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Ms. Smith

The Development of Evil in the Island Boys in Lord of the Flies

How does one become evil? According to William Golding people are inherently evil. Golding feels people will return to their evil instinct when given the opportunity and with the correct circumstances as displayed in his novel Lord of the Flies. Evil will arise eventually no matter what the subjects try to do to stop it. All people are different and think in different ways, leading to disagreement, which further leads to acts of evil against others. Golding's Lord of the Flies displays the onset of evil in boys trapped on an island through ways of peer pressure, fear, and the quest for power.

Peer pressure is used to make the boys commit evil acts on the island. People have influences, whether good or bad that have an effect on how they run their lives. When removed from civilization and with no adult supervision, the young boys stranded on the island resort back to a primal proclivity. They form groups and fall into a group mentality. Although possibly unwanted, Piggy and Ralph succumb to the group mentality when visiting Jack's tribe, "Piggy and Ralph, under the threat of the night sky, found themselves eager to take a place in this demented but partly secure society" (Golding 152). The pressure to do whatever the group was doing was strong that night on the island. The boys were not only pressuring others but were being pressured by each other. Any act the group did was agreed upon in consensus, no matter what the act may be. The act committed that night (the murder of Simon) was surely evil in nature. No one in the group of boys would dare disagree to what they were doing for fear of

displeasing the rest of the group. This, coupled with their loss of civilized identity, caused this horrible travesty to occur. Sometimes, growing up in civilization is not enough to prevent people from committing acts they would never do under normal circumstances. Even adults find themselves doing evil under the pressure of a group. *Can you find support for this?* These people's thoughts become that of a group. They see others doing obscene deeds and think that what they are doing is okay because others are also doing it, without using rational thought. During the war in Iraq, Iraqi prisoners kept in Abu Ghraib were brutally tortured and abused by United States Soldiers. *cite* The situation that allowed for soldiers to perpetrate grew as more and more soldiers witnessed what the other soldiers were doing and imitated their actions. The peer pressure experienced by the offending soldiers must have been of a great magnitude for it is not easy to reverse common sense that the soldiers as civilians would have learned growing up. As Philip Zimbardo, PhD said, these people were "seduced into evil by dehumanizing and labeling others" (What makes good people do bad things?). For the boys on the island and the soldiers at the prison, this evil towards others psychologically became them believing that their acts are for the greater good. Peer pressure and group mentality are triggers for the boys on the island to commit acts they would have never done under normal circumstances. Fear is a method of enforcing peer pressure and can be used to take control of others.

Fear is the main method used in the novel to gain power and to control the other boys. Fear is a powerful emotion with the capability to bring one to their knees or stop any action whatsoever. Jack used fear to hold the boys, especially the 'littluns,' in his grasp of power and turn them to his side. There are many instances where fear was used in the novel. One of these instances is by not providing information, and then providing a source of fear. Wilfred is tied up and beaten for no apparent reason, making the boys fear what could happen if someone were to

actually disobey Jack. The following conversation happens between Roger and Robert about the situation:

‘He’s going to beat up Wilfred.’ ‘What for?’ Robert shook his head doubtfully. ‘I don’t know. He didn’t say. He got angry and made us tie Wilfred up. He’s been’ – he giggled excitedly ‘he’s been tied up for hours, waiting’ – ‘But didn’t the chief say why?’ ‘I never heard him.’ (Golding 159) ✓

The two characters cannot figure out why Jack would do such an act, thus falling into Jack’s trap. This situation creates a sense of paranoia amongst the group. This is the same kind of paranoia many of the “successful” dictators in history have used to take control over their territories. Hitler used the Jews, Kim-Jong-Il, and later Kim-Jong-Un, used the entire Western World, and Jack used the beast as a source of paranoia. The paranoia upset the balance of the follower’s emotions and they became scared (How Dictators Keep Control). These leaders would then portray themselves as the only possible salvation for the followers. The followers would graciously then do anything the leader asked for fear of worse repercussions, ensnaring themselves in the grip of the dictatorial figure. Fear is used to control and maintain a following in the novel as well as in the real world. The quest for power is the reason evil sprouted on the island in the first place, and the reason leaders believe they must go through such drastic measures to get what they want. ✓

The need for power is a strong feeling and is the catalyst for evil in the boys. When people enter into a position of power, there are two ways to handle it. They could either use it for good and to make their nation better, or for bad, as in the case of Jack. At the same time, all characters in this novel are children, and when children do not get their way, the reaction can be

much more severe than an adults'. As Jack would not be elected chief, he would revolt and create his own group, "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 91), this group could be manipulated to do his evil deeds. In fact, most, if not all, evil one could see in the media or in history textbooks is rooted in the need for power. Dictators like Hitler harbored this concept. He wanted to take over Europe with his ideals. A rapists' goal is to take over another person, at an attempt to ensure that they themselves are more powerful than their victim (A Quest for Power: The Cases of Hitler and Stalin). In modern society, the way to get power is by having a high income. The more money one has, the more effect one can have on society, thereby having more power. One can see that the main cause for evil erupting on the island is the human need to control others and have power, just as people yearn to have more money in today's world.

Golding's Lord of the Flies has revealed the decline of proper societal behaviour when in the absence of civilization. He has portrayed this rise of natural evil by writing about the boys using peer pressure and fear to gain control and the quest for power using those methods. People will always have a general need to think intrinsically. This leads to people becoming selfish, only acting if it is beneficial to their lives. This selfish feeling is what drives people to get what they want by any means possible. The means of doing so is often by sinister acts of evil, and those in the way of the evildoer's path could be hurt. In today's society, money runs the world, and the pursuit of power is always present and ever changing. It has now become very difficult for any one person to stand up in the face of evil and fight for what is right. Without money, there is no power, and no hope for any cause to be heard. Until the importance of money is reduced and the fight and pursuit of goodness is raised, evil will continue to hold a reign on society, the world, and the human soul.

Good connections to real world examples!

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