

## **Tasks:**

- 1. Before you read create a mind map explaining what you think Lord of the Flies has to say about human nature (who we are).**
- 2. Read the critical essay and highlight powerful points and ideas.**
- 3. Revisit your mind map. What new information can you add?**

## **Lord of the Flies; What does Golding say about human nature? How does he say it?**

William Golding's literature piece Lord of the Flies provides an incisive insight into human behavior. The novel tells the fictional story of a group of English boys during an outbreak of a world war that get stuck on an uninhabited island with just themselves and no adults that would be an authoritative figure among them. Over the course of time, these boys demonstrate elements of human nature beyond civilized human beings as they are put in a society and environment where there are no rules or civility set in place. Golding contends that human nature, when free from the constraints of society, draws people away from common sense to savagery. His fundamental arguments are that human beings are savage by nature, and are moved by urges toward brutality and dominance over others. The use of characterization, symbolism, and character development are various literary devices that Golding uses in Lord of the Flies to illustrate that all humans are inherently evil.

The character development of Jack in Lord of the Flies is just one of many details that Golding makes use of in his attempt to address that all human beings are savages by nature. Jack has a desire for power at the beginning of the novel and gets furious over the fact that he ends up not getting the role as chief. For a while, Jack maintains the moral sense and discipline that civilization had established in him. "We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages" (Golding 42) Jack said in the book about establishing order among the group in the beginning. Jack realizes that there is a need to make order, something that being in a society has instilled in him. When he first encounters the pig, he is unsuccessful at killing it. Golding writes, "They knew very well why he hadn't; because of the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the unbearable blood" (29). It is the civilized Jack who is unable to bear the thought of harming the pig. He then devotes his time into hunting and trying to kill the pig, changing the image of his character very much ever since the beginning, slowly drifting into savagery as he finds pleasure in killing the pigs. As more time goes by, his savagery has affected the whole group as he, along with others have killed Simon, the first character to realize that the barbarianism that has descended within them is just a part of human nature. Ralph, a symbol of order and civility opposite to Jack also participates in Simon's murder, revealing that all humans have the ability to be evil in the right setting. Although Ralph participates, Piggy is the only one that does not due to his greater intelligence in comparison to the other boys. With intelligence, he still has maintained a sense between good and bad, morality. Throughout the novel, Jack can be seen developed from a civilized school boy to a symbol of savagery and anarchy in an environment where there is no such of a society with rules and order. Golding's development of the character Jack is one literary device that Golding utilizes to address how humans are susceptible of savagery when they are far away from civilization.

The imaginary beast is one symbolic figure that Golding implements into Lord of the Flies

that exhibits the change in human nature as an individual gets farther away from civilization. Most of the boys suppose that there is a terrifying beast on the island due to the physical forms they have seen such as the dead parachutist and believe that it remains hidden in the ocean during the day and emerges only at night. The majority of them believe in this idea, except Simon. "What I mean is . . . Maybe it's only us . . ." (89), Simon proposes that perhaps the beast is only a figure made up within the boys' minds, during the group's questioning of the beast's actual existence. While although all the other boys laugh at his idea, Simon's belief conforms to Golding's idea that an inherent human evil exists. Simon is the first character to recognize that the beast in reality is not an external force, but instead a component of human nature. Meanwhile, the other boys' beliefs in the beast increases more as the more savagely they have become, treating it as an immortal god. On the other hand, in spite of his theory, Simon does not fully make sense of his own idea until he confronts with the Lord of the Flies later on where he is told that the beast is really inside of them all, "Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close..." (143) though the boys think the beast lives in the jungle, Golding makes it clear that it lurks only in their hearts. Golding's implementation of the beast in the boys' adventure on the island displayed an irrational fear among the boys through its symbol to uncover an element of human nature as an individual gets farther away from rationalization.

The characterization by Golding supports his argument that humans are profoundly diabolical. He writes, "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in..." (75), the group's chant when they all together have killed their first pig. This indirectly portrays the savagery that has slowly developed in the group, in an environment where there are no rules to live by, but had been attempted to be established. Golding later writes "He could see a striped savage moving hastily out of the green tangle, and coming toward the mat where he hid, a savage who carried a spear..." (198) as Ralph, the last hope of civilization and order for the group is hunted down by Jack's boys. In this sequence, Golding directly characterizes a group of school boys who had turned into a group of uncivilized human beings with diction. This in turn also gives confirmation to the change in human nature of the boys ever since their arrival after the plane crash. The setting of a society with rules are no longer in place, had greatly changed the behavior of the boys. Lord of the Flies reflects on Golding's belief that people of all age groups have innate capacity for evil and that this natural capacity is never too far from a civilized society.

Lord of the Flies gives an intriguing view of human behavior when people are in a society where rules of a civilized society are no longer existent. Golding feels that man is naturally evil and the novel strongly suggests that. It also alerts us of our potential to descend from order to chaos when the time is right. In a situation, when a society is unable to control a man's behavior, the man's sense of cruelty increases therefore leading to violence and savage behavior. Golding's idea of the dark side of human nature appears very accurate as one man's act of violence against another is seen every day whether on a small individual scale or big global war. Golding's novel delivers an important message to all; man's hope to recognize and control the monster within man himself is with a civilized society, influenced by the effects of government and religion, two things lacking in Lord of the Flies. Otherwise, human beings are thirsty for power, despite the rules that try to make order.