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## The Littluns: From Innocence to Victims

What do you think of when someone says “children?” Sweet, innocent, and naive are just some of the adjectives that today’s society has placed on the common image of society’s own youngest members. Yet in *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, the children who are stranded on an island after their plane has crashed turn into murderous, hateful humans. There is, however, a group of children on the island who seem to not be at fault for any of the horrible things that happened on this island: the littluns. These were the smallest children on the island; the littluns do commit some of the horrendous things that occur in the novel, but they (unlike some of their bigger companions) do not know any better. Although the role that they play in the novel is small, their impact on the reader and their relation to symbolism is big. The littluns represent the innocence of young children, and also function as stand-ins for the normal everyday people of the world.

An example of the complexity of the littluns involves their childish ways. Kids are supposed to always be playing and almost always trying to be mischievous; as adults see them, children are pure and always seem to be happy. However, this nature seems to completely change throughout the course of the novel. At the beginning, the littluns are cheerful and follow the path that Ralph has made. They release all of their inhibitions and look at their change of circumstances as a fun and exciting adventure with no adults. Throughout the novel, the island changes from a civilized paradise into a chaotic hell. There are fights, murders, and all sorts of disturbance and discord. However, one thing that never changes is that the littluns continue to play. What changes with their playing, though, was that it started to lose its purpose. Golding indicates that the youngsters were playing aimlessly, just because that was the only thing that they could think of doing; it was a habit that they were accustomed to. Examining this, one can come to the conclusion that the island has had a deep and negative effect on the littluns. They have lost their festive and happy spirits, as well as their innocence, even if their play persists in its external form.

The littluns' innocence was primarily lost because of the fear and emotional damage that they suffered. An example of this alteration was the first encounter of the beastie. The boy who recounts the story is, “(a) shrimp of a boy, about six years old, and one side of his face was blotted out by a mulberry-colored birthmark ... he bored into the grass with one toe ... the small boy twisted further into himself” (35). The boy described here is quite obviously very scared and shy because of what he has seen. Later, we learn that the boy has mysteriously disappeared. Although the precise reaction is not stated in the book, one can assume that this event shook all of the littluns, who are probably now more fearful than ever. Another example of the vulnerability of the littluns is Percival, a character in the novel who has suffered extreme psychological

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damage. In the middle of the story, he is seen on the sand constantly repeating his full name and addressing himself. This is an attempt to prepare himself for the day in which someone will come and save him, although it is not healthy that he is constantly saying the same thing to himself. When help finally arrives, he is in utter disbelief and completely forgets what he was practicing all along.

This group of relatively young boys also represents a bigger idea; the idea of normal civilized people. The littluns are heavily influenced by the biguns (Jack, Ralph, Piggy, etc.), and when the biguns descend into chaos or do not provide a sense of stability, their younger companions also descend into chaos. The littluns do whatever the biguns tell them to. The biggest decision they made was whether to choose Ralph or Jack as their leader, in a process somewhat like a democratic election. Jack provided a more fun and adventurous plan, while Ralph provided a safe and secure plan. For most of the littluns, Jack's ideas were more appealing and thus they chose to be led by Jack. This decision turned out to be a huge advantage for Jack, giving his group more manpower and "soldiers." The leaders have to be able to understand the needs of the people, and in this case the littluns; despite Jack's victory, Ralph quite obviously understood what they were thinking. At a meeting he said, "Well, they're frightened... Have you been awake at night?...they talk and scream" (52). He sees the problem and is trying to work out a solution. Yet Jack is much more selfish and puts his needs before the needs of the groups. When Ralph brings up this topic, all he can say is "As if it wasn't a good island" (52) and "They're batty" (52). His ways of confronting the issues are through denying them and downplaying their importance. Much like citizens today, the littluns need a leader, and that leader can either help them or destroy them.

It is evident that the littluns went from being innocent to victims becoming of the the worst of human nature. They were kept in fear, which psychologically scarred them. They were no longer the same kids who arrived on the island; in the end they had a much darker view of the real world. Human need their leaders, and these leaders must be willing to sacrifice their own needs for the needs of the group. The same fears are ever-present in the real world. With every new leader we choose, we may remain the civilization that we have always been, or take a turn for a darker and scarier society.

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