

# Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities

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# Giving into Darkness

**By: McKenna Smack**

It is often said that, we are all born innocent and moral at heart. Contrary to that belief, others feel we are born immoral and impure. Everyone in the world has a different opinion about this topic. Maybe there is no real answer, or maybe both sides are right in some way. In William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, there is a group of civilized school boys who get stranded on an island. Eventually, without civilization, rules, and society, the boys all become savage and life turns into chaos. With the symbols of clothing and the conch shell, William Golding shows everyone is evil and immoral inside, and civilization is the only thing keeping us from giving into the darkness of human nature. Early in the novel, Golding suggests the kids are innocent because they are civilized. A are good symbol to show this is their clothing. At the beginning of the book, everyone is clothed and civilized. The narrator says, "Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks, which bore a long silver badge on the left breast, and each neck was finished off with hambone frill" (19). Jack and these boys, who are as of now civilized, are also fully clothed. When they have all their clothes on, it shows how they are completely civilized. However, when they have rec fewer clothes on, their civilization is also less. The fewer clothes, the less they are civilized and they become more savage.

Whereas, when time goes by near the middle of the book, the clothes that the boys' have on start to become less and less. As there appears to be fewer clothes, there is also less civilization. When the narrator says, "Jack crouched with his face a few inches away from this clue, then started forward into the semi-darkness of the undergrowth. His sandy hair, considerably longer than it had been when they dropped in, was lighter now; and his bare back was a mass of dark freckles and peeling sunburn. A sharpened stick about five feet long trailed from his right hand, and except for a pair of tattered shorts held up by his knife-belt, he was naked" (48). This shows how as the time has gone by, less and less clothes are on particular characters. His hair is longer than it was when they first got there, that means the boys have been in the island for a while now. He having this sharpened stick shows that he is possibly going to hunt. Jack is now one of the few people to have barely any clothes on. This means, now that Jack has little clothes on, he has little civilization. Another example of this idea comes up a little later in the book, when Jack yells at Ralph because he wants to hunt for meat, because Jack now has a persistent feeling to kill, When Jack says, "We want meat." "Well, we haven't got any yet. And we want shelters. Besides, the rest of your hunters came back hours ago. They've been swimming." "I went on," said Jack. "I let them go. I had to go on. I--" He tried to convey the compulsion to track down and kill that was swallowing him up" (51). Ralph is concerned about not having shelter, whilst Jack wants to kill and get meat. Jack is trying to control himself from the feeling of wanting to kill, but as he has fewer civilization, it becomes harder to control his impulses. As the other

example shows how Jack is almost naked, this shows Jack is now having an urge to kill, he didn't have before. Due to having little clothing on, Jack has little civilization left.

Close to the end of *Lord of the Flies*, nearly all the boys are naked, thus meaning they have little, to no civilization left. When Golding writes, "But really, thought Ralph, this was not Bill. This was a savage whose image refused to blend with that ancient picture of a boy in shorts was as and shirt" (183). Ralph is saying that Bill, this boy, was not him at all, because without civilization he has turned into a savage. Bill has now given into the darkness inside of him and the image of the old him cannot blend with the person he has become. The old him was clothed, which meant he was civilized and innocent. Now he is naked with only war paint on his body, with the mindset of a savage.

Another symbol, that shows how at the beginning of the novel the boys were innocent, and at the end they were completely uncivilized is the conch. Piggy says, "S'right. It's a shell! I seen one like that before. On someone's back wall. A conch he called it. He used to blow it and then his mum would come. It's ever so valuable-" (15). In the beginning of *Lord of the Flies*, two boys find a conch shell, later it is used to call assembly meetings. At these meetings, whoever is holding the conch has the right to speak. It symbolizes, civilization, rules, and order. Without the conch, the boys wouldn't have any form of government. The conch, keeps them from talking over each other in the meetings, and helps turn the discussions they have into actions, so they can survive. Another example of the conch and the power it has, is when the boys are starting to split into two groups

and Ralph doesn't know if he should blow the conch, because he is scared the other boys won't come back and listen during the meeting. When Ralph says, "If I blow the conch and they don't come back; then we've had it. We shan't keep the fire going. We'll be like animals. We'll never be rescued" (92). This shows, that the rules people make up for other people, only work when everyone agrees. If no one agrees with the rules made up, then nobody will follow them and the society won't work properly. With the conch, brings law and order, if Ralph doesn't blow it then he still has the power over what happens.

At the end of the novel, the boys have all split into two different groups, one mostly civilized, with Ralph as leader, with about six other people. The other is completely without civilization, with Jack as leader. Everyone else who is not with Ralph, have all given into the darkness inside and are all with Jack. The two groups of boys end up getting into a fight and the most civilized person on the island, Piggy, is dead. When Piggy dies, the conch breaks. When the narrator says, "The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist" (181). This shows when piggy dies, the conch breaks. When the conch breaks, all of the rules made, the order, and all civilization are gone. Piggy was killed by a huge rock, one let loose by one of the other boys, Roger. Roger killed Piggy, which means he is the one who took the law and order away from the island and all of the boys. The moment Roger lets the rock go, it kills Piggy, meaning the laws made, were forever gone.

In the end, William Golding clearly proves we are all born evil inside and society, laws, and rules are the only thing keeping us civilized, by using the two

symbols of clothing and the conch. Some people say, we are born innocent and pure. Others, including William Golding, believe we are born evil and barbaric. The world is a different place than when Golding wrote this novel because, there is no big war going on. He wrote this book during the time of the cold war; however, Golding's message still applies, because what he is saying is, if there was no society and all that was left was these kids who know the rules and know how to be civilized, they would still eventually become uncivilized, through the darkness of human nature. I agree with Golding to some extent. On one hand yes, people may possibly be born evil, but alternatively, maybe its society and rules that lead people to act certain ways as they grow up with civilization. As people grow up they learn how to be civilized and follow the rules, for most of people's childhoods, most of the time they follow the rules. As time goes on, and people keep following the outline society has set for them, it may lead some people down a different path of life and civilization; possibly one that does not fit the mold of how the average person should act throughout their life. With civilization, comes order. With no rules or laws, people give into the darkness inside.