

Jean-Paul Sartre's Play, The Flies Essay

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Jean-Paul Sartre's play, *The Flies* is a tragedy in which Sartre melts philosophy, politics, and literature together. Sartre uses his literary talents and places countless themes and literary devices in *The Flies* in order to make statements about human beings as well as the political turmoil of 1946; freedom is a constant and obvious theme throughout the play, and Sartre even goes so far as to use inanimate objects, such as stones, to insert deeper meaning into the play. Sartre inserts bits of his life into the tragedy as well. It is no coincidence that Sartre wrote *The Flies* while under Nazi occupation in France.

Sartre's portrayal of Argos in the play is strikingly similar to the state of affairs in France during the mid-1940s. Aegistheus as a tyrannical usurper of the throne is a clear representation of the Nazis that invaded and occupied France. Clytemnestra symbolizes the submissive Vichy government. Sartre had to tiptoe around the subject of the occupation, yet inserted enough similarities for it to be relevant for the people watching the play at that time. In essence, *The Flies* was a call to arms for the people living in France during the German occupation. While Sartre was so seemingly focused on writing a liberal piece of literature that would stir the French people into action, he also managed to insert countless existential theories and philosophies into the action.

The concept of freedom is a staple of [existentialism](#), and as such, is present constantly throughout the play. However, freedom does not simply exist; Freedom must be seized and obeyed simultaneously, as Orestes explains in the end of the play: "Neither slave nor master. I am my freedom" (Sartre 493). In fact, the Oxford English Dictionary defines existe...

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...and would simply be carrying out another order that was predetermined many years ago. Because Sartre wrote *The Flies* during the Nazi occupation, Orestes' decision to take action against the tyrannical Aegistheus is crucial. Orestes represents the French people, and Sartre clearly wanted to inspire an uprising against the oppressive Nazi leaders.

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