

Fear is one of the world's greatest motivators. For most of the world's tragedies and bad decisions, the root cause was fear. Fear clouds our judgement. From the LGBTQ hate crimes in Russia to the Salem Witch Trials, fear is the most common denominator in those social disasters. The book *Lord of the Flies* follows this trend, furthering the the notion that fear leads to acts of desperation that would not be considered in a calmer state of mind.

In the sixth chapter of *Lord of the Flies*, the twins, Sam and Eric, are keeping watch by the fire when they spot "the beast". They sit, frozen in terror, before retreating to Ralph and Piggy's tent and abruptly waking them to share their dreadful discovery. As the twins go on to tell the terrifying encounter, Ralph's apprehension level rises. "*Soon the darkness was full of claws, full of the awful unknown and menace.*"(59) Ralph and Piggy have no proof of the existence of the beast other than word of mouth from the twins. However, they almost immediately accept the idea and this quote does a great job of blowing up the transition from wariness to extreme paranoia. In this moment, they start to imagine all the danger and become extremely paranoid about everything around them experiencing fear of something they don't even know for sure exists. Golding's words exemplify how easy irrational ideas can be accepted if one is frightful enough and in enough of a desperate situation that any and everything could be seen as a threat.

In colonial Massachusetts, Puritans were thriving at the edge of the woods. However, the Indigenous people of the land didn't take too kindly to the settlers and vice versa. This created a widespread sense of fear among the settlers. This fear soon turned into hysteria. The Puritans lived by the Bible, and blamed the Devil for all conflict and hardship. It would therefore make sense that the Indigenous people be viewed as the Devil in the eyes of a Puritan. In the

documentary *Mankind: The Story of Us All, Episode 9*, this was said to provide insight on life through the eyes of a Puritan: “*The fascinating thing about the Salem Witch Trials is they occur at a crucial tipping point in the history of America...so if you can imagine sitting in your little living room...every snap of a branch you hear, every rustle of the leaf you hear is either the Devil or the Indians.*” At the time of the witch trials, the Puritans were in a state of severe paranoia. So naturally they are overly suspicious of any strange or hostile activity, for example, women who had what could be considered a bad temper were more likely to be accused because they showed a higher level of hostility than others at that time. Had the pilgrims not been on edge, they would not have been so quick to accept the idea of a witch living among them... then take it upon themselves to *correct* the problem without any concrete evidence other than word of mouth from their equally hysterical peers.

Soon after the beast was first seen, mass hysteria soon spread throughout the entire “tribe”. At this point in the story, they were all having a feast-Ralph has lost almost all of his followers to Jack. Meanwhile, Simon is making his way back down the mountain to share his discovery that the beast is actually a dead parachutist. By the time he gets down, the boys are chanting in a circle excitedly about killing the beast. They spot Simon, but can only make him out to be a dark figure that they immediately assume is the beast. After Simon falls out of the woods the boys immediately attack him. “*The beast [Simon] was on its knees in the center,...it was crying out...something about a body on the hill. The beast struggled forward,...fell over the steep edge of the rock to the sand by the water. At once the crowd surged after it,...leapt onto the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws.*”(176). At this point the fear has manifested into irrational rage. It is even

catching onto Ralph and Piggy who are the few more sensible minds on the island. Their solution to the problem is to eliminate the beast and so they think they are doing the right thing. Often times when people are scared of something and their fear makes them irrational, they think that decisions that they're making are helping to solve the problem but they don't take the time to think, they just act and end up doing more harm than good. For example, when the boys thought they killing the beast and getting rid of what was terrorizing them, however all they did was kill one of their own, who was innocent and was even about to help them.

Once the hysteria and paranoia around witchcraft set in they began to accuse and hold trial for alleged witches. These people usually were women. They were more closely scrutinized because they were believed to be morally weaker than men. A group of people would need to simply complain of being choked, scratched, etc. and then trial would be help. If the woman or man on trial was found to be guilty, they were hanged. In a history channel documentary this was said of the settlers' intentions: *"The chilling part about Salem is that everyone who was involved thought they were doing the right thing...And what happened was that 19 people were put to death by the state because of those good intentions."* The people of Salem were very afraid that evil would come and destroy their civilization, so their solution was to eliminate it or what they suspected was it. In their mind they were doing what was best for the future of Massachussetts. They were too afraid and too hysteric to see the flaws in their actions All they can sse is the immediate solution to their problem and so they take it.

Fear leads to acts of desperation that would not be considered in a calmer state of mind. Fear can cloud our judgement and, if not tended to or controlled, can turn into irrational rage that put the individual and the subject of his or her fear. During the Salem Witch Trials, innocent

people were killed because of mass hysteria caused by attacks of Indians. In *Lord of the Flies*, the went into a fit of violence and rage and tore apart the first thing they saw, which was one of their own but they were too out of control to take a minute and realize what they were doing. I think both of these examples can teach us about how important it is to keep your cool in bad situations and not let fear, or any negative feeling for that matter get the best of you.

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