

The Lord of the Flies

By William Golding

Adventure

World War II

1. The Author and His Times

William Gerald Golding was born on September 19, 1911 in Cornwall England. His father was a schoolmaster and his mother was a suffragette. His parents had wanted him to study science, so he did from grammar school until the second year of college. After his second year of college, he abandoned the study of science in favor of English literature. He wrote poetry and worked in amateur theater for a while before becoming a teacher where he was at the beginning of World War II. At the start of World War II, he entered the Royal navy and served with distinction on mine sweepers, destroyers, and rocket launchers. He believed that the horrors of World War II can be based on some innate evil which he explores in Lord of the Flies. After the war, he returned to teaching and writing, although had little success getting published. He was able to get Lord of the Flies published and it experienced great success.

2. Form, Structure, and Plot

The Lord of the Flies contains twelve titled chapters. The plot is simple and rarely splits into more than one plot lines, although it does sometimes. Occasionally, the story separates from the general group and follows one child. For example, the story followed the first of Jack's hunts into the jungle, and also Simon's wanderings to be alone. One of the techniques he uses in organizing plot is foreshadow. Through the use and manipulation of many symbols, he gives the reader an idea of what is to come foreshadowing future events.

2.5 Outline of Events

Exposition - The exposition is basically all of chapter 1 and the first part of chapter 2. The characters are introduced and so is the problem. The readers learn that because of the war, the children were taken to be transported someplace by plane when the plane was attacked and crashed on the island. Ralph is made the leader of the entire group and Jack is made the leader of the hunting party. Piggy tries to maintain order. This takes the period of 1 day.

Rising action - The rising action starts in the middle of chapter 2 where the boys attempt to make a signal fire but it rages out of control. One of the boys are lost. After this, order is slowly lost and chaos slowly takes its place.

Climax / Crises - The climax occurs when order is completely lost, the conch is crushed, and Piggy is killed. Jack takes over the group.

Falling action - The falling action is the brief period between the time where Jack takes over and the officer arrives. We see the innate evil within the boys which is a reflection of the evil within the entire mankind.

Resolution - The jungle catches fire and a naval ship spots the smoke. An officer comes ashore just as Ralph is being hunted by the other boys and all are rescued and taken back into society.

3. Point of View

Golding write the novel in the third person perspective. There is one omniscient narrator. Although the book generally follows Ralph, it occasionally breaks off and follows another character for a time. This entire book is autobiographical in that it tells us something the author wants to show us. Golding tries to teach us and warn us of the evil nature of mankind. He says through the book that we are evil and that it is only society that keeps us from committing crimes.

4. Character

Golding's characters have a depth and are believable for the somewhat unbelievable situation they are put in. Each character has his own fully developed personality. He does this while maintaining a certain symbolism in the characters. Each character, while being their own person, symbolizes some idea, but not to the point where the characters are flat.

Ralph - Ralph is 12 and one of the older boys on the island. He is the leader throughout most of the book being determined, rational, and understanding. He is dressed as in a typical school uniform, but not as the choir boys. He tries to understand the problem and the people on the island trying to give rational solutions. However, psychologically, he loses faith in the boys and decides that he has little hope to restore order into the island. His purpose is to show the reader through his eyes the degradation of the society on the island, and thereby show the innate evil within man. "This expresses his understanding and caring side."

Jack - Jack is also one of the older boys and about Ralph's age. He starts as the leader of the choir boys, and develops into the leader of the hunters eventually taking over everyone on the island. He is dressed nicely in a choir boy outfit. He is strong, villainous, and proud perpetuating the crimes committed by the boys on the island. He cares only for his own power and not for the common good. He disregards order and in him the reader clearly sees the innate evil of man since he was the one that cast-off society earliest. He becomes Ralph's most powerful antagonist because of this. "I ought to be chief because I'm chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp."

Piggy - Piggy is slightly younger than Ralph and in the weakling in the group being overweight and suffering from asthma. He is dressed similar to Ralph in a typical school uniform and ears glasses. He is weak, smart, and friendly. While is put down by the other

boys, he is necessary on the island as a source of intelligence and insight. His insights are often ignored because of his weak appearance and he is killed by the Jack and his savages. "My auntie told me not to run on account of my asthma."

Simon - Simon is the saint in the story. He is skinny and dressed similar to Ralph in the school uniform. He is kind, caring and sincere. In the novel, he serves to bring a certain insight into the story. He is the one that seems to best understand the inner evil, and the first to understand the beast. He takes care of the littluns. Sadly, his insight is lost among the boys as he is killed being mistaken for the beast. "Simon, sitting between the twins and Piggy, wiped his mouth and shoved his piece of meat over the rocks to Piggy, who grabbed it. The twins giggled and Simon lowered his face in shame."

5. Setting

The Lord of the Flies takes place on an island during World War II. This is significant since the isolation forms a sort of civilization and community, a sort of microcosm to the real world. At the same time, the island lacks a society and the societal laws and rules allowing for the boys to run wild and show their true, ugly, inner selves. Since the island is a microcosm, Golding uses it to reflect our world and give comments on our world and his view of human nature. In this book, the setting is used less to create a mood than to put the characters in a particular situation

6. Themes

1. This book traces the faults in society to the faults in the individual person. Golding says that each person has an evil inner nature poorly covered by society. If the society is taken away, then the inner nature comes out and chaos and lawlessness erupt.
2. Each person has an evil nature and is capable of committing heinous crimes. In this book, virtually every person fell to the level of Jack's savagery except those that were able to see that evil such as Ralph, Simon, and Piggy.
3. The beast is human. In the beginning of the book, a littlun told the others that he saw a beast in the jungle starting everyone's fears. However, it turns out that the beast is actually a parachutist and human, symbolizing that what they should be scared of is not some evil creature, but their own selves and other humans.

7. Style

Golding makes his novel come alive with a significant use of symbolism, physiological development, and general truths. His writing style is simple but the subject matter is deep. He uses a rather comparatively simple story to convey a weighty idea.

8. Diction

In The Lord of the Flies, Golding's language is neutral. However, it is simple and it is as if he is telling the story himself rather than writing prose. The vocabulary and sentence

structure are simply and easy to understand. Golding uses a lot of imagery and symbolic devices.

Passage 1 - "The three boys walked briskly on the sand. The tide was low and there was a strip of weed-strewn beach that was almost as firm as a road. A kind of glamour was spread over them and the scene and they were conscious of the glamour and made happy by it. They turned to each other, laughing excitedly, talking, not listening. The air was bright. Ralph, forced by the task of translating all this into an explanation, stood on his head and fell over. When they had done laughing, Simon stroked Ralph's arm shyly; and they had to laugh again." (pg. 25)

Passage 2 - "When you're done laughing, perhaps we can get on with the meeting. And if them littluns climb back on the twister again, they'll only fall off in a sec. So they might as well sit on the ground and listen. no. You have doctors for everything, even the inside of your mind. You don't really mean that we got to be frightened all the time of nothing? Life," said Piggy expansively, "is scientific, that's what it is. In a year or two when the war's over they'll be traveling to Mars and back. I know there isn't no beast - not with claws and all that, I mean - but I know there isn't no fear, either." (pg. 84)

Passage 3 - "Ralph looked at him dumbly. For a moment he had a fleeting picture of the strange glamour that had once invested the beaches. But the island was scorched up like dead wood - Simon was dead - and Jack had.... The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, 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." (pg. 202)

Golding's writes in a simple neutral style. His language is not complicated or flowery. At the same time, it is not too informal. He uses a lot of imagery as can be seen in his description of the "weed-strewn beach" that was "as firm as a road" in passage one. The dialogue in passage two is not at all flowery and sounds like typical speech for a 12 year old, except that Piggy seems to show an amount of wisdom greater than your typical 12 year old. Passage 3 is written clearly and nicely shows emotion while still narrating in a neutral tone without too much involvement from the narrator.

9. Syntax

Most of the sentences in *The Lord of the Flies* are simple. There are sentences that are complex and the occasional compound sentence. Most characters speak simply and clearly. Often, they speak fragments and string together fragments and ramble such as in passage 2. All the speech is written as if it were speech.

The first passage contains mostly simple sentences. One example of a compound sentence is, "when they had done laughing, Simon stroked Ralph's arm shyly; and they had to laugh again."

The second passage contains both simple and complex sentences. In this passage, the speech is somewhat rambling and contains several fragments. However, this sort of speech conveys the idea that Piggy was thinking while he was speaking. The third passage contains mostly simple and complex sentences. The writing style here gives the feeling of desperation and loss of hope. The reader feels how Ralph feels and understands what he understands about the “loss of innocence.”

10. Imagery

Golding frequently uses imagery to describe the scenery and the setting. A good example occurs in the first passage where Golding’s writes, “there was a strip of weed-strewn beach that was almost as firm as a road. A kind of glamour was spread over them and the scene and they were conscious of the glamour and made happy by it.”

11. Symbolism

Golding uses a lot of symbolism in *The Lord of the Flies*. The entire book is symbolic of the nature of man and society in general as the island becomes a society metaphorical to society as a whole and the hunt at the end of the book symbolic of the war. A symbol Golding uses throughout the book is the conch. It represents authority and order. The person holding the conch had the power, and it created order and rules since when it was called, everyone had to listen. Another symbol is Piggy’s glasses. It symbolized knowledge and insight. While Piggy had them, he was able to give advice to the group, such as that of the signal fire. It was the glasses that created the fire. However, after the glasses are broken, the group loses what insight they had. The war paint is also a symbol. It symbolized the rejection of society. In a way, when they put on the mask of war paint, they took off the mask of society and revealed their true inner selves which was savage.

12. Figurative Language

Personification - Golding uses little personification in this book. He does use it, however, during the conversation between the dead pig head and Simon. The head is personified and given able to speak to Simon. Although it is dead, it is proud and defiant in its speech.

Simile - Golding occasionally uses simile. One occasion occurs in the first passage when Golding compares the sand with a road saying, “there was a strip of weed-strewn beach that was almost as firm as a road.”

Metaphor - Golding often uses metaphor in this book. In fact, all symbolism is a type of metaphor since they compare two unlike things. Other metaphors in the book was when Golding described the choir boy at the beginning of the book as a dark creature crawling along the sand.

Allusion - Golding has several allusions in the book. The title itself is an allusion to the Bible since "The Lord of the Flies" was a title given to Beelzebub. Simon's name in the book is also an allusion to the disciple Simon Peter.

13. Ironic Devices

There are several cases of irony in this book. Usually, the meaning is straightforward. However, I did find a case of verbal irony. That case is when Ralph and Piggy are discussing Simon's death. Ralph says, "I wasn't scared. I was - I don't know what I was."

14. Tone

Golding's tone is that of a lecturer. Through his book he tries to teach us and warn us about our own evil. This tone is carried through the novel. The tone is maintained more through the events and the characters in the story than by syntax or writing style. An example is the discovery of the parachutist. The writing style at this part remained just as neutral as the rest of the book, but the event of finding the parachutist as the beast teaches us that it is not some mystical monster, we have to be worried about but ourselves.

15. Memorable quotes

"'I ought to be chief,' said Jack with simple arrogance, 'because I'm chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp.'" This shows the early signs of the tension between Jack and Ralph, and it also shows Jack's pride.

"Ralph stirred uneasily. Simon, sitting between the twins and Piggy, wiped his mouth and shoved his piece of meat over the rocks to Piggy, who grabbed it. The twins giggled and Simon lowered his face in shame." This quote shows that Simon is kind and sincere.

"Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in." These expresses the increasing intensity of the boys' savagery.

"It was dark. there was that -- that bloody dance. There was lightning and thunder and rain. We was scared!" This describes how the boys' have gone beyond the point of fun and games. They are no longer boys playing on the island but a bunch of savages.

16. Additional Comments and Analysis

I greatly enjoyed this book. The story without the symbolism was intricate and emotional. Golding does a good job showing the emotional states of Ralph and Jack. We can see Ralph gradually losing hope and understanding the evil, and we can see Jack become power hungry and savage. The murders add a nice touch to the story since they are both dramatic and moving. The symbolism adds another level to the enjoyment of the story since I can compare the ideas developed in the story to my own life and my own beliefs.

Opinion:

I really liked the book for its interesting message. It's deep and challenging to read. Others will definitely enjoy reading this book for its interesting message and often shocking events.

The book seemed to appeal to adolescents' natural skepticism about the allegedly humane values of adult society. It also captured the keen interest of their instructors in debating the merits and defects of different characters and the hunting down of literary sources and deeper symbolic or allegorical meanings in the story—all of which were in no short supply. Did the ending of the story—a modern retelling of a Victorian story of children stranded on a deserted island—represent the victory of civilization over savagery, or vice versa? Was the tragic hero of the tale Piggy, Simon, or Ralph? Was Golding's biggest literary debt owed to R. M. Ballantyne's children's adventure story, *The Coral Island*, or to Euripides's classic Greek tragedy, *The Bacchae*?

Though the popularity of Golding's works as a whole has ebbed and grown through the years, *Lord of the Flies* has remained his most read book. The questions raised above, and many more like them, have continued to fascinate readers. It is for this reason, more than any other, that many critics consider *Lord of the Flies* a classic of our times.

Lord of the Flies has attracted an immense amount of both favorable and unfavorable criticism. Most vehement among the latter critics are Kenneth Rexroth, whose essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* castigated the author for having written a typical "rigged" "thesis novel" whose characters "never come alive as real boys." In the same camp is Martin Green (1960), who criticizes Golding's early works, including *Lord of the Flies*, as "not importantly original in thought or feeling." Otherwise admiring critics like James R. Baker have claimed that the popularity of the book peaked by the end of the 1960s because of that decade's naive view of humanity and rejection of original sin.