
A Look at Disturbing Events Highlighted in William Golding's Book, Lord of the Flies

Traumatic experiences and difficult moments help to define an individual's resilience and character. These traumatic experiences often occur during one's adolescence and are part of one's coming-of-age rite of passage. Whether beneficial or destructive, these significant moments alter lives irreversibly. In particular, most adolescents encounter trying times which help them to grow morally and psychologically. Usually, these pivotal moments become the focus of numerous coming-of-age novels. For instance, in *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, Ralph's experience on the deserted island irrevocably transforms his perspective of human nature. Without the presence of adults and equipped with the dizzying freedom to make his own decisions regarding good and evil, to lead a tribe of schoolboys, and to choose his group of close friends, Ralph encounters numerous unexpected challenges. By dealing with these challenges, he becomes wiser and eventually comes to terms with "grown-up" issues.

Ralph loses his innocence and he witnesses the death of Piggy during his time on the deserted island, but he fails to fully realize the significance of these monstrous events until the conclusion of his time on the island. When the naval officers rescue Ralph and his comrades from the forest fire on the island, they jokingly inquire if casualties occurred during the boys' "make-believe war". At this moment, Ralph realizes the overwhelming barbarism of the boys' conduct, and he begins to sob. Ralph weeps for the "end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy." Following these tragic events, Ralph finally understands the human capacity for evil, which leaves him grappling with the notion that everyone possesses "darkness"- the capacity for evil within them. This revelation officially marks Ralph's transition from adolescence to adulthood, signifying that the lessons he learned from his experiences on the island have made him wiser and broadened his perspective in the ways of the world. He realizes that even seemingly innocent, civilized British schoolboys possess dark, murderous tendencies that become evident without the presence of civilized society and explicit expectations for humane conduct.

The *Lord of the Flies* summarizes the boys' transition from civilized individuals to savage barbarians in the absence of a civilized social construct. As the first leader of the island, Ralph initially represents the epitome of order and goodness. He governed with fair laws and democratic decision-making processes that included each member of the tribe. However, dark, powerful forces constantly challenge Ralph's authority. The innately evil forces of fear, blood-lust, and violence become steadily apparent as the boys free themselves from the constraints of civilized society. Gripped with vengeance for losing the leadership position to Ralph, Jack leads an antagonistic faction that rebels against Ralph's authority. Jack organizes his hunting-obsessed group and appeals to the boy's need for nutritional meat. Jack enforces his power through a tyrannical violence. At first, Ralph and his scarce population of followers represent the forces of good whereas Jack and his followers distinctly represent evil. However, the distinct line between good and evil become increasingly blurred. Gradually, Ralph and Piggy become afflicted by these powerful evil forces, and in their desperate attempt to acquire food from Jack's hunt, they participate in the macabre hunting reenactment that contributed to Simon's death.

From the carefree boy that stood on his head whenever he felt the overwhelming excitement of the island to the weeping adolescent that felt the weight of the world on his shoulders, Ralph's life drastically changes in William Golding's bildungsroman, *Lord of the Flies*. Because of the obstacles he faces as well as his experience with imminent death, Ralph grows wiser throughout the novel. With this wisdom comes the burdensome knowledge of the human tendency toward barbarism. Ralph realizes that the beast exists; not as a creature that haunts the island, but as a sinister force that dwells inside of humans, waiting to be unleashed. Only society's expectations can restrain the beast.

Because of his encounter with the darkness of human nature and his struggle to restrain the beast within himself, Ralph discovers the evil secrets of man's heart. This evil irreversibly transformed Ralph's perspective of humanity and leads him to become more conscious of his personal decisions. Furthermore, in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding demonstrates the ability of man's innate darkness to rapidly taint innocence and overwhelm one's civilized tendencies. This tumultuous coming-of-age tale focused on the dark, whirlwind moral and psychological development of the British schoolboys. However, the children's marred innocence serves as a reminder that the awareness of man's evil cannot and should not be forgotten.

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