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Human Nature and Lord of the Flies

William Golding creates tension in Lord of the Flies and conveys a message through it. A great example of this tension lies between Ralph and Jack. Events involving this include ones such as Ralph and Jack arguing on how to build civilization, their competition for power, and their feud at the end of the story clearly show this tension between the two. He conveys the message that well-behaved people will revert to animalistic behavior when the rule of law is dissolved. In Lord of the Flies, through the tensions of the boys with differing views of civilization, competition for power, and savagery, Golding conveys that well-behaved people will revert to animalistic behavior when the rule of law is dissolved.

Since the boys end up stranded on the island, they must form civilization to survive. However, Ralph and Jack have differing views on how to do so. Ralph believes that structure, rules, and maintaining a signal fire are the greatest priorities while Jack believes hunting, violence, and fun should be prioritized. In Chapter 2, Ralph calls a meeting wanting to keep order as he discusses the fire. However, as soon as he mentions it, Jack leads all of the children on an exciting rampage up the mountain. Also in Chapter 6, Ralph is angry because he wants to go on looking for the beast, but Jack is encouraging the others to “Roll rocks and have fun.”

Ralph and Jack are constantly competing for power over everyone. Jack's use of violence and savagery almost completely overrules Ralph's civilized society that he has tried to create among the boys. When it came time for choosing the leader, Jack didn't see competition as he knew he would win. However, Ralph was chosen. He didn't easily accept defeat. In Chapter 8, Jack erupts into an angry diatribe and rails against Ralph and his poor leadership skills. He insists that Ralph is a coward and that he would be a better leader. He ends up leaving the group, and hours later many of the boys leave Ralph's group to join Jack's. Soon the two tribes will engage in violent conflict with each other.

By the end of the story, Ralph and Jack have had just about enough with each other. So much tension has been built up, that it visibly begins to erupt. In Chapter 12, Jack sends his group to hunt down Ralph to burn him, spear him, and crush him with a boulder. They try to hunt him down by sending a boulder toward his hiding place and then smoking him out by lighting the island on fire. This is an example of the many actions that show the savagery within the boys, which continues to convey Golding's message.

Throughout the story, William Golding conveys the message that well-behaved people will revert to animalistic behavior when the rule of law is dissolved. He conveys it by creating tension between the boys, most notably Ralph and Jack. Examples of this tension include Ralph and Jack arguing over how they should build civilization, their competition for power, and even Jack having his group hunt down Ralph to burn him. He successfully conveys his message through the savagery of the boys and shows why it is important to have rules and laws within society.