

# TWO VIEWS OF HUMAN NATURE

## MANKIND'S ESSENTIAL ILLNESS



### Jean-Jacques Rousseau

- Mankind is essentially “good”
- Aspects of society (greed, corruption, etc.) make Mankind “bad”.

Check:

<https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/rousseau/themes/>



### William Golding

- Mankind is inherently “evil”
- Structures of society are build to keep humanity “good”. Without these structures, society falls apart.

Helpful link:

<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/lord-of-the-flies/themes/human-nature>

Jacques Rousseau and William Golding both held opposing view on human nature. The question revolves around whether or not people are born good or evil. As neither opinion can be proven, the debate rages on today.

### Jacques Rousseau

Rousseau believed that humans are born pure. In other words, they are good, loving and caring. He believed that external forces allow for the creation of evil humans. External forces today would be things such as laws, media, religion, etc. Rousseau argued that if children were allowed to develop free from society, there would be no evil people in the world, and therefore, no crimes would be committed.

### William Golding

Golding believed that children were born evil and violent. He believed that society and its institutions are the only way to make a child a moral, law-abiding citizen. Furthermore, Golding believed that if people were taken out of society and isolated, they will quickly revert back to violence.

## Assignment:

After reading both Rousseau's and Golding's philosophies on human nature and having read *Lord of the Flies*, **do you believe that human beings are inherently good or inherently evil?** Equally important, **does society encourage human beings to be good or evil?** Consider what aspect of the larger topic you would like to investigate and explain your answer in a well-developed paragraph using support (e.g. things you have read, witnessed, personal experience, etc...) Make sure your answer is clear and well developed as you will be using it in a class discussion in which you will hope to persuade your classmates to follow your philosophy.

**Your completed paragraph** – A developed paragraph of over 200 words, arguing your philosophy on human nature. Remember that your paragraph must include a strong introduction and conclusion in order to argue your point effectively. You should also include at least two points in your argument that you are able to support with examples. Paragraphs will be written with attention to argument and language. The paragraph is expected to be proofread and contain no errors.

## Reminders

- Your response can be framed in a number of ways. Here are the top 4:
  - o "Humans are inherently good."
  - o "Humans are inherently evil."
  - o "Society helps humans to be good."
  - o "Society is responsible for bringing out the worst in humans."YES, you can argue a couple of these points without contradicting yourself
- The standard response for students tends to be "Humans are a little bit of both" or "Humans have the capacity for good AND evil." This goes without saying. It is better to choose a side and work to argue the truth in that side, rather than take the easy road and say both sides are true.
- Effective arguments are usually based on concrete evidence. Relying on hypothetical situations to prove your point ("Let's say there was a group of boys on an island with no adults...") usually falls flat. If you want an example of a reasonably good piece of evidence that could be used in favor of Rousseau, read the article I have attached with the lesson.

**Take the time to find your own evidence and use that for your response.**