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Adolescent Literature

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Literature Dossier

They surrounded the covert but the sow got away with the sting of another spear in her flank. The trailing butts hindered her and the sharp, cross-cut points were a torment. She blundered into a tree, forcing a spear still deeper; and after that any of the hunters could follow her easily by the drops of vivid blood [...].

Here, struck down by the heat, the sow fell and the hunters hurled themselves at her. This dreadful eruption from an unknown world made her frantic; she squealed and bucked and the air was full of sweat and noise and blood and terror [...]. The spear moved forward inch by inch and the terrified squealing became a high-pitched scream. Then Jack found the throat and the hot blood spouted over his hands. The sow collapsed under them [...].

At last the immediacy of the kill subsided. The boys drew back, and Jack stood up, holding out his hands.

“Look.”

He giggled and flecked them while the boys laughed at his reeking palms. Then Jack grabbed Maurice and rubbed the stuff over his cheeks . . .

“Right up her ass!” (Golding, 105)

Within this passage, Golding illustrates the death of a sow, but what he is really trying to convey is the birth of the boys' primitive nature. One of the important themes in *The Lord of the Flies* is the inherent evil that exists in human nature. Golding exhibits the evil that exists within the boys during this scene. Although the young boys are killing as a form of survival, the scene emphasizes a deeper level of bloodthirst that can only be explained by evil. The aggression, the hunt, and the kill are all animalistic, a characteristic that is not seen in society. However, the giggling and mocking by the boys highlights a cruel domination, which extends passed the need for meat. This scene is so powerful because the dialogue can be misconstrued for rape in the sense that the sow is personified in a sexual manner. This is shown within Golding's choice of positioning the sow underneath the boys, she is struck down by heat, as her squeal turns to

screams when they hunch forward to kill her. The boys find excitement and pleasure in the kill, along with exploiting and killing her, they make it a point to identify it as through the ass.

This hyper aggression that the boys demonstrate in the passage does not happen overnight, which makes this scene so transformational. Through a series of events in the novel, Golding shows how the boys drift further from the order of society, hence closer to an evil and primitive nature. This contributes to one of Golding's main ideas that evil exist in humans, the novel argues that without discipline and order - savagery occurs. Young boys play to this theme because they are coming of age and in a time where they are not only stranded without guidance but where they also have to solidify right from wrong. Characters such as Jack, symbolizes the anger, violence, cruelty and greed that Golding believes to inherently exist in humans, without the consequence. Susan M. Swearer Napolitano, a professor apart of the Educational Psychology, Department at University of Nebraska Lincoln, claims that, "...the aggression among the boys starts as verbal aggression and then, over time, becomes more physical and finally, violent...recognized that relational aggression and physical aggression co-existed, were not mutually exclusive, and existed among boys(611)." Here Napolitano suggests that relational aggression and physical aggression coincide with one another, especially in boys, and the novel represents how difficult it is to separate the two. In the model society, aggression is deemed unacceptable. However, Golding aims to draw parallel to its rationalization in modern day. Golding uses the novel as an allegory to reflect worldly events. For example, the story takes place during some kind of nuclear war. This is not fully disclosed to due to the sensitivity of its topic, but is heavily suggested by the plane being shot down and the brief history of the children's transport, destination as well as rescue. Goldings focal point is to show that war, rape, and murder still exist in society and stem from the innate human desire to dominate and underlying trait of evil. The power of this passage depicts the kind of savagery that even children can succumb to.

"There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast. . . . Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! . . . You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are the way they are?"(Golding,142).

Simon's interaction with the beast, whether is is a hallucination or not, becomes central to Golding's point that innate human evil exists without the pressures of society. Simon is the first character in the novel to see the beast not as an external force, but as a component of human nature. This claim is furthered within this scene as the beast reveals it's true identity, making it a compelling moment in the book. Throughout the novel the children are afraid of a monstrous figure in their imagination which Golding uses to foreshadow the one thing they should truly be afraid of; themselves. The idea of the Beast is so powerful and destructive to the society the children have created that it allows them to act in the same manner. The beast draws out the malicious features in the young boys out of fear as it plays to their vulnerability. As a result, they act on the only instincts they believe to stand against this creature, anger and cruelty. As the beast becomes more and more evident in the novel, the fear rises and the savagery emerges. Simon's character stands as the voice of truth in the novel, which eventually leads to his murder.

This can apply to a religious and spiritual interpretation within the works, as Simon suggests to resist the beast inside. Simon is calling the boys to resist forms of sin, instead he is killed. Simon's death is symbolic because his character signifies innocence and love, but most importantly the qualities that the community has lost during their time on the deserted island. Bern Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub's article, *Lord of the Flies: Beetzlehub Revisited* is found in the National Council of Teachers in English, it explains Simon's role as an attempt for heroism by stating, "Simon comes closest to foreshadowing the kind of hero Golding himself has seen as representing man's greatest need if he is to advance in his humanity-the Saint Augustine's, Shakespeares and Mozart's, "inexplicable, miraculous"(98). As Simon discovers the parachuter on the island, he is able to disconnect fear and instead place in reason. Unlike the other boys, he realizes there is no object or creature to be afraid of other than themselves. In his attempts to spread the knowledge, he is killed by all the boys including Ralph and Piggy who are supposed to be almost as moral and ethical as him. David Spitz in his article *Power and Authority: An Interpretation of Golding's "Lord of the Flies"*, published in the Antioch Review Inc, touches on how the shape of society weighs heavily on its moral and ethical code. Golding illustrates within this scene how easy it can be do succumb to evil if the majority of society is on board. He shows how even characters such as Ralph, the leader, and Piggy, the intellect, can partake in the murder of Simon, the truth teller. Spitz claims, "He alone speaks to the beast, the Lord of the flies, and learns that the beast is not something outside of man but is an actual part of man, always close to man, and hence not something to be killed or run away from." Given *The Lord of the Flies* is an allegory for the evil that exists in society, perhaps Simon exemplifies the kind of people that are needed to "fix" the world. This would explain for his very spiritual yet brutal bloodshed. Aforementioned way for Golding to convey there is no solution for the beastly qualities that remain in humans, even the ones who represent morality.

"The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist. Piggy, saying nothing, with no time for even a grunt, traveled through the air sideways from the rock, turning over as he went [...]. Piggy fell forty feet and landed on his back across the square red rock in the sea. His head opened and stuff came out and turned red. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed" (Golding, 209).

Piggy's death symbolizes the fall of the society the conch represented. The scene is so important because the conch shattering symbolizes the shattering of civilization, and how easy this so called society ceases to exist. Not only does the conch come to an end, so does the life of one of the only children who exemplified what it stood for. Piggy and the conch both represented order in society. Piggy's intelligence created the ideology of the conch and what it meant for the boys on the island. It was Piggy who brought the society together and his passing displays how the society has come to an end. Bern Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub's article, *Lord of the Flies: Beetzlehub Revisited*, is found in the National Council of Teachers in English, and claims that the main characters adhere to different themes in the novel by stating "Almost endlessly, the four major characters are thematically suggestive, and are usually identified in the book with certain

imagery and talismanic objects:... Piggy with pig's meat (his physical sloth and appetite and eventual sacrifice), with his glasses that represent intellect and science...with communal hope (all shattered when the conch dwindles in power and is finally shattered, and the signal fire dies out (Oldsey, Weintraub, 98). This passage highlights why Golding decided to name Piggy after an animal. His body type and demeanor represents the kind of object the boys have been hunting. Because piggy is physically weak and mentally strong he becomes a target for the boys to tease early on. As the boys' aggressive behavior and violence toward each other escalates, so does their actions toward Piggy. During this scene Piggy becomes nothing, but an animal the boys have slaughtered thus his twitching meant no more to them than any other killing they have done. Golding relates Piggy's death to that of the animals the boys have been hunting because he wants to emphasize how easy the kill is for them even though it is that of a human. This symbolizes there is truly no difference between people and prey at this point in the novel and in their society. Piggy and the conch die together which calls to the end of ordered civilization, thus this scene insinuates that order is truly needed to steer humans from savagery.

The novel's historical context pertains to the death of piggy as well as the brutality alongside it. As Piggy dies, Jack is indeed proud of himself and unbothered by the life that was just lost. The casualties on the island adhere to the casualties in the war, and show how humans justify killings regardless of how ruthless they seem on the outside. A reader may create an emotional attachment to the deaths in the book, however, these characters exist to pinpoint the tragedies in the world regardless of which "tribe" the human is apart of. Although Jack's purpose in the novel is to resemble a dictator, he is merely a boy who's reactions are untouched by the discipline in society. Jack symbolizes the workings of a beast who feeds off of the followers who justify his actions, but in fact Golding is hinting all beasts have to begin somewhere. Piggy is a paramount character who must have been wiped out tragically to convey Golding's main ideas.

"The rules!" shouted Ralph, 'you're breaking the rules!"

'Who cares?'

Ralph summoned his wits.

'Because the rules are the only thing we've got!'

But Jack was shouting against him.

'Bollocks to the rules! We're strong-we hunt! If there's a beast, we'll hunt it down! We'll close in and beat and beat and beat-!'"(Golding, 70).

Although all the boys understand and initially respect the conch, as time goes on characters such as Jack begin to test the rules and disrespect what the conch stands for, which is order, civilization and law. This conversation within the novel erupts because Jack does not remain quiet for Piggy to speak, furthering Ralph the leader to step in and have a talk with him. At this moment piggy has the conch which enables him to speak and not be interrupted, a rule they have established early on in the novel for their society. However, Jack verbally addresses to have

away with the rules because he would rather hunt animals and the beast. Jack also does not respect Piggy or the society in the way some of the other boys do, which proves he is the bad seed planted in their civilization. At this point in time the boys are unaware that the beast lives inside of them and not on the island. Their complete disregard for the rules in society reflects how much closer they are to becoming the beast inside of them. Even though Piggy is the one who is being disrespected in the scene, as the leader, Ralph steps in to insure the rules Piggy established are being followed. This type of authority causes Jack to become even more angry because he craves power. Ralph as the protagonist stands for leadership, morality and civility which Jack as the protagonist counters this. One could argue that although Ralph calls the shots, his decisions are heavily influenced and persuaded by Piggy, which is for the better. John F. Fitzgerald and John R. Kayser, published in University John Hopkins press, argue that pride is the original sin reflected in *Lord of the Flies*, they claim, “Although Ralph discovers the conch, Piggy knows what it is and how to use it. But perhaps, most important of all, Piggy sees the need for a meeting”(Fitzgerald, Kayser, 81). Unlike Jack, Piggy has never been prideful, although he is arguably smarter than Ralph and provides better ideas for society, he is content with his role within it. Piggy acts as the voice of reason in the novel even though he would not be taken seriously by the others if it were not for Ralph. Subsequently, Ralph recognizes Piggy's intelligence and knows that it were not for him their society would not have been the same. Piggy is the only boy who remembers the customs of society as he tries to implement them on the deserted island, as the novel progresses, Piggy still has a strong grasp on right, wrong, and maintaining order.

“Who thinks Ralph oughtn’t to be chief?”

He looked expectantly at the boys ranged around, who had frozen. Under the palms there was deadly silence.

“Hands up?” said Jack strongly, “whoever wants Ralph not to be chief?”

The silence continued, breathless and heavy and full of shame. Slowly the red drained from Jack’s cheeks, then came back with a painful rush. He licked his lips and turned his head at an angle, so that his gaze avoided the embarrassment of linking with another’s eye.

“How many think –”

His voice trailed off. The hands that held the conch shook. He cleared his throat, and spoke loudly.

“All right then.”

He laid the conch with great care in the grass at his feet. The humiliating tears were running from the corner of each eye.

"I'm not going to play any longer. Not with you." (Golding, 98)

Power is a very important thematic stress in the novel which is reflected the most through Jack and Ralph's interactions. Jack is a boy who craves power and authority over the other boys and longs for them to follow him instead of Ralph. Ralph is a natural leader who was elected by the boys because of his appeal and ability to call them together through the conch, which symbolizes rules and order. Alaa Lateef Alnajm interprets major themes in the novel, in his article published by the International Journal of English and Literature, he claims "A writer may express a theme through the feelings of his main character about the subject he has chosen to write about. Similarly, themes are exposed through thoughts and conversations of different characters" (Alnajm, 98). During this scene Jack stands before the boys calling them to turn to his own clan, and because they do not join him, he becomes shameful and humiliated. This suggests that power is important in the novel and more importantly, there is a struggle to obtain and maintain it. For a moment you can catch a glimpse of the child in Jack as he claims he does not want to "play" with them anymore. Although they have all been blood thirsty during their hunts, Jack refers to their interactions as play time. This choice of dialogue is chosen to remind the reader they are only children despite their viscousness. Therefore, their actions and reactions are premature regardless of the implications. It is evident that the young boys do not follow Jack at first because they are afraid and ultimately not ready to leave their so called society. They also do not respect Jack more than Ralph because he does not possess the qualities of a true leader. Despite this scene, Jack does come to rise out of fear, hunger, and a loss of respect for society. This fear has developed and lingered in all the boys and tells them they will never be rescued and there is a beast who they must protect themselves against. This idea enables them to devalue their attempts to recreate a structure of society and focus more on what is important now; survival mode. Ralph does allow the boys to hunt on the island because he values meat and knows it will create sustainability for all the boys. However, Ralph does stand for civilization and knows that it is not the most important thing to worry about on the island. This is why he conducts keeping the fire on and building shelter over hunting which eventually was ignored by Jack and the other hunters. Jack is skeptical toward their return from the beginning, therefore, is only worried about how to survive and not about maintaining order. Early on Jack attempts to instill in the younger boys that they will not return home, which directly counters Ralph's words. As a result, the reader can pinpoint the tension between the two characters and see how this develops in the series of events that lead up to this moment in the book. Power is a constant issue in society and Golding is only mirroring issues that exist despite the age or setting in this book. This scene is so important because Jack is going against society regardless of the consequence of humiliation and social exile.

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Research On Words

The Oxford Dictionary

I chose to further my research within the novel *Lord of the Flies* because I am fascinated by the creation and maintenance of society, but most importantly the words we use to describe people within it. *Lord of the Flies* plays to the theme of savagery in human nature specifically describing the children who grow into beasts. The word beast is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as an animal, especially a large or dangerous four-footed one, 'a wild beast'. This animalistic definition plays to the primitive nature of the characters in the book as they become more evil and bloodthirsty towards animals and each other. Although, the beast is a physical creature by definition its connotation in the book and toward humans, is used to describe an untamed corrupt human nature that exists without societal structure and discipline. Oxford's second example claims a beast to be used in 'the gift of reason differentiates humanity from the beasts'. This goes along with the theme of the novel because as the boys drift from society they are construed as the opposite of humanity, but also beasts themselves. Although the word beast is first used to describe a creature the young boys find out the beast actually exists inside them. A beast is used to describe the exact opposite of civilized and mannerly. For example, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* also uses the word beast to describe a prince whose heart is cold and evil. He is turned into a beast because the witch believes that is what reflects his soul. Throughout the movie the beast mirrors the exact opposite of the beautiful Belle, she is kind, thoughtful, generous and loving, all of which the beast is incapable of, or so it seems. As the story progresses Belle finds out these qualities existed in the beast all along yet took time and care to draw out. In comparison to *Lord of the Flies*, the beast exists inside the children and grows as they lose sight of qualities such as thoughtfulness, generosity, kindness and love. These qualities turn into violence, anger greed and mistrust which leads them to perform savage events such as murder. An interesting sample sentence from the Oxford Dictionary 1.4 example states, 'He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man.' Here a beast is so far detached from himself he no longer has to be a man, only a sort of evil creature. The example almost glorifies this state because the human no longer has to worry about the pain in society because they are too far removed. One could argue that once some of the boys on the island have become savage they do not want to come back to civilization. This is shown when Ralph tries to reason with Jack and Simon tries to assure the boys the beast does not exist. Yet Jack still forms his own tribe and they all choose to murder Simon. The Beast is not only used to explain a major theme in the novel, but a reoccurring theme in human existence. A beast is powerful, untamed, and inhumane which makes it compelling when used to describe a human let alone young boys.

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