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Perfect humans are imperfect

Leaders are those who can provide assurance to their subjects and take responsibility for their actions. Many thrive for this rewarding position, however, humans are made up of mistakes. William Golding explores the flaws of humans and how it disturbs one’s performance as a leader. The *Lord of the Flies* suggests perfect leaders are non-existent because humans are imperfect.

Ralph is an important character who is elected leader through a democratic process and, therefore, granted authority over the boys. As appointed leader, he emphasizes that “fire is the most important thing on the island” [86] as well as building shelters. He focuses on getting rescued for everyone’s sake and is concerned for their well-being. In addition, Ralph encourages freedom of speech, granting each boy the right to speak when given the conch to avoid “everybody talking at once” (31). His desire for equality is an admirable trait for a good leader. However, even Ralph has his flaws, shown in different situations. An example includes his savage nature gradually surfacing as he is exposed to evil influences. As stated earlier, Ralph focuses his priorities on a fire and shelter, unlike Jack who constantly wants to hunt. He shows signs of disapproval for Jack’s desire, claiming “smoke is more important than [a] pig” (86).  However, as the story progresses, Ralph is tempted with meat and accepts it with gratitude as “his past diet of fruit and nuts... [gives] him too little resistance” (78). He gradually allows selfish temptations to influence his values and actions. Finally, Ralph surrenders to evil as he partakes in a hunt and wounds a boar, bragging ecstatically that he “hit him… wounded him… and felt that hunting was good after all” (124). This contradicts his previously negative viewpoint on hunting. In addition, the savage nature in Ralph can be seen in the boys’ tribal-like “game” as they pretend to hunt a pig, who is Robert, chanting a disturbing song. However, the boys take it too far and begin to hurt him despite his cries of pain. Ralph displays signs of brutality as he “fight[s] to get near [Robert]... the desire to... hurt [him being] over-mastering” (125). When the opportunity for evil presents itself, he is overwhelmed by his desires and succumbs to the evil. This signifies that even the most pure of hearts have blemishes. Ralph is a good leader who actively supports and understands his peers, however, his flaws and evil temptations become overpowering when he is put to the test, deteriorating the effective of his leadership.

Another notable leader is Jack, a strongly opinionated individual who possesses certain desirable traits of a good leader. He displays certainty in himself as he confidently claims he “ought to be chief” (18), showing he has potential to be a strong authoritative figure. He is able to articulate his thoughts clearly and shares his opinions without hesitation. In addition, Jack is able to influence and keep his subjects under control; however, his methods are cruel, revealing the evil inside him. He uses fear to control others and convinces them to associate this fear with Ralph and Piggy. He claims they will “try to spoil things… then... the beast might try to come in” (177). His claim sends “shudder[s] and mutters] of agreement” (177) throughout the boys. His use of fear allows him to manipulate others and forces them to be submissive and not question his authority. Such methods are used in a dictatorship. Jack is a prominent representation of corruption as he holds many characteristics of a dictator. He has gained authority by eliminating Ralph and Piggy, who represent democracy and intelligence, and has replaced it with fear and irrational thinking. Also, Jack is known for his violent and forceful nature, one of the hallmarks of his personality. When he feels threatened or embarrassed, he turns to violence as a way to redeem himself. He targets Piggy multiple times as he “[sticks] his fist into Piggy’s stomach... [then] smack[s] Piggy’s head” (75) after Ralph confronts him about letting the fire out and losing their chance to be rescued. Jack’s endless actions of savagery emphasize the effects of human flaws.

        Lastly, Piggy displays excellent potential to be a respected leader. He shares brilliant ideas with the group such as building shelters and approaches problems in an intelligent manner. He cares for the littluns who are often looked down upon, and shows concern for their safety after one of them has gone missing after the fire. He also suggests figuring out all the boys’ names “and making a list” (5). Piggy shows responsibility and leadership through intelligence and compassion. However, despite his rational thinking, he is ridiculed and often ignored due to his appearance, enduring verbal abuse with comments such as “‘shut up, Fatty’” (17) and other similar references to his weight.  The criticism he faces challenges his leadership skills as he is unable to articulate words effectively and cowers behind Ralph for security and comfort. Piggy has difficulty standing up for himself, the rules, and his moral beliefs. His lack of confidence and communication skills affects his performance as a leader. This can be seen in his constant concern of a lack of adults as he constantly asks, “where’s the man with the megaphone? [...] ‘aren’t there any grown-ups at all? […] ‘that pilot’” (2). Due to his weak abilities to present himself with certainty, he is unable to sustain the boys’ attention and is often cut off by insults and other remarks, his only defending argument being, “I’ve got the conch!’”(97). He heavily relies on the conch and authoritative figures he deems safe and reliable. Although Piggy demonstrates thorough intelligence and rationality, he is weak and therefore lacks leadership qualities.

William Golding explores the ideal characteristics of a good leader however proves that human flaws influences the effectiveness of one’s leadership quality. He portrays human flaws in many different forms and shows how it influences one’s performance as a leader and as an individual. The characters in the novel face many conflicts challenging their personal values and leadership skills. The imperfections of humans cannot be erased, however, one’s determination to rise above their flaws is mightier than one who does not.