be for their self-motive (Loyd). When the boys crash-land on the island, they immediately choose Ralph as chief. However, Ralph's lack of leadership and enforcement of the rules make Jack and the others susceptible to breaking them. A clear example of this is when the hunters carelessly extinguish the signal fire and Ralph "said no more, did nothing, stood looking down at the ashes around his feet" (Golding 72). Jack and the hunters commit a huge mistake that could possibly distinguish the boys' chance of survival. Instead of being authoritative and enforcing punishment like a strong leader, Ralph lets the incident go. Although Ralph's lack of response to the boys' carelessness of letting the signal fire go out may seem harmless, it leads to significant consequences. Towards the end, Jack steals Piggy's glasses, when Piggy attempts to speak out against this unfair action, one of the boys in Jack's tribe, Roger, decides to throw a huge rock that "struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee" and falls to his demise. Golding writes how afterward, "Ralph's lips formed a word but no sound came"(Golding 181). When Ralph remains silent in times where the boys are morally wrong, it provides a gateway for the kids to commit even more drastic and violent actions in the future without any fear of repercussions. In this case, the murder of Piggy was the consequence of Ralph's lack of response. Yet again, Ralph does not say a word. His silence fails to demonstrate his authority causing the boys' descent into savagery, and thus creating anarchy. Although Ralph does his best to help the boys get rescued, the death of Piggy was inevitable due to the lack of any leadership skills.

Although it may seem that Lord of the Flies is a fictional tale, the message and ideas of this novel could not have been more relevant to our society today. A major threat looms: Tension between the United States and North Korea. This conflict must be avoided as it has the power to be detrimental to our entire world. Golding clearly illustrates in his novel that humans are naturally greedy, selfish, and are bound to cause harm to others to satisfy their needs. Which goes hand in hand with Thomas Hobbes' idea that all people are selfish and by nature always "in a state of war" (Loyd). The boys lose all they know about civilization and humanity, and as a result the whole island turns into a murdering mess. The boys' desires and selfishness like hunting and building forts, overtakes what is morally correct. It is imperative that we learn from the lessons of Thomas Hobbes and what he has warned about the true nature of man to prevent conflicts that our nation faces today. One can hope that North Korea or America's ego or greed may not lead them to a nuclear war that ends the world as we know it.