

## The Lord of the Flies

The world had witnessed the atrocities of World War II and began to examine the defects of their social ethics. Man's purity and innocence was gone. Man's ability to remain civilized was faltering. This change of attitude was extremely evident in the literature of the age. Writers, who through the use of clever symbolism, mocked the tragedy of man's fate. One such writer was William Golding. An author who has seen the destruction of war and despises its inevitable return. Through the use of innocent and untainted children, Golding illustrates how man is doomed by his own instinct. The novel is called Lord of the Flies, and is of extreme importance to help reconstruct the current wave of revolutionary ideas that swept the twentieth-century generation. Lord of the Flies portrays the belief of the age that man is in a constant struggle between darkness and light, the defects of human nature, and a philosophical pessimism that seals the fate of man. Golding's work are, due to their rigid structure and style, are interpreted in many different ways. Its unique style is different from the contemporary thought and therefor open for criticism.

The struggle between darkness and light is a major theme in all the works of William Golding. Strong examples of this are found throughout Lord of the Flies. The most obvious is the struggle between Ralph and Jack. The characters themselves have been heavily influenced by the war. Ralph is the representative of Democracy. Elected as the leader he and Piggy his companion keep order and maintain a civilized government. The strength of Ralph's character was supported by the power of World War II. Jack, on the other hand, represents authoritarianism. He rules as a dictator and is the exact opposite of Ralph. Jack is exemplifying the Hitler's and Mussolini's of the world. He is what the world fears and yet follows. This struggle is born at the very beginning and escalates till the very end. The struggle in the book is a negative outlook on life in the future. One other example is the debate over the existence of the beast. The idea of a beast brings all into a state of chaotic excitement in which Ralph and Piggy lose control. Ralph and especially Piggy try to convince everyone that there is no such thing as a beast to maintain order. Jack and his choir of hunters do all to win support of the hunt and in doing so he becomes an advocate for evil. This struggle between good and evil is a fairly clear picture of the way this post-war generation viewed man and his journey through life. This is done through Golding's masterful use of allegory. Therefor making it enjoyable for all readers.

Golding himself stated that the purpose of the novel was to trace the defects of society back "to the many defects of human society." The use of children is an extremely effective way of making the purpose understandable to readers of all generations.

"The idea of placing boys alone on an island, and letting them work out archetypal patterns of human society, is a brilliant technical device, with a simple coherence which is easily understood by a modern audience." (Cox 163)

This quote by C.B. Cox gives us the reason why this novel has survived so long and is so well respected. The children are left to react in ways that will test how

close they will resemble modern civilization. The group at first tries to assemble a type of democratic government in which Ralph is elected leader. At this instant we

see something that is most important. That is the reluctance of Jack to become the leader. He and his choir singers, which are dressed in black to symbolize evil, are immediately separated from the group and labeled as hunters. This gives Jack some piece of power and like the dictators of the 1930's he insists he receive more.

The hunter party is Golding's triumph in giving the first glimpse of human savagery through the hunter party. As the hunter party grows in numbers the hunters have a great thirst for blood and death. This is how the beast is first seen.

They become more savage and soon begin to paint their faces to show how fierce they are. The whole time Ralph and Piggy the only rational thinkers have become the greatest enemy of the party. They begin to make chants and dances and do all to destroy any order. When Piggy is killed we see the end of rational thinking and the complete collapse of mankind's strength to remain civilized at all costs. Man has become savage and has shown a terrifying glimpse into the future of Democracy. The defect of man is revered to as the beast. The thing the boys were all running away from was what they became and it was lead by the representation of Satan himself, the red haired Jack. At certain stages in the story Golding deliberately makes us forget that these are only young children. Their drama and conflict typify the inevitable overthrow of all attempts to impose a permanent civilization on the instincts of man.

Golding along with many of the writers of the time gave pessimistic endings not only to their books but to life in general. They showed society in a sort of downward decent which could not be stopped because it is in our nature. The savagery of man is used through the use of the hunters. The pessimism is viewed through the ending. The ending has been interpreted in many ways but most contain the same ideas. The idea that there is no hope or mankind. The story takes

place in the near future during an atomic war. The children were being transported away from Britain. The world had already started to become savage and as many people in the generation said " If world war three is atomic bombs than world war four is sticks and clubs." Obviously the idea of human nature and savagery were in fact very prominent. Golding uses an excellent idea for the end of this story. The naval officer comes to rescue the children from their war with Ralph and are suprised to find how savage the "English" boys were acting. At this point we see Ralph begin to cry not for being saved but for mankind.

" The naval officer, who comes to rescue them...His trim cruiser, the sub-machine gun, his white drill, epaulettes, revolver and row of gilt buttons, are only more sophisticated substitutes for the war-paint and sticks of Jack and his followers. He too is chasing men in order to kill, and the dirty children mock the absurd civilized attempt to hide the power of evil. And so when Ralph weeps for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the death of his true wise friend, Piggy, he weeps for all the human race." (Cox 164)

Such a tragic view of the future of mankind and their nature is a perfect window for people to understand how the impact of the war made the world rethink its ethics and how life was thought of as a punishment in the extreme sense and that there was no hope for the future except fear. This view has since changed but not greatly as one would imagine. The basic ideas are still their and modern society may still relate to this novel. The interpretation may not be exact but from

now on mankind will always weep for " the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and" the most disturbing" for all the human race."



