

Innate evil and power control lead to bullying

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William Golding was a World War II veteran who saw for himself the atrocities perpetrated on the victims of what he felt was innate evil. By writing *Lord of the Flies*, he recreated that story. Suzanne Collins came from a long line of veterans of wars, including a father who served in the Vietnam War.

Those experiences combined with an appreciation of ancient Roman gladiatorial times were her inspiration for *The Hunger Games*. Although these authors' backgrounds have some similarities, the differences are acutely displayed in their varied philosophies. Golding, in *Lord of the Flies*, uses the characters of Jack and Roger to show how innate evil will force otherwise civilized people to abandon their morals if left unchecked. Suzanne Collins, on the other hand shows how a morally bankrupt totalitarian government forces an innately good and compassionate character, Katniss, to rebel in *The Hunger Games*. An underlying theme in both works is how power is maintained through bullying.

In his literary critique, Patrick Reilly notes Golding's thesis: " *Lord of the Flies* is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature" (Reilly 206). After crashing on a deserted island during World War II, the boys attempt to organize a mini-democracy to sustain themselves and attract passing ships or planes to rescue them. However, factions develop and Jack and Roger begin to rally as many of the boys as possible to their increasingly dictatorial leadership. A perfect example of these actions from the book is as follows: " When Roger, looking down on the bag of fat that is his view of Piggy, releases, ' with a sense of delirious abandonment', the great rock that kills the advocate of adult common sense, he is not acting like a kid but like the corrupt adults who have plunged the world into atomic

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war in the first place” (Reilly 210 and Golding 180). Jack and Roger are Golding’s symbolic characters who represent savagery and the desire for power.

They bully the other boys into giving them that power. This shift of power is portrayed through the following statement: “ The chief (Jack) led them, trotting steadily, exulting in his achievement. He was a chief now in truth; and he made stabbing motions with his spear. From his left hand dangled Piggy’s broken glasses” (Golding 168). Although Golding and Collins both describe fictional dystopias, Collins differs from Golding’s view of innate evil.

Collins portrays a compassionate young girl trying to subsist under the thumb of a ruthlessly totalitarian government ruled by President Snow. Vivienne Muller’s critique notes that “ President Snow’s control of the districts and his shoring up of power and material wealth for the capitol relies heavily on managing and manipulating the real...The Hunger Games act as a reminder to the populace of what might happen to them should they decide to rebel” (Muller 53). President Snow and his government are Collins’ symbols for universal evil and greed. The games are the tool Snow uses to keep the populace satisfied yet afraid through violent entertainment. In The Hunger Games, Katniss expresses her sarcasm and frustration: “ Anyway, Gale and I agree that if we have to choose between dying of hunger and a bullet in the head, the bullet would be much quicker” (Collins 17).

Katniss also states that starvation is common in District 12 and she has to hunt illegally in the woods to feed her mother and sister. This statement indicates her rebellion against the unfairness of Snow and his government.

Collins' view of evil is depicted in *The Hunger Games* as a totalitarian government that bullies its populace through starvation and a modern day version of gladiatorial games. However, Katniss rises above innate evil unlike Jack and Roger. Golding and Collins portray very different reactions to bullying in their novels even though both include elements of totalitarianism.

Patrick Reilly's critical analysis of *Lord of the Flies* hypothesizes that Golding "...insists throughout the book that men prefer passion to practicality and glamour to commonsense" (Reilly 207). Reilly chooses that hypothesis as the reason the boys follow Jack as opposed to Piggy who has the most commonsense and practical intelligence. After Jack becomes the leader, he goes hunting and "...relishes the danger of the chase and the excitement of the kill" (Reilly 208). The boys give the power to Jack as "...the meat giver... at the trifling cost of their freedom. Jack is not a proponent of savage disorder but of stern totalitarian discipline.

Far from disliking rules, he loves them too much and for the wrong reasons" (Reilly 211). Although both authors portray totalitarianism, Collins portrays different responses to bullying. Collins' protagonist, Katniss, displays compassion toward friends and rebellion toward the totalitarian government of Panem. Muller again notes that " She (Katniss) protects Prim, her sister, by taking her place in the hunger games and she is defiant of authority in the small tactics of rebellion she performs..." (Muller 59). Such kindnesses and rebellious actions include caring for Peeta when he is wounded and refusing to kill him, and singing to Rue while she dies and then covering her body with flowers. Katniss reflects that Rue's death "...has forced me to confront

my own fury against the cruelty, the injustice they inflict upon us”(Collins 286).

Both Katniss and Peeta “...play to the audience and outwit Snow by threatening to swallow poisoned berries” (Muller 60). Katniss, rather than seizing power over others as she is able, shows compassion and then courage. Muller, in her literary critique, proposes that Katniss, “...heavily traumatized by her active response to the ugliness of war and oppression, makes the decision to embrace rebirth instead of destruction” (Muller 62).

The conflict between good and evil is a long-served theme in journalism. The authors of *Lord of the Flies* and *The Hunger Games* have explored that theme in different ways. Studying their methods is instructional in understanding the human condition as well as the causes of bullying.

For Golding, the root of all evil is the innate evil that lurks in all of us. For Collins, it is totalitarianism. The common thread between *Lord of the Flies* and *The Hunger Games* is the pursuit and maintenance of unbridled power through bullying. Maybe in the world today, studying the varying degrees of bullying in literature would be instructive in preventing it in our schools.

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