

Are We Good or Are We Evil?

(It's not simply black or white.)

Throughout our exploration of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, we've asked ourselves whether human beings are inherently good or inherently evil. For some of us, this is a very complicated question. We find ourselves wanting to say, "Hey, it's not that straightforward, not that black and white." Some would suggest that there may be potential for good and evil in all of us, and certain conditions might send us sliding in one direction or another. Others might suggest that our acts can be evil, but that we are genuinely good. We just make mistakes or get diverted. These ideas move us directly into the old debate about Nature vs. Nurture: Are we shaped by our biological make-up or by our environment, or some melding of the two?

One way to explore this further would be to turn these ideas loose into the marketplace of ideas (a.k.a. public space where others can see them). There they can then do battle with each other, withstand the onslaught of scrutiny, or crumble under a pure critique. So let's try it.

For this project, you will write two 1-page, single-spaced essays. On one page you'll identify and discuss a **real example** of human beings exhibiting what you deem to be "evil" (this should be a story that was in the news, not a personal story). On the other page, you'll discuss how THE SAME STORY demonstrates our "good" side. Of course, opinion matters here. You make the selections, and you must convince your reader that your notions of good and evil have merit. So, it's your job to define what makes something good or evil, and it's your job to explain to the readers why your example captures your view. Feel free to read up on philosophy related to these matters.

The format of your writing should follow these guidelines:

- Your titles should be "Good" or "Evil" (Times New Roman – Bold - 24 pt.) plus a 1-line subheading of your story (16-pt.) The body of the paper should use Times New Roman 12 pt.
- The top part of the paper (1/3) should report the details of the event – use *ITALICS* for this. The bottom part (2/3) should explain WHY/HOW you believe it exhibits good or evil.
- Both essays should be presentable for public consumption (If you do not employ well-thought-out ideas, proper grammar, or do not follow these formatting guidelines, you will receive no more than 1/2 credit)
- We will staple both of your essays back-to-back with a black construction paper border. Then we will hang them from the library ceiling using tape and string. I'll provide these materials; however, you must have your PRESENTABLE work ready at the beginning of class on

Day: _____ Date: _____

- The selection of news stories will be on a first-come, first-served basis, and there will be no duplicate stories. So, you should select several stories to ensure that you get your choice, and be ready to make those selections on: _____

40 pts for each essay
See reverse side for format model