

Lesson 10: Which Is Better?

☐ Getting Started

In the first half of the novel, when Ralph is at the height of his influence, he struggles to get the boys to cooperate on projects including building shelters, establishing water systems, and designating waste systems to keep the food clean and safe. By Chapter 5, he calls an assembly to let the other boys know he is fed up with the general lack of interest in these important tasks:

"We were going to have water brought from the stream and left in those coconut shells under fresh leaves. So it was, for a few days. Now there's no water. The shells are dry. ... Then there's huts. Shelters. ... That shelter might fall down if the rain comes back. We'll need those shelters then. There's another thing. We chose those rocks right along beyond the bathing pool as a lavatory. That was sensible too. The tide cleans the place up. You littluns know about that. ... Now people seem to use anywhere. Even near the shelters and the platform. You littluns, when you're getting fruit; if you're taken short ... you keep away from the fruit. That's dirty! ... That's really dirty. If you're taken short you go right along the beach to the rocks. See? ... This place is getting dirty."

Ralph hopes to build a civilization on the island, and he fails. Jack allows and encourages destructive behavior rather than constructive efforts. How much pain and destruction will the boys tolerate before they challenge Jack's power? How many boys will die as Jack uses violence to maintain his influence?

Stuff You Need

- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
- journal

Ideas to Think About

- How does a society maintain order? Are laws necessary?
- What are the implications for contemporary society?
- How are violence, power, and control related?

Things to Know

- Complex societies are called **civilizations** by historians. Civilizations have common traits such as literacy, skilled trades, social structure, and dense groups or settlements. The characteristics of civilizations -- which include highly developed government, science, and culture -- do not guarantee good behavior.
- **Savagery** is the state of being untamed and often fierce. It is often considered to be the opposite of civilized. However, savagery can occur within civilizations.

Activities

☐ Activity 1: Developing Civilizations

Ancient Romans used to gather in the thousands to watch people and animals tear each other apart. The Colosseum — the Roman amphitheater where the brutal shows took place — is still standing and is one of the most popular tourist sites on the planet. It reminds us that a community skilled enough to erect a structure able to withstand nearly 2,000 years of wear and tear was savage enough to cheer and laugh as fellow human beings came to a gruesome end.

If you ask people what they think of when they think of Rome, the ruthless violence in the Colosseum may be a common response. However, if you ask historians or engineers about Rome, they may think of the aqueducts. Aqueducts are structures that move water from one place to another for drinking water, bathing and cleaning, watering crops, and more. Romans thrived in no small part because of their focus on constructing aqueducts. Roman aqueducts were impressive engineering accomplishments. Using only the power of gravity, the aqueducts moved water from sources up to 50 miles away through a system of underground and above-ground structures to the city of Rome.

Roman Colosseum, Roman aqueduct



The aqueducts are just one example of the level of education, imagination, and skill displayed during the Roman Empire. The Romans show us that humans are capable both of great achievements and terrible acts at the same time. Complex societies like

Rome, called **civilizations** by historians, have common traits: reading and writing, skilled trades, and a social structure that organizes how the people live. People in civilizations tend to live together in dense groups or settlements. The characteristics of civilizations — which include highly developed government, science, and culture — do not guarantee good behavior.

Definitions of **savagery** usually include the idea of being "uncivilized," or untamed and fierce. However, Rome has shown us that the same human beings can display either civilized or uncivilized behavior. In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding makes us think about what pushes people from the civilized to the savage.

The boys are coming from an organized, civilized society and are thrown into a world without any of the constructs of civilization: there are no laws or authorities who can enforce rules, there are no buildings or bathrooms, and there are no books or doctors to consult to determine which plants and animals are safe to eat.

Immediately before Piggy is murdered, he asks the boys to make direct comparisons between civilization and savagery: "Piggy lifted the white, magic shell. 'Which is better — to be ... like you are, or to be sensible like Ralph is?' A great clamor rose among the savages. Piggy shouted again. 'Which is better — to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?'"

Piggy's death is an obvious step further into chaos for the boys because it is a gruesome murder. But it is also symbolic, because it silences Piggy's point of view. Piggy, like Simon, is killed while trying to reason with the other boys. Consider what you have learned about early civilizations in history classes and complete the "Developing Civilization" activity page. If you haven't completed coursework on early civilizations, or if you'd just like to review the topic, the following video can supply more information.



Crash Course World History

www.beyondthepage.com/link/5096/

Watch the first two and a half minutes of this video to learn more about how "civilization" is defined.

☐ **Activity 2: Journal Entry**

Write a one-page journal entry from the point of view of your chosen character. The character should analyze aspects of Jack's leadership. How does it contrast with Ralph's attempts at leadership? How does it contrast with the civilized aspects of the boys' lives before the island? Recall that the boys come from a developed and highly regimented British society.

If the character you choose to write for is no longer living, you can still write from his point of view. A deceased narrator is a common literary strategy. What would he have thought about what happened after his death?

Wrapping Up

Ralph proves to be an ineffective and failed leader. Two voices of reason and civilization — Simon and Piggy — are silenced through execution. Now the question is whether Ralph will survive. As you read the final chapter of the novel, consider the failures of civilization Golding saw during his lifetime, and draw parallels between the boys and what they represented to Golding.

During the next lesson, you'll watch a movie adaptation of the novel. Which scenes from the book do you believe must be included in an adaptation so that it represents a meaningful interpretation of the story?

Homework

You will read Chapter 12 for homework. Continue to add to the STEAL character pages as you read.

☐ Reading and Questions

Read Chapter 12 and then answer the following questions. Add to the STEAL character pages as you read or after you have completed the reading.

1. What do Samneric tell Ralph that Jack and Roger planned to do?

2. Why do you think Sam and Eric refuse to join Ralph?

3. What does Ralph run into when he is trying to escape the fire?

4. Why does the ship come to the island?

Developing Civilization



Directions: The boys face many of the same challenges ancient peoples and early civilizations faced. However, the boys face additional psychological challenges because they come from a modern civilization. How are the boys' lives and mindsets similar to and different from the lives of peoples in early human civilizations? Record your thoughts in the chart below.

Similar to Early Peoples

Different from Early Peoples

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📖 Things to Know

- Complex societies are called **civilizations** by historians. Civilizations have common traits such as literacy, skilled trades, social structure, and dense groups or settlements. The characteristics of civilizations -- which include highly developed government, science, and culture -- do not guarantee good behavior.
- **Savagery** is the state of being untamed and often fierce. It is often considered to be the opposite of civilized. However, savagery can occur within civilizations.

🕒 Skills

- Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme. (LA)
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (LA)
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. (LA)

Introducing the Lesson

Students are reminded of the importance of clean water and safe food sources to civilization and are prompted to recall that Ralph is unable to inspire general cooperation for improvement projects even when he is at the height of his influence. However, it is important to note that history has taught us that the drive and capability to build infrastructure associated with civilized societies is not mutually exclusive or inconsistent with the perverse notion of torture as entertainment. Both were present in ancient Rome. To demonstrate this, students learn what the aqueducts were and are also asked to consider what took place in the Colosseum.

Activities

Activity 1: Developing Civilizations

Students are asked to consider what they have learned about early civilizations in history classes and to fill out a chart to compare and contrast the lives and mentalities of ancient peoples with the lives and mentalities of the boys on the island.

For students who need more information on early civilizations, a link to a video is included that describes what makes a civilization. The video addresses both the external aspects of a civilization (agriculture,

bathing, buildings) and the internal aspects of civilization (a limited tolerance for violence, the expectation of cooperation among people.)

Answers will vary but may include the following points:

Similar to Early Peoples

- food scarcity: the boys must be hunter/gatherers.
- shelters: they must make covering from the elements.
- infrastructure: there are no developed water systems.
- science and technology: the boys have no electricity for heat, light, and cooking.
- medicine and other expertise: there are no hospitals to go to if the boys are ill; there are no firemen to put out fires; there are no laws, judges, or elections to settle disputes.

Different from Early Peoples

- The boys have prior knowledge of technology and laws that ancient peoples did not have.
- The boys have been conditioned to act according to the rules of a developed world.
- There are no adults on the island, whereas human groups usually include people of all ages.
- The boys have hope of rescue; they believe it is likely that they will return to a developed society soon. Ancient people would only have understood their world.

Activity 2: Journal Entry

Students are asked to write a one-page journal entry from the point of view of a character of their choosing. The character should analyze aspects of Jack's leadership and how that contrasts with both Ralph's attempts at leadership as well as aspects of the boys' lives before the island. If a character the students choose to write for is no longer living, then students can write about what their character would think about the events that happen after his death. A deceased narrator is a common literary strategy.

Answers will vary, but should indicate doubts about the sustainability of Jack's violent leadership style.

Wrapping Up

Questions to Discuss

- What does it mean to be civilized? Does it have more to do with being physically clean and sheltered, or does it have more to do with being nonviolent? (Answers will vary.)
- Do you think it is possible that under Jack's leadership shelters will be built and designated toilet areas will be respected? Will it be possible to do these things while the savage dances, violent deaths, and unjustified beatings continue? (Answers will vary.)
- Until now, the boys have had a choice between tribes. But Chapter 11 ends with Samneric being threatened and forced to join Jack's tribe. Is that a form of leadership or is it something else entirely? (Physical force is not leadership.)

Things to Review

Review the components of a civilization and the definition of savagery.

Homework

For homework, students will read and answer questions about Chapter 12 and add to their STEAL character pages.

Reading and Questions

1. What do Samneric tell Ralph that Jack and Roger planned to do?

To hunt and kill Ralph.

2. Why do you think Sam and Eric refuse to join Ralph?

Answers may vary but should be along the lines they are scared of what Jack will do if they leave; they realize that they don't have a choice but to follow Jack, or they don't think that Ralph can be in charge anymore.

3. What does Ralph run into when he is trying to escape the fire?

A naval officer

4. Why does the ship come to the island?

The ship saw the fire (set by Jack) blazing in the jungle.