

Follow the Leader

Luay Eljamal
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Westwood Community High School
Mrs. Jade Stephens
English 20-1



Jim Rohn defined a leader as a person who can “be kind, but not weak; ... be thoughtful, but not lazy; be humble, but not timid...” Through this statement, Rohn tells readers that an individual cannot be a successful leader, without wielding certain qualities first. In order for an individual to be a successful leader, he or she must have the ability to maintain order, justice and the support of their followers to suppress the darkness that is inside every human being. These qualities are presented clearly in William Golding’s novel, *Lord of the Flies*, through Ralph, who is able to maintain order and justice throughout the island, but eventually loses the support of his followers. Similarly, Jack, a totalitarian dictator, maintains the support of his followers and practices order, but does not emphasize the importance of justice. This harms him and the people he leads to an extent that they do not immediately realize. Contrasting both characters, however, is Roger, an ambitious child, who does not possess any of the necessary abilities to be a successful leader. An individual can only be a successful leader should they have the ability to maintain order, justice, and the support of his or her followers. Most of these abilities are demonstrated through the character of Ralph.

Ralph’s leadership provides peace and order to the island, until his lack of enforcing the rules eventually cause the boys on the island to divide into two tribes. While he is chief, however, he is able to maintain justice, by ensuring that all the boys feel equal. This is evident through his protection of Piggy, who is often mistreated for being the weakest and most different in the group. Likewise, Ralph maintains order by creating reasonable rules for them all to follow, such as the rule of the conch. “I’ll give the conch to the next person to speak,” Ralph says. “[The speaker] can hold it when he’s speaking.” (36). In addition, it is apparent that his main focus is their rescue, and he always remembers to emphasize this to his followers, in order to conserve

order on the island. “The fire is the most important thing on the island,” Ralph says. “How can we ever be rescued except by luck, if we don’t keep the fire going?” (88) Unfortunately, with time, he loses the support of his followers as they begin to feel that Jack’s way of doing things is more fun than Ralph’s. As a result, all of the “biguns”, aside from Piggy, Sam and Eric, rebel against Ralph and decide to join Jack’s new tribe for the remainder of the novel. Had Ralph issued punishments to those who had disobeyed the rules, the boys might have taken him more seriously, and the schism may not have occurred. By using his compassion and intelligence, Ralph was able to maintain order and justice, but due to his lack of punishments for those who deserved it, he was not able to maintain the support of his followers. Though his priorities are a wiser choice for the boys to follow, the majority of the boys decide to follow Jack’s easier choices, which create a different kind of chaos.

The boys under Jack’s rule become uncivilized and turn into savages, due to Jack’s inability to maintain peace throughout his tribe. Unlike Ralph, Jack maintains order by creating rules that benefit him, as an individual, as opposed to the entire group, as a whole. An example of this is portrayed when members of Jack’s tribe end Jack’s sentences by saying “The Chief has spoken; it is apparent that Jack created this rule to show his followers that he is authority, and should be viewed as a higher power, instead of a fellow leader. Contrasting Jack’s ability to maintain order is his inability to maintain justice throughout his tribe, due to his strong passion for hunting and games. His focus, rather than getting rescued, is limited to what they should be doing with stranded on the island. He chooses to hunt and have fun, which is important, but only effective when used as a break from the critical jobs that the boys have to do in order to survive. Piggy creates an effective contrast between Jack and Ralph’s priorities, when he asks Jack’s tribe

whether they would rather be “a pack of painted niggers” or “sensible like Ralph is” (199). By saying this, he tries to show the boys of Jack’s tribe how they have been led astray, by Jack’s carelessness and immaturity, and how Ralph’s sensibility can help lead them to their ultimate rescue. Unlike Ralph or Jack, Roger has no sense of the abilities that he needs to be a successful leader.

Roger’s sadistic acts bring nothing but chaos to the boys on the island, while under Jack’s rule. Readers are given subtle hints to Roger’s sadistic ideas when he is seen throwing stones at Henry to miss. He leaves the space around Henry, because he is reminded of “the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law.” (67). But when Jack’s unjust ruling helps him forget his past, and brings him farther away from modern civilization, Roger begins to abuse the power that he has. He proves to be sadistic and unjust when he “leans all his weight on the lever” under a giant rock, which strikes “Piggy [with] a glancing blow” and kills him. (200). Readers are also given subtle hints which point to his passion of becoming a leader, when Golding writes that he “[wields] a nameless authority”. However, the boys on the island would not have survived for as long as they did, had they been under Roger’s leadership. While Jack is chief, he threatens to harm those who do not obey his rules, but never dares to go as far as Roger does to satisfy his deriving pleasure from inflicting pain on others. While Jack lures people into his tribe, by offering food and fun, Roger would have gotten Jack out of the picture, as soon as possible, and forced the boys to join him, instead. Roger would bring out the darkness inside every human being, instead of helping to suppress it, and all of these things help prove him to be an individual, who is not fit to be a successful leader.

The fact that humans, in society, need rules as well as punishments to keep disobedient people in line and suppress the darkness within them is inevitable. The novel *Lord of the Flies* effectively provides lifelike examples of the qualities that a leader must have in order to successfully inhibit the darkness that survives inside every human being. The character of Roger, effectively illustrates the situational disturbances that could occur, should an unruly individual take leadership over a group of people. Contrastingly, Jack's character exemplifies the consequences of a group led by order, but not justice, while Ralph's poses as an example of a well-rounded individual, who is able to maintain justice and order, but not the support of his own followers. A successful leader should have the strengths necessary to suppress the darkness within every human being, by maintaining order, justice, and the support of his or her own followers. Although Jack gained more support from his followers, it is important for one to realize that a seemingly good leader may not be as charismatic as a poor one. Jack creates rules to intensify his own power, while Ralph creates rules for the good of his people; and although his popularity soon disappeared, the wisdom and guidance of his good leadership skills always remained for those who were willing to listen to them. That, in itself, is the utmost perfect example of a leader.

Works Cited

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