

**English 10 – Summer Reading Requirement: Lord of the Flies, by William Golding
The Attack on Rousseau’s “Noble Savage” Theory**

In his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, Eighteenth century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed that man was, by nature, good; it was society that corrupted the “noble savage”. Eminent thinkers like Voltaire responded, “No one has ever used so much intelligence to persuade us to be so stupid. After reading your book, one feels that one ought to walk on all fours. Unfortunately, during the last sixty years I have lost the habit.” However, many Romantics picked up on Rousseau’s idea.

Although Rousseau had extraordinary influence on younger English Romantics, William Golding completely rejected the “Noble Savage” belief which pervaded ideas and literature for generations. Golding takes the youngest people he can, perhaps least affected by society, puts them on a tropical paradise island, and shows them not in their nobility, but in their savagery.

Where has goodness gone? What is the source of childhood corruption? Society?

Critical Response Questions:

There will be a writing assessment in the first week of school based on the following questions. As you read, be sure your annotations and thoughts are directed, at least in part, to being able to explore these questions:

1. **What faults in our society does Golding point out in Lord of the Flies? Support with examples from the text.**
2. **Traditionally, children are portrayed as innocent. Are they in Lord of the Flies? Explain, and support with examples from the text.**
3. **Whose fault is it that things didn’t work out on the island? Support with examples from the text.**

Ms. Foran, Ms. Rosenbaum, Ms. Stefan, Ms. Watts

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