

Lord of the flies essay sample



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Many different leadership styles exist in a society, each with its own motives, but all with the same goal: the fight for power and survival. In the novel *Lord of the Flies*, the author William Golding examines the different leadership styles in a society and explores how the leader of a society affects the society's survival. Golding uses the three main characters of Ralph, Jack, and Piggy to symbolize conflicting leadership styles: democratic, dictatorial, and paternalistic.

First, Ralph, a natural leader, symbolizes a democratic leadership style in the way he leads the boys by creating an atmosphere in which everyone's opinion matters. At the first assembly, Ralph explains how using a conch shell will ensure that each boy will have a fair chance to speak and give their opinion, "' I'll give the conch to the next person to speak. He can hold it when he's speaking...And he won't be interrupted. Except by me'" (33). In this dialogue, Ralph uses the conch to set up a concrete rule system that ensures that each boy has a say in decision-making, without leading to chaos.

Taking into account the ideas of others allows Ralph to keep tension down between the boys, and make the best decisions that will secure the group's survival. Piggy compares Ralph's structured democratic style to Jack's savage leadership as he asks the boys, "' Which is better — to be a pack of painted Indians like you are, or to be sensible like Ralph is.... Which is better — to have laws and agree, or to hunt and kill? '" (180) In pointing out the folly of the boys' devotion to Jack, Piggy reinforces that it is Ralph who offers them the strongest chance of survival.

Compared to Jack's intention to hunt and kill, Ralph's leadership is wise and keeps the peace, which is essentially, the motive behind democracy. Ralph's commitment to seek consensus and build a civil society helps create a culture of shared power as the boys work to survive. Although he is chosen by the boys for the protection he promises, Jack symbolizes a dictator as he shows that he will do whatever it takes, including acts of violence and brainwashing, to obtain power. When discussing the foundations for his new tribe, Jack confirms doubts about the beast, " I [Jack] say this.

We aren't going to bother about the beast...We are going to forget about the beast'" (133). The boys in Jack's tribe are overcome by the security that Jack offers them by telling them it is all right to forget the beast. In gaining the boys' confidence, Jack becomes their chief, not by force, but by the people's choice. When dealing with his captives Sam and Eric, Jack uses violence and persuasive language to lure them into his tribe, brainwashing them in the process, " The chief [Jack] snatched up one of the few spears that were left and poked Sam in the ribs.

...What d'you mean by coming with spears? What d'you mean by not joining my tribe? '"(182) Jack utilizes fear with the boys in order to gain control of them. He taunts Sam and Eric into thinking they did something wrong, which compels them to submit to his desires. Boys are at first drawn into Jack's tribes because of the security he promises, but Jack only satisfies their short term wants and needs, and in the end, only seeks after power for himself.

In contrast to Jack, Piggy symbolizes a paternalistic leadership style that is characterized as logical, intelligent, and dependable. Piggy speaks to the

boys about how they should have made shelters first, when he chides them, "...the first time Ralph says ' fire' you goes howling and screaming up this here mountain. Like a pack of kids'" (45). He describes the boys as a group of kids, though he himself is a child, because he believes that he is more sensible and sophisticated than the rest. He finds their quick action immature and unwise and attempts to correct them.

After Piggy's death, as Ralph is trying to decide whether to hide or to flee, he wonders, " What was the sensible thing to do? There was no Piggy to talk sense. "(196) Ralph has relied on Piggy for security in making decisions. Now that Piggy is not there, it seems the world doesn't make sense, because there is no one to give Ralph a mature perspective on the matters at hand. Piggy's mature outlook on problems helps Ralph and the other boys to make decisions, and find sensible solutions that lead to better survival.

Using the three main characters Ralph, Jack, and Piggy, Golding shows how democratic, dictatorial, and paternalistic leadership styles contrast in the way they seek power and secure survival. In Ralph, the boys find a leader willing to listen to their ideas; in Jack, they find security and hope, and in Piggy, they find wisdom in their decision making. In societies in our own world, it seems that strong leadership coupled with the balanced distribution of power and the logical, sensible approach of mature adults would best meet the needs for survival.