**Lord of the Flies**

**William Golding**

**Revision Booklet**



**First off....what's up with the title?**

You can approach this title on a few different levels. To begin, “the Lord of the Flies” is the name of the pig’s head after being impaled on a stick. This seems a natural choice of names for such a bloody object. The pig’s head then, being the title and all, becomes rather important. The horrible and primitive violence of the boys is a central theme.  
  
Next, you can approach the individual meaning and aesthetic of the words “Lord of the Flies.” “Lord” has a lot to do with power, and it is, of course, the desire for power that drives a lot of the boys of the island (think Jack and his “you’re not the boss of me” attitude). “Flies,” on the other hand, connote death and decay (think that dead squirrel you found in the backyard and all the flying insects swarming about). Put them together, and you’ve got death and decay tied up with power and corruption. Nice.  
  
Lastly, as if that were not enough, “The Lord of the Flies” is also the name Beelzebub, a demon or the devil, depending on how you like your mythology. So this book is getting at some pretty big questions, and driving home a rather weighty message about inherent evil and eternal darkness.

**Plot Overview**

When an aircraft carrying British children who are being evacuated from a war zone crashes on a remote island, killing all adults, the children realise that they will have to survive on their own and no one knows where they are.

They begin life on the island full of excitement, but gradually the order they tried to create breaks down. The civilised schoolboys become savages.

# Chapter 1 - Sound of the Shell

Ralph and Piggy meet on the beach, having survived the crash. They introduce themselves, then enjoy swimming in a lagoon. The island seems a magical place.

Piggy finds a large conch. Ralph blows it like a trumpet, and all the other boys who survived flock around. One group arrives in choir uniforms, led by Jack. The boys elect Ralph as their chief, so Ralph asks Jack to be leader of the choir, who will take the job of hunters. Piggy takes names.

Jack, Ralph and Simon explore the island to see if it is inhabited. They push a huge rock off the top of a hill, shouting with delight as it crashes down.

As they scramble back to the others, they see a wild pig. Jack gets out a knife to kill it, but can't quite bring himself to draw blood and the pig scurries away

# Chapter 2 - Fire on the Mountain

Ralph holds an assembly. The conch becomes a symbol of authority - only those holding the conch can speak.

A small boy says he's frightened of a 'snake-thing'. Ralph reassures him there's nothing to worry about, but Jack wants to hunt, just to make sure!

Ralph says there must be a fire to alert passing ships; Jack and his choir rush off to make one. They grab Piggy's glasses to light it with. Jack announces his hunters will keep the fire going. Piggy tries to encourage them to act sensibly. Yet suddenly the fire burns out of control and spreads through the undergrowth.

The boy who spoke up about the snake-things is missing - presumably burnt.

# Chapter 3 - Huts on the Beach

Jack sets off hunting, but fails to catch a pig. He returns to the camp to find Ralph, who has been hard at work building shelters with Simon. Ralph complains the others don't help at all.

Ralph and Jack can't agree what their priorities are - making shelters and getting rescued, or finding meat.

Simon goes off by himself into the dense jungle and worms his way into the thickest part.

# Chapter 4 - Painted Faces and Long Hair

Roger bullies three littluns playing, then watches their games. Even they are disagreeing and fighting.

Jack paints his face as camouflage to help him hunt a pig and goes off with his hunters.

Ralph spots a ship on the horizon, but the hunters have let the fire go out, making it impossible for the ship to know they are there and denying them rescue. The hunters return triumphant with a pig, but have to face Ralph's anger. In the argument that follows, Jack breaks half of Piggy's glasses.

They all cook the pig and eat it, although Jack is initially unwilling to share. The hunters are still excited and raise a chant, "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in."

# Chapter 5 - Beast from Water

Ralph immediately calls an assembly in the darkness. He tries to clarify his thoughts as he prepares for it, and wishes he could think as clearly as Piggy.

At the meeting, Ralph tries to re-establish rules. Then he tries to confront the fear everyone is feeling about a beast. Piggy claims there can be no beast; Simon suggests the beast is 'only us'. The discussion gets more heated, with boys snatching the conch from each other to talk and breaking the rules.

Jack declares he and his hunters will find the beast and starts a wild dance that Ralph is powerless to stop.

Piggy wishes for some grown-ups to keep order. Ralph wishes for a sign from the grown-up world.

# Chapter 6 - Beast from Air

Ironically, that sign appears: late that night, a parachutist's body lands on the island, the victim of an aerial battle. Sam and Eric, tending the fire, see the body and believe it to be the beast.

Jack volunteers to lead an expedition to find the beast. After a dispute about whether the signal fire or finding the beast is more important, they set out to the far rocks, the only unexplored place on the island. Ralph bravely crosses to the rock first to confront the beast, followed by Jack. When it is clear there is no beast, the others come, and they realise it is a great place for a fort.

Jack and his followers want to stay at the fort, but in the end Ralph convinces everyone to go back to the mountain and make a fire.

# Chapter 7 - Shadows and Tall Trees

As the party walk back through the jungle, Ralph feels anxious at how dirty and uncivilised he is becoming, and is worried about his position as chief. He dreams of his home, yet Simon reassures him, saying he is sure he will get back.

Jack and his followers approach a pig, but it escapes, then they play at killing a pig - almost too violently.

When night falls, the older ones wonder whether to continue the hunt for the beast or rejoin the little ones. In the end, Ralph, Jack and Roger go on while the others return. They climb through the burnt area of the mountain and when they reach the parachutist's body, the wind makes it rear up. They run away, terrified, thinking it must be the beast.

# Chapter 8 - A Gift for the Darkness

Now the threat of a beast is more real, the tension between Jack and Ralph increases. Jack calls an assembly, and when the boys vote for Ralph to remain as chief, Jack declares he is not going to 'play' any more and goes off by himself.

Ralph and the others, knowing that they can no longer rely on Jack and his followers to keep the fire going on the mountain, start a fire down by the bathing pool.

Jack and his small group kill a pig and leave the head on a stick in a clearing, as an offering to the beast. Simon, hiding in the clearing, sees it all. He stays on when the others leave, staring hypnotised at the bloody head, which is now covered in flies.

Jack and his hunters swoop on Ralph, Piggy and the others and steal wood to make a fire for a pig feast. Jack invites everyone to eat meat - if they join his tribe.

Meanwhile, Simon - dehydrated and ill - imagines the pig's head talking to him and mocking him. He has an epileptic fit.

# Chapter 9 - A View to a Death

Simon wakes in the night and discovers the dead body of the parachutist. He realises that this must be 'the beast' and, after freeing the tangled lines from the rocks, sets off to tell the others.

Ralph learns from Piggy that Samneric and Bill have gone to Jack's group to get meat. They decide to go too, to eat meat and find out what's going on.

Everyone else (except Simon) is already there, laughing and singing. Jack is in the middle, giving orders like a king. He commands his gang to give meat to Ralph and Piggy, then he asks who will join his group. Ralph protests that he still is chief.

The dispute is interrupted by thunder and lightning which makes the boys uneasy. Jack orders them to dance the pig hunting dance - Kill the Beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! The chant becomes frenzied, so when Simon stumbles into the middle of the group with his news, they kill him.

The parachutist's dead body is lifted out to sea by the wind and Simon's dead body gently drifts away from the beach.

# Chapter 10 - The Shell and the Glasses

Piggy and Ralph discuss the events of the previous night without actually mentioning Simon's death, which shows how anxious they are about what happened.

Jack is now a real chief, with a painted face and a tribe of 'savages'. He beats those he's angry with and wields full control.

Ralph, Piggy and Samneric make another fire on the beach to create smoke in the hope of rescue. They feel better when they have completed the work. Ralph relaxes and dreams of home.

Suddenly, the calm is interrupted by Jack and two hunters who invade the shelters and begin a fight. They leave triumphant with Piggy's glasses, rendering Piggy near blind and helpless.

# Chapter 11 - Castle Rock

Ralph, Piggy and Samneric hold an assembly with just a few littluns - everyone else is now in Jack's tribe. They are bitter against Jack for having stolen Piggy's glasses, their one chance of rescue. Piggy is determined to get them back, so they set out with the conch. They wish they looked smarter, to prove how civilised they still are.

Painted savages guard the camp while Jack is out hunting. When Jack returns, he argues with Ralph about Piggy's glasses. Jack orders Samneric to be tied up. Piggy bravely takes the conch and stands to speak, despite being able to see almost nothing. He tells the savages to stop acting 'like a crowd of kids', so they become angry. Roger, high on the cliff, heaves a rock loose. It strikes Piggy and kills him. The conch is shattered too.

Jack, unaffected by Piggy's death, claims he is now Chief as the conch is broken. He assumes complete control. Ralph is alone.

# Chapter 12 - Cry of the Hunters

Ralph lies hidden and afraid. Everyone else is now part of Jack's tribe. He comes across the pig's head on the stick and, in sudden anger, destroys it with his bare hands.

Ralph meets Samneric who warn him to be careful - Roger is especially dangerous. They help him find a place to hide. He tries to sleep.

Early next day, Jack forces Samneric to reveal Ralph's hiding place. The tribe heave another rock down the mountain near to where Ralph is hidden, but he is not hit. Next they light a fire to try to smoke him out. The fire takes hold.

The situation gets worse and worse - Ralph begins to panic, knowing Jack is out to kill him. He tries to hide, but the savages find him. He bursts out and runs wildly - straight into a naval officer who has landed on the island to investigate the smoke.

The officer is shocked when Ralph says that two boys have died. Ralph claims that he is the leader - then bursts into tears. The officer turns away, embarrassed.

**Characters**

# Ralph

* He is twelve years and a few months old.
* He has an attractive appearance, which suggests that he has an attractive character too. *"You could see he might make a boxer, as far as width and heaviness in the shoulders went, but there was a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil."*
* He is sensible: it was Ralph's idea to have a chief, establish rules and build a signal fire so they can be rescued. He speaks wisely.
* He is a good leader. He knows that it's important to keep Jack on his side and speaks to Piggy with the directness of genuine leadership. *“There was a stillness about Ralph as he sat that marked him out: there was his size and attractive appearance."* Later on he feels the weight of being chief as a personal hell - but he doesn't give up.
* He wants to hang on to civilised values. When he realises that their lives are full of dirt and decay, he feels a*"convulsion of the mind"*. In the discussions about the beast, he feels *"the understandable and lawful world... slipping away".*
* He uses civilised language. Even when he is pleading with Jack for the return of Piggy's glasses, he speaks like a school boy: *"You aren't playing the game".*
* He is brave. He led the search for the beast at the fort alone: *"I'm chief. I'll go. Don't argue."* It is Ralph who approaches the dead airman at the top of the mountain, with leaden steps, while Jack and Roger stay back.
* Yet even Ralph sometimes gets carried away with the hunt. Ralph starts the game where they pretend Robert is a pig: *"The desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering"*. Later on, he becomes part of the 'dance' that kills Simon. Near the end, he breaks the pig's skull on the stick with a sick fear and rage.
* Ralph finally becomes an outcast. He tells himself this is *"Cos I had some sense".*
* When he meets the naval officer, he is seen as a little scarecrow, but Ralph is still able to assert himself as the leader. Then he cries, for the first time on the island.

# Jack

* Jack is the leader of the choir. He was the chapter chorister, can sing C sharp, and was the head boy at school.
* He has red hair and is tall, thin and bony."*His face was crumpled and freckled, and ugly without silliness"*. His fiery hair and his ugly appearance give us clues to his hot-headed, unpleasant character. *"Out of this face stared two blue eyes, frustrated now, and turning, or ready to turn to anger."*
* He is proud and arrogant.
* He is hungry for power. When we first meet him he bosses the choir around; later he undermines Ralph's leadership and sets up his own tribe against Ralph, even though he loses a vote. He gradually becomes a dictator. When he orders the tribe to tie up Samneric her boasts to Ralph *"See? They do what I want."*
* He knows as soon as Ralph asks him that the choir should be hunters. Hunting then pre-occupies him more and more through the novel.
* He can't kill the first pig he sees because of "*the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the unbearable blood"*. Yet he quickly puts aside any doubts.
* Jack thinks of nothing but hunting. *"All you can talk about is pig, pig, pig!"*Ralph says angrily.
* Jack paints on a mask to help him hunt better. The paint gives him a liberation into savagery: he is able to do savage things now he looks more like a savage.
* He is so moved by having killed a pig that he isn't anxious about the ship that went by while the fire was out. All he thinks about is the knowledge that *"they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will on it, taken away its life".*
* By the end, Jack has moved on even further. His prey has gone beyond pigs - he is keen to hunt Ralph.
* He commits the first act of violence towards another boy on the island when he thumps Piggy. *"His voice was vicious".* He gets gradually more violent towards other boys: he has no thought for Piggy when he steals his glasses and later he ties up and beats Wilfred.
* He pretends not to be frightened of the beast - but is shivering and croaking when he sees the 'beast' on the mountain. Does this suggest that he's not really as brave as he'd like to think he is?
* Although Jack says near the start: *"We're not savages",* it's soon clear he doesn't care about the rules or being civilised: *"Bollocks to the rules! We're strong - we hunt!"* He rejects the order that had been established on the island: *"We don't need the conch any more".*
* At the end, he has no remorse for Piggy's death. He declares himself Chief. He has lost the name Jack, which suggests he has lost all.

# Piggy

* He has physical disadvantages because he is fat and asthmatic and is short sighted. Without his glasses, everything becomes a blur.
* He is very intelligent - in Chapter 1 it is his idea to make a list of names, and it is he who realises that no adult knows the boys are on the island. Later he suggests making a sundial and hats. *"What intelligence had been shown was traceable to Piggy."* Ralph recognises Piggy could think: *"Piggy, for all his ludicrous body, had brains."*
* However, he does not speak as grammatically accurately as the others:*" How can you expect to be rescues if you don't put first things first and act proper".* Perhaps this is to suggest he wasn't as well educated as the others and that he is not from the right class of people to be a successful leader. At the time the novel was written most power was still in the hands of the middle and upper classes. *“Piggy was an outsider, not only by accent, which did not matter, but by fat, and ass-mar, and specs, and a certain disinclination to manual labour."*
* He is embarrassed by his nickname, and he behaves with dignity when Ralph betrays the name to the others. We never know his real name.
* He is kind and considerate to the littluns. He helps the boy with the birthmark talk about the 'snake-thing' and helps Percival talk about the beast. He is later often left to care for them when the others are exploring and hunting.
* He has the most mature attitude of any boy on the island. He scornfully sees the other boys *"Acting like a crowd of kids".*
* He is pragmatic. When Simon dies, Piggy tries to convince Ralph there was nothing they could have done: *"It was an accident... and that's that".*
* Like Ralph, he believes in civilised values and clings to what creates order: *" I just take the conch to say this. I can't see no more and I got to get my glasses back".* When they go to the fort to confront Jack, he shouts *"I got the conch!"* to try to show Jack that he has a right to be heard.
* Piggy and the conch are destroyed together by the rock Roger levers. Thus both intelligence and the symbol of authority are dead, so we know that there is nothing left to stop Jack gaining full control.
* At the end, Ralph mourns the fall through the air of *"the true, wise friend called Piggy".*

# Roger

* When he is first seen, he is described as *"slight”* and *"furtive". "The shock of black hair, down his nape and low on his forehead, seemed to suit his gloomy face and make what had seemed at first unsociable remoteness in to something foreboding."*
* He is a loner and uncommunicative by nature: he *"kept to himself with an inner intensity of avoidance and secrecy."*
* He is cruel. He deliberately spoils the littluns' games. Later, he relishes sharpening a stick at both ends with which to kill Ralph.
* He volunteers to go up the mountain with Ralph and Jack to find the beast.
* He becomes Jack's right hand man: they torture Samneric together to find out Ralph's hiding place. Yet he is capable of acting independently: he levers the rock that kills Piggy on his own initiative.
* He is an executioner. He kills Piggy and, in the final hunt, Ralph fears Roger because he *"carried death in his hands".*

# Simon

* The first time we meet Simon, he is in his choir robes. He faints on the beach because of the heat and Jack mocks him. We know he is delicate. He has epilepsy.
* He is *"a skinny, vivid little boy, with a glance coming up from under a hut of straight hair that hung down, black and course"*. His hair hides his face, which hints to us he is secretive.
* He is imaginative: he sees the buds on the bushes as *“Like candles. Candle bushes. Candle buds".*
* He is helpful and works for the good of others; he is the only one to stick with Ralph to make the shelters. He is kind to the littluns and finds fruit for them.
* The others recognise he is 'different' to them in some way. Ralph says *"He's queer. He's funny."* Piggy says "*He's cracked".*
* He has *"a secret place in a clearing full of flowers and butterflies"*, and is sufficiently at one with the jungle to walk in it alone at night. He is at one with nature and he has no fear. *"He walked with an accustomed tread through the fruit trees."*
* He seems able to prophesy - he is the first to suggest that *"it wasn't a good island"* and he tells Ralph, *"You'll get back to where you came from".*
* He is the most perceptive about the beast. He says *"maybe there is a beast... What I mean is... maybe it's only us".* He is the only one to see that the problems on the island stem from the boys' relationships with each other, not from an outside force. Yet nobody understands what he's trying to say.
* When the Lord of the Flies 'speaks' to him this idea is reiterated: the voice in Simon's head says *"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!... You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you?"*
* He is killed just as he is about to reveal the truth. It is ironic that he is the only one who finds out that the 'beast' was a dead parachutist, but is denied passing on the message because the group of boys think, in their frenzy, he is the beast.
* Simon's close relationship with nature seems to carry on even after he is dead: " *The waves turned the corpse gently in the water. ... Softly, surrounded by a fringe of bright inquisitive creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out towards the open sea".*

# Sam and Eric

* The twins gradually lost their individual names on the island and become Samneric. They depend upon each other and do everything together. *"They were twins and the eye was shocked and incredulous at such cheery duplication. They breathed together, they grinned together, they were chunky and vital."*
* They are the first to see the parachutist (while they are tending the fire at night) and think it is a beast.
* They share Ralph and Piggy's dismay at the death of Simon.
* They are involved in the first successful pig hunt with Jack, but more and more they grow to support Ralph. They join the fight against Jack when Jack raids the shelters at night to get Piggy's glasses. Finally, only Samneric and Piggy are left on Ralph's side. Yet they are not strong enough to withstand a lot of pressure, and ultimately reveal Ralph's hiding place to Roger and Jack. In the end evil triumphs over good.

**Themes**

**Civilization vs. Savagery**  
The central concern of Lord of the Flies is the conflict between two competing impulses that exist within all human beings: the instinct to live by rules, act peacefully, follow moral commands, and value the good of the group against the instinct to gratify one’s immediate desires, act violently to obtain supremacy over others, and enforce one’s will. This conflict might be expressed in a number of ways: civilization vs. savagery, order vs. chaos, reason vs. impulse, law vs. anarchy, or the broader heading of good vs. evil. Throughout the novel, Golding associates the instinct of civilization with good and the instinct of savagery with evil.

The conflict between the two instincts is the driving force of the novel, explored through the dissolution of the young English boys’ civilized, moral, disciplined behavior as they accustom themselves to a wild, brutal, barbaric life in the jungle. Lord of the Flies is an allegorical novel, which means that Golding conveys many of his main ideas and themes through symbolic characters and objects. He represents the conflict between civilization and savagery in the conflict between the novel’s two main characters: Ralph, the protagonist, who represents order and leadership; and Jack, the antagonist, who represents savagery and the desire for power.

As the novel progresses, Golding shows how different people feel the influences of the instincts of civilization and savagery to different degrees. Piggy, for instance, has no savage feelings, while Roger seems barely capable of comprehending the rules of civilization. Generally, however, Golding implies that the instinct of savagery is far more primal and fundamental to the human psyche than the instinct of civilization. Golding sees moral behavior, in many cases, as something that civilization forces upon the individual rather than a natural expression of human individuality. When left to their own devices, Golding implies, people naturally revert to cruelty, savagery, and barbarism. This idea of innate human evil is central to Lord of the Flies, and finds expression in several important symbols, most notably the beast and the sow’s head on the stake. Among all the characters, only Simon seems to possess anything like a natural, innate goodness.

**Loss of Innocence**  
As the boys on the island progress from well-behaved, orderly children longing for rescue to cruel, bloodthirsty hunters who have no desire to return to civilization, they naturally lose the sense of innocence that they possessed at the beginning of the novel. The painted savages in Chapter 12 who have hunted, tortured, and killed animals and human beings are a far cry from the guileless children swimming in the lagoon in Chapter 3. But Golding does not portray this loss of innocence as something that is done to the children; rather, it results naturally from their increasing openness to the innate evil and savagery that has always existed within them. Golding implies that civilization can mitigate but never wipe out the innate evil that exists within all human beings. The forest glade in which Simon sits in Chapter 3 symbolizes this loss of innocence. At first, it is a place of natural beauty and peace, but when Simon returns later in the novel, he discovers the bloody sow’s head impaled upon a stake in the middle of the clearing. The bloody offering to the beast has disrupted the paradise that existed before—a powerful symbol of innate human evil disrupting childhood innocence.

**Fear**

From the beginning of the novel, the boys struggle with fear of the unknown. They fear what they cannot see, the parts of the island they haven’t explored, the mysterious beast, and of course, though they may not realize it at first, they fear the damage they may do to one another. All of these have some “unknown” element to them; they can’t see in the dark, they don’t know what’s on the island, they’re unsure of what the beast really is, and they’re ignorant of the depths of their own violent capabilities.

**Rules and order**

At the heart of this novel is the question of whether the problems of society and all its ills can be traced back to the defects of human nature. Golding seems to be saying that yes, this is the case. The ethical nature of any society depends ultimately on the morality of its individual members, and in *Lord of the Flies*, humans are basically corrupt and inherently evil. It seems that rules and order are the only boundaries keeping people from their true, violent natures. As soon as you take those people and put them outside of a system with punishments and consequences, they will revert to primitive attitudes and actions, and destroy themselves in the process. Man needs the structure provided by civilization.

**Symbols**

**The Conch Shell**  
Ralph and Piggy discover the conch shell on the beach at the start of the novel and use it to summon the boys together after the crash separates them. Used in this capacity, the conch shell becomes a powerful symbol of civilization and order in the novel. The shell effectively governs the boys’ meetings, for the boy who holds the shell holds the right to speak. In this regard, the shell is more than a symbol—it is an actual vessel of political legitimacy and democratic power. As the island civilization erodes and the boys descend into savagery, the conch shell loses its power and influence among them. Ralph clutches the shell desperately when he talks about his role in murdering Simon. Later, the other boys ignore Ralph and throw stones at him when he attempts to blow the conch in Jack’s camp. The boulder that Roger rolls onto Piggy also crushes the conch shell, signifying the demise of the civilized instinct among almost all the boys on the island.

**Piggy’s Glasses**  
Piggy is the most intelligent, rational boy in the group, and his glasses represent the power of science and intellectual endeavour in society. This symbolic significance is clear from the start of the novel, when the boys use the lenses from Piggy’s glasses to focus the sunlight and start a fire. When Jack’s hunters raid Ralph’s camp and steal the glasses, the savages effectively take the power to make fire, leaving Ralph’s group helpless.

**The Fire**  
The signal fire burns on the mountain, and later on the beach, to attract the notice of passing ships that might be able to rescue the boys. As a result, the signal fire becomes a barometer of the boys’ connection to civilization. In the early parts of the novel, the fact that the boys maintain the fire is a sign that they want to be rescued and return to society. When the fire burns low or goes out, we realize that the boys have lost sight of their desire to be rescued and have accepted their savage lives on the island. The signal fire thus functions as a kind of measurement of the strength of the civilized instinct remaining on the island. Ironically, at the end of the novel, a fire finally summons a ship to the island, but not the signal fire. Instead, it is the fire of savagery—the forest fire Jack’s gang starts as part of his quest to hunt and kill Ralph.

**The Beast**  
The imaginary beast that frightens all the boys stands for the primal instinct of savagery that exists within all human beings. The boys are afraid of the beast, but only Simon reaches the realization that they fear the beast because it exists within each of them. As the boys grow more savage, their belief in the beast grows stronger. By the end of the novel, the boys are leaving it sacrifices and treating it as a totemic god. The boys’ behaviour is what brings the beast into existence, so the more savagely the boys act, the more real the beast seems to become.

**The Lord of the Flies**  
The Lord of the Flies is the bloody, severed sow’s head that Jack impales on a stake in the forest glade as an offering to the beast. This complicated symbol becomes the most important image in the novel when Simon confronts the sow’s head in the glade and it seems to speak to him, telling him that evil lies within every human heart and promising to have some “fun” with him. (This “fun” foreshadows Simon’s death in the following chapter.) In this way, the Lord of the Flies becomes both a physical manifestation of the beast, a symbol of the power of evil, and a kind of Satan figure who evokes the beast within each human being. Looking at the novel in the context of biblical parallels, the Lord of the Flies recalls the devil, just as Simon recalls Jesus. In fact, the name “Lord of the Flies” is a literal translation of the name of the biblical name Beelzebub, a powerful demon in hell sometimes thought to be the devil himself.

**Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Simon, Roger**  
Lord of the Flies is an allegorical novel, and many of its characters signify important ideas or themes. Ralph represents order, leadership, and civilization. Piggy represents the scientific and intellectual aspects of civilization. Jack represents unbridled savagery and the desire for power. Simon represents natural human goodness. Roger represents brutality and bloodlust at their most extreme. To the extent that the boys’ society resembles a political state, the littluns might be seen as the common people, while the older boys represent the ruling classes and political leaders. The relationships that develop between the older boys and the younger ones emphasize the older boys’ connection to either the civilized or the savage instinct: civilized boys like Ralph and Simon use their power to protect the younger boys and advance the good of the group; savage boys like Jack and Roger use their power to gratify their own desires, treating the littler boys as objects for their own amusement.

**Context**

# William Golding

William Golding was born in 1911. After leaving Oxford University, he worked as an actor, producer and writer, and then as a teacher in a boy's public school.

During World War 2 Golding was lieutenant in the Royal Navy, in command of a small rocket ship. While carrying out his duties he ordered the destruction of German ships and submarines and he shelled German troops from sea during the D-Day landings.

Golding was horrified by what war revealed about people's capacity to harm their fellow humans. He was appalled by what happened in the Nazi concentration camps, and by the way the Japanese mistreated their prisoners. He was appalled too by the consequences of the British and American mass bombing against civilians - and even by what he himself did as a naval officer.

During the war the British justified all the destruction they wrought on the grounds that they had 'right' on their side, but Golding came to question this smug assumption. He gradually learned to see all human nature as savage and unforgiving: he knew that even the 'goodies' can become 'baddies'. In the novel Ralph and Piggy get as involved in the dance that leads to the killing of Simon as Jack and his tribe are.

World War 2 ended in 1945. The United Nations was set up after the war to try to ensure that a global conflict never happened again, but in 1954, when Lord of the Flies was published, the threat of a nuclear war was still very real. It was entirely plausible to the novel's original audience that an atom bomb really could destroy civilisation.

# Desert Islands

Most imaginary desert islands are peaceful paradises where the shipwrecked traveller manages to continue living pretty much as before. In a book called Coral Island by RM Ballantyne, published in 1857, 100 years before Golding's book, three young British boys are shipwrecked on a desert island and have to survive without any adults. Brave and resourceful, they thoroughly enjoy their experience and there is never a hint of trouble. As one of the characters, Peterkin, says, There was indeed no note of discord whatever in that symphony we played together on that sweet coral island.

From his experience as a teacher, Golding knew that the idyllic life of Coral Island could never exist in real life. So, he set out to write a novel that showed his ideas about the darker side of human nature starting from the same basis: boys stranded on a desert island, away from all civilising influences. Lord of the Flies was the result.

**Useful quotations**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PG** | **Speaker** | Quote | **About** |
| 38 | x | “Then, with the martyred expression of a parent who has to keep up with the senseless ebullience of the children” | Piggy |
| 42 | Jack | “I agree with Ralph. We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English.” | Rules |
| 51 | x | “He tried to convey the compulsion to track down and kill that was swallowing him up.” | Jack/ hunting |
| 53 | Jack | “If you're hunting sometimes... you can feel as if you're not hunting, but -- being hunted.” | hunting |
| 62 | x | “...there was a space around Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life.” | Roger throwing stones |
| 64 | x | “...the mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness.” | Jack's mask |
| 70 | x | “ knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink.” | Jack/ hunting |
| 71 | x | “There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled commonsense.” | Civ vs. sav |
| 81 | Ralph | “But I tell you that smoke is more important than the pig, however often you kill one.” | Civ vs sav |
| 82 | Ralph | “Things are breaking up. I don't understand why. We began well; we were happy. And then -- ...Then people started getting frightened.” | Beast/ fear |
| 84 | Piggy | “I know there isn't no beast -- not with claws and all that, I mean -- but I know there isn't no fear either...Unless--...Unless we get frightened of people.” | Beast/ fear |
| 89 | Simon | "What I mean is... Maybe it's only us." | Beast/ fear |
| 91 | x | “The world, that understandable and lawful word, was slipping away. Once there was this and that; and now -- and the ship had gone.” | Civ vs. sav |
| 115 | x | “Ralph too was fighting to get near, to get a handful of that brown, vulnerable flesh. The desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering.” | Civ vs. sav |
| 126 | Jack | “The beast is a hunter... we couldn't kill it.” | Beast |
| 127 | Jack | “I'm not going to play any longer. Not with you.” | Civ vs. sav |
| 142 | The LOTF | “There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast... Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!... You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are the way they are?” | Beast |
| 142 | x | “The beast was harmless and horrible; and the news must reach the others as soon as possible.” | Beast |
| 152 | x | “Piggy and Ralph, under the threat of the sky, found themselves eager to take a place in this demented but partly secure society.” | Civ vs. sav |
| 170 | Ralph | “after all we aren't savages really and being rescued isn't a game” | Civ vs. sav |
| 202 | x | “Ralph wept for for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of a true, wise friend called Piggy.” | innocence |