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Jack's Shifting Identity

“Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self.” B. R. Ambedkar. An identity can develop over time, but almost always as a reaction to experiences. Jack, goes through major transitions as the events on the island take place. Over the course of the book Jack morphs into everything from a monster to a little boy. The complex identity of Jack shifts over time.

The story begins with Jack being rather innocent and insecure even though he was granted leadership of the choir boys. This leadership role almost automatically gives his character a sense of control and superiority, even though the other boys don't necessarily see him the same way. He begins to embrace this new identity as he takes charge of the hunter group. He shifts from a naive young boy reluctant to kill for food to a manipulative and controlling leader. As master of the hunters, Jack's character shifts to a bloodthirsty animal.

Jack's primitive side takes over as he begins to embrace killing. The killing goes beyond finding sustenance; he kills for pure fun and pleasure. He begins to actually enjoy the killing and appears to lose himself in a trance-like state as he hunts to kill. When asked if any of the boys want to join with him in a group and none respond, Jack runs off in tears. “ ‘All right then.’ He

laid the conch with great care in the grass at his feet. The humiliating tears were running from the corner of each eye...He leapt down from the platform and ran along the beach, paying no heed to the steady fall of his tears;"Pg.127. This is symbolic of Jack losing the last of his humanity and the thirst for blood takes him over completely. Jack then uses his blood lust to attract other boys to his side. The boys fear the beast on the island, and because Jack always has food and is not afraid to kill, the other boys naturally gravitate to his provisions and protection. This depravity escalates to the point that when Simon is killed, Jack thinks Simon is the beast.

Simon's death is the pinnacle of Jack's killing, however he retains control of the rest of the boys on the island. As his thirst for blood dissipates, he again shifts to become an assertive and confident leader. He uses this new found confidence to organize the manhunt for Ralph. This final hunt is successful until the island catches fire and the remaining boys run for their lives.

The end of the book again shows a shift in Jack's identity. As the boys are rescued, Ralph steps up as the leader and Jack purposely stands back. "A little boy who wore the remains of an extraordinary black cap on his red hair and who carried the remains of a pair of spectacles at his waist, started forward, then changed his mind and stood still." Pg.201. Is this Jack realizing he doesn't want to be accountable for the damage done, or is his humanity returning when faced with adults?

All these shifts in Jack's identity were his way of coping with their situation. Jack's actions changed the other boys, not the other way around. Jack was not just a drop of water that loses its identity, he acted independently and for his own benefit.