

### **Lord of the Flies Final In-Class Essay**

Choose **one** of the following essay topics and write a multi-paragraph essay addressing the topic. Some of the topics are very broad, so be sure to choose your own focus.

1. Choose **three** of the hunts and explore what they illustrate in the novel.
2. Consider a possible **theme** and/or **symbol** of the novel and discuss how it is expressed and developed. You may choose more than one.
3. "I learned during World War II just how brutal people can be to each other. Not just Germans or Japanese, but everyone." Discuss how Golding expresses this in Lord of the Flies.
4. Discuss what the **conflict** between Ralph and Jack can tell us about human nature (*you knew this was coming*) and our own society.
5. Discuss the ending of the novel.

Topic: 1. Three hunts

Intro: The evolution of their prey / what they're willing to prey on / underlying desire for power

Topic 1: Chapter 4: Jack and his hunters learn the liberation of face-paint and kill their first pig.

Topic 2: Chapter 8: Jack and his hunters split from the tribe and brutally slaughter a mother sow.

Topic 3: Chapter 12: Ralph becomes the prey of the hunters and the island burns.

Concl.:

In *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding, the progression of the boys' depravity is mirrored in the progression of the hunters, both as their group grows in size and as their choice of prey evolves. Their progression from hunting a pig to hunting a mother sow to hunting a human shows us both how the boys are becoming more and more used to violence and how they are building up a kind of tolerance for the killing of another human. This progression is further mirrored in the change in Jack's attitude towards blood, as in the first hunt he is disgusted by it whereas later, starting with the killing of the sow, he revels in it. The irrational fear that grips all of them has caused them to descend into a dark, violent mindset, one which sustains itself only on the conquest of other living things, as if in exerting their power over others they are gaining a temporary high which allows them to forget about their overwhelming fear; Jack, someone who

was already addicted to the rush of power before arriving on the island, becomes the natural leader of a group such as this, as he understands more clearly the allure of hunting and is able to use his understanding to convince more boys to join his side.

In Chapter 4, the hunters, currently just comprised of a few boys, first experience this high as they “impose their will upon [a pig]” (74). Jack’s attitude towards blood here is undergoing a change: he “grimace[s] distastefully” at the blood on his hands, and he “twitch[e]s” when he remembers cutting the pig’s throat, “shuddering” as he describes the “lashings of blood,” but he also is beginning to enjoy the concept of the blood, saying “you should have seen it . . . you should have seen the blood” and laughing at his own distaste for it, convincing himself that he must become enamoured with it to be a hunter (73). This pig that they kill is, at this point, the closest thing to a human they have ever killed, and the novel emphasizes the parallels between the pigs and the littluns when in Chapter 1 it describes the piglet as being caught “in the madness of extreme terror,” with a voice that is “thin, needle-sharp and insistent” (28). It bleeds just like them, it thinks only of food in a similar way, and it is terrified of an unknown new presence on the island, striking in the darkness of the undergrowth. The allure of all this to the boys is described here too: it is a “brilliant world of hunting, tactic, fierce exhilaration [and] skill,” infinitely more attractive to the frightened boys than Ralph’s “world of longing, and baffled common sense” (75). As the rest of the group learns about this high, this relief from the terror that pervades the island, they begin to incline themselves away from the confusing civilization of Ralph and Piggy and towards the easy escape of Jack’s hunting, and this inclination will only grow from here.

In Chapter 8, this tension between the two groups finally breaks, and Jack splits off from the main group to form his own hunting tribe, following surreptitiously by the

majority of the biguns. His promise of a life where one can find an escape from the fear that has, by this point, completely overtaken them is something only the few with the greatest intrinsic ties to civilization, like Piggy, Samneric, and Ralph, can resist. Jack is “brilliantly happy” that he finally has a group of people whom he is the leader of, and understanding the reason that they all came to him, he tells them that they’re “going to forget the beast” (146). He finds, however, that he can derive even more power by channeling their fear of the beast when they aren’t hunting, and so proposes a ritual, intended to both release them from their fear while hunting and keep them dependent on his leadership with that same fear while not: when they kill their prey they are to “leave some of the kill for it” (147). They then begin their hunt, and before long, they encounter a sow in “deep maternal bliss” (147). Not only is the sow more human than the pig from before, as she tends to her young, “enjoying the shadows under the trees” in a similar way to, in Chapter 4, the children are described to “duck” the heat, “running to the shade and lying there,” but she is also connected to the rapidly disappearing innocence of the children in her role as a mother, a tie which still links them back to the civilization they are trying to cast off. In the following scene, they kill her in a manner that the book describes almost as rape, and in this way they cast off both the bond to their mother and the social taboo against incest, severing any ties between them and innocence in the process. As soon as the frenzy is over, it’s apparent that Jack has them back under his control by the power of the fear of the beast yet again, as they become “suddenly furtive” as he sets the sow’s head upon the stake, saying that the “head is for the beast” (151). The high has ended, and they are again under the influence of the beast, and its overwhelming, irrational terror.

Chapter 12, the end of the novel, is concerned with the final hunt, the human hunt, and the point where everything seems to come to a head. Between Chapter 8 and now, the “savages” have killed both Simon and Piggy, and they now have zero disinclination to launching a full-scale hunt for Ralph. Their violent intent is outlined when Ralph is told that “Roger sharpened a stick at both ends,” a callback to the similar order Jack gives Roger in Chapter 8 when preparing the impale and display the sow’s head, telling him to “sharpen a stick at both ends” (211, 150). Ralph does not understand the implications of this, however, as he “trie[s] to attach a meaning to this but could not”, which shows us how he has still retained some of his innocence, even if the deaths of Simon and Piggy have developed within him the seeds of a kind of disbelieving cynicism (211). The final hunt not only shows how the hunters finally are able to hunt a human without reservation, but its complete destruction of the island, including the shelters, also cements the idea that they have cut all ties with civilization and have gone completely wild. The only reason they are now able to organize to form this hunting party is the desire for the high that will provide relief from their terror, and they can see the dismemberment of Ralph and the offering of his head to the beast only as another source of relief.

As the novel concludes, the boys are taken out of this vicious cycle of fear by the presence of something which both comforts and shames them: the adult world, the civilization which they left behind, and with it the realization of what it is they have done. The irony of the ending is that the civilization they are going back to is barely in better shape than their island’s, but as of now they have at least thrown off the burden of one form of irrational fear, so it at least feels like resolution. These three hunts come at three pivotal points in the progression of fear in the novel: in the first, the boys discover

that there is an easy release from the fear; in the second, they learn to worship it, and begin to live from hunting high to hunting high; and in the third, the progression of their fear-induced violence and depravity comes to a head, only to be stopped by an outside force with more of a psychological effect even than the fear within them. The ending fits the book well because it flips it on its head, forcing you to think critically about the progression that came before it, and to consider the inversion of the savages to small, vulnerable children once again. *Lord of the Flies* tells such a compelling story because it applies our darkest understandings of humanity to children, questioning if there even is such a thing as innocence, and in doing so forces us to look inward and recognize the same qualities within ourselves.