



FREEDOM AND HUMAN INTERACTION

It has been said that it is the goal of the individual to achieve as much freedom as possible. Conversely, it is the function of the State to maintain order in society. As was discussed in *Freedom, Responsibility, and Law*, sometimes laws simultaneously limit and enhance freedom. Thus, the goals of the individual and the goals of the State can

sometimes be achieved simultaneously.

With this understanding, think more deeply about the concept of freedom. Even though it is the goal of the individual to achieve as much freedom as possible, absolute freedom for every individual is an impossible proposition. Consider this extreme example: if every person was free to kill others if they so pleased, then nobody would be free to enjoy life, liberty, or security. There must be bounds to freedom.

So how does society determine the bounds of its freedoms?

It has been generally accepted that the most freedom that an individual can enjoy is to be free to do as he or she pleases, so long as that person's actions do not impose upon the freedom of another individual. In other words, there are reasonable limits placed upon individual freedom.

There are several situations in *Lord of the Flies* that raise basic questions about reasonable limits on freedom. Consider the following examples from Chapter 4.

- When Piggy confronts Jack about letting the fire go out, Jack beats Piggy and breaks a lens of his glasses. In a lawful society, Jack would not be free to beat on Piggy as he pleased. Jack's freedom to act this way restricts Piggy's safety and security.
- When Roger and Maurice destroy the littluns' sand castles, they are able to do this without constraint. However, in a lawful society people are not free to destroy other people's property at their own pleasure. This is considered a reasonable limit on freedom.

These simple examples illustrate why at times freedom must be limited. They also illustrate that these limits are not being well-defined on the island. Without rules that restrict people's actions, the boys on the island may have a great deal of freedom, but this freedom is not resulting in a safer and more fair society.

CONSIDER

1. When Roger casts stones at Henry, he is careful not to hit him. Golding describes the situation as such:

Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruin. (p. 67)

- a) How important is "the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law" for preserving freedom?
- b) Are there times when the protection of parents, school, police, and the law becomes too intrusive? If so, why do you believe this?

2. Golding claims that Roger's arm was "conditioned by a civilization" so that he would not cast stones at Henry.
 - a) If this is true, then how does Johnny "throwing sand at an imaginary Percival" reflect the conditioning taking place within the island society?
 - b) Does this bode well for the boys' future?

FOR FUTURE READING

At the close of the chapter, Ralph is concerned with how the island is falling into lawlessness. Out of concern, he calls an assembly. As the story unfolds, watch for how power and authority is used to preserve law and order, and how power and authority is used to destroy law and order.