

Lord of the flies literary analysis essay

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After analyzing the characters in William Golding's novel, *Lord of the Flies*, one can recognize that many of the characters embody the theme of the novel. One of the prominent themes in *Lord of the Flies* is man's inner savage; man's inhumanity to others, and Golding manages to explore and capture this theme in a way that is enjoyable to read. Three characters in the book who truly illustrate the theme of man's inner savage; man's inhumanity to others are Jack, Ralph, and Simon.

The theme of the novel, man's inner savage; man's inhumanity to others is most apparent in Jack Merridew's character. Our first true glimpse into Jack's inner monster occurs after he kills his first pig:

His mind was crowded with memories; memories of the knowledge that had come to them when they closed in on the struggling pig, knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink (Golding, 81).

Jack's excitement stems from having "outwitted" a living thing, and having "imposed" his will on it, which he later does with Simon, and Piggy. Jack really has no reason for killing showing that, "Perhaps the most disturbing motives for killing is just for the thrill of it." (Ramsland, 3). Throughout the book, Jack is driven by his thirst for power, and is willing to go to any lengths to get what he wants, which includes killing anybody that steps in his way.

He slowly begins to lose his conscience, as shown by the fact that he feels no remorse, guilt, or regret after participating in the brutal murders of both Simon, and Piggy. The fact that Jack could turn from a proper, English boy to a murderer who can kill and feel no remorse, shows that Jack does harbour a

monster inside of him, is a savage, and he is very capable of being inhumane to others, thus, illustrating the theme of the novel.

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Another character who briefly illustrates the theme of the novel is Ralph. Ralph shouldered the responsibility of rescuing all the boys, proving him to be the leader that the boys on the island needed, but even then, Ralph senses himself falling into the same savagery as the other boys at times during the book. On the hunt that Ralph participates in, Ralph's inner savage has one of its only opportunities to reveal itself, "Ralph too was fighting to get near, to get a handful of that brown, vulnerable flesh. The desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering" (Golding, 164). This hunt proved that even Ralph, the sensible, responsible, and intellectual leader who represented the struggle for order, civilization, and democracy on the island, has an inner savage, just waiting to get out.

Near the end of the book, Ralph was close to falling victim to the other boy's savagery as they were chasing him through the island, ready to kill him. He trips and falls at the feet of an officer, and begins to cry, "Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of a true, wise friend called Piggy" (Golding, 290). Ralph cries for all that he has lost, and at that moment, he realizes that he will never be the same since he has learned about the evil that lurks within all humans, illustrating the theme of man's inner savage; man's inhumanity to others.

Man's inner savage; man's inhumanity to others is first recognized by the character, Simon, in the novel, Lord of the Flies. When the boys discuss the

possibility of there being a beast on the island, Simon steps forward and says, “ Maybe it’s only us.” (Golding, 126) implying that it was the boys themselves who were the “ beast”, capable of hurting, of killing, and of committing other acts of evil. This theme is explored prior to the killing of Simon, the other boys chant, “ Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!” (Golding, 219) and when Simon is being murdered, Golding describes it in brutal detail to emphasize the inhumanity shown by the other boys, and to show how savage they have become:

The sticks fell and the mouth of the new circle crunched and screamed. The beast was on its knees in the center, its arms folded over its face. It was crying out against the abominable noise something about a body on the hill. The beast struggled forward, broke the ring and fell over the steep edge of the rock to the sand by the water. At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws (Golding, 219). On the island, Simon was the only character to represent hope, and innocence, but in the end, he was a direct result of the other boy’s savagery, and inhumanity. His death signified the end of innocence, and goodness on the island.

In William Golding’s book, *Lord of the Flies*, the theme of man’s inner savage; man’s inhumanity to others is explored in many ways, one of them being through the characters Jack, Ralph, and Simon. Jack embodies this theme the most, since he is the first to turn savage, and impose his will on the other boys. Ralph comes close to becoming a savage at times throughout the book, and Simon is one of the only characters who manages

to keep his innocence, but is a direct result of the savagery shown by the other boys on the island in the end. William Golding managed to explore and capture the theme of man's inner savage; man's inhumanity to others perfectly in his book, *Lord of the Flies* in a way that is enjoyable for all to read.

Works Cited

Golding, William. *Lord of the flies*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1962. Print.

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