



Lord of the Flies by William Golding

English Literature Revision Guide

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- 1) Key terms
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1. Key Terms/ Words

Fear	Democracy	Dictatorship
Human nature	Microcosm	Primitive
Violence	Innocence	Order
Morality	Satanic	Knowledge
Society	Anarchy	Innate
Inherent	Symbolism	Evil

Key Quotations: Chapter by Chapter

Chapter 1:

"They used to call me Piggy!"

"The creature was a party of boys, marching..."

"You're no good on a job like this."

Chapter 2:

"Ralph sat on a fallen trunk, his left side to the sun. On his right were most of the choir; on his left the larger boys who had not known each other before...before him small children squatted in the grass."

"We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English, and the English are best at everything."

"You got your small fire all right."

Chapter 3:

"Then, amid the roar of bees in the afternoon sunlight, Simon found for the fruit they could not reach... passed them back down to the endless, outstretched hands."

"The candle-buds opened their wide white flowers... Their scent spilled out into the air and took possession of the island."

Chapter 4:

"Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life."

"He began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling."

"I painted my face--I stole up. Now you eat--all of you--and I--"

Chapter 5:

"Piggy, for all his ludicrous body, had brains. Ralph was a specialist in thought now, and could recognize thought in another."

"Serve you right if something did get you, you useless lot of cry-babies!"

"Daddy said they haven't found all the animals in the sea yet."

"Maybe there is a beast....maybe it's only us."

"The world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away."

Chapter 6:

"Even the sounds of nightmare from the other shelters no longer reached him, for he was back to where came from, feeding the ponies with sugar over the garden wall."

Chapter 7:

"You'll get back to where you came from."

"Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Kill the pig! Bash him in!"

"The desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering."

"We mustn't let anything happen to Piggy, must we?"

"The only trouble was that he would never be a very good chess player."

Chapter 8:

"He says things like Piggy. He isn't a proper chief."

"Piggy was... so full of pride in his contribution to the good of society, that he helped to fetch wood."

"This head is for the beast. It's a gift."

"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 what they are?"

"You're not wanted..."

Chapter 9:

"Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!"

"They were glad to touch the brown backs of the fence that hemmed in the terror and made it governable."

"There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws."

"The water rose farther and dressed Simon's coarse hair with brightness. The line of his cheek silvered and the turn of his shoulder became sculptured marble."

"Surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out toward the open sea."

Chapter 10:

"We was on the outside. We never done nothing, we never seen nothing."

"You can't tell what he might do."

"There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws."

"What could be safer than the bus centre with its lamps and wheels?"

"It's come... It's real!"

Chapter 11:

"This is jus' talk... I want my glasses."

"After all we aren't savages really..."

"A single drop of water that had escaped Piggy's fingers now flashed on the delicate curve like a star."

"Behind them on the grass the headless and paunched body of a sow lay where they had dropped it."

"Ralph--remember what we came for. The fire. My specs."

"Samneric protested out of the heart of civilization"

"You're a beast and a swine and a bloody, bloody thief!"

"Which is better--to have laws and agree, or to hunt and kill?"

"The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist."

Chapter 12:

"They're not as bad as that. It was an accident."

"Then there was that indefinable connection between himself and Jack; who therefore would never let him alone...."

"A star appeared... and was momentarily eclipsed by some movement."

"Ralph launched himself like a cat; stabbed, snarling, with the spear, and the savage doubled up."

"What was the sensible thing to do? There was no Piggy to talk sense."

"Couldn't a fire outrun a galloping horse?"

"You'll get back."

"He saw a shelter burst into flames and the fire flapped at his right shoulder."

"In the stern-sheets another rating held a sub-machine gun."

"I should have thought that a pack of British boys... would have been able to put up a better show than that."

"Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy."

Background information

- From 1939 during the Second World War, Golding served in the Royal Navy in command of a rocket ship. He was involved in the bombardment and sinking of enemy ships, the Battle of the North

Atlantic and the Normandy Landings. The character of the naval officer in the final moments of the novel may have been a persona he was familiar with. During his wartime service he witnessed and contributed to vast destruction and human suffering.

- The end of the Second World War left him pessimistic and bitter about the future of mankind and our capacity for humanity or 'civilisation': he felt despair at the 'discovery' of the concentration camps as well as the use of the atomic bomb as a way of bringing about an end to the conflict. The war led him to believe in the **innate evil of humanity**. We are trapped by **original sin**.
- The novel is set during a time of global conflict. His original draft of the novel, rejected by his publisher, included an opening chapter that looked at a nuclear war which caused the boys' evacuation from England and their crash. This fictional background may also explain Piggy's pessimism that they will be rescued by adults who are busy destroying each other, and his insistence that they are now responsible for and accountable to themselves.
- Golding worked as a teacher in a boy's private school. From this experience he felt he gained insight into human behaviour and human potential – or lack of.

Character Profiles

Piggy

Pigs are intelligent creatures that are hunted and killed on the island

This parallels the events surrounding Piggy.

- rational and intelligent, overweight and physically unfit
- wears thick glasses
- gets out of breath easily because he has asthma
- poor grammar suggests that he comes from a different social background than Ralph
- thinks logically and has a scientific way of looking at the world
- an outsider
- apprehensive of anything involving physical activity
- severe physical limitations

Ralph

Ralph's name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon language meaning 'counsel'

- well built, athletic
- displays leadership skills immediately
- eager to be rescued and believes desperately that adults will come to their rescue
- needs to be alone to think things out
- responsible and can organise
- tolerant and open-minded
- possesses moral courage
- although he admits to fear, he does not lack courage
- popular and admired
- believes in rules and fair play

Jack

Jack's name is Hebrew in origin and means 'one who supplants'

- leader of the choir and later the hunters
- charismatic, attractive and manipulative
- irritable and quick to anger
- has no time for weakness
- destructive nature
- wants to make up his own rules and is power hungry
- has primitive urges and feelings
- is happy and at home in the forest
- no qualities such as thought and reasoning
- rules his tribe by fear and violence
- used to power
- superficial maturity
- aggressive with violent reactions
- self-confident and arrogant
- irresponsible

Roger

His name, which is Germanic in origin, means 'spear'

- furtive, intense, secretive
- desire to hurt others
- sadistic and irresponsible
- ruthless and coldly violent
- enjoys the freedom of being out of control

Simon

Simon's name comes from the Hebrew word meaning 'listener'

- has fits and is ridiculed
- solitary and stammers
- has insight and is thoughtful about the situation
- has the faith that everything will be all right
- represents the spiritual, poetic point of view
- compassionate
- his oddness is the mark of an individual

Maurice

- enthusiastic and easily swayed
- joins in with Jack's gang and doesn't consider the consequences
- the joker

Sam

- Eric's twin brother, younger than the others
- has dominant control over Eric and is the more dominant of the pair

Eric

- Sam's twin brother, appears much younger than the rest
- follows his brother and accepts his choices

Key Themes

- The need for civilisation/The Basic needs of society
- Innocence and the loss of it
- Fear of the unknown
- Blindness and Sight
- Use and Abuse of Power
- The Loss of Identity
- The Problem of Evil in Man
- Betrayal
- Survival
- Bullying
- Justice and Injustice
- Violence and Death
- Leadership

Sin and Human Brutality

- Human beings are innately evil; we all have the capacity to commit evil and are born with this trait. All we need is a catalyst to allow this brutality to be revealed and acted upon. The boys of the novel, trapped on an island, are representative of humanity. They are a microcosm of our doomed and self-destructive nature. By reverting back to barbarism and barbarity they reflect the **fall of man**.
- Golding takes advantage of this **oxymoron**: children are traditionally seen as innocent and pure, untainted yet by the world and by temptation, so Golding is using the shock value of brutal children to make the reader question their implicit values and assumptions.
- Interestingly, Golding was frustrated by children's stories that he himself read to his children. Stories such as the Famous Five show children working as civilised creatures in harmony, moral awareness and unity to defeat evil. Golding felt that this was ridiculous.

Symbolism

The conch

Rationality

- The conch is symbolic of common sense and discipline. It is beautiful because it is part of the island. "In colour the shell was deep cream, touched here and there with fading pink."
- Its beauty strikes us when Ralph and Piggy find it, but then is forgotten as they put it to use.
- Piggy treats the conch with great care.
- In his world of reason, the symbol of the conch is central to a civilised society.
- The conch gives authority to a speaker and through the conch the needs of the boys can be discussed in an orderly way.
- The boys cannot talk at meetings unless they are holding the conch, and, for Piggy, the conch avows the necessity of decent, controlled behaviour.
- It is Piggy who immediately recognises the shell as a conch and he instructs Ralph how to blow it, in order to call meetings.

Its destruction

- If its destruction at the same time as Piggy's death symbolises the destruction of rationality on the island, it also points out the limitations of that rationality.
- Throughout the novel Piggy cradles the conch, desperate to cling to a world that is sensible and rational.
- However, as the situation on the island deteriorates, and Jack's brutality is entrenched, the conch becomes irrelevant and pointless.
- The conch belongs to nature and as soon as man begins to use it, with whatever decent intentions, it is doomed to inadequacy and oblivion.
- It brings into being assemblies that rapidly disintegrate into horseplay and boredom.
- Once Jack is chief, his initial disregard for the conch becomes absolute, as Jack's society is a society of tyranny and violence.
- The end of the conch, when it shatters with Piggy, comes about because of eyes that can no longer see shining thing or boy, but only empty shell and pig, which stand in the way and fuel the power urge.
- The conch shatters with the same force as Roger destroys Piggy: "the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist."

Rescue sign

After his initial exploration of the island, Ralph calls a second meeting, and discusses the necessity of making a fire so that they can be rescued. This sounds like fun to the boys, and all of them, except Piggy, rush off to build one. The fire rages out of control and "The boys broke into shrill, excited cheering" and "build a bonfire".

Piggy is frustrated and screams at them to "act proper". He is indignant and furious that the boys have gone "and set the whole island on fire". The necessity of a fire as a smoke signal is lost on the boys.

Cooking

- For Jack, the fire is for roasting pig, despite his initial boast that he and his hunters will keep a

rescue fire going. When a ship does pass on the horizon, the fire is dead, as Jack and his hunters are so intoxicated with the hunt that they have forgotten about rescue.

- Jack is angered when Ralph and Piggy attack him about the dead fire. Jack lunges at Piggy and breaks one side of his glasses. The fire is re-lit for the purpose of cooking the pig and the boys feast on meat.
- Later in the novel, when Ralph and Piggy go to Castle Rock to recover Piggy's glasses that Jack and his hunters have stolen, the fire now has one purpose only - cooking pig. Ralph screams at Jack: "Look at that! Call that a signal fire? That's a cooking fire. Now you'll eat and there'll be no smoke. Don't you understand?" Of course Jack and his hunters have no wish to understand, as the idea of rescue belongs to a world long forgotten. Thus at the end of the novel, in order to hunt and kill Ralph, Jack recklessly sets the entire island on fire.

Safety vs destruction

- If the fire is first a rational but false symbol of safety, and then an irrational but true symbol of destruction, then it exactly parallels the symbolic use of the hunters who offer first a hope of sustenance and then a foreshadowing of disaster in their concern with killing rather than cooking. It is indeed ironic that Piggy's spectacles, emblem of a "civilised" intelligence, should be linked to the fire that comes, as much as the beast, to stand for that primitivism and savagery so rampant by the end of the novel. The more sinister associations of the fire are fostered by Jack's assertion that the conch, the would-be symbol of order, does not "count" on the mountain, the location of the fire.

The 'beastie'

Origins

- The term includes all the fear and terrors of the boys. It is a terrifying force that Golding believes is in all of us - a force of evil. As the rules of society lose the fragile grip on people, the concept of the beast becomes increasingly more desperate and more terrifying. This leads to the boys' hysterical "The beast comes out of the sea -" / "Out of the dark -" / "Trees -".
- The beastie is introduced by the boy with the mulberry-coloured birthmark. The small boy seems to have mistaken the large tree-creepers for snakes. The "littluns" become more and more frightened by the darkness and have nightmares about the "beastie".
- One of the most pathetic aspects of the reality of the boys as frightened and confused humankind is their insistence on seeking the beast everywhere but in the place of its origin, the human heart. Adults can comfort children after nightmares but in a situation where no adults are present and where the nightmares are made to indicate the terrible limitations of adult knowledge, no such comfort can emerge.
- For Jack, the beast is something that can be controlled. Hence he offers the head of a pig as a sacrifice, as a gift for the beast. Furthermore, Jack's frenzied hunting and the ritual chanting enable the boys to forget the beast temporarily.

Realisation

- It is through Simon's confrontation with the Lord of the Flies that Golding articulates this dark, sinister force. "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you?" Thus when the dead parachutist lands on the island, he is taken for the beast by everyone except Simon. The boys flee from the sight of "this great ape & sitting asleep with its head between its knees." But Simon recognises that "the beast was harmless and horrible". However, before he has a chance to inform the boys, he is killed. In the death of Simon, Golding reinforces his statement about the beast, the fact that the

beast is "other". First, it was the pig, then Simon, next Piggy, and if it were not for the Royal Navy, Ralph. All the deaths are variations on pig slaying, as the boys externalise the evil, "the beastie", that is in every one of them.

Piggy's Glasses

- These represent science and clear-sightedness but they are soon broken. Like the science of the atom that has been perverted for nuclear war, they are perverted by Jack and the others to become a mere instrument for making a fire.

The Lord of the Flies

- 'Lord of the Flies' is a literal translation of **Beelzebub**, an alternative name for the devil. He/it is a very powerful **symbol** in the novel and represents **evil** and **savagery**.
- When the boar's head 'speaks' to Simon it promises him some 'fun'. This sinister remark **foreshadows** his death in the next chapter. This ties in with a biblical reading of the novel, as Simon can be seen as a **Jesus** like character within the novel, warning the boys about their **inner evil**.
- At the end of the novel, Ralph knocks the skull to the floor suggesting he has understood the evil it represents.

The Influence of the Coral Island

Ideal vs real

- Golding has admitted that RM Ballantyne's novel *Coral Island*, published in 1858, has a "pretty big connection" with *Lord of the Flies*. However, whereas Ballantyne's boys lead noble, thoroughly decent lives - for they are "Britons", a term with which they compliment one another throughout - Golding's boys progressively deteriorate. *Lord of the Flies* challenges the *Coral Island* morality that Golding obviously regards as unrealistic. Ballantyne's island is a 19th century island inhabited by English boys in the full pomposity of Victorian superiority, ignorance, and prosperity. To a generation that has witnessed two wars, Ballantyne's resolution is naive.

Similar characters

- Golding clearly intended *Lord of the Flies* (1954) as a realist's answer to *Coral Island*.

In *Coral Island*, three boys are shipwrecked on an unidentified Pacific island - Ralph Rover, the 15 year-old narrator; Jack Martin, "a tall strapping broad-shouldered youth of 18, with a handsome, good-humoured firm face" and Peterkin Gay, "little, quick, funny, decidedly mischievous and about 14 years old". The lads live in "uninterrupted harmony and happiness". At the end of the novel, just as the boys think they will be devoured by savages, they are released into the hands of their teacher who announces "through the great goodness of God you are free!". The natives embrace Christianity, and all is well.

Golding's protagonists are also named Ralph and Jack; Peterkin becomes the overweight Piggy. Simon is an independent creation, although Golding has claimed that Simon was inspired by Peterkin, perhaps suggesting that the name of Peterkin is linked to that of Simon Peter of the New Testament - two names deriving from one. Along with numerous other boys ranging in age from six to 12, they are abandoned on a South Sea Island after being evacuated from Britain during a nuclear war. However, there is no "uninterrupted harmony and happiness" on Golding's coral island, but **anarchy, chaos** and **murder**.

- **Evil intentions**

It is Golding's intention in *Lord of the Flies* to tell a true story - to expose the **beast** within every one of us and tell a realistic story - "a book" as he put it "about real boys on an island, showing what a mess they'd make." Golding is quite clear on this point: "Within the child are the seeds of evil that will eventually flower."

Golding questions civilisation itself; against man's innate savagery it seems contemptibly weak. In Golding's view, the innocence of the child is a crude fallacy, for man has by nature a terrible potentiality for evil. This potentiality cannot be eradicated or controlled by a human political system, no matter how respectable.

Golding insists that evil is inherent in man, a terrifying force that he must recognise and control. We are, in Golding's words, a species that "produces evil as a bee produces honey. "Just as the humble insect produces sweetness, we produce the wickedness and violence that sour our lives. Evil lies within man, whose nature is inherently depraved. Man's basic instinct is to kill, and the depth of his wickedness is revealed in his tendency to kill his own species.

- **Microcosm of the adult world**

Explained Golding (in an interview concerning the novel):

I decided to take the literary convention of boys on an island, only make them real boys instead of paper cutouts with no life in them, and try to show how the shape of the society they evolved would be conditioned by their diseased, their fallen nature.

According to Golding:

The whole book is **symbolic** in nature except the rescue in the end where adult life appears, dignified and capable, but in reality enmeshed in the same evil as the symbolic life of the children on the island. The officer, having interrupted a manhunt, prepares to take the children off the island in a cruiser which will presently be hunting its enemy in the same implacable way. And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?

Golding's aim

What Golding is saying is that there is no essential difference between the island world and the adult one. The children reveal the same nature as the grown-ups. In fact the child's world on the island is a painful microcosm of the adult world, for the ruin they bring upon themselves is universal. After all it is atomic warfare in the air that has brought them to the island.

The Significance of the Title

- The title is a translation of Beelzebub, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Ba'alzevuv, which in Judaism and Christianity denotes the principles of evil personified. He is one of the chief devils in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
- Golding equates the *Lord of the Flies* with the demonic (devilish) force present in humankind - a force so hideous, that fly-covered excrement would best represent it. Golding presents evil, not as an abstraction, but as something concrete, namely, a pig's head swarming with flies.
- In order to account for Simon's insight into the nature of evil, Golding makes him a visionary and a saint. Simon knows there is no beast: "maybe it's only us," he suggests. To clarify his suggestion, he asks timidly, "What's the dirtiest thing there is?" Jack answers in a word of "one crude expressive syllable." The word is obviously "shit", which in 1954 Golding was too discreet to use. The logic

here is clear but depressing: if humans are the beasts, then humans are shit. Thus the two basic metaphors for evil are flies and excrement, so that the Lord of the Flies is the Lord of Dung. Excrement is everywhere on the island. Eating fruit causes diarrhoea, and the island is dotted with faeces.

2. Exam Top Tips For Success

You will answer ONE essay question.

The essay is worth 30 marks in total.

(plus 4 extra marks for your ability to write fluently and demonstrate good literacy)

You will be examined on your ability to:

- Respond thoughtfully to the task (use the key words from the question to show you are answering it)
- Respond thoughtfully to the whole text (show knowledge and understanding of the start-middle-end of the novel)
- Use quotations to support your ideas
- Show appreciation /consideration of writer's uses of language and/or form and/or structure and effect on readers/*audience*
- Thoughtful consideration of ideas/*themes*

USE THESE:

Sentence starters to use which impress examiners and prompt secure analysis:

ANALYSIS: This implies... / This suggests...

DEVELOPED ANALYSIS: The use of the word " ____ " suggests....

EVALUATION: This is/isn't effective because.... /This is/ isn't successful because...

EFFECT ON THE READER: This makes the reader think/ feel....

MULTIPLE INTERPRETATION: Alternatively, this may suggest... On the other hand, it could also imply...

3. Past Questions: *Lord of the Flies* Essay Questions

- 1) Discuss the ways law and order disintegrates on the island.
- 2) Why do you think Golding called his novel *Lord of the Flies*?

3) What do you think Golding has to say about civilisation and civilised behaviour in the novel?

You should consider the following:

- Which characters and ideas are “civilised”
- How Golding presents the “uncivilised”
- The ending of the novel

4) Write about how one or more of the following are presented in the novel:

- Violence and savagery
- Children and adults
- How leaders gain power

5) Discuss how Golding presents ONE of the following characters:

- Jack
- Ralph
- Roger
- Simon
- Piggy

6) What do you think is more true, that the boys bring evil to the island or that the island exerts an evil influence on them?

7) Simon says, “Maybe there is a beast.”

Ralph says, “But there isn’t a beast.”

Jack says, “We’ll make sure when we go hunting.”

How does William Golding use the “beast” in the novel as a whole?

You should write about:

- What the “beast” may symbolise
- The way the boys’ ideas about the “beast” change
- What effect the “beast” has on the boys

8) Ralph is changed by his experiences on the island. How does Golding show this?

You should write about:

- What he is like when he is first stranded on the island
- What he tries to do and how he responds to events and situations
- How the writer presents the character of Ralph

9) Although the reader’s sympathies are usually with Ralph, many of the boys decide to follow Jack.

Explain what you think are the differences in what Jack and Ralph stand for and in how they behave in the novel.

10) Why do you think Golding chose to set *Lord of the Flies* on an island, and how does he use the island in the novel?

11) Piggy is clearly a clever boy, but he is a victim too. How is he important in the novel?