

Sample Literary Analysis Essay

The purpose of a literary analysis essay is to closely examine some aspect of a literary work. In this essay, RHS student Moses Martinez analyzes the fears felt by the characters in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Notice that the essay follows the proper MLA format.

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Island of Fear

As humans, we all fear something, and we deal with those fears in ways that match our personalities. In *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding shows the fears of Jack, Ralph, and Piggy and chooses specific ways for each to deal with his fears. Therefore, each of the three boys reacts to fear in his own unique way.

The first boy, Jack, believes that a beast truly does exist. He is afraid and admits it; however, he deals with his fear with aggressive violence. He chooses to hunt for the beast, arm himself with a spear, and practice killing it: "We're strong—we hunt! If there's a beast, we'll hunt it down! We'll close in and beat and beat and beat—!"(91). He also uses the fear of the beast to control and manipulate the other children. Because they fear the beast, they are more likely to listen to Jack and follow his orders. Furthermore, Jack fears Ralph's power over the group and Piggy's rational thought. This is because he knows that both directly conflict with his thirst for absolute power. He responds to these fears in his familiar, violent way. He physically and verbally abuses Piggy, and he argues with Ralph and questions his authority to such an extent that he ends up leaving the group. Jack eventually consolidates his power by forcing the last members of Ralph's group into his tribe and ordering a hunt for Ralph.

Next, the boys' leader, Ralph, has his own fears. However, he deals with them differently than Jack does. At first he does not fear the beast; rather, he fears that the boys will never be rescued due to the group's inability to keep a rescue fire lit. Ralph's fear remains valid through most of the book, yet his efforts to convey the urgency of the fire to the group are thwarted by Jack. At one point, Ralph exclaims, "I'm chief... There's no signal showing. There may be a ship out there. Are you all off your rockers?"(108). This quote shows how he continuously tries to stress the fire and his fear of not being rescued. Ralph also begins to fear the other boys. After Simon dies, he realizes just what the boys are capable of doing, especially under Jack's influence. He tries to conquer this fear by looking to Piggy for rationalization and for guidance as to how best lead on the island.

The last boy, Piggy, fears Jack—and with good reason. Jack takes his anger out on Piggy, who stands in stark contrast to Jack's character: "I'm scared of him... but if you stand out of the way he'd hurt the next thing. And that's me" (93). Piggy handles this fear by avoiding Jack and remaining loyal to Ralph. Another fear that Piggy experiences is a fear of being ignored or shunned by others. Above all else, Piggy wants acknowledgement of his opinions and thoughts, as proven by his statement: "I got the conch... You let me speak!"(42). This quote shows Piggy's constant efforts to be recognized by the others and to make them pay attention to him. Throughout most of the novel, Piggy seeks refuge from his fears in both Ralph and the conch.

In conclusion, William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* exposes the reader to three characters with different personalities and fears: Jack, Ralph, and Piggy. Each of the boys try to conquer his fear in a different way. Fear is a natural emotion encountered by everyone, but each person deals with it in a way that best fits his/her individual personality.