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Sociology
Homework

Lord of the Flies

Lord of the Flies is a film, based on a book written by William Golding. It begins during an evacuation at the time of war. We are shown two schools, a state school and a private choir school. The choir school is more upper class and posh, whereas the state school is middle class. We are shown that the plane crashes after being hit by lightning in an electric storm. It lands near the south pacific.

After we are shown the images of the plane crash, we are shown the first two characters in the film, Ralf and Piggy, who both appear lost and slightly distressed. Piggy introduces himself and begins to talk to Ralf about himself. He asks if there are any grown ups, clearly being used to the authority and guidance of adults in society. Ralf then asks Piggy if he is going to join him for a swim in the lagoon. Piggy says that his auntie wouldn't let him on 'account of his asthma', showing that he still respects the guidance of adults. They find a shell on the beach and refer to it as a 'conch', a name that they have learned in previous society. This conch later becomes a symbol of authority to prevent argument. Ralf blows the conch to attract attention, so that he and piggy can begin to restore social order.

The conch gives the desired effect, a young boy approaches, then more children begin to appear, including a group of choir singers, being led by Jack, a young boy giving orders to the other choir members. The boys begin to introduce themselves, many in the way that they have been taught through secondary

socialisation, Piggy asks one boy for his name, to which he responds 'Percival Reams Maddison' this boy also gives his home address and telephone number, as he has been brought up with this being acceptable social behavior. Piggy pipes up, asking that a name be repeated. But Jack says, "You're talking too much. Shut up, Fatty." There is laughter all around; he is singled out because he is different. Ralph says, "He's not Fatty, his real name's Piggy." Ralph means well but further embarrasses Piggy; there is more laughter, louder this time.

To maintain social order, the children decide to select a leader using democracy, something which they have also learned during secondary socialisation. They vote to give somebody the higher status as leader. All of the choir boys vote Jack as they are clearly used to him as their leader and he is an authoritative character. All of the other boys vote for Ralph, selecting him as 'chief' of the island.

The boys go on an 'expedition' to find out if the island is completely uninhabited and to see if it really is an island or if there is land attached further on. Most of the older boys are selected to go on the expedition, but Jack tells Piggy that he can't come. Ralph tries to resolve this situation by telling Piggy that they need him to look after the younger children.

The children play about on their expedition. They may be acting like adults, but they are still children, going along with their childlike instincts to play. Eventually they come to a high point on the island and can clearly see that it is an uninhabited island.

A group of the boys become the hunters; they set out to find food for the children, but cannot bring themselves to kill their find – a pig. This is because it is against the norm and would probably be seen as deviant in the society that they have been brought up in. To them, this seems inhumane and wrong.

When the boys return to the rest of the children, they explain that it is an island. Ralf is reassuring about the situation, telling the others that it will be alright. Jack uses ethnocentricity to bring up the mood of the children saying "We're British and the British are best at everything!" You can tell at this point that Jack wants to be leader. Piggy is more negative about the situation, claiming to have seen a beast on the island. Some of the other boys begin to fear this 'beast'. Piggy states that nobody knows where they are, but the others take no notice of this intelligent contribution.

The boys start a fire and the choir boys promise to keep the fire going to attract attention in case of the chance of rescue. ▲At this point, the boys have begun to look far more scruffy, they are wearing torn clothes, no tops and carrying wooden spears, rather than the neat, thick layers of uniform that they began with. They begin to build huts, but as they do so, they still play about in the sea because of their child instincts.

▲After a few days on the island, we can clearly see that their behaviour has changed dramatically, their faces covered in mud used as tribal paint, their clothes scruffy and dirty, carrying spears and hunting animals. Now they can bring themselves to kill the pig and even chant 'kill the pig, slit its throat, batter it' as they carry it back to the huts on a spear.

When the hunters reach the huts, Ralf and Piggy are both angry with them for letting the fire go out because of a passing plane. If there was fire, it may have caught the attention of the aircraft and they could have been rescued. When Piggy tells them off, Jack hits him and Piggy's glasses break. Piggy is clearly very hurt by this. The other boys laugh at this while eating like savages, showing their changes in behaviour and forgetting manners that would have been important in British society. Piggy is hungry with no food. Jack tells him that he hasn't done as much work as the

others. He says that he has done as much work as Simon and Jack and therefore deserves as much food. Simon gives Piggy his food and Jack, almost unwillingly, gives his. After this, the other boys continue to chant "Kill the pig, slit its throat, batter it!" This further upsets Piggy. At this point, an assembly is called while the boys continue to chant in a humiliating fashion.

During the assembly, a young boy once again brings up the apparent sightings of 'the beast'. Many of the young boys begin to talk about this, talking of ghosts and the beast coming out of the sea. We then see a distant large object coming towards them from far out in the sea. Simon says 'maybe there is a beast' and the boys begin to ponder the idea of ghosts. Piggy says that there is no supernatural beast, that there are scientific explanations. He is being reassuring and making intelligent contributions to the discussion. Simon is also reassuring, claiming that he doesn't believe in the beast. Jack wants power and says that Piggy is making up stories, like his 'teacher' implying that Ralf also makes up stories.

The twins, Sam and Eric, explore the island and whilst doing so, they find what they think to be 'the beast'. They run away screaming, claiming to have seen 'the beast'. Sam and Eric run back to the others and tell them of their findings. The older boys decide to go in search of 'the beast' while Piggy stays at the main camp and takes the role as teacher, teaching the young ones the history of the name Cambridge. The boys come to find what they think is 'the beast' and run away screaming, without seeing that it is not a beast, but the pilot, hanging from a tree by his parachute.

Later on that evening, Jack tries to turn the others against Ralf and leaves the group to be his own leader. Others begin to join him gradually and they attack the area of the island at night where Ralf and the others are. They are wearing muddled face

paint all over, like a separate tribe. They attempt to steal fire wood and in the process create a frenzy. In this time, Simon has gone in search of the beast which he claims to not believe in. This turns out to be a disastrous mistake, as the others mistake him for 'the beast' when he is crawling through the bushes. He is murdered by his peers.

The next day, Jack asks who of the boys are left. Piggy says that only the two of them and some of the younger boys are still on their part of the island, the others have all joined Jack. This shows us that they have created a sub-culture on the island with common values and similar behaviour patterns. Ralf talks to Piggy about the night before, saying that it was murder. Piggy denies this and can't even bring himself to say the word murder. This is clearly out of regret. It is because he knows that this is deviant and that normality has almost vanished on the island.

When the boys steal Piggy's glasses in an attack, he says that he can't see without them. He and Ralf go to the other part of the island in an attempt to retrieve his glasses. Ralf tries to reason with the others. He tries to inform them of what wrong they are doing, but the boys don't take him seriously. Some of the boys on the top of the cliff decide to push off a large boulder, which lands on Piggy and kills him. This is murder and shows that much of their norms and values have changed during their time away from society.

Eventually, the others chase Ralf through clouds of smoke caused by a fire, which turns out to have attracted the attention of members of the Navy, who come to rescue the boys by boat. Ralf cries at this, clearly glad that he is to get away from this disaster and return to the society that he is used to.

The film shows us how peoples' values can change over a short period of time, their views of things and what they have learned

from secondary and even primary socialisation can be altered by changes in their surroundings, culture and lack of authority. They create cultural diversity in having different values to their previous society e.g. the killing of the pig, which was previously thought of as deviant and wrong, became a norm of the children on the island. The film benefits me as a Sociology student, it shows me that instincts are something that can be learned and changed over a short period of time and that people will often follow the stronger leader rather than the leader with good intentions.