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Jack's Effect on the Boys

Lord of the Flies by William Golding aptly demonstrates how a change in one character's identity can create a change in another character's identity. As the story unfolded, so did Jack, the antagonist's true identity. At the beginning of the book, he controlled the choirboys with dictatorial authority. He met the main protagonist, Ralph, and became his friend. After Ralph became the chief, he granted Jack the title of "hunter," along with his choir. Jack's savage rampage begins with this title.

At this point, Jack's had not yet developed the ability to take serious physical actions. When Jack discovered a pig entangled in vines, he tried to kill the pig but his emotional growth did not yet allow him to end a life. Page 31 holds a significant source for this fact; "They knew very well why he hadn't: because of the enormity of the knife descending into living flesh; because of the unbearable blood." After that event, though, he slowly became more uncivilized and inhumane. After this point in the book, Jack became prepared, emotionally and physically, to kill.

Once Jack's barbaric identity started to unravel, the other boys began to transform along with him. One of Jack's hunters, Roger, comes about as a great example of this. On page 62, when Roger first wanted to hurt one of the boys, Henry, he threw a rock at him, but instead of hitting, he, "...threw it to miss." He continues to throw the rocks at Henry, "Yet there was a space

round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw.” Afraid of the “punishment” he would get from his old civilization if he ended up hitting and hurting Henry, Roger would not hit him. Later, though, after Ralph’s impeachment and the boys elected Jack as the new chief, Roger no longer felt constrained by his old civilization, allowing him to hurt and causing him to kill one of the boys, Piggy. Roger’s identity formed into that of a killer when, and only when, Jack let his inner savagery escape.

Jack affected the other boys the same way he affected Roger. The boys all thought most highly of Ralph’s judgment during his chieftainship. When Jack became chief, though, the boys all followed Jack’s orders, abandoning equality and civility, and accepting Ralph as the enemy.

Jack’s manipulation, his sociopathic tendencies, and the fact that he allowed himself to revert to a primal version of himself all contributed the rest of the boys’ savagery. If Jack had listened to Piggy’s just desire for rules and order, then, perhaps, no one would have killed, and no one would have died.