

The Evil & Primitivism in Man

In the story *Lord of the Flies* Ralph, the democratic character, and Jack, the dictator are the most important main characters. Ralph is the voice of hope on the island, and without that, the boys would have turned to savagery much faster, and under the control of Jack. William Golding uses Ralph and his character foil, Jack, to show how civilization works and how it doesn't. Jack, the chief of the hunters, represents the hidden human passion and almost animal cruelty, and Ralph, who represents human common sense to show how civilization is.

This story is an allegory. This means the character, events and setting represent deeper truths or generalizations than those suggested by the surface story. There are four main characters, and each character represents different types of people in the world. Jack is the dictator who uses force to show his thoughts and feelings. Therefore he is the destructive side of man. He is the type of person who would rather have fun and gratification over work. On the other hand Ralph is the believer in democracy and fairness. He is the voice of hope, and the responsible type of person. The boys on the island, allegorically show what the human civilization is like.

Ralph stands for order and conduct of society. Each chapter begins with order, which means that Ralph has control. Ralph uses the conch to show order and the right to speak. By the end of each chapter there is no order and there is usually chaos, this shows that evil and/or fear has control, meaning Jack has control. Allegorically in the world it would be a legislative government versus a military type of government. Where Ralph is the legislative and Jack is military. The disorder caused by Jack, threatens the island and the society that Ralph has tried so hard to form. Ralph wants to have a fire, so they can be rescued, but Jack is more worried about having fun than being rescued and this is a major conflict. The fire is a symbol for hope and enlightenment, but when it gets out of control it becomes very destructive. Anything without order and control can become destructive, this is why Ralph is so important to the society.

The two character foils, Ralph and Jack, have different ideas and want different things. Ralph wants huts and a signal fire. The huts which stand for civilization and the signal fire is needed to get rescued. This shows that Ralph creates and builds. On the opposite end of that is Jack. Jack wants to hunt and kill pigs and have fun. This shows primitivism. Jack is shown as a person who kills and destroys. Here is the conflict; creating and building versus killing and destroying. Ralph asks Jack what he wants: "Don't you want to be rescued? All you talk about is pig, pig, pig!" And Jack answers him and tells him what he wants: "But we want meat!" This tells us that Ralph and Jack will not settle their differences. Right from the start unity of society is threatened by the different purposes of the boys.

Ralph was never comfortable with primitivism, but Jack rather enjoyed it. Ralph thinks to himself: "He would like to have a bath, a proper wallow with soap... and decided that a toothbrush would come in handy too." Ralph resists primitivism strongly but is still sucked into it. Even though he resists primitivism, he still went on a pig hunt and when he gets a stab at the pig, he becomes very proud of himself, and ends up enjoying the hunt very much. This shows that every human has an evil side. Even Ralph, who is the one who absolutely hates primitivism. The dead pilot in the tree suggests that humans have de-evolved, gone backwards in evolution. Ralph cries: "If only they could send a message to us... a sign or something." The dead pilot was the sign that the real world isn't doing any better than they were doing on the island.

Jack objects to doing things that Ralph tells the whole group of the boys to do, as well he objects to Ralph's being chief. Ralph still believes in the conch, and thinks it still holds some order: "Jack! Jack! You haven't got the conch! Let me speak." Again Ralph refers to the rules: "'The rules!' shouted Ralph, 'you're breaking the rules!'" Jack replies with: "Who cares?" His reply is short and

stabbing. Once Jack says this, the reader knows that there is no turning back. The conversation continues: "Because the rules are the only thing we've got!" And to end the argument about rules, Jack says: "Bollocks to the rules!..." Jack then protests to using the conch: "'Conch! Conch!' shouted Jack, 'we don't need the conch anymore.'" Ralph later thinks to himself: "The world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away..."

The conflict between the two of them, which was also caused by different views on the existence of a beast, culminate when Jack decides to separate from Ralph. When the groups separate, neither of them profit from it, only Ralph and Piggy realize this. Ralph's group is not big enough to keep the signal fire going, and Jack and the hunters do not have Piggy's glasses to make their own fire, to roast their pigs. Since most of the boys have lost the need for civilization and the hope of being rescued, Ralph has lost control of them. They now fear the beast, and Jack tells the boys that if they are hunters they can protect themselves from the beast. So now Jack gets control of most of the boys. Ralph loses hope: "I'm frightened. Of us. I want to go home. O god I want to go home." But Piggy was there to help him out of his slump for a bit. But when Piggy is killed, Ralph is helpless and desperate. He is alone and it seems that Ralph's common sense has entirely been defeated.

There is a running theme in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Man is savage at heart, this is shown by Ralph in the pig hunt, and always ultimately reverting back to an evil and primitive nature. This is all shown by Jack and his group of hunters when they have the pig dances, the pigs head as a scarifices and, last but not least, they turn into a group of savages.

Ralph and his common sense stays almost the same throughout the book, it's Jack and his hunters who change. To end, here's a quote from David Anderson's work entitled *Nostaldia for the Primates*:

In this book Golding succeeds in giving convincing form to which exists deep in our self-awareness. By the skill of his writing, he takes the reader step by step along the same regressive route as that traversed by the boys on the island... Our first reaction are those of 'civilized' people. But as the story continues, we find ourselves being caught up in the thrill of the hunt and the exhilaration of slaughter and blood and the whole elemental feeling of the island and the sea... The backing of Golding's thesis comes not from the imaginary events on the island but from the reality of the readers response to them. Our minds turn to the outrages of our century - the slaughter of the first war, the concentration camps and atom-bombs of the second - and we realize that Golding has compelled us to acknowledge that there is in each of us a hidden recess which horrifyingly declares our complicity in torture and murder...

