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How the Pig Ruined Jack's Life

In William Golding's, *Lord of the Flies*, a plane carrying a group of schoolboys crashes on an island. The plane's pilot is killed during the crash and no adults are there to maintain control over the group of boys. Two boys, Jack and Ralph, compete for a role of leadership on the island and Ralph is ultimately elected as leader. Ralph is portrayed throughout the book as a fair, levelheaded leader, while Jack is portrayed as a cruel, oppressive one. This difference between the two boys develops from a few important moments in the book where Jack is humiliated and made to feel like less of a contributor on the island by Ralph. Not only is this a theme explored in the story, but is a prominent one in the outside world as well. *Lord of the Flies* and supporting examples from the outside world show its readers that humiliation drives people to doing extreme things, and these extremes usually involve violence.

In the first chapter of the book, Jack, Simon, and Ralph are trying to hunt a pig to eat. Jack gets ahold of a pig while the other boys crowd around, raises his knife to kill it, and ultimately finds himself unable to go through with the killing. "'You should stick a pig'" said Ralph fiercely. 'Why didn't you?' (31) Ralph seems to be attempting to blame Jack for being unable to kill the pig, or is at least trying to make Jack feel bad for what happened. Ralph views Jack as a competitor for power because the two are arguably the strongest individuals on the island, so he is asserting dominance over Jack by putting him down, attempting to humiliate him. The word "fiercely" indicates that Ralph is talking to Jack with great intensity. The words "why didn't you" reveal that Ralph is trying to convey that it was Jack's responsibility to have killed the pig,

although earlier on in the paragraph it says, “then they all three laughed ashamedly” (31) which shows that Ralph was also ashamed that he was unable to come through in the process of attempting to kill the pig. This leads me to believe that because Ralph was ashamed that he couldn’t help kill the pig and felt bad about himself, he put complete blame on Jack for being unable to kill the pig.

After Ralph said what he did, Jack reacted by saying, “I was going to,” and “I was choosing a place. Next time--!’ He snatched the knife out of the sheath and slammed it into a tree trunk. Next time there would be no mercy. He looked round fiercely, daring them to contradict.”(31) This quote exposes Jack’s feelings of shame, embarrassment, and humiliation. He feels Ralph and the others might not respect him after he accepted full blame for being unable to kill the pig. He seems frustrated and angry with himself in this scene, as words such as “snatched”, “slammed”, “no mercy”, “fiercely”, and “daring” are used. Jack is overcompensating and acting unnecessarily aggressive to show the other boys that he is tough and strong. He is trying to overcome the fact that he was unable to kill the pig by promising more violence in the future. This moment backs up my thesis because Jack’s humiliation over being unable to kill the pig has driven him to feeling like he needs to be violent in order to prove himself.

Later on in the book, Jack becomes a ruthless leader; resorting to stealing, torturing, and killing. These acts of violence all stem out of the very first moment where he felt he wasn’t “man enough” and quickly spiraled out of control to create a situation where he constantly chooses to go to extremes to prove to others that he is the most powerful leader deserving of the most respect. He found that when he showed mercy to the pig, he was blamed for not being able to kill it. He then took his anger out on the sources of his embarrassment (both Ralph and the pig) later on, and received respect and dominance over the others for it. Jack may have had the

power to the obvious eye, but once the situation is looked at more closely, the reader can see that it is actually the other boys that hold the true power. Their reactions alone had the potential to influence Jack's actions and attitude, before it was too late. If Ralph had shown some compassion when Jack was too afraid to kill the pig, it is less likely that Jack would have resorted to abusing the pig later. It is also unlikely that Jack would've gone to such extremes to kill Ralph at the very end of the book if he was not holding his own personal grudge against him.

My thesis does not only relate to *Lord of the Flies*, but to the outside world as well. According to humiliationstudies.org, "Based on these studies of social exclusion and the brain research on social pain, we can hypothesize a pathway along which humiliation progresses toward aggression. In theory, humiliation may trigger social pain activating the alarm system of the brain leading to decreased self-awareness in the form of a deconstructed state, which includes emotional numbness. Decreasing self-awareness leads to a decrease in self-regulation, which leads to an increase in self-defeating behavior, including aggression." A specific example that this website uses is the example of ostracized youth becoming "school shooters". When children are humiliated by others for many years of their lives, they may turn to violence as a last resort as a form of "payback" or a way to attack who or what has made them feel bad about themselves for so long. According to onlinelibrary.com, "Case studies were conducted of 15 school shootings between 1995 and 2001 to examine the possible role of social rejection in school violence. Acute or chronic rejection—in the form of ostracism, bullying, and/or romantic rejection—was present in all but two of the incidents." Rejection and humiliation come out of the same sources very often, so readers can draw parallels between the psychology behind why children become school shooters and the psychology behind why Jack became such a violent leader on the island.

In conclusion, *Lord of the Flies* gives its readers many new perspectives about how the world works and why people do what they do, particularly in terms of attaining power. The theme that is discussed in this essay allows readers of the story to view Jack, his rise to power, and the other boys on the island in a new light. This essay allows readers to see that a leader's actions, beliefs, and thoughts are largely defined by his or her supporters. If the rest of the boys on the island treated Jack with compassion, the great chaos and turmoil that eventually ensued would not have come about, and Jack may not have gone to such extremes to prove himself. Therefore, the violence in this story was a result of the humiliation Jack felt when his capabilities were questioned and he was faced with the daunting task of killing the pig.

Works Cited

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