Summer Howell

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Jack’s Mask

In the book *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, one of the main characters, Jack, has a very complex personality. Jack is the leader of the choir boys and is clearly used to being in charge by how poorly he handles not being chief of the island. He begins to transform into another scarier, more intense version of himself, using violence and cruel acts as his way of obtaining power. This mask created for Jack includes significant symbols such as a middle divider of smoke, a cracked section around the eye, and a serpent shielding the other side.

The symbol of smoke is an important representation of how Jack divides himself from the other boys. When Jack took all his hunters, including the ones maintaining the fire, and let the fire go out just so they could kill a pig, he guaranteed a division between himself and Ralph. Ralph spoke to him, “You let the fire go out.’ Jack checked, vaguely irritated by this irrelevance but too happy to let it worry him.” (69) Jack is full of pride and too self-centered to consider how letting the fire go out would influence his relationships with the other boys. Another important symbol on the mask is the cracks surrounding one of the eyes.

The broken area around the eye represents a few things about Jack. It’s modelled after Piggy’s broken specs caused by Jack, but it also shows how violent he can be and how easily he can snap, due to his hot-headed nature. After Piggy spoke up about Jack being irresponsible with the fire, “Jack smacked Piggy’s head. Piggy’s glasses flew off and tinkled on the rocks.” (71) Actions like these prove that Jack has no respect for the other boys’ opinions and he’s willing to hurt them if he doesn’t get his way. The last and most important symbol on the mask is the snake covering half of it.

Snakes represent envy or jealously and people who are fake or two-faced are often referred to as one. Jack fits in this category perfectly like a puzzle piece. Throughout the novel, Jack’s envy towards Ralph grows at a rapid pace and all because Ralph was voted to be chief over him. Jack called a meeting just to bash Ralph and held a new vote “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.” (127) Jack is so power-hungry and jealous of whoever has power that he can’t handle being the second in command. The serpent is the best representative of Jack’s personality.

The symbols of a wall of smoke, a cracked area around the mask’s eye, and a snake show who Jack is as a person. Using a mask allows you to hide yourself and distract others from the deeper layers of your personality which is precisely what Jack did in the novel while hunting. Although this mask shares all of Jack’s bad qualities, it’s easy to alter your mask to the opposite of who you really are and benefit from lies. This is a common circumstance in the real world which people often use to gain more friends and a higher social status. This shows how simple it is for people to put on an act to fit in.