

Symbolisms in lord of the flies by william golding argumentative essay sample

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Background of the Author

William Golding was born and raised in Cornwall, United Kingdom (UK) in 1911. Having gained education at Marlborough Grammar School and Brasenose College in Oxford, Golding initially received training from his parents for him to become a scientist, yet he focused on English literature instead. Apart from being a writer, Golding also became a musician, sailor, lecturer and schoolmaster, and actor. Golding first published his written works in 1935 – a volume of poems he wrote with the influence of the education he received in Oxford. Bishop Wordsworth's School gave Golding the opportunity to become a lecturer, although the Second World War cut his stint short as he joined the Royal Navy in 1940. After the Second World War, Golding resumed his stint as lecturer and started writing his first novel, *Lord of the Flies*, published in 1954 (Nobelprize. org).

World Events during the Life of the Author

Golding lived at a time when his nation, the UK, became heavily engaged in the Second World War. Clearly, Golding used his professional training as a writer to use his experiences during the Second World War as a sailor into his own rendition that portrays civilization as a struggle between individual interests and collective thinking. Such is highly apparent in the way Golding designed his characters and the various symbolisms he employed in writing *Lord of the Flies*, which finds further elaboration in this study (Dickson 12-26).

Setting

Golding set *Lord of the Flies* on a distant island somewhere in the Pacific Ocean, wherein a plane from the UK evacuating pre-teen boys crashes on the surface during an unnamed war, presumably a reference to the Second World War. The pre-teen boys, seemingly having not known one another before, made it a point to find ways for rescue while being stranded in the island. A group of boys named Ralph, Piggy and Simon all sought to lead the boys towards the main agenda of catching the main attention of passing ships for their rescue, while a group of choirboys led by a boy named Jack and his deputy Roger sought to sustain their food supply mainly via hunting (Dickson 12-26).

Characters and Allegorical Relations

Ralph, Piggy and Simon

The triumvirate of Ralph, Piggy and Simon among the pre-teen boys in the island initially stood as perhaps the legitimate leadership ruling over the pre-teen boys. Regarded as the chief upon election by the pre-teen boys, Ralph exhibited qualities of a real leader marked with wisdom, logic and direction. Along with his deputy Piggy, Ralph discovered a conch shell that enabled him to gather all of the pre-teen boys in the island. Anyone who takes hold of the conch gains authoritative attention, particularly when planning for efforts for their rescue. Although Ralph appeared a rational character at first, having promoted the importance of having fun while maintaining the smoke signal whenever ships go near the island, he eventually degenerated towards corruption. Ralph, given his powerful position, led himself alongside the “

biguns" (older boys) to bully Piggy and attempted to step down from leadership due to growing frustrations over failures to attract rescuers through the smoke signal (Golding 19-37). Piggy, although an asthmatic overweight boy, stood as the intellectual adviser of Ralph. Appearing as quite the most mature-minded of the pre-teen boys in the island, Piggy possessed scientific ideals on life that support his views on maintaining civilization, as seen in the way he relies on the conch to gain authority in speaking authoritatively at conventions. Yet, with Ralph becoming increasingly corrupt, Piggy became a laughing stock among the biguns for their constant bullying. The spectacles Piggy has worn throughout *Lord of the Flies* became an instrumental tool for creating fire, which was a coveted tool by Jack. Roger eventually killed Piggy and destroyed the conch shell he possessed, henceforth becoming a symbol referring to the destruction of civilization (Golding 3-200). Simon stood as a peaceful and positive figure. The fits of hallucination Simon experienced led him to realizations on the fears of the other pre-teen boys on the existence of a beast wandering on the island. When Simon discovered the severed head of a pig offered by the leader of the rival hunting group, Jack, to the beast, he began referring to it as the "Lord of the Flies" because it attracted flies hovering over it. Simon started experiencing hallucinations whenever he sees the Lord of the Flies, which he frequently sees giving him messages saying that the "beast" is just an imaginary creation of the pre-teen boys out of their paranoia. The sight of the dead parachutist spotted by the twins Sam and Eric, both of which mistook it as the beast, further fuelled such fear. As Simon was about to report his realizations, the tribe formed by Jack slaughtered him during a

tribal dance, mistaking him for the beast. Such symbolized the elimination of truth, embodied by Simon, by the growing savagery of Jack and his followers (Golding 121-173).

Jack and Roger

Jack is the leader of the choirboy faction of the pre-teen boys stranded on the island, who rivalled the authority of Ralph and his cohorts by forming a hunting group. Initially, the aim of Jack is to ensure the stability of the food supply of the island, although he initially relented from hunting due to his fear of blood. Yet, the compelling need to hunt for food pushed Jack to become engrossed in hunting, to the point when he started to abandon the smoke signal. The obsession to hunt grew within Jack, which enabled him to gain a sizable following among the pre-teen boys against the authority of Ralph, duly marked by his clay-and-earth war paint he applied on his face. Driven by the fear of the beast, Jack made an offering of a severed head of a pig later referred to as the Lord of the Flies by Simon. The growing savagery of Jack and his followers soon led to the death of Simon (Golding 39-200). Roger, the deputy of Jack who eventually held the role of chief executioner, grew from a civilized bigun to an animalistic savage. The emancipation of Roger coincided from the time when Ralph ruled with authority up to the time when Jack gained power with his savagery, from which he tortured several pre-teen boys into joining the savages, most notably Sam and Eric. Roger is responsible for the death of Piggy, having killed Piggy and destroying the conch shell in the process (Golding 64-211).

Sam and Eric

Twins Sam and Eric were among those assigned by Ralph to look after the smoke signal. While on duty, Sam and Eric saw the body of a dead parachutist landing near Castle Rock, the touted habitat of the beast. Sam and Eric eventually came to mistake the dead parachutist as the beast, leading Ralph, Jack and Roger to form a search party at Castle Rock. Ralph, fearing the beast, eventually turned back, giving Jack and Roger the opportunity to build a savage faction against him. Roger then tortured Sam and Eric into joining the tribe led by Jack. Serving as the catalyst of the hardened division between Ralph and Jack, Sam and Eric embodies the paranoia felt by the pre-teen boys in the island towards the existence of the beast (Golding 149-211).

Naval Officer

The Naval Officer, who landed on the island and discovered the savagery of the pre-teen boys, expressed his disappointed as he anticipated “ a better show” from them, particularly because they are British. Standing as somewhat the “ wake-up call” in Lord of the Flies, the Naval Officer criticizes the savagery of the pre-teen boys, particularly in his recognition of Ralph as the leader and the messy appearance of Jack (Golding 224).

The Beast and the Lord of the Flies

The paranoia of the pre-teen boys in the island triggered by their prolonged stay led to the idea of the beast, the existence of which alleged by some of the “ littluns”, the younger counterparts of the biguns. Sam and Eric mistakenly identified a dead parachutist as the beast, triggering searches led

by Ralph, Jack and Roger. In a tribal dance, Jack had Simon slaughtered by his followers after they mistook him as the beast. The idea of the beast prevalent throughout the pre-teen boys in the island further caused disarray to the once-widespread civilization that existed under the leadership of Ralph (Golding 162-172). The Lord of the Flies stands for the severed head of a pig offered by Jack to the beast that triggered the hallucinations of Simon as it served as his means to realize the truth behind the beast (Golding 121-173).

Symbolisms

Narrative

The narrative of Lord of the Flies predominantly features the use of scapegoating. Ralph, for instance, served as a scapegoat for the unruly pre-teen boys as he stood up to attempt to introduce peace and order in the island, ultimately failing with the breakdown of civilization due to the rise of Jack. Simon is also a scapegoat in the same vein as Ralph, as he died while carrying the truth about the beast with him. Piggy, also a scapegoat figure, died under the hands of Roger, in turn symbolized the diminishing value of intelligence within the savage society of Jack (Dickson 12-26).

Conch Shell

The conch shell granted authority to anyone who possesses it. Piggy, being intelligent but lacking leadership and charisma due to his appearance and disposition, relied on the conch shell in order to gain authority as he makes his ideas heard in conventions. The destruction of the conch shell coincided

with the death of Piggy, which symbolized the unimportance of intelligent authority under the savagery of Jack (Dickson 12-26).

Spectacles

The importance of the spectacles, originally owned by Piggy, to make fire caused a frenzy within the savage faction led by Jack. The spectacles, given the foregoing, symbolized the scientific ideals of Piggy, which in turn has benefited the pre-teen boys in the island with its use as a tool to create fire, much to the motivation of Jack and his followers to steal it (Dickson 12-26).

War Paint

The war paint applied by Jack on his face symbolized the completion of his transformation towards savagery. Initially, Jack relented from slaughtering a pig on his first opportunity to hunt for food, yet the necessity for hunting made him a blood-frenzied individual that soon challenged the civilization implemented by Ralph and his followers (Dickson 12-26).

Works Cited

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