Psychology of Evil
Directions: Thoroughly answer questions 1-9 on a separate sheet of paper.

The Lucifer Effect
A Lucifer figure or motif exists in numerous religions and mythologies. Zimbardo uses the interpretation that Lucifer was G-d’s favorite angel until Lucifer’s jealousy caused him to be cast out of heaven—and so, Lucifer takes revenge on G-d by tempting man. Zimbardo uses this term because he believes that the “line between good and evil is permeable and movable,” and not “fixed.” Zimbardo believes that human beings are fundamentally good and made evil—not born to be either one or the other. The “Psychology of Evil” intends to explain how good people turn evil, and consequently, how they can be turned back to good.

EVIL
Zimbardo defines “evil” as the exercise of power to intentionally harm (psychologically), hurt (physically), and/or destroy (mortal) and commit crimes against humanity.

What are the factors that psychologists use to explain transformations of human character?

- Dispositional Factors: Characteristics from inside individuals (i.e. they’re bad apples)
- Situational Factors: Characteristics in the environment external to the individual (i.e. they’re good apples in a bad barrel, and so they go bad)
- Systemic Factors: Characteristics that create the environment—political, economic, legal (i.e. there are bad barrel-makers)

Milgram Experiments
Stanley Milgram wanted to discover to what extent people would obey an authority figure even when directed to act against their moral consciences. The experiment asked for volunteers to “teach” other people to improve the others’ memories. A “doctor” in a white coat asked the volunteer teacher to administer questions to a learner. If the learner got the question wrong, then the “doctor.” directed the teacher to administer an electric shock to the learner to “teach” him not to get the answer wrong. For every wrong answer the learner made, the teacher was instructed to administer higher and higher electric shots—all the way up to 450 volts (a near-lethal amount). The teacher was not allowed to see the learner during the shocks but could hear the screams and pleas for mercy (the learner was an actor who wasn’t really shocked, but the teacher did not know this). Psychologists predicted that since only 1% of the population is sadistic that only 1% of the teachers would go all the way to 450 volts, but in one study, despite the fact that many people wanted to stop earlier, 90% of the teachers complied with the “doctor” in the white coat and administered the 450 volts. Milgram’s conclusion: when directed by a person in authority, other’s will act against their own morals if told to do so.

1. Zimbardo claims that “all evil starts with 15 volts.” What does he mean by this?
2. How is this true in Lord of the Flies?
3. Why do people in the Milgram experiments “go all the way to 450 volts” in the experiment?
4. Metaphorically speaking, what is the equivalent to the 450 volts in Lord of the Flies?
Standford Prison Experiment

The Stanford prison experiment was a study of the psychological effects of becoming a prisoner or prison guard. The experiment was conducted at Stanford University from August 14 to August 20 of 1971 by a team of researchers led by psychology professor Philip Zimbardo. 24 male students out of 75 volunteers were selected to take on randomly assigned roles of prisoners and guards in a mock prison situated in the basement of the Stanford psychology building. The participants adapted to their roles immediately: the guards enforced authoritarian measures and ultimately subjected some of the prisoners to psychological torture; many of the prisoners passively accepted psychological abuse and, at the request of the guards, readily harassed other prisoners who attempted to prevent it. Two of the prisoners quit the experiment early and the entire experiment was abruptly stopped after only six days.

The Power of Anonymity

Zimbardo claims that “people’s aggression can also increase when they feel anonymous--for example, if they wear a uniform, hood or mask....You minimize social responsibility. Nobody knows who you are, so therefore you are not individually [responsible]. There’s also a group effect when all of you are masked. It provides a fear in other people because they can’t see you, and you lose your humanity.”

For example, an experiment in 1974 by Harvard anthropologist John Watson evaluated 23 cultures to determine whether warriors who changed their appearance--such as with war paint or masks [or uniforms]--treated their victims differently. As it turned out, 80 percent of warriors in these cultures were found to be more destructive--for example, killing, torturing or mutilating their victims--than unpainted or unmasked warriors.

5. Connect the above ideas about the “power of anonymity” to the use of paint in Lord of the Flies.

7 Social Processes that Grease the Slippery Slope of Evil
(I.e. Environmental factors that lead to evil)

- Mindlessly taking the first small step (i.e. “all evil starts with 15 volts)
- Dehumanization of Others (i.e. one doesn’t see others as people with feelings like oneself, rather one perceives others as bad, enemies, insects, animals, death, evil, etc.)
- De-individuation of Self (anonymity)
- Diffusion of Personal Responsibility (i.e. YOU are not entirely or directly responsible, rather you were acting with a larger group or under others’ orders.)
- Blind Obedience to Authority
- Uncritical Conformity to Group Norms (i.e. You do what the group does without question)
- Passive Tolerance of Evil through Inaction or Indifference (See Bystander Effect)

The Bystander Effect

The bystander effect or Genovese syndrome is a social psychological phenomenon that refers to cases where individuals do not offer any means of help in an emergency situation to the victim when other people are present. The probability of help has often appeared to be inversely related to the number of bystanders; in other words, the greater the number of bystanders, the less likely it is that any one of them will help. The mere presence of other bystanders greatly decreases intervention. In general, this is believed to happen because as the number of bystanders increases, any given bystander is less likely to notice the situation, interpret the incident as a problem, and less likely to assume responsibility for taking action.

The case of Kitty Genovese is often cited as an example of the "bystander effect". It is also the case that originally stimulated social psychological research in this area. On March 13, 1964 Genovese, 28 years old, was on her way back to her Queens, New York, apartment from work at 3am when she was stabbed to death. According to newspaper accounts, the attack lasted for at least a half an hour during which time Genovese screamed and pleaded for help. The murderer attacked Genovese and stabbed her, then fled the scene after attracting the attention of a neighbor. The killer then returned ten minutes later and finished the assault. Newspaper reports
after Genovese’s death claimed that 38 witnesses watched the stabbings and failed to intervene or even contact the police until after the attacker fled and Genovese had died.

6. Discuss at least 3 of the 7 social processes that allow for evil to happen as they pertain to *Lord of the Flies*—particularly in the deaths of Simon and Piggy, and the premeditated attempted murder of Ralph.

7. Explain the saying, “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

I Need a Hero! Vs. I AM a hero!

- Most of the heroes we know seem EXTRAordinary: Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Superman, Spider Man, Wonder Woman. However, these role models either have organized their entire lives around their sacrifice for a cause or have supernatural talents. These cannot be the ONLY role models for heroism that we hold up to children because then they won’t believe that they are capable of heroics.

- Most real heroes are EVERYDAY PEOPLE who emerge as heroes only in particular situations.
  - The very same situations that can create perpetrators of evil can also inspire the Heroic Imagination in some or render most people passive bystanders and guilty of the Evil of Inaction.

- Heroes are ordinary people who ACT when others are passive and who give up EGO-centrism for SOCIO-centrism (i.e. one no longer thinks only of the “I,” but rather of the “We.”)

What about YOU?

One day YOU will be in a new situation with 3 paths:

- Path one: You become a PERPETRATOR OF EVIL
- Path two: You become guilty of PASSIVE INACTION
- Path three: You become a HERO

“I did what anyone could do; I did what everyone ought to do.”

On January 2, 2007, Wesley Autrey was waiting for a train at a subway station in Manhattan with his two young daughters. At around 12:45 p.m., he and two women noticed a young man, Cameron Hollopeter, having a seizure. Autrey borrowed a pen and used it to keep Hollopeter’s jaw open. Following the seizure, Hollopeter stumbled from the platform, falling onto the tracks. Autrey saw the lights of an oncoming train. As one of the women held Autrey’s daughters, Autrey dove onto the tracks. He thought he would be able to take Hollopeter off the tracks, but he realized there was not enough time. So, he protected Hollopeter by throwing himself over Hollopeter’s body in a drainage trench between the tracks, where he held him down. Though the operator of the train applied the brakes, all but two cars still passed over them, close enough to leave grease on his cap.

8. Reflect on the events and characters of *Lord of the Flies*. Specifically discuss which characters fit the following labels—mention specific events from the novel when explaining how characters fit these labels:
   - Perpetrators of evil
   - Guilty of passive inaction
   - Hero

9. Put YOURSELF into *Lord of the Flies*.
   - What are two moments in the novel that NEEDED a hero and didn't have one?
   - Why did those moments need a hero—which of the 7 social processes that lead to evil were at work in that moment?
   - What could you have done to be a hero in that moment?