

# Yr 10 English Humanity and War Essay

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*'Empire of the Sun is a story about how the human spirit can overcome the most difficult of events.'* Discuss.

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War is an aggressive phenomenon triggered by disputes and fuelled by ambition, with rippling affects that can destroy entire populations. J G Ballard's 1984 novel *"Empire of the Sun"* is a historical narrative recounting the life of its author during the occupation of China in the early 1940's, representing the effects of war on an individual. Through the novel we are shown the protagonist's mental maturity, his survival and growing independence, as well as his newfound viewpoint on war.

Jim has a forced development from child to man during World War II; learning to survive the brutal conditions he faces both in his time of alienated survival and in his time at prison camps. Jim's process of self-discovery as he realises his potential for resourcefulness, determination and resilience in the face of difficulty and turmoil in a damaged nation. Jim's friendship with Basil teaches Jim to take care of himself in an effort for better privileges through favours. Throughout the course of the novel Jim grows as a result of his poor circumstances and makes the most out of living at Lunghua camp.

Jim's experience of alienation after he is separated from his parents; his attempt to create order and a sense of safety by treating the other prisoners in the camp as a kind of extended family. Jim is a wealthy only child, showing stereotypical signs of loneliness with selfish and dependent morals, now so dependent on other figures to rely on like a normal parent-child relationship. By doing so, Jim creates a network of connections that owe Jim through either loyalty or through some form of payment of services. This allows Jim added security, knowing he has someone to count on when he is in a struggle.

Jim's abandonment of his innocent ideas about the nature of war and more mature recognition of the brutality and futility of war, and of the nature of courage and bravery. In conjunction to this is Jim's exposure to cruelty which leads him to a deeper understanding of its causes. "It disappointed Jim that none of his fellow prisoners was interested in the war. It would have helped to keep up their spirits, a task which Jim was finding more and more difficult." (Chapter 18) Jim went from being a naïve, war enthusiast with a passion for anything aircraft related, to a matured boy tired from living with the war struggle. Jim remained passionate about planes, with planes becoming a symbol for the fight between the Allies and Axis powers, but Jim now no longer romanticised about the destruction war can bring.