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“Change in Power is Inevitable”

In a democracy, the public chooses their leader through an election. In William Golding’s “Lord of the Flies”, Ralph and Jack are the candidates in their two elections. Ralph wins both elections, yet somehow after the second election, Jack managed to convince everyone to join his newly formed colony. Due to Ralph’s obsession of maintaining the signal fire, Jack’s ability to gather more resources than Ralph, and his exploitation of the beast, we can understand how Jack took power after losing the second election. The people decided that Jack should lead, and they had a very good reason to.

Ralph’s blind fixation on maintaining the signal fire led him to ignore other key survival issues, allowing Jack to fill in the void. Ralph was a fantastic leader and people admired him, yet he did not emphasize the importance of survival like Jack did. Whenever Ralph asked the littluns to work, “'They’d work for five minutes then wander off or go hunting.'” (Golding 51). He needed to enforce his demands to get things done. When he worked, he only focused on the fire and constructing shelters. Those long-term goals were non-essential in their climate. He left people to their own business and they got nothing done as a colony. Jack and Ralph both had their obsessions, but Jack’s delicious meat seemed more important to the littluns than the boring signal fire on top of the mountain. Ralph’s determination of sustaining the signal fire allowed Jack to persuade the littluns to join his side of the island, with promise of security and hearty meals.

When Jack created his own colony, he immediately had the advantage of gathering more resources than Ralph, allowing him to sway more people over to his side after the election. Jack trained himself for weeks to hunt boars on the island. He and the choir fed everyone from the beginning, and everyone knows he is more than capable of hunting for his clan. His choir of hunters joined Jack after the second election, enabling him to get more resources than Ralph. Jack takes initiative by demanding his choir to “'…go into the forest now and hunt.'” (Golding 147), unlike Ralph’s approach with the littluns. Ralph does not demand anything from them. They are gatherers, not hunters. The thought of freshly cooked meat at the feast convinced the littluns to join Jack. Jack’s selfishness also aided him when he stole Piggy’s glasses to make fire. Jack had the ability to get whatever he want because of his personality and determination to succeed. The way he handled situations made him a great leader and it led to getting the same resources as Ralph in a couple of days. This persuaded most people with promises of a hearty meal every night and a roof over their heads. Everyone left Ralph because he could not compete with Jack’s offer.

Jack turned many over to his side because he exploited the littlun’s perception of the beast. When he hunted for the first time with his newly formed clan, he gave a boar’s head as a gift to the beast. Jack mentioned it was so the beast would not bother them again, but Golding’s tone of the scene describes it as a sacrifice in a worshipping ceremony. Later, when Jack had his feast, he told Ralph’s clan “'I gave you food.' said Jack, 'and my hunters will protect you from the beast'” (Golding 166). He pulled an ultimatum that Ralph could not match. Jack will protect his colony until the beast is killed. Ralph did nothing to protect them as a leader. This is confirmed in the littluns mind after Simon’s death. Jack capitalized on Simon’s death by, suggesting “'[The beast] came – disguised. He may come again even though we gave him the head of our kill to eat. So watch; and be careful.'” (Golding 177). Jack dug into the feelings of the boys to scare them, but also to solidify his leadership in their heads. Jack is a master of manipulation, and he used the fear of the beast to gain the trust of the littluns, leaving Ralph with only a handful of loyalists.

Ralph was more popular among the survivors. He led the charge by winning the two elections against Jack. He was level-headed and reasonable, yet throughout the book, Jack swept away his followers one by one through his tactics and leadership. People followed Jack when he founded his own colony. We can understand how Jack took power after the second election through Ralph’s focus on maintaining the fire, Jack having better resource management than Ralph, and Jack using the fear of the beast to his advantage. Jack easily convinced everyone that he was more fit as leader, right under Ralph’s nose through such a simple gathering. Whenever there is a better candidate, change in power is inevitable.