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Ms. Smith

*Loss of Identity in Lord of the Flies*

Identity is what leads humans to separate from one another. In this world there are leaders, followers, innovators, teachers and many other types of people. In William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, each boy starts off with an innocent, civilized identity. As civilization begins to dissipate, man naturally returns to his primal background, allowing his identity to slip away.

All of the boys became more primitive to a certain extent due to their separation from civilization, but Piggy was the least affected by loss of identity. Piggy's loss of identity began when he was never called by his real name after he asked to not be called Piggy (11). The reader never knows Piggy's real name and the boys did not either. Later on, Piggy knew that the boys were losing their minds and changing, "What are we? Humans? Or animals? Or savages? What's grownups to think? Going off – hunting pigs – letting fires out – and now!" (91). The boys had to take some strange or immoral actions, but the rules of civilization were not there to remind them of who they were. Not only could loss of identity affect the least appreciated members of the group, but also some of the most looked up to, such as Ralph.

Ralph was voted chief and he wore that title proudly, yet he let the title overpower his true identity. Ralph was originally calm and collected, but as the others started to take advantage of him those traits diminished. Once the boys did not follow his directions of keeping the fire lit, he got angry and used the worst language he knew (68). Ralph slowly began to use his power and temper in ways that he would not have before. Although he was only twelve, holding the power of the chief also forced Ralph to grow up and act more responsibly than the other boys on the island. This caused Ralph to possibly forget his age and act older, but at the end of the novel the Naval officer only saw him as a little boy, "The officer inspected the little scarecrow in front of

him. The kid needed a bath, a haircut, a nose-wipe and a good deal of ointment.” (201). During the entire length of the book, Ralph appeared older but the reader was reminded that he was just a young boy. Although loss of identity occurred within those with more power, it also occurred much more drastically within the boys who did not get what they wanted.

Originally a choir leader, Jack was not used to not being in charge, and he let his hunger for power fuel him. When he was not voted as chief, Jack quickly tried to push away his civilized self by creating a mask for hunting that looked nothing like him (63). This mask allowed him to believe that it was not Jack who was killing a pig, but a stranger or a warrior. Jack also covered his and the other hunter’s faces with pig’s blood (135) to separate their civilized personalities from their savage-like personalities. This primitive ritual also allowed the hunters to embrace the joy of the kill as they distanced themselves from civilization. Eventually, Jack became so separated from himself to the point where he would physically beat other boys (159) in order to eliminate his own anger. By the end of the novel Jack was more ‘leader of the savages’ than ‘Jack the choir leader.’ Along with the older boys, most of the littluns managed to lose themselves among the need for survival and they forgot who they were.

Due to the fact that three of the older boys returned to their more primitive nature, most if not all of the others followed and lost who they once were. One of the boys, Percival, who recited his full name and address in the beginning of *Lord of the Flies* was not able to remember those facts to identify himself the end of the novel (201). Throughout the extent of events, Percival had forgotten everything about himself that he had been taught to remember. Jack also had an impact on the boys by turning them into savages and by convincing them that the rules of civilization did not apply, “The chief was sitting there, naked to the waist, his face blocked out in white and red. The tribe lay in a semicircle before him.” (160). Painting their faces allowed the boys to live under a mask and a different identity. Every boy on the island, young or old, allowed their identity to slip away to a certain extent whether it was as little as Piggy or as much as Jack.

Civilization taught these boys how to behave, but the dissipation of it allowed them to return to a more primitive nature and to forget themselves. The boys painted masks, fought each other while the oldest boy was twelve. To a certain degree this shows how much one can change because of their surroundings and circumstances. When people in society are not reminded of what is right or wrong or who they are, they may tend to forget themselves and act in a way that is a polar opposite of their true identity.