

Champion of English Section

Senior Division

Name of Winner : Xiao Yu Xuan

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Book Title : Lord of the Flies

Author : William Golding

Publisher : Faber and Faber

Summary: (450 words)

The novel is a bleak satire, narrating the adventure story of a group of schoolboys aged between 6-13. They are forced to land on a distant, primeval island in an air crash as their plane is accidentally hit amid a nuclear war. On this uncivilized island, they need to establish order and cooperate to best allocate the resources for survival.

Stranded on a remote, uninhabited island, the boys are strangers to each other. An athletic boy called Ralph and

a plump boy, nicknamed Piggy, happen to find a conch shell. Ralph blows into the conch shell to assemble the boys. As they are gathered, Ralph is elected as the chief to lead the boys and delegate tasks. The end goal is to be noticed and rescued by ships passing by.

So, the boys use Piggy's glasses to focus sunlight and make a fire to produce noticeable smoke. However, the majority of the boys are idle as the time is ticking away. Ralph's authoritarian prestige deteriorates. Shortly after, the boys are already spreading terrifying rumours of a vicious 'beastie'.

Jack, who stands out saying that he will execute the beast, gains popularity over Ralph. One time, Jack calls over the boys to hunt a wild pig. Many a boy does he summon, including those who are in charge of maintaining the fire. The overlooked fire eventually goes out and can no longer seek attention from the ships. Ralph fiercely confronts Jack but is repelled by the other boys. This exacerbates the divergency between the boys. After

the dispute, Jack forms his own group and leaves the squad led by Ralph.

The boys gradually shift towards Jack as they submit to their animal urges. The children soon forget the plan for rescue, silence the opposing voices and blindly follow Jack to return to primitive men. They raid Ralph's camp and take away Piggy's glasses, the only tool to start a fire. To recapture the glasses, Ralph, Piggy and a pair of twins set off for Jack's tribe. Unfortunately, they trigger a trap set by Roger, which kills Piggy and shatters the conch. Ralph manages to escape but the twins are tortured by Roger until they agree to join Jack's squad. After a long chase, Ralph falls in front of a British naval crew member, who is there to investigate the fire, and finally gets rescued.

Commentary: (722 words)

Are educated boys able to retain their innocence, morality or even humanity when there are no rules, regulations or any bindings? Clearly not. Illustrated in this

satire, we see the release of primitive, animal nature of human beings. Initially, the boys are civilized and sensible. The difficult position helps them build a certain sense of collective will, to cooperate, to unite and to survive. But as time passed, the collective ideas in the boys' mind faded, with concerns of individual interest replacing it. For instance, the misconduct of the boys who deemed hunting playful, who should have looked after the five, causing them to miss the chance of being rescued. There is no deterrence for their misbehaviors. Intuitively, no incentive is in place for the boys to sacrifice for the whole. They will rather enjoy themselves.

The most notable clash in the book is the dispute between Ralph and Jack. Ralph stands for the minorities who will choose to retain the good side of humanity, and to establish a community with order, while Jack stands for the desire of humanity, the extreme ambition to seize power and the leading role. The book provokes the readers' thoughts about the darker aspects of human nature. One of

the most captivating parts of the novel is the transformation of the villain Jack. At the beginning, Jack is described as a disciplined leader of a choir. However, due to the absence of adult supervision and rules binding, Jack's desire for hegemonic control begins to emerge. He challenges Ralph's leadership and forms his own tribe. Within his own squad, he becomes increasingly authoritarian and violent. Jack starts to revel in the thrill of hunting and embracing his savage instincts. The influence of power has corrupted Jack, driving him to abandon the moral principles of a civilized man.

The novel also looks into the fragility of civilization. Though Ralph strives to establish rules and build shelters for the group, the boys are more immersed in their primal desires. The breakdown of communication hinders the cooperation of the group. The boys fail to make a consensus of what the first priority is. They fail to fulfill their responsibility to maintain the signal fire and prioritize immediate gratification. The boys do not foresee

the ultimate goal as the group becomes no longer cohesive.

Speaking of elements that compose the story, fear and rumours play a significant role in the narrative. The boys become consumed by the deeply rooted idea of a beast lurking on the island, which they initially believe to be a physical creature. However, as the story progresses, it becomes evident that the true beast lives within themselves. The beast symbolizes the boys own inner fear and a shadow cast on their teamwork. It is believed that such a narrative distorts the boys' perceptions and drives them to act violently.

Throughout the story, the innocence, morality and humanity of the boys all fade away. In reality, even educated adults can commit immoral wrongdoings, countries can launch inhumane slaughter. From Stone Age to Modern Times, humankind has noticed that our desires need to be restricted and deterred to stop extinction of civilization. That's why law emerges. There are acts, pacts, laws and constitutions. All of these are implemented to set

a bottom line for morality. In the story, the disappearing regulations become an incentive for the boys to commit misconduct, to completely reveal their desires, which is apparently devastating. The rationale of setting up law is simple. As human beings, we enjoy rights of freedom, our behaviors should not be limited unless they are jeopardizing other individuals. That is called the Harm Principle. Obviously, it is the core of a civilized society, the fundamental rule.

Being intriguing and inspiring of its exploration of human's psychological behaviors, this children's literature is certainly worth reading.