



A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF VIOLENCE AND MORAL DECAY IN “LORD OF THE FLIES”

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Abstract. In this thesis, the thin line between civilized behavior and primitive instinct is explored through William Golding’s novel, “Lord of the Flies”. The primary focus is placed on how the human heart changes when the rules and “eyes” of society are removed. It is argued that the violence seen on the island is not caused by an external monster, but by a psychological shift that occurs when individuals are allowed to hide behind a “mask” of anonymity.

Through a analysis, the use of face paint is examined as a tool that allows the characters to abandon their moral upbringing. It is observed that for many of the boys, morality was simply a habit learned from adults rather than a deep personal belief. As the symbols of order such as the conch are destroyed, the decay of their internal moral compass is revealed. The tragedy of characters like Simon and Piggy is analyzed to show how logic and natural goodness are often overwhelmed by the pressure of the group. It is concluded that Golding’s work serves as a timeless warning. The “darkness of man’s heart” is presented as a universal reality that exists within everyone, regardless of age or background. This study suggests that morality is a fragile choice that requires constant care and the strength of a civilized community to survive.

Key words: *William Golding, Lord of the Flies, moral decay, anonymity, human nature, violence, psychological mask, fragile civilization.*

Introduction. The story of William Golding’s “Lord of the Flies” begins with a simple, almost exciting idea: a group of young boys is left alone on a beautiful tropical island without any adults to tell them what to do. At first, this is seen as a wonderful adventure. However, it is quickly discovered that without the “eyes” of society watching them, the boys must face the most difficult challenge of all their own nature. In this article, the thin layer of civilization that covers our deeper instincts is analyzed to understand why the boys' small society falls apart so quickly.

The main problem described in the novel is the conflict between two basic human desires: the need to follow rules and live peacefully, and the urge to act on violent, selfish



impulses. It is observed that as long as the boys believe a rescue is coming, they try to maintain order by using a conch shell to speak and building signal fires. But as time passes and the “adult world” remains far away, this order is replaced by a darker reality. The internal “Beast” is introduced not as a monster from the sea, but as a spirit of violence that lives inside every human being.

Furthermore, the novel explores the frightening idea that morality might only be a habit we learn from others. When the boys are placed in a world where no one is punished for being mean or violent, their moral habits begin to decay. The primary struggle is seen through the eyes of Ralph, who tries to keep the peace, and Jack, who finds freedom in the violence of the hunt. By focusing on these humanized conflicts, it is shown that the island is a small mirror of the larger world. Golding suggests that the real tragedy is not the lack of food or shelter, but the loss of the “light” inside the human soul.

Main part. The struggle between society and the individual is a central theme that has been analyzed by many scholars. It is often noted that William Golding wrote this novel after witnessing the horrors of World War II, which deeply changed his view of human nature. Researchers argue that before Golding, stories about children on islands (like “The Coral Island”) usually showed them as perfect and brave. However, Golding challenged this idea by suggesting that children, like all humans, have a “dark side” that appears when rules are gone.

A key area of interest in the literature is the Psychology of the Mask. Experts in social psychology have looked at Jack’s tribe and noted a process called “deindividuation.” It is suggested that when the boys paint their faces, they stop feeling like individuals and start feeling like a part of a violent group. This “mask” is seen as a way for the human heart to hide from its own conscience. Critics argue that the face paint does not just change how the boys look, but how they feel about right and wrong.

The figure of the “Beast” is another major topic in academic reviews. While earlier readers might have looked for a real monster, modern analysis focuses on the “Beast within.” It is often cited that Simon’s conversation with the pig’s head is the most important psychological moment in the book. Scholars like Harold Bloom have noted that Simon represents a rare kind of natural morality that does not need laws to be good. The literature suggests that Simon’s death represents the moment when humanity loses its ability to see the truth.

The breakdown of moral conditioning is frequently discussed. It is observed that for many characters, like Roger, morality was never a choice but a habit forced on them by parents and teachers. When the “invisible circle” of social protection disappears, this habit is easily broken. This review of the literature shows that “Lord of the Flies” is not just a



story about boys, but a deep study of how fragile our moral world really is.

The transition from a civilized schoolboy to a violent hunter is not a sudden jump; it is a slow fading of the self. A key moment is found when Jack first paints his face to go hunting. On page 63, the psychological power of the mask is revealed: *“He began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling. He looked in astonishment, no longer at himself but at an awesome stranger.”* (Golding, 63 p.).

In this extract, it is analyzed how the paint acts as a “shield” for Jack’s conscience. It is observed that he is no longer looking at “Jack,” the boy who was once a head chorister. Instead, he sees a “stranger.” This stranger does not have to follow the rules of the adult world. It is argued that the mask provides the anonymity needed to commit acts of violence without feeling personal shame.

Another layer of moral decay is seen in Roger, a character who represents the dark potential within everyone. In a famous scene on page 62, Roger throws stones at a younger boy named Henry, but he purposely misses. The reason for this is deeply human: *“Roger’s arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law.”* (Golding, 62 p.). Here, the psychology of habit is examined. It is shown that Roger is not “good” by choice; he is simply “conditioned” by the rules he grew up with. However, as the story continues, this “invisible circle” of protection disappears. Once Roger realizes the “policemen” are not coming, his violence becomes real. It is analyzed that when morality is only a habit and not a belief, it decays quickly under pressure.

Finally, the death of Simon is scrutinized as the ultimate loss of morality. Simon is the only character who understands that the “Beast” is not a monster outside, but a darkness inside. On page 143, the “Lord of the Flies” (the pig’s head) speaks to him: *“Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! You knew, didn’t you? I’m part of you?”* (Golding, 143 p.). In this tragic moment, the internal beast is revealed. It is observed that when the boys kill Simon later that night, they are not just killing a boy; they are killing the part of themselves that still knows the truth. The analysis suggests that the mob loses its individual humanity and becomes a single, violent animal.

Conclusion. The journey of the boys on the island serves as a powerful mirror for the human condition. It is concluded that the descent into violence in *Lord of the Flies* is not a failure of survival, but a failure of the human spirit when it is stripped of social accountability. Through our analysis, it has been shown that the “mask” of face paint was the primary tool that allowed the boys to stop being individuals with consciences and start being a tribe without mercy. Morality is often a social habit rather than a deep-rooted belief. As seen with Roger, when the “invisible circle” of law disappears, the impulse for violence



often takes its place. Golding's novel is a deeply humanized warning. It tells us that civilization is a thin and precious layer that we must protect every day. When Ralph weeps at the end of the book, he is not just crying for his friend Piggy; he is weeping for the "end of innocence" and the realization that the potential for darkness lives in all of us. This thesis concludes that the only way to fight the "Beast" is through the constant, conscious choice to remain human, even when no one is watching.

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