

A fair-haired boy lowers himself down some rocks toward a lagoon on a beach. At the lagoon, he encounters another boy, who is chubby, intellectual, and wears thick glasses. The fair-haired boy introduces himself as Ralph and the chubby one introduces himself as Piggy. Through their conversation, we learn that in the midst of a war, a transport plane carrying a group of English boys was shot down over the ocean. It crashed in thick jungle on a deserted island. Scattered by the wreck, the surviving boys lost each other and cannot find the pilot.

Ralph and Piggy look around the beach, wondering what has become of the other boys from the plane. They discover a large pink and cream-colored conch shell, which Piggy realizes could be used as a kind of makeshift trumpet. He convinces Ralph to blow through the shell to find the other boys. Summoned by the blast of sound from the shell, boys start to straggle onto the beach. The oldest among them are around twelve; the youngest are around six. Among the group is a boys' choir, dressed in black gowns and led by an older boy named Jack. They march to the beach in two parallel lines, and Jack snaps at them to stand at attention. The boys taunt Piggy and mock his appearance and nickname.

The boys decide to elect a leader. The choirboys vote for Jack, but all the other boys vote for Ralph. Ralph wins the vote, although Jack clearly wants the position. To placate Jack, Ralph asks the choir to serve as the hunters for the band of boys and asks Jack to lead them. Mindful of the need to explore their new environment, Ralph chooses Jack and a choir member named Simon to explore the island, ignoring Piggy's whining requests to be picked. The three explorers leave the meeting place and set off across the island.

The prospect of exploring the island exhilarates the boys, who feel a bond forming among them as they play together in the jungle. Eventually, they reach the end of the jungle, where high, sharp rocks jut toward steep mountains. The boys climb up the side of one of the steep hills. From the peak, they can see that they are on an island with no signs of civilization. The view is stunning, and Ralph feels as though they

have discovered their own land. As they travel back toward the beach, they find a wild pig caught in a tangle of vines. Jack, the newly appointed hunter, draws his knife and steps in to kill it, but hesitates, unable to bring himself to act. The pig frees itself and runs away, and Jack vows that the next time he will not flinch from the act of killing. The three boys make a long trek through dense jungle and eventually emerge near the group of boys waiting for them on the beach.

Analysis

Lord of the Flies dramatizes the conflict between the civilizing instinct and the barbarizing instinct that exist in all human beings. The artistic choices Golding makes in the novel are designed to emphasize the struggle between the ordering elements of society, which include morality, law, and culture, and the chaotic elements of humanity's savage animal instincts, which include anarchy, bloodlust, the desire for power, amorality, selfishness, and violence. Over the course of the novel, Golding portrays the rise and swift fall of an isolated, makeshift civilization, which is torn to pieces by the savage instincts of those who compose it.

In this first chapter, Golding establishes the parameters within which this civilization functions. To begin with, it is populated solely with boys—the group of young English schoolboys shot down over the tropical island where the novel takes place. The fact that the characters are only boys is significant: the young boys are only half formed, perched between civilization and savagery and thus embodying the novel's central conflict. Throughout the novel, Golding's foundation is the idea that moral and societal constraints are learned rather than innate—that the human tendency to obey rules, behave peacefully, and follow orders is imposed by a system that is not in itself a fundamental part of human nature. Young boys are a fitting illustration of this premise, for they live in a constant state of tension with regard to the rules and regulations they are expected to follow. Left to their own devices, they often behave with instinctive cruelty and violence. In this regard, the civilization established in *Lord of the Flies*—a product of preadolescent boys' social instincts—seems endangered from the beginning.