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The Symbolism and Archetypes of the Conch vs. the Beast

In the novel, *Lord of the Flies* two inanimate objects take on extremely important identities and act as symbols and archetypes that prove quite crucial to the plot of the story. The conch symbolizes order and peace and takes on the identity of the archetype the Helper, an archetype often found in nature with the ability to aid the protagonist. Whereas the beast's identity represents fear and evil, while taking on the archetype of the Witch, symbolizing manipulative evil. Although these identities driven from symbols and archetypes may seem small at first; when one views the grand scheme of the novel they prove quite important.

The conch's identity symbolizes order, peace, and the archetype of the Helper. This statement proves true for various reasons, for instance, Piggy always protects the conch. Piggy and the conch act conjointly because Piggy needs rules to survive and the conch acts as the foundation of the rules. The conch's identity fits the archetype of the Helper in various circumstances. The most obvious way that the conch fits into this archetype comes primarily from the conch deriving from nature. Also, the conch frequently aids Ralph, the protagonist of the novel, to ensure that he will succeed throughout the story, and as a matter of fact, when the conch begins to lose power, Ralph does as well. The following excerpt from the novel proves that when Piggy dies along with the shattering of the conch, it represents loss of all order, and takes away the last of Ralph's power as chief, showcasing the need for order, peace, and the

Helper archetype. “ ‘See? See? That’s what you’ll get! I meant that! There isn’t a tribe for you anymore! The conch is gone---’ He ran forward, stooping. ‘i’m chief!’ ” (p.181). This quote, coming directly after the destruction of Piggy and the conch shows just how much Ralph needs the conch’s help to succeed over Jack’s reign of terror. This proves true because right after the destruction occurs, Jack proceeds to hurl a spear at Ralph and chaos endures showing the cruciality of the conch to the boy’s society, and how Ralph barely functions without the assistance of the conch.

On a similar note, the beast’s identity takes on the archetype of the Witch while simultaneously exhibiting fear and evil. The archetype of the Witch represents manipulation through evil, something that the beast showcases frequently. At first, the boys on the island live almost harmoniously until their fear becomes manipulated and deceived resulting in belief of a beast. In one early scene in the novel, Ralph continuously claims that no beast exists, due to his ever growing fear that a beast does indeed exist. However, without knowing it, Ralph’s continuous denial plants the thought of the beast’s identity into the boys’ heads leading to the beast taking over the majority of the other boys’ actions manipulating them into lives of savagery and evil. This quotation from the novel proves that, as the novel advances and the boys become more violent the driving force of their violence caused by the beast evilly manipulating their fear.

“Besides, it’s---” “---dark. All right then.” Eric squatted back and watched Sam make up the fire.... The tent fell inwards and flung a wide circle of light over the mountaintop. “Sam---” “Huh?” “Sam! Sam!” Sam looked at Eric irritably. The intensity of Eric’s gaze made the direction in which he looked terrible, for Sam had his back to it. He scrambled round the fire, squatted by Eric, and looked to

see. They became motionless... “Ralph! Wake up!” The leaves were roaring like the sea. “What's the matter?” “We saw---” “---the beast---” (p. 97, 98).

This passage from the novel showcases Samineric with the thought of the identity of the beast fresh in their minds due to a recent assembly where a discussion about the beast took place. This causes the boys to react extremely frightened even though they saw a dead paratrooper not the beast. The boys' fear manipulated them to the belief that they saw the beast.

The identities of the conch and the beast uphold great importance to the plot of the novel. Both of entities show similarities in which they aid the duration of the plot, while simultaneously causing differences depending on how they affect the other characters of the story. One of the largest similarities between the conch and the beast that the reader recognizes comes from their influence on the story. For instance, without the identity of conch, no civilization would exist and not one coherent thought would come out of any of the boys' mouths without the conch forcing them to listen to each other. Likewise, without the beast, the opinions shared between Jack and Ralph would present themselves quite similar and fighting would occur less frequently because the driving force of the boys' actions would include little to no fear. This would lead to a less dangerous power struggle between Jack and Ralph. The ways in which the beast and the conch differ prove more obvious to the reader than their similarities. Meaning, whenever Ralph uses the conch to carry out an action he usually benefits from the conch's assistance creating something helpful for the characters. Whereas when the beast becomes pulled into a situation, the result usually causes havoc on the characters present. An extreme example of the beast's havoc ends up costing Simon his life due to the way it manipulated the other boys' fear into thinking that Simon's figure and the beast momentarily blended into the same identity. The beast and the

conch also cause the largest differing opinions between characters. For instance, Ralph believes that the conch proves necessary to the civilization on the island, while Jack thinks that the conch should hold no importance leading to many arguments between the two boys, which eventually causes the altercation between Jack's tribe and Ralph at the end of the novel. As expressed, the ways that the conch and the beast prove similar and how they differ influence the plot of the novel greatly.

Thus, without the conch and the beast in the storyline of the novel, some of the more drastic pieces of the plot would not exist. While each entity represents a different archetype and both symbolize something of great importance, they both prove necessary for what they cause the characters to achieve throughout the book. The similarities and differences caused by the conch and the beast in the novel also prove that the two entities actually parallel in how they affect the plot of the novel. Therefore, without the identities of the conch and the beast there to represent archetypes, symbolize deeper meanings, and push the plot along the story, the novel *Lord of the Flies* would become quite a divergent tale.