

 **AQA GCSE English Literature**

Lord of the Flies

Contents

- * Lord of the Flies: Overview
- * Lord of the Flies: Plot Summary
- * Lord of the Flies: Themes
- * Lord of the Flies Key Theme: Civilisation versus Savagery
- * Lord of the Flies Key Theme: Good versus Evil
- * Lord of the Flies Key Theme: Religion
- * Lord of the Flies Key Theme: Power and Leadership
- * Lord of the Flies: Characters
- * Lord of the Flies: Ralph Character Analysis
- * Lord of the Flies: Piggy Character Analysis
- * Lord of the Flies: Simon Character Analysis
- * Lord of the Flies: Jack Character Analysis
- * Lord of the Flies: Roger Character Analysis
- * Lord of the Flies: Context
- * Lord of the Flies: Writer's Methods and Techniques
- * Lord of the Flies: Key Quotations
- * Lord of the Flies: Character Quotations



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Overview

Lord of the Flies is Section A of Paper 2 of your GCSE English Literature examination. You are expected to write one essay-length answer to one set question (from a choice of two) and, unlike with the Shakespeare and 19th-century novel questions, you will not be given an extract from the text. This can seem daunting at first, but this page contains some helpful information and links to more detailed revision note pages, that will enable you to feel confident answering any question on Lord of the Flies. This page includes:

- **A summary of Lord of the Flies**
- **Lord of the Flies plot**
- **A brief overview of what is required in the exam**
- **Lord of the Flies characters**
- **Lord of the Flies context**
- **Lord of the Flies themes**
- **Lord of the Flies quotes**
- **Top tips for the highest grade**

Lord of the Flies summary

Lord of the Flies is a novel, written in 1954, by the English writer William Golding. Golding was born in 1911 in Cornwall, England, and grew up in Wiltshire, before going on to graduate with a degree in English from Oxford University. After Oxford he became a teacher and schoolmaster, teaching a variety of subjects in a number of schools for over 20 years, only interrupted by his military service during World War Two. It is both Golding's experiences teaching young boys, and his first-hand experience of warfare in the Royal Navy, that informed his novel Lord of the Flies.

The novel is set in the midst of a fictional nuclear world war, which allows Golding to explore ideas about violence, different styles of leadership and power. Golding also explores themes such as the loss of innocence – and human nature – through the presentation of his characters. The children in Lord of the Flies represent all human beings and civilisation, and using characters (or settings, such as the uninhabited island) to explore philosophical ideas is known in literature as allegory. Using children as his protagonists allows him to explore human nature at its most innocent and basic, and his message is ultimately a pessimistic one: all human beings, including children, have a natural capacity for evil.

For more details on Golding's use of allegory and symbolism, and other literary techniques, see our Lord of the Flies: Methods and Techniques page.

Lord of the Flies plot



Your notes

During an unnamed world war, a group of boys crash land on a deserted island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Two of the boys – Ralph and Piggy – look to establish order on the island so that they might work together to survive long enough to be rescued. Ralph is elected the leader of the boys in a vote. However, another boy, Jack, has different ideas about how the island should be run. Instead of building shelters, gathering fresh drinking water and tending to a signal fire, he wants to hunt pigs on the island, and increasingly rejects the rules set out by Ralph. This leads to a split in the group, with Jack leading a second ‘tribe’ on the island. Meanwhile, many of the boys are terrified of an imaginary monster and mistake a dead parachutist for this ‘beast’. In the panic and confusion, the boys become frenzied, so that when a boy, Simon, emerges from the trees at night-time all of the boys attack and kill him. This tragedy – far from chastening the boys – only leads to further acts of violence and torture as Jack’s rule increasingly resembles a reign of terror. Ralph and Piggy look to reason with Jack, but after an argument Piggy is killed and Ralph chased into the jungle. Just before Jack and his tribe descend on Ralph, they see a naval officer who has come to rescue them. Realising what they have become, all the boys weep in shame. For a more detailed summary, please see the [Lord of the Flies: Plot Summary](#) page.

How is Lord of the Flies assessed in the exam?

- The English Literature Paper 2 requires you to answer four questions (three on poetry) in 2hrs 15min. That means you have approximately 45 minutes to plan, write and check your Lord of the Flies essay
- Paper 2 is worth 96 marks and accounts for 60% of your overall GCSE grade
- The Lord of the Flies essay is worth 34 marks in total, because it also includes 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Section A of Paper 2 contains the Lord of the Flies question and you are required to **answer only one** of the two printed questions on the novel
- Unlike the Shakespeare and 19th-century novel questions, you will not receive an extract from the text in your exam
- It is also a closed-book exam, which means you will not have access to a copy of the novel in your exam
- You will be asked a question that asks you to analyse and write in detail about an aspect of Lord of the Flies

For a much more detailed guide on answering the Lord of the Flies question, please see our revision notes on [How to Answer the Modern Prose and Drama Essay Question](#).

Lord of the Flies characters

Although Golding includes many characters in Lord of the Flies, the characters you should focus on when revising are:

- Ralph
- Piggy
- Jack

- Simon
- Roger

It is always vital to remember – when considering Lord of the Flies, or any text – that characters are deliberate constructions created by a novelist for a purpose. These characters often represent ideas, or belief systems, and a writer, like the philosophically minded William Golding, uses these characters to explore these ideas and beliefs through them. For more details on how Golding uses his characters in Lord of the Flies to explore human nature and religion, please see the [Lord of the Flies: Characters](#) revision notes page.



Lord of the Flies context

Understanding how to include context in a GCSE essay is challenging, so it is first necessary to figure out what examiners really mean when they talk about context. They define context not as historical information, or biographical facts about a writer, but as the ideas and perspectives explored by a writer through their text. Therefore, the Lord of the Flies context you should explore in your essay response is not historical information about the Cold War, or irrelevant facts about William Golding's own life, but ideas about:

- The consequences of war
- Loss of innocence
- Social class
- Christianity

Lots of these ideas and perspectives are still relevant today, so your own opinions on them are valid, and examiners welcome them in an essay. For a detailed breakdown of the contextual topics listed above, see the [Lord of the Flies: Context](#) page.

Lord of the Flies themes

Understanding the themes that are prevalent in Lord of the Flies will enable you to reach the highest levels of the GCSE mark scheme. This is because to be rewarded top marks on your essay, you need to take what examiners call a “conceptualised approach”: a detailed and perceptive exploration of Golding’s ideas and intentions. The main themes explored by William Golding in Lord of the Flies are:

- Civilisation versus savagery
- Good versus evil
- Religion
- Power and leadership

You are encouraged to explore other themes that Golding explores in his novel, because bringing original ideas when interpreting a text is always rewarded highly at GCSE. However, the above list makes a great place to start, and detailed breakdowns of each of these themes can be found on our [Lord of the Flies: Themes](#) page.

Lord of the Flies quotes

It is, of course, important to learn quotations for your Lord of the Flies exam question, especially since it is a closed-book exam and you will not have a printed extract on your paper. However, it is worth stating here that examiners value “references” to the novel just as highly as direct quotations: this is when students pinpoint individual moments in the text, rather than quoting what the characters say. In order to select references really successfully, it is extremely important that you know the plot of Lord of the Flies itself very well, including the order of the events that take place. This detailed act-by-act breakdown of the plot will help you to revise the chronology of Lord of the Flies.

Of course, it is also useful to revise a few – very well selected – quotations from the novel that can be used in a variety of essays on different themes and characters. Luckily, we have made that selection for you! For a ‘translation’ and detailed analysis of each of these quotations, see our Lord of the Flies: Key Quotations page.



Your notes

Top tips for the highest grade

Please see our revision pages on the Modern Prose and Drama exam for guides on:

- [Structuring the Lord of the Flies essay](#)
- [Lord of the Flies methods and techniques](#)
- [How to include context in a Modern Prose essay](#)
- [Understanding the Lord of the Flies mark scheme](#)
- [A Modern Prose and Drama model answer](#)

Lord of the Flies: Plot Summary



Your notes

Plot Summary

One of the most vital and helpful things you can do in preparation for the exam is to ‘know’ the plot of Lord of the Flies thoroughly. Once you know the text well, you should be comfortable and familiar with key events that you can then link to larger ideas. Having an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the text will help you to gain confidence to find the most relevant references to support your response.



Your notes



At their first meeting the boys elect Ralph, and not Jack, as their leader

LORD OF THE FLIES

PLOT STORYBOARD



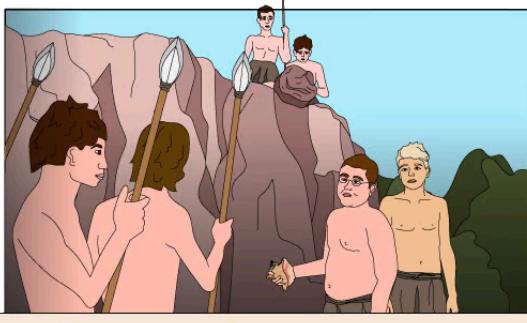
Sam and Eric mistake a parachutist's dead body for the beast. The boys set out to kill it



Falling out with Ralph over the rules and how to deal with the beast, Jack sets up his own tribe



Mistaking Simon for the beast, the boys kill him in a frenzied attack



Ralph attempts to reason with Jack, but Piggy is killed in the ensuing fight



Just before Jack's tribe kill Ralph, the boys are rescued by a naval officer

Overview

Lord of the Flies is a 1954 novel by English author, and former schoolteacher, William Golding. The novel is set in the midst of a worldwide nuclear war on a deserted island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It concerns a group of British schoolboys – the only survivors of a plane crash – learning to fend for themselves in this uninhabited and isolated wilderness.

The novel begins with Ralph and Piggy attempting to find other survivors of the plane crash. By blowing a conch shell, Ralph manages to assemble a group of boys who promptly elect him as their leader. Jack, an older boy, is appointed as the leader of the hunters. Ralph – along with Piggy – attempts to impose some order on the island, in part to allay fears of an imagined ‘beast’; they task the others with building huts and keeping a signal fire lit, so that passing ships and planes might see it and rescue them.

Ralph and Piggy grow increasingly frustrated with the other boys who fail to keep the signal fire lit, especially Jack, whose hunters catch a pig instead of tending the fire. These tensions grow and result in a split in the group: Jack and his hunters no longer acknowledge Ralph’s leadership. Meanwhile, all the boys continue to be plagued with fears about a beast roaming the island.

Two boys spot a dead parachutist in the trees and mistake him for the beast. All the older boys join forces once again to hunt and kill this monster, but after the unsuccessful hunt, they split for good and Jack declares himself the leader of the island. Jack’s group begins to take part in strange rituals, including frenzied tribal dances and the offering of sacrifices. Simon, a reserved boy, stumbles into one of these frantic dances. He is mistaken for the beast and killed.

After the murder of Simon, Jack’s group become even more crazed and violent, and attack Ralph and Piggy. In an effort to reconcile the two groups, Ralph and Piggy go to Castle Rock, Jack’s group’s stronghold, but Jack is not interested and Piggy is killed, while Ralph is pursued into the jungle. Just before Jack’s group comes upon Ralph, a British naval officer appears. He has come to rescue them. The boys weep in shame at what they have become. The officer turns away.

Chapter-By-Chapter Plot Summary

Chapter 1

- A fair-haired middle-class boy, Ralph, meets a chubby working-class boy, Piggy, on a beach on a deserted island
- They establish that their aeroplane – carrying evacuees from England – has crashed and decide to find other survivors
- Piggy suggests that they could use a **conch shell** as a kind of horn to summon survivors
- Ralph blows it and several groups of boys assemble
- In a divided vote, Ralph is elected leader
- Ralph, realising Jack is disappointed not to be leader himself, appoints Jack as the head of the hunters

Chapter 2



Your notes



Your notes

- Ralph summons all the boys to a meeting
- At the meeting, it is agreed that since there are no adults on the island, it is up to the boys to organise and look after themselves
- It is also agreed that – at meetings – whoever is holding the conch shell has the right to speak, and no one else can
- One of the younger boys – with a mulberry-coloured birthmark on his face – says that he saw a “beastie” the night before. Fear spreads through the younger boys
- The older boys reassure the group that there are no monsters on the island
- In order that the boys might get rescued, Ralph proposes the boys build a signal fire to alert passing ships and planes of their presence
- They attempt to light their signal fire (with Piggy’s glasses) but instead, in their haste, set fire to nearby trees, causing a forest fire
- Piggy rebukes the group for their stupidity and mentions that the boy with the mulberry-coloured birthmark, who was playing by the trees, is now missing

Chapter 3

- Ralph voices his frustration that none of the boys, besides Simon, seem to be helping in putting up shelters
- The other boys are playing, or off on hunting adventures
- He directly criticises Jack for failing to catch even a single pig
- Simon helps some of the younger boys – also known as “littluns” – pick fruit
- Simon then finds a secluded spot in a glade and basks in the beauty of the island

Chapter 4

- The littluns grow increasingly fearful of the idea of a monster living on the island
- Some of the hunters, including Roger, begin to bully the littluns, stomping on their sandcastles and throwing stones near them
- Ralph notices that the signal fire has gone out and is furious with Jack, who was on fire duty
- Jack and the hunters return to camp with their first kill: a pig
- Ralph and Piggy **chastise** Jack and the hunters for letting the signal fire go out
- Jack slaps Piggy after Piggy continues to **rebuke** Jack
- The hunters roast the pig and commence a frenzied dance around the campfire

Chapter 5

- Ralph blows the conch shell and convenes a meeting to discuss the importance of keeping the signal fire lit
- He also criticises the boys for failing to gather water, help in building shelters and even failing to use the designated toilet areas
- One of the littluns suggests that the beast might hide in the sea during the daytime, an idea which terrifies even the older boys
- Not following the established rules for the meeting, Jack insists that if there is a beast, he and his hunters will kill it and leads most of the boys off into the jungle in a crazed dance
- Only Ralph, Piggy and Simon are left in the group



Your notes

Chapter 6

- In the night, a military gunfight takes place above the island, but no one is alerted because the twins Sam and Eric – supposed to be on signal fire duty – fall asleep
- Sam and Eric discover the dead body of a parachutist and are convinced it is the beast
- After hearing of the beast from Sam and Eric, all the boys, except Piggy and the littluns, set out on an expedition to kill the beast
- Ralph allows Jack to lead this expedition and the two come to a temporary **truce**
- However, the boys quickly lose sight of their objective to seek out the beast and begin to play, leaving Ralph frustrated once more

Chapter 7

- The boys spot pig droppings in the jungle and decide to hunt the pig while still searching for the beast; this time, Ralph joins in
- The boys, including Ralph, get caught up in the excitement of the hunt
- Still in a frenzied state after the chase, the boys re-enact the hunt with a boy called Robert standing in for the pig
- They nearly kill Robert, such is the savagery of their game
- Ralph announces that it will be too difficult to hunt for the beast at night, but Jack disagrees, challenging Ralph to join him
- Ralph reluctantly agrees and the boys spot what they think is the beast at the top of the mountain
- Terrified, they run down the mountain immediately to warn the others

Chapter 8



Your notes

- The boys fall out over how to deal with the beast and Jack declares he is setting up his own tribe
- Lots of the boys follow Jack
- Piggy attempts to convince Ralph that they are better off without the other boys and that the best course of action would be to build another signal fire on the beach
- Jack's tribe kill a pig in a savage attack and cut off its head to offer as a sacrifice to the beast
- Members of Jack's tribe steal sticks from Ralph's camp, but also invite them to a feast that evening
- Simon returns to his secluded glade in an attempt to seek some peace
- However, this is the location of the **sacrificial** pig's head, impaled on a stick in the middle of the clearing
- Simon stares at it and begins to hallucinate that it is **The Lord of the Flies** and that it is talking to him
- The head promises to have some "fun" with Simon and that he can't escape, and Simon faints

Chapter 9

- Simon wakes and is drawn to the mountain, where he discovers the dead body of the parachutist
- Realising that the boys have mistaken this dead man for a monster, he descends the mountain to tell the boys of their mistake
- Meanwhile, at the feast, which Ralph and Piggy have joined, Jack sits on a throne and has his face painted
- After the meal, Jack's tribe begin a ritualistic dance
- Even Ralph and Piggy are swept up in the frenzy of the dance, and the boys become more and more lost in the savage ritual
- Simon emerges from the forest to tell them the true identity of the beast but the boys – in their frenzy – set upon him with fists and teeth
- Simon is killed and his body is washed away by the storm surge

Chapter 10

- The next morning Ralph recognises his part in the murder, but Piggy characterises Simon's death as an accident
- Jack's tribe has relocated to Castle Rock, a natural fortification at the top of the mountain
- He rules his tribe with fear and punishment: we see boys beaten and tortured
- In the night, Jack's hunters attack Ralph's camp, beating up many of the boys, including Ralph
- Piggy realises that they came for his glasses and, consequently, the means to make fire

Chapter 11

- Bringing the conch shell, Ralph and Piggy visit Castle Rock in an attempt to reason with Jack and to secure the return of Piggy's glasses
- Jack commands Ralph to leave his camp, and when Ralph refuses, they fight
- As the fight intensifies, Roger launches a huge boulder from the top of Castle Rock
- Ralph dodges the huge rock, but it strikes Piggy, smashing the conch shell and sending Piggy to his death on the rocks below
- Jack throws a spear at Ralph, who flees into the jungle
- Jack's tribe begin to torture Sam and Eric



Your notes

Chapter 12

- Ralph stumbles upon the **sacrificial** pig's head, throws it to the ground and takes the stake for a weapon
- He returns to Castle Rock in an attempt to rejoin Sam and Eric
- Sam and Eric tell him that Jack has plans to kill Ralph in the morning so Ralph retreats and hides in the jungle
- In the morning, Jack sets the jungle alight in an attempt to drive Ralph out
- Terrified, Ralph fights his way past the hunters and flees for his life, until he finally collapses from exhaustion on the beach
- When he looks up he sees a British naval officer who has – on seeing the forest ablaze – come to rescue them
- The hunters soon reach the beach and all the boys weep in shame at what they have become
- The officer turns away from the **indecorous** sight of a group of boys weeping



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Themes

Exam responses that are led by themes, or the ideas that a writer is exploring in their text, are more likely to reach the highest levels of the mark scheme. Exploring the text thematically, specifically in relation to the question being asked, will help to increase your fluency and assurance in writing about Golding's novel.

Below are some themes which could be explored in Lord of the Flies. This list is not exhaustive and you are encouraged to identify other ideas within the novel. Below you will find sections on:

- Civilisation versus savagery
- Good versus evil
- Religion
- Power and leadership

Civilisation versus savagery

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Perhaps the central concern of Lord of the Flies is a question: is it more natural for human beings to work together and create a community (civilisation), or do people naturally tend towards their individualistic impulses (savagery)?

Knowledge and evidence:

- Golding creates a setting – a deserted island – which is free of any markers of civilisation:
 - Since there is no existing civilisation on the island, the boys are liberated from the **trappings** of civilisation:
 - Laws and rules



Your notes

- Existing social and ethical codes of conduct
- Creating a setting which is free of all the obligations and expectations of society (a **tabula rasa**, or 'blank-slate') allows Golding to create a thought-experiment in which the boys can decide whether or not it is best to work together, or act as individuals
- Golding deliberately chooses boys – children – as his characters since they are the embodiment of innocence:
 - Therefore, if these children choose savagery, it can be assumed that all human beings would also succumb to their base impulses
- Initially, there are boys for whom order and cooperation are important:
 - Ralph, and particularly Piggy, look to establish rules and order from the outset:
 - In Chapter 1, Ralph and Piggy establish meetings
 - These meetings involve rules, including a rule which states that whoever is holding the conch shell must be heard:
 - As such, the conch shell represents **democracy** and free speech
 - They also initiate a leadership vote (which represents democratic elections)
 - Ralph and Piggy also attempt to create a system of shared responsibilities:
 - They create a rota for tending the signal fire
 - They assign roles to different members of the group, including water collectors, hut builders and hunters
 - This division of labour – and the creation of rules and order – represents **government**, and also the most basic form of civilisation
- However, Golding suggests that the boys – and perhaps humanity in general – find these responsibilities **arduous**, and much less attractive than acting on their impulses:
 - Instead of fulfilling their responsibilities and following rules, the boys selfishly prefer to do what they want to:
 - The choir hunt instead of tending the signal fire
 - The other older boys do little work building the huts (except Ralph and Simon)
 - The littluns do no work at all
 - The boys begin to defecate in the stream, thus potentially poisoning the water supply
 - Increasingly, the rules established in Chapter 1 are adhered to less and less:
 - This is shown in Chapter 5 when Jack says "Bollocks to the rules!"



Your notes

- This culminates in Chapter 11 when the conch shell – representing democracy and order – is shattered
- When the boys do not fulfil their assigned responsibilities, or do not follow the rules, it is always for self-gratification:
 - It is more fun hunting than tending the signal fire
 - The littluns just play all day, making sandcastles
 - It is easier not to walk all the way to the designated toilet area than to defecate in the stream
- Golding seems to suggest that it is in human nature to act naturally on our own impulses, above working for the collective good
- For Golding, the issue seems to be that in rejecting **collective responsibility** humans turn to **barbarism**
- Over the course of the novel, the boys become increasingly savage:
 - Their hair grows longer
 - They become increasingly naked
 - They begin to paint their faces
 - They commence ritualistic dances and sacrifices
- All of these may be seen as rejections of the customs of civilised society
- However, they also serve to progressively dehumanise the boys:
 - As the veil of society is lifted from the boys, they become more aggressive and violent
 - They become more **bestial**, which makes them more difficult to distinguish from animals:
 - In the ritual that follows the successful hunt in Chapter 7, a boy named Robert is nearly killed when pretending to be a pig
 - Simon is killed because he is presumed to be a beast
 - During Simon's murder the boys are described as attacking him with "claws" and "teeth"
- In Lord of the Flies, the Beast is a representation of human evil, but can also be seen as a symbol for human savagery:
 - Simon says that the Beast is just "us", meaning all people have a capacity for savagery
 - This is proved in the novel when even the most upstanding of characters – Piggy and Ralph – are overcome by their inner savagery when taking part in the murder of Simon
- Golding seems to be suggesting that civilisation exists to suppress "the Beast" in all of humanity

What is Golding's intention?



Your notes

- Golding creates a thought-experiment to interrogate whether, if the foundations of civilisation were taken away, human beings would naturally choose savagery over an ordered and rule-bound society:
 - Golding is suggesting that it is a supreme effort for human beings to maintain an ordered, rule-bound society
 - He seems to conclude that even the most innocent in society – children – would ultimately choose savagery over civilisation
- Golding is suggesting that the urge to escape a rule-bound society with codes of conduct is natural:
 - However, he is also suggesting that this freedom from order and control is **illusory**, and causes people more harm than good
- Golding is perhaps also arguing that humanity needs civilisation to protect ourselves from our natural impulses towards savagery

Good versus evil

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

In many ways Lord of the Flies is a morality tale exploring the two sides of human nature. Golding is exploring whether evil is **inherent** in human beings, or whether it is learnt. Ultimately, his view is a pessimistic one: he seems to suggest that all human beings have a natural capacity for evil.

Knowledge and evidence:

- William Golding is reported to have said that, by writing Lord of the Flies, he aimed to trace society's flaws back to their source in human nature:
 - His view therefore is that evil is not external but **inherent** in human beings
- The characters in Lord of the Flies represent the full range of the human capacity for good and evil:
 - Roger is presented from very early on as barely able to contain his desire to commit violent acts:
 - He tramples over sandcastles and throws rocks at the littluns as early as Chapter 4



Your notes

- Once Jack's stronghold is established on Castle Rock, Roger becomes torturer-in-chief
- In Chapter 11 he launches the rock that hits Piggy, leading to his death
- Sam and Eric describe Roger as "a terror" in Chapter 12
- Simon, by contrast, represents human goodness:
 - Simon can be viewed as a Christ-like figure, who represents absolute human goodness
 - However, Golding seems to suggest that goodness is not a trait that makes humans popular or attractive
 - Simon is presented as a loner, an outsider
 - His noble actions do not persuade others to follow his lead
- Golding contrasts Simon with Roger by **juxtaposing** their interactions with the littluns:
 - Roger is presented as first bullying the littluns in Chapter 4
 - Only a few pages earlier, in Chapter 3, Simon is shown helping the littluns gather fruit
- Ultimately, Simon's goodness is extinguished by the evil that lurks in all the boys:
 - Even the most morally upstanding characters of Piggy and Ralph take part in Simon's murder
- It can also be argued that evil – as represented by Jack's reign of terror and Roger's threats of violence – wins over good on the island
- For Golding, because humans are more attracted naturally to evil than good, we need society to protect humanity from themselves:
 - Society creates moral and social codes that can combat evil desires
- The moral and ethical codes of English society are something that Ralph, and especially Piggy, seek to maintain:
 - On the island these are the rules and expectations that Piggy and Ralph look to establish among the boys
 - Ralph says in Chapter 1 that "We can't have everybody talking at once. We'll have to have 'Hands up' like at school"
 - Ralph, and especially Piggy, refer to "adults", "grown-ups" and "school" frequently to maintain a connection to the moral safety net of society
- For Piggy especially these rules represent safety:
 - Golding is suggesting that these codes of conduct protect humanity from base or **primal** desires: to overpower others weaker than ourselves
 - Piggy is physically weak, and a lower class than many of the other middle-class boys



Your notes

- If these established codes of conduct were abandoned he could become a victim of physical intimidation, or explicit prejudice
- Ralph and Simon both recognise humanity's capacity for evil:
 - Indeed, Ralph acknowledges his own part in the murder of Simon, and as such, his own potential for evil

What is Golding's intention?

- Golding's pessimistic message about human nature is that evil naturally prevails over good:
 - Simon's absolute moral goodness loses out to Jack's (and particularly Roger's) tendency towards evil
- He also suggests that evil is **inherent**, even in children
- Golding suggests that society's rules and values protect humanity, and especially the weakest in society, from human evil: exploitation, prejudice or violence

Religion

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Some people assume that Lord of the Flies is a **religious allegory**, but this reading is perhaps too simple: instead, Golding seems to explore the complex relationship between human beings' inner natures and external value systems, such as Christianity.

Knowledge and evidence:

- There is a lot of Christian imagery in Lord of the Flies, but Golding is not attempting to create a straightforward **religious allegory**:
 - Instead, he uses religious symbolism to explore ideas about human nature, and human goodness and evil
- The island can be seen to represent the **Garden of Eden**:



Your notes

- The **Garden of Eden** in the Christian Bible was an untouched paradise which was spoilt when the Devil tempted Eve, the first woman
- This biblical story represents mankind's loss of innocence
- The island the boys land on is also an unspoilt paradise
- However, Golding seems to suggest that it is "unspoilt" because there are no people there, and when humans come into contact with paradise, they ruin it
- Unlike in the Bible, the evil is not introduced by an external force (the Devil), but by the evil nature of human beings themselves
- Unlike in the Bible, Golding's boys are not totally innocent like Eve, despite the fact they are children
- Again, this highlights the fact that Golding is suggesting that evil is **inherent** in human beings, even children
- Another interpretation is that the **glade** that Simon retreats to is a symbol for the Garden of Eden:
 - In Chapter 3 Simon finds a secluded **glade** – a clearing in the forest – and sits there a while, soaking in the island's beauty:
 - Where other boys are fearful of the island, he sees its wonder: butterflies and "bright fantastic birds"
 - The **glade** represents a spot on the island that is unspoilt by the boys
 - Golding is, therefore, suggesting that it is unspoilt by humanity
 - However, later in the novel, in Chapter 8, Simon returns to the glade and it is no longer the unspoilt paradise it once was:
 - Instead, a **sow**'s head has been placed on a stick in the middle of the clearing
 - It is no longer a place of peace, but has become a place of anxiety and fear
 - It could be said that the **glade** has been **sullied** by human evil
- Either way, both Edens are spoilt by the character of Jack:
 - Jack is the one who places the **sacrificial** pig's head on the stick in the glade
 - Jack is continually described as treating the island with contempt:
 - He hacks at its leaves
 - He curses it
 - By Chapter 12, this contempt has grown, and leads him to burn entire swathes of forest



Your notes

- Jack – the embodiment of human savagery and evil – destroys all that is innocent and good
- Simon himself can be seen to represent Jesus Christ:
 - He is absolutely good:
 - He helps those less fortunate than himself (the littluns)
 - He always fulfils his responsibilities to the group (for example in Chapter 3 he is the only boy helping to build huts)
 - It could be argued that Simon also represents the Christian concept of **grace**:
 - Divine grace is the influence of God, or Jesus, which inspires good deeds
 - However, again, Golding isn't creating a religious parallel here
 - Unlike Jesus Christ, Simon's goodness does not inspire the others to become more **virtuous**, or to help each other
 - Golding goes as far as to suggest that humanity destroys goodness, even if it is perfectly good
- The sacrificial pig's head could be seen as representing the Devil:
 - The name "Lord of the Flies" is another name for the Devil
 - This "devil", like in the Bible, spoils a paradise (here, Simon's once-peaceful glade)
 - However, unlike in the Bible, the evil here is not external (a real beast, or monster) but internal (the boys' own evil):
 - The "Lord of the Flies" is a representation of the boys' own disordered minds
 - The boys create this monster in their own minds, just like they create the beast
- Golding could be suggesting that Jack's leadership represents a rejection of Christian values:
 - He rejects the moral and social codes that Ralph and Piggy look to establish
 - He demands absolute obedience from his tribe
 - This could be seen as **idolatry**: his tribe is forced almost to worship Jack as a God

What is Golding's intention?

- Golding seems to be suggesting that it is in human nature to destroy all that is good
- Golding also seems to suggest that the human capacity for evil overrides existing value systems, like the moral code of Christianity

Power and leadership



Your notes

Golding uses the two characters of Ralph and Jack to represent two styles of leadership: Ralph symbolises **democracy**, while Jack represents **authoritarianism**. Ultimately, Golding seems to suggest that – although it does more harm than good – people are more attracted to the powerful rule of **autocracy**.

Knowledge and evidence:

- Golding uses the first few chapters of Lord of the Flies to explore the power struggle between Ralph and Jack:
 - Both feel that they should act as the leader of the boys
 - Both feel a sense of entitlement; they both feel they deserve the role of leader:
 - Ralph feels he deserves it because he is attempting to create a functioning society that benefits all the boys
 - Jack feels he deserves the role because he is the most powerful (he is one of the tallest and oldest of the children), and because he already leads a group (the choir)
- Golding uses the characters of Ralph and Jack to represent different types of leadership:
 - Ralph represents a democratically elected politician:
 - He is elected by a majority of the other boys in Chapter 1
 - He sets up rules and shares out responsibilities
 - He attempts to do what is best for the group
 - Jack, on the other hand, represents an anti-democratic **autocrat**:
 - He is seen commanding the choir from the outset of the novel:
 - In Chapter 1 Jack is described as “controlling” the choir while marching them along the beach



Your notes

- He quickly loses interest in the rules set out by Ralph and Piggy
 - In Chapter 8 he fails to recognise Ralph's (democratically elected) leadership any longer
- Golding sets the two styles of leadership, and leader, in opposition to one another:
 - Ralph is measured where Jack is impulsive
 - Ralph is rational where Jack is unthinking
 - Ralph focuses on **collective responsibility** while Jack prioritises **personal freedom**
- The objects associated with Ralph and Jack also represent these differing styles of leadership:
 - The conch shell represents **democracy** and free speech: everyone is allowed a voice in Ralph's system of **government**
 - Jack's spear represents **authoritarian** rule:
 - His rule is not based on shared responsibility and collective decision-making, but on threats, violence and torture
 - Ultimately, a different weapon – a rock – destroys the conch shell:
 - This represents the victory of **authoritarianism** over **democracy**
 - It also represents the total rejection of the civilised **government** Ralph was trying to establish
- Overall, Golding is exploring whether human beings naturally choose community and **collective responsibility** over **self-interest**:
 - Ralph's style of leadership requires hard work from the boys, and doesn't offer instant rewards:
 - Completing chores and following rules will benefit all the boys eventually, but Golding suggests that human beings prefer instant **gratification**
 - Jack's style of leadership offers the boys total freedom from order and a rule-bound, **collectivist** society:
 - This is ironic, given that Jack's tribe is not free at all (they have to do exactly what he orders) and any boy who goes against his wishes is punished

What is Golding's intention?

- Golding argues that – given the choice – human beings will reject **altruism** over **individualism**:
 - Creating a functional society requires sacrifice, which is arduous
 - However, the absence of rules and responsibilities creates an environment in which **autocrats** can thrive
- However, the **personal freedom** offered by **autocrats** is **illusory**:

- Far from being free of rules and responsibilities, Golding argues that life under **autocracy** is more harmful than the alternative, **democracy**



Your notes

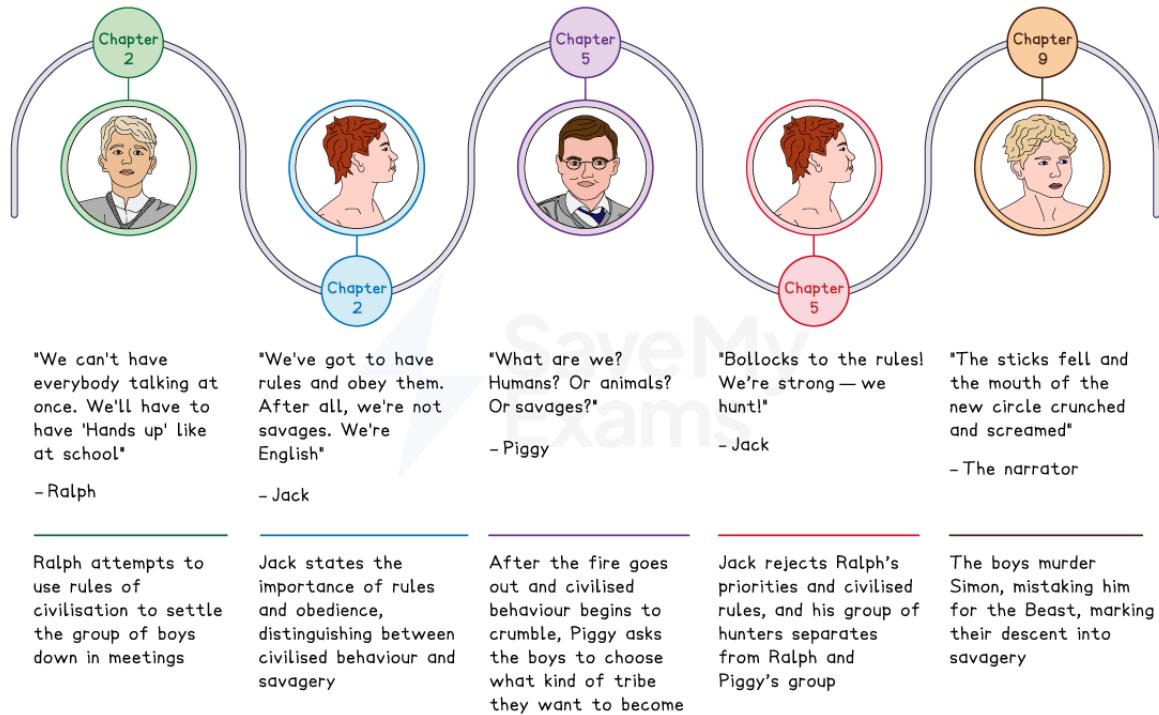


Your notes

Lord of the Flies Key Theme: Civilisation versus Savagery

Civilisation versus savagery mind map

The theme of civilisation versus savagery in Lord of the Flies:



Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Lord of the Flies civilisation versus savagery timeline

What are the elements of civilisation versus savagery in Lord of the Flies?

- **The island setting:** The desert island represents a blank slate on which the boys are free to make their own society and choose between civilised behaviour or savagery:
 - The island can therefore be seen as a **microcosm** of society as a whole, with Golding suggesting that the decisions made by the boys reflect universal truths about human nature
 - From the moment that the boys arrive in a crash that scars the island, to the raging wildfire at the novel's conclusion, Golding shows how the boys corrupt the island around them with their savage influence


Your notes

- Symbolism:** The conch, Piggy's glasses and the signal fire symbolise rules and civilised order upon the island:

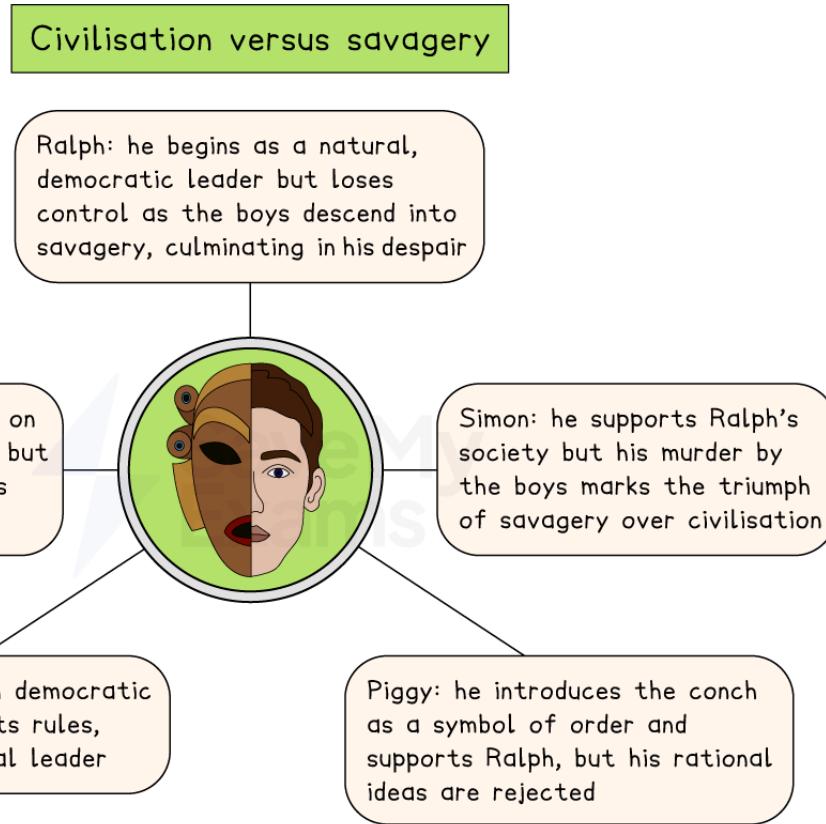
- As the boys descend into savagery, these symbols lose their original power (when Roger destroys the conch and murders Piggy)

- The Beast:** Golding uses the Beast to represent our capacity for evil and savage behaviour:

- Although the boys initially fear the beast as an external threat to their society, Simon realises the terrible truth: the Beast is just "us", and symbolises the potential for violence and savagery in every human being

The impact of civilisation versus savagery on characters

The shift from civilised behaviour to savagery over the course of the novel affects the characters in a variety of ways:


Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Civilisation versus savagery in Lord of the Flies



Your notes

Character	Impact
Ralph	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ At the start of the novel, Golding presents Ralph as a natural leader: he is elected democratically and he establishes rules and order among the boys based on the expectations "at school":<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ralph loses control of the group as the boys give up the trappings of civilisation and fall in with Jack's tribe of face-painted hunters▪ Ralph descends into savagery himself when he participates in the murder of Simon▪ When Roger murders Piggy, Ralph's final hopes for civilisation die as well
Simon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Simon supports Ralph's democratic society by feeding the littluns and helping to build shelters:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ He also tries to rescue the boys from their own savage behaviour by revealing the true nature of "the Beast"▪ The boys mistake Simon for the Beast and murder him in a frenzy, marking a turning point in the conflict between civilisation and savagery
Piggy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Piggy faithfully supports Ralph's leadership, and introduces the conch as a symbol of democracy and social order:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ His rational, sensible suggestions are often rejected by the other boys▪ His eventual murder at the hands of Roger represents the final victory of savagery over civilisation
Jack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Jack, the lead chorister, initially seeks to establish a democratic order, but later rebels against Ralph, saying "Bollocks to the rules!":<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ He becomes the tyrannical leader of a new tribe of hunters▪ Jack's transformation demonstrates the temptation of violence and savagery
The Littluns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The youngest and most innocent boys are shown to depend upon civilisation for survival:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ They need the older boys to feed and shelter them at the start of the book and a littlun perishes in an out-of-control fire▪ Their innocence also makes them vulnerable to Jack's influence; the littluns are easily absorbed into his barbaric tribe



Your notes

Why does Golding use the theme of civilisation versus savagery in his novel?

Allegory:

- Golding uses the boys' fate on the island as an allegory for the battle between civilised society and humanity's deepest and most savage impulses
- The novel is a thought experiment that explores whether humans can be seen as innately evil:
 - Golding suggests that it is an almost impossible task to prevent even the most innocent of individuals from succumbing to their inner "beast"

2. Criticism of the class system

- When the boys follow Ralph's democratic order through the use of the conch and school-based rules, Piggy has a space to make his voice heard:
 - Other boys mock Piggy for his accent, which marks him as working-class
 - When the boys stop working together, Piggy's protests are ignored by the others and he is ultimately killed

Exam-style questions on the theme of civilisation versus savagery

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of love:

- How does Golding portray the conflict between civilisation and savagery in the novel? (You could start with Ralph's struggle to keep the signal fire burning.)
- "Simon's death marks the end of civilisation in the novel". How far do you agree with this statement? (You could start with Golding's descriptions of the boys killing Simon.)

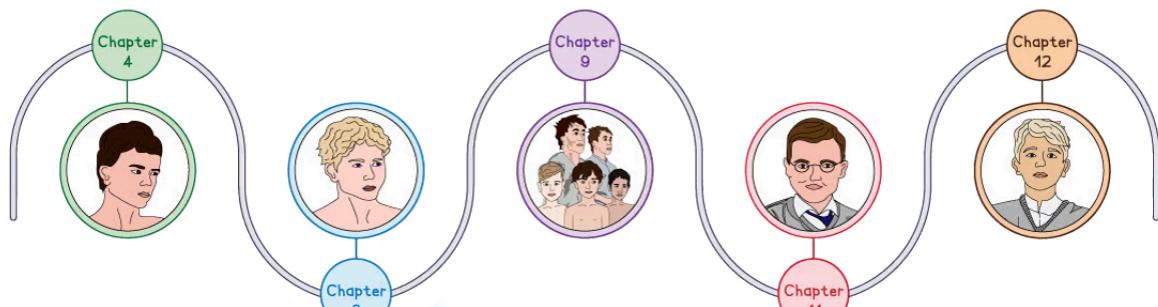


Your notes

Lord of the Flies Key Theme: Good versus Evil

Good versus evil timeline

The theme of good versus evil in Lord of the Flies:



"Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life"
- The narrator

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!"
- The Beast

"Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!"
- The boys

"Which is better — to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?"
- Piggy

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

Roger throws stones in the direction of the littluns, but the rules of his old, civilised life cause him to refrain from actually hitting any of them

Simon hallucinates a conversation with the Lord of the Flies but realises that there is no real beast — only evil that lurks within all humans

The boys, frenzied and believing Simon to be the Beast, join in a bloodthirsty chant as they murder him

Piggy presents Jack's tribe with a final, clear choice between good and evil before Roger kills him with a boulder

As Ralph realises that the boys will finally be rescued, he is overcome with grief at their capacity for evil

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Lord of the Flies good versus evil timeline

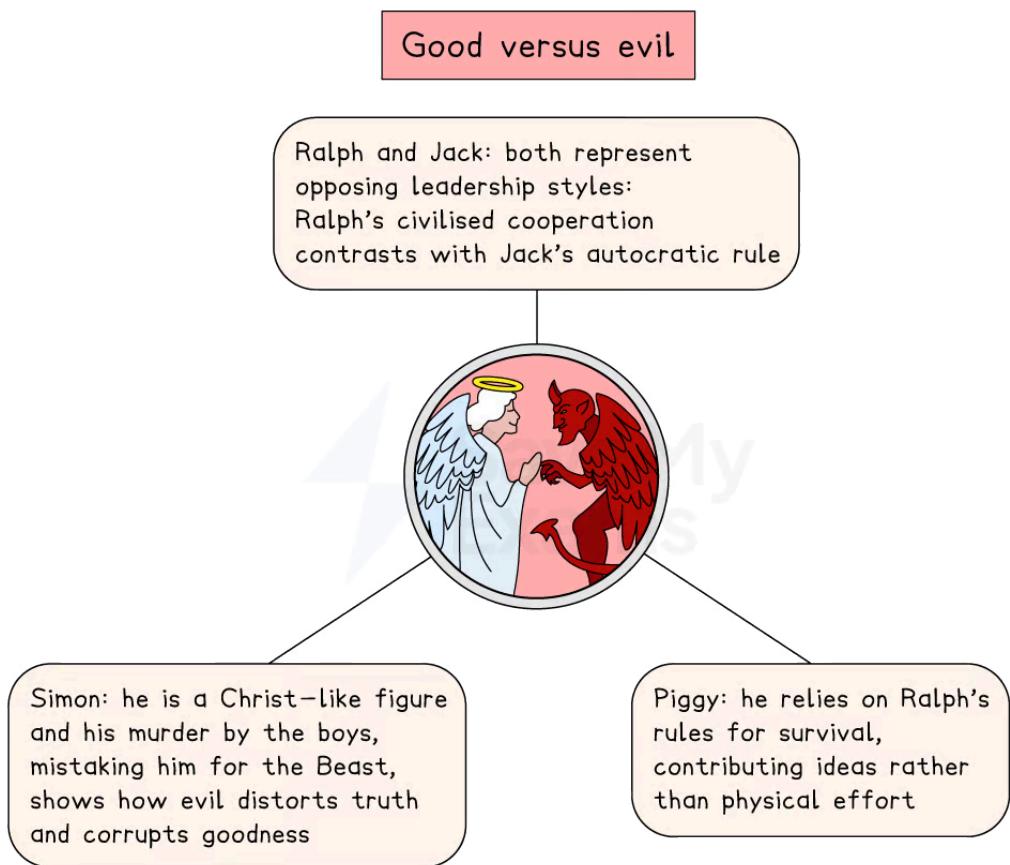
What are the elements of good versus evil in Lord of the Flies?

- **Increasing violence:** As the boys forget the rules that help society to function and succumb instead to the temptations and lawlessness of savagery, instances of death and violence become increasingly brutal and **malicious**:
 - In Chapter 2, a littlun dies in an accidental forest fire; in Chapter 8, Jack's hunters brutally kill a sow; in Chapter 9 the boys murder Simon in a frenzied group attack; and in Chapter 11, Roger intentionally murders Piggy


Your notes

- **Simon's death:** Simon represents goodness, and Golding shows him helping the littluns, supporting Ralph, and appreciating the island's beauty; he is also the only boy brave enough to search for the Beast by himself:
 - The boys murder him as he attempts to warn them about the true nature of the Beast
 - His death represents a triumph of evil on the island, and a key turning point in the boys' descent into savagery
- **The Beast:** When the boys begin to fear an unseen "beast", Jack and his hunters brutally kill a sow and leave its head as an offering to the Beast:
 - Simon hallucinates a conversation with the fly-infested pig's head in which he realises that the true Beast is the evil that lives inside the boys

The impact of good versus evil on characters


Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Good versus evil in Lord of the Flies



Your notes

Character	Impact
Ralph and Jack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ralph represents the kind of civilised leadership that sees members of a community work together for the common good▪ Jack, on the other hand, demonstrates an autocratic leadership style that contrasts with — and destroys — Ralph's rules and order▪ Jack's violence becomes increasingly evil and bloodthirsty until the end of the novel
Piggy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Piggy's survival depends upon people following Ralph's 'good' rules and helping one another▪ He cannot contribute physically as well as the other boys, but offers ideas on how a good society should function▪ He is unfailingly loyal to Ralph, and his death represents the final triumph of evil on the island
Simon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Simon may be considered a Christ-like figure: he supports Ralph, helps the neediest members of the group, and bravely confronts "the Beast"▪ He is murdered as he tries to save the boys from themselves▪ The boys mistake him for the Beast, demonstrating how evil can twist the truth and corrupt goodness

Why does Golding use the theme of good versus evil in Lord of the Flies?

A moral story about human nature:

- Golding presents a pessimistic view of human nature, showing how easily our selfish, evil natures can win out against our responsibility to work together and do good
- Golding introduces this idea early in the novel, foreshadowing the boys' descent into savagery through Roger's violent behaviour and the boys' bullying of Piggy

2. Social commentary:

- Golding suggests that civilisation is the only thing that masks our innate tendency towards evil and savagery
- When the hunters allow the signal fire to go out, their only connection to the outside world, they symbolically disconnect from the rules and expectations of society and give in to their worst impulses

(like the rest of humanity)



Your notes

Exam-style questions on the theme of Good versus evil in Lord of the Flies

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of good versus evil:

- Explore how Golding presents good and evil in Lord of the Flies.
- How does Golding use the character of Simon to represent the conflict between good and evil in Lord of the Flies?



Your notes

Lord of the Flies Key Theme: Religion

Religion mind map

The theme of religion in Lord of the Flies:

Chapter	Quote	Summary
3	"Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach" – The narrator	Simon provides food for the many littluns, like Christ feeding the five thousand in The Bible
7	"You'll get back all right. I think so, anyway" – Simon	In this prophetic statement, Simon suggests that Ralph will survive the events of the novel, but also seems to foresee his own death
8	"You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close!" – The Lord of the Flies	The Lord of the Flies speaks to Simon, revealing that the true evil on the island exists within the boys themselves
9	"... a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out toward the open sea" – The narrator	Simon's corpse is lit by glowing fish and shining stars, as though the natural world mourns his death
12	"There was another noise to attend to now, a deep grumbling noise, as though the forest itself were angry with him..." – The narrator	Golding's description suggests that the boys have corrupted paradise and are no longer welcome

How is religion presented in Lord of the Flies?

Lord of the Flies is not a straightforward **religious allegory**, but Golding nevertheless presents religious ideas in several ways in the novel:

- **The island setting:** The unspoiled island might be likened to the biblical **Garden of Eden**, an **unblemished** paradise that was spoilt by humanity
 - The boys damage the island as their crashed plane leaves an enormous "scar" in the forest, symbolising the corrupting influence of human beings



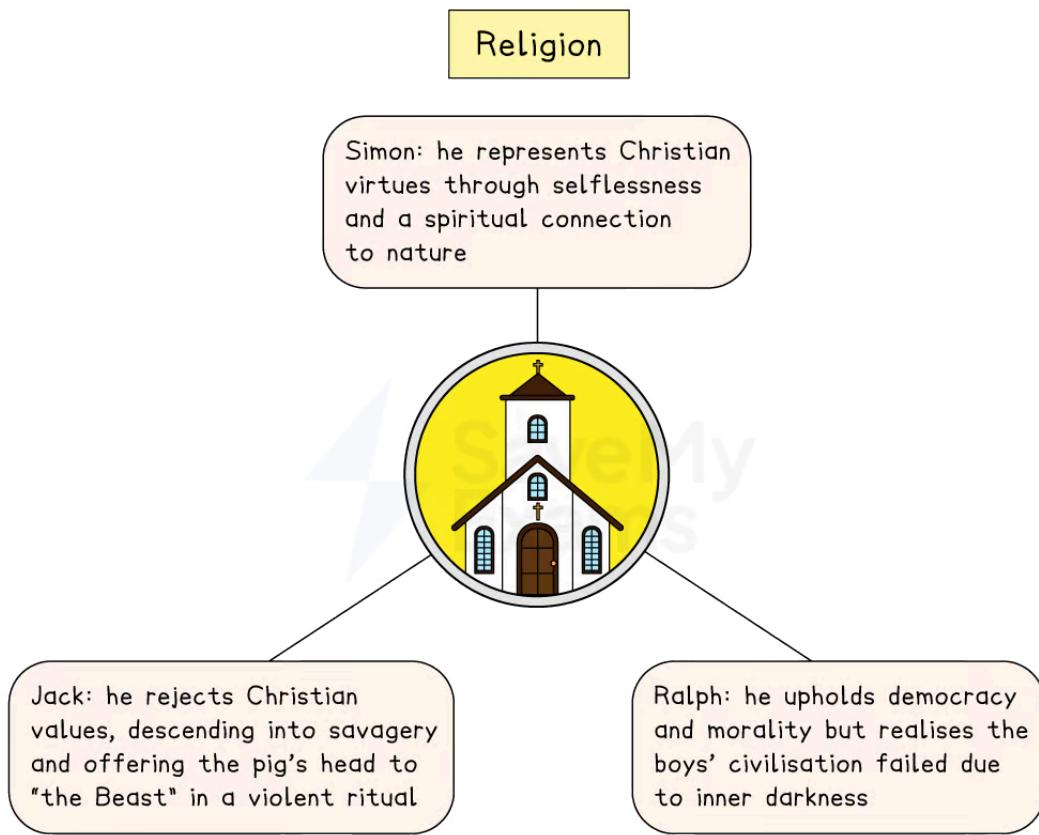
Your notes

- Simon appreciates its beauty and comments on some beautiful candle-like flowers, but Jack swipes at them with a knife, reflecting their opposing moral stances
- In Chapter 12, Ralph hears an angry “grumbling” that evokes God banishing Adam and Eve from **Eden**
- **Christ-like symbolism:** Golding describes Simon in ways that **evoke** Christ:
 - He feeds the littluns with “double handfuls” of fruit before feeding himself and is the only boy able to confront “the Beast” on the mountain
 - Only Simon understands that the true threat on the island is their own capacity for violence and sin; he dies trying to save the boys from themselves and even his friends Ralph and Piggy are caught up in the violent frenzy
 - Nature seems to mourn Simon’s death, and his body is accompanied out to sea by glowing fish
- **Bestial behaviour:** Jack and his hunters bring bloodshed onto the island, spoiling its former tranquility:
 - The hunters brutally murder a pig, and Golding depicts the sacrificial slaughter as an act of savage, almost sexual, violence
 - Jack places the pig’s head on a stick in Simon’s peaceful glade, **tainting** an Eden-like environment with a tribute to death and violence

The impact of religion on characters



Your notes


Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Religion in Lord of the Flies

Character	Impact
Simon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simon initially demonstrates the Christian virtues of 1950s public schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He supports Ralph's leadership, carries out his assigned roles, and selflessly helps those less fortunate than himself by feeding the littluns and sticking up for Piggy ▪ He is also, though, deeply perceptive and has an almost spiritual connection with the natural world: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He seeks respite in a peaceful glade that could represent his own personal Garden of Eden ▪ He is unafraid when he discovers the dead parachutist on the mountain, untangling the corpse's parachute as though freeing a trapped soul on the wind



Your notes

Ralph	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ralph demonstrates Christian virtues and morality in his insistence upon democracy, rules and cooperation:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ He is surprised by how quickly the other boys give up these values in the pursuit of selfish pleasures like hunting▪ At the end of the novel, he realises that the boys' civilisation has failed because of the darkness inside their own hearts
Jack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Jack is introduced as the head chorister, a reminder of the importance of religion in English public schools in the 1950s▪ He later appears half-naked and in face paint, with his physical transformation reflecting his movement away from the Christian values (of Ralph and Simon) to savagery and violence:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ He offers the pig's head to "the Beast" as in a pagan ritual; the sacrifice spoils Simon's glade, ruining its tranquility with bloodshed and human violence

Why is religion a key theme in Lord of the Flies?

Religious allegory

- Golding suggests that evil is inherent in even the most innocent of children, and that the boys' behaviour reflects a rejection of Christian values
- Jack's **dictatorial** leadership and his decision to place of the pig's head on a stick as a sacrifice to the Beast could be considered a form of **idolatry**
- The term "Lord of the Flies" is another name for the Devil, with Golding implying that the boys bring the Devil to the island paradise

2. A critique of human behaviour

- Golding seems to suggest that it is human nature to destroy what is good – even if the humans are innocent young boys
- Humanity's destructive tendencies are shown to override positive human values, such as cooperation, community and compassion

Exam-style questions on the theme of religion in Lord of the Flies

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of religion:

- Explore how William Golding presents religious ideas in Lord of the Flies.

- How does William Golding use Simon and Jack to present ideas about religion in Lord of the Flies?



Your notes

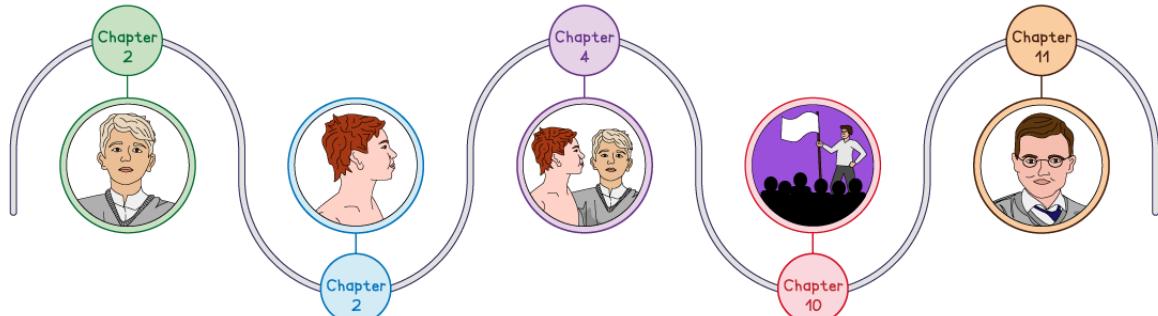


Your notes

Lord of the Flies Key Theme: Power and Leadership

Power and leadership timeline

The theme of power and leadership in Lord of the Flies:



"And another thing. We ought to have more rules. Where the conch is, that's a meeting"

- Ralph

"We'll have rules! ... Lots of rules! Then when anyone breaks 'em—"

- Jack

"There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled commonsense"

- The narrator

"The chief was sitting there, naked to the waist, his face blocked out in white and red"

- The narrator

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

- The narrator

Ralph establishes the conch as a symbol of democracy, demonstrating his values as the elected leader of the boys

Jack gives the impression of valuing rules and order, but seems especially excited about giving out punishments — foreshadowing his later autocratic leadership

Golding contrasts the opposing leadership styles of Jack and Ralph, suggesting that civilisation is less appealing than violence and bloodshed

Jack's transformation into "the chief" is represented by his face paint, which hides his former identity and frees him from rules and order

Roger destroys the conch, valued by Ralph and Piggy as a symbol of civilised democracy, marking the triumph of Jack's violent leadership

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Lord of the Flies power and leadership timeline

How are power and leadership presented in Lord of the Flies?

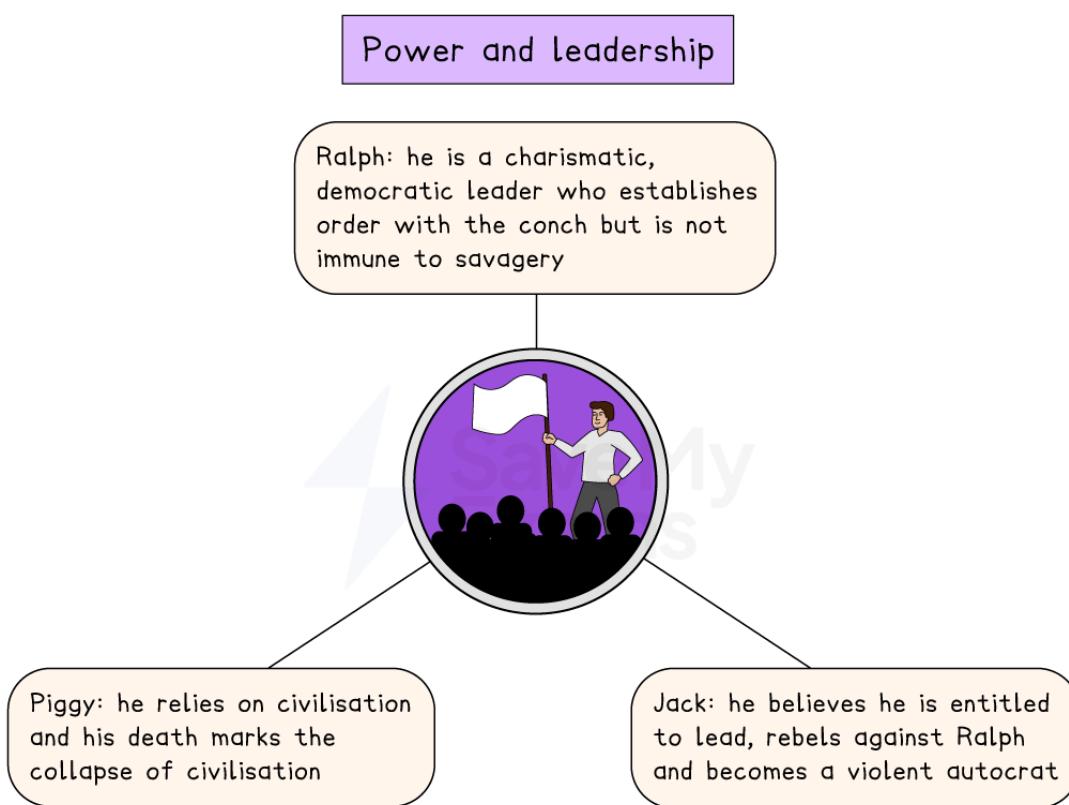
- **Symbolism:** Golding contrasts the democracy represented by Ralph's conch, with the tyrannical dictatorship represented by Jack's face paint and spear
- When Jack's chief torturer, Roger, destroys the conch, the moment represents the death of any hope for civilisation among the boys



Your notes

- **Conflict:** Golding explores power and leadership through a central conflict between Ralph's **democratic** approach and Jack's **autocratic** leadership, echoing the violent conflicts of the early 20th century:
 - The novel begins in the apparent aftermath of a nuclear attack (the reason why the boys have been evacuated)
 - The plight of the boys on the island is the result of escalating violent conflict
 - Jack's leadership leads to a fire that sweeps through the forest; the conflict with Ralph threatens to consume everyone in a **microcosmic** representation of real-world fears about nuclear powers

The impact of power and leadership on characters


Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Power and leadership in Lord of the Flies

Character	Impact
Ralph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ralph is a charismatic leader, whose size makes him a link to the adult world of authority:



Your notes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ He is elected through democratic means (a group vote), and he and Piggy establish the conch as a symbol of democracy and authority; it allows every person a voice in the group▪ Although Ralph shows common sense and maturity in seeking to set rules and create a sense of order among the boys, he is not above cruel or savage behaviour▪ He is swept up in the group attack on Simon and regrets it bitterly afterwards
Jack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Jack believes he is entitled to lead because of his role as head chorister:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Although Jack initially favours “English” rules, he resists Ralph’s leadership and rebels to lead his own group of hunters▪ By wearing face-paint, he sheds the order of his former life to become a more savage and violent “chief” and imposes an autocratic rule: he punishes those who do not obey him, and sentences Ralph to death
Piggy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Piggy depends upon civilisation for survival on the island, as he is unable to contribute physically in the same ways as the other boys:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ His glasses become an important symbol of civilisation as they allow the possessor to make fire, cook food, and contact the outside world▪ Jack’s mistreatment of the glasses suggests his callous disregard – both for the weaker Piggy and for Ralph’s rules and order▪ Piggy is Ralph’s last follower; his death represents the end of any hope for civilisation on the island

Why does Golding use the theme of power and leadership in Lord of the Flies?

Golding uses the central conflict between Ralph and Jack to represent the key theme of power and leadership.

1. Democracy vs autocracy

- The island begins as a **democracy** in which all of the boys have a vote, and (through the conch) their voices are heard
- Ralph establishes rules in which all boys work for the benefit of the entire community, such as building shelters and setting a signal fire
- Jack’s autocratic leadership marks him as a violent **dictator** who seeks to torture and kill those who disobey him

2. The importance of rules:

- Golding suggests that humans are **innately** selfish, and are naturally drawn to individual success over community spirit
- The breakdown of the boys' community on the island reflects Golding's idea that civilised behaviour cannot exist without clear rules; without order and shared goals, humans descend into savagery



Your notes

Exam-style questions on the theme of power and leadership in Lord of the Flies

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of power and leadership:

- Explore how Golding presents power and leadership in Lord of the Flies.
- How does Golding present Ralph as a strong leader in Lord of the Flies?



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Characters

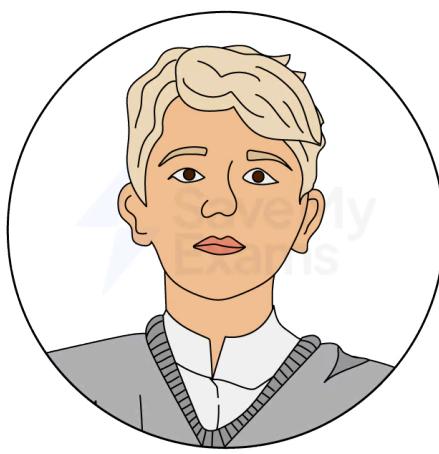
It is vital that you understand that characters are often used symbolically to express ideas. Golding uses all of his characters to symbolise various ideas that he chose to explore in Lord of the Flies, and the differences between characters reflect age-old debates about human nature. Therefore, it is very useful not only to learn about each character individually, but how they compare and contrast to other characters in the novel. Below you will find character profiles of:

- Ralph
- Piggy
- Jack
- Simon
- Roger

Minor characters:

- The Littluns
- Sam and Eric

Ralph

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

- In many ways, Ralph can be seen as the character through which the reader experiences the island:



Your notes

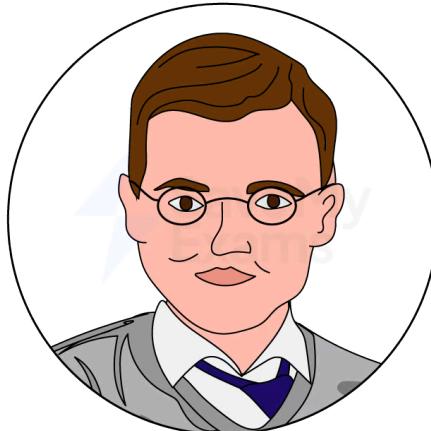
- He is the novel's **protagonist** and we see a good deal of the novel's action from his perspective
- He is also the novel's moral centre:
 - He can be seen as representative of humanity as a whole
 - He experiences the competing influences of **reason** (from Piggy) and **individualism** (from Jack)
 - Ultimately, his demise suggests that Golding believes that **individualism** (and savagery) will always triumph over **reason** and cooperation
- Ralph is presented as:
 - **Charismatic:**
 - He is a charming and magnetic figure for the other boys
 - He is also athletic and physically capable, which makes him even more attractive to the group
 - This means he is a natural choice for the boys to elect as leader
 - Moral:
 - Ralph attempts to do what he feels is "right"
 - Golding has him repeatedly referring to the values and moral codes of English society ("like in school")
 - He understands, unlike many of the other boys, that acting **altruistically** is the only way they will survive
 - He **deplores** the impulsive **individualism** of Jack and his hunters
 - **Impressionable:**
 - Although he has a strong moral compass, Ralph is easily led
 - When invited to go hunting by Jack, he very quickly becomes frenzied like the rest of Jack's tribe
 - He needs constant reminding from Piggy to maintain order, or of his responsibilities as leader
 - He becomes swept up in the ritualistic frenzy during Simon's murder
 - **Reflective:**
 - Unlike many of the other boys, Ralph recognises that evil lurks in the boys
 - He acknowledges his part in the murder of Simon
 - He "weeps" when rescued, understanding the "darkness of man's heart"



Your notes

- Ralph is used by Golding to represent **democratic** leadership:
 - He is elected as leader in a vote
 - He sets up meetings which represent **government**:
 - These meetings allow – via the conch shell – all members of the group to have a voice and to debate
 - He attempts to act in a way that benefits the group as a whole:
 - He prioritises survival and rescue
 - He sets rules and responsibilities to share out the burden of work fairly
- Ralph also represents the English middle class:
 - He feels entitled to lead the group because his father is a commander in the Navy
 - He attempts to recreate English society:
 - His rules and division of labour are an attempt to emulate the society he has come from
 - He mocks Piggy for his lower-class accent

Piggy



- In Lord of the Flies, Golding uses Piggy to represent **reason** and **rational** thinking:
 - He is the most intelligent of all the boys
 - He is behind many of the group's **innovations** and ideas:
 - It is his idea to use the conch shell in meetings



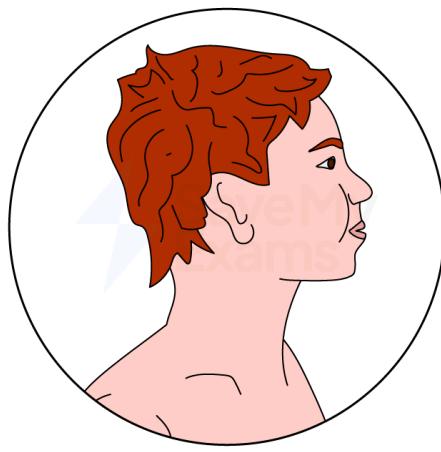
Your notes

- It is his idea to first create shelters
 - Although he objects to the other boys using them, his glasses are used to start the signal fire
- He supports Ralph diligently in maintaining order:
 - He keeps a register of all the boys
 - He constantly reminds the others – even Ralph – of the need to follow the rules
 - He reminds Ralph of his own leadership responsibilities
- He – like Ralph – is fully aware of the gravity of their situation:
 - Unlike the immature littluns, and the distracted hunters, Piggy understands how serious it is that they have to fend for themselves
 - In Chapter 2, he seems to be the only boy aware (or willing to state) that “nobody knows where we are”
 - His knowledge of the difficulty of surviving, and being rescued, is one reason he desperately clings to the rules
- His rationalism means he doesn’t believe in the existence of the beast:
 - He says at one point that “Life [...] is scientific”
- Piggy is the novel’s most tragic character:
 - He is treated terribly throughout the novel by almost all of the boys:
 - None of the boys call him by his real name, but by a horrible nickname: Piggy
 - Indeed, we as readers never discover Piggy’s real name
 - This is **dehumanising**, and his treatment in Chapter 1 **foreshadows** the violence first committed by the other boys against real pigs, and later, Piggy himself
 - Jack repeatedly threatens Piggy with violence
 - Piggy is later the victim of violence from Jack and his hunters
 - Despite his absolute loyalty to him, Ralph never steps in to prevent Piggy being verbally or physically abused
 - Ultimately he is killed by a rock thrown by Roger on Castle Rock
 - Piggy’s death represents the death of **reason**, and of possible **reconciliation** and agreement among the divided tribes:
 - Just before he dies he states: “Which is better – to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?”

- For Golding, clearly savagery ("hunt and kill") triumphs over **reason** and civilisation ("have rules and agree")
- Piggy also represents the English lower classes:
 - He is mocked for his lower-class accent
 - Despite his obvious intelligence he is given a low status in the group:
 - He is constantly bullied by Jack and his hunters
 - He is routinely ignored by others, including the littluns
 - Piggy is desperate for the boys to maintain the rules and moral codes of society, because this offers him protection:
 - Society's rules prevent human beings acting on their violent impulses
 - Golding is suggesting that without these **social norms** people with lower status would come to harm



Jack

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

- Jack is the novel's **antagonist**:
 - He stands in opposition to Ralph in almost every way
 - It becomes increasingly clear that Jack becomes an obstacle that Ralph must overcome in order to first survive, and then be rescued
- Jack is presented as:
 - Violent:



Your notes

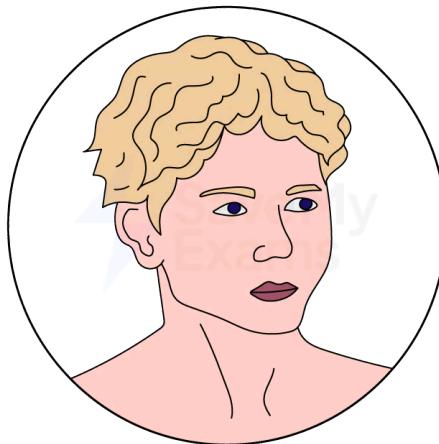
- As early as Chapter 1, Jack is described as “slashing” his knife at the plants on the island
- In Chapter 4, Jack paints his face and immediately feels “liberated” from the social and moral conventions of society:
 - This is a turning-point for Jack’s character, as after this moment he becomes less and less **inhibited** to commit acts of violence
- His violent acts from Chapter 4 onwards accelerate:
 - The hunters have their first successful hunt
 - They also begin to take part in ritual ceremonies, one of which (with a boy called Robert) almost ends in bloodshed
 - He begins a reign of terror on Castle Rock, torturing any boys who disobey him
- **Monomaniacal:**
 - Jack is obsessed with the idea of killing a pig
 - For Jack, although he claims that he is hunting to provide food, it is much more about a **primal** and savage desire to kill another living creature
 - He ignores all of his other responsibilities (such as tending to the signal fire and building huts) to hunt:
 - Not tending to the signal fire (as he was supposed to) leads to a missed chance of rescue, but Jack firmly defends his actions
 - Golding is perhaps suggesting, therefore, that the human impulse towards savagery is much stronger than that of civilisation (which rescue would represent)
- **Individualistic:**
 - Jack is furious when he is not elected leader in Chapter 1:
 - This means that he is not in total control, and has to compromise
 - Jack never follows the rules and responsibilities set out by Ralph:
 - Initially he insists that doing whatever he pleases (hunting instead of building huts or gathering water) is actually better for the group (“I gave you food”)
 - However, later his total rejection of Ralph’s authority is more explicit: “Bollocks to the rules!” (Chapter 5)
 - When Jack sets up his own tribe, he presents it as a chance for other boys to reject the rules-based **government** of Ralph and for each boy to have **individual freedom**:
 - However, this freedom is totally **illusory**, because Jack always has total authority on Castle Rock



Your notes

- Jack punishes any boy who disobeys his orders
- On Castle Rock, Jack becomes a symbol for absolute **autocracy**
- Influential:
 - Jack – like Ralph, but for different reasons – is a very attractive leadership figure for the other boys:
 - Jack is also athletic and physically imposing (he is one of the tallest and oldest boys)
 - He has authority over his choir from the outset (in Chapter 1 he is described as “controlling them”)
 - He is powerful enough to kill
 - He offers the boys freedom, where Ralph offers chores and rules
- Jack is used by Golding – in contrast to Ralph – to represent **autocratic** and **authoritarian** rule:
 - The fact that the majority of the boys choose Jack over Ralph’s style of **government** suggests that Golding believed that:
 - 1) A society based on sacrifice is less attractive to humans than one where personal freedom is promised
 - 2) **Authoritarianism** dominates **democracy**, given the opportunity

Simon

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

- Golding uses the character of Simon to represent human goodness:
 - He is moral:
 - Simon is the only character described by Golding directly helping the littluns:



Your notes

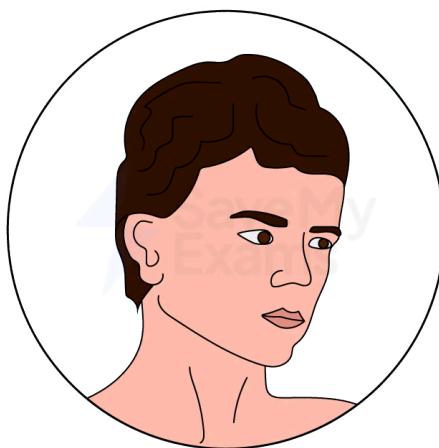
- In Chapter 3 he helps the littluns gather food by picking fruit they cannot reach
- This shows that he believes in acting **altruistically**
- He is – perhaps other than Ralph – the only character in Lord of the Flies who makes personal sacrifices for others
- He is cooperative:
 - He is the only boy who is consistently described by Golding helping build the huts
- He is respectful of nature:
 - In direct contrast to Jack, he respects and delights in his new surroundings:
 - Where Jack “slashes” at them, Simon sees the beauty in a particular plant he refers to as “candle buds”
 - Where the other boys fear the island, Simon sees the island’s beauty, especially in the secluded glade he finds
 - Jack spoils this glade with the sacrificial sow’s head, just as he will destroy nature later by setting fire to the jungle in Chapter 12
- He is **prescient**:
 - He is the first boy to realise that there is no beast on the island
 - Furthermore, he suggests that while there is indeed no external beast, perhaps the boys are creating one in their own minds:
 - He says of the beast: “maybe it’s only us”
 - This could also be Golding suggesting that there is no external evil on the island, only the evil that comes directly from the boys themselves
- Golding also uses the character of Simon to explore ideas about morality and Christianity:
 - Unlike Jesus Christ (which Simon can be seen to represent), his goodness does not inspire others to act **altruistically**
 - In fact, far from being an inspiration to the other boys, his capacity for good and cooperative spirit, means he is seen as strange by the group:
 - They call him “queer” and Simon seems to have no friends
 - He cuts an isolated figure and is **marginalised** by the other boys
 - His death can be seen to represent the triumph of human evil over goodness:
 - Golding is perhaps suggesting that the human impulse for savagery and individualism is much stronger than that for civilisation and cooperation

- It is significant that all of the other boys are involved in his murder:
 - This is further evidence that all of humanity naturally tends towards savagery
- Golding is perhaps also suggesting that this human impulse is stronger than external value systems, such as the moral code of Christianity



Your notes

Roger

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

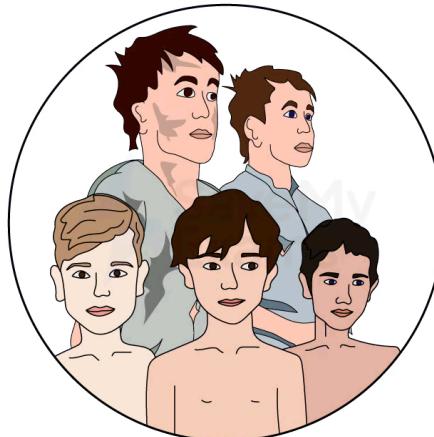
- Roger is used by Golding to represent humanity's capacity for evil
- Initially, Roger is presented as a quiet member of Jack's choir
- However, over the course of the novel his impulse towards violence and cruelty becomes more and more apparent:
 - In Chapter 4, Roger is described by Golding as throwing rocks at a littlun, Henry
 - At this stage he "threw to miss"
 - This suggests that he is still constrained by society's moral codes ("Roger's arm was conditioned by civilisation")
 - However, this episode **foreshadows** later violent acts committed by Roger
 - Later in the novel, Jack's tribe split from Ralph's and become liberated from Ralph's and Piggy's rules
 - They also kill a pig for the first time, which also marks a turning point in the novel:
 - After the first successful hunt, the hunters are emboldened to commit more and more acts of violence (even against other boys)



Your notes

- After the tribes split, and the hunters' first successful kill, Roger feels no **inhibitions** in acting on his cruel impulses:
 - In Chapter 11 he again throws a rock at another boy, but this time, doesn't throw to miss:
 - This rock – a boulder – is launched directly at Piggy, the impact of which kills him
 - He also becomes Jack's torturer-in-chief on Castle Rock
 - Sam and Eric indicate that Roger's **inhibitions** have now completely vanished: "You don't know Roger. He's a terror"
- Golding is suggesting that the very real human impulse for violence and evil is largely constrained by society's rules and values:
 - Without these conventions governing our behaviour, he seems to suggest, evil is unleashed

Minor characters

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

The Littluns

- The littluns are a collection of much younger boys who rely almost entirely on the older boys
- If Jack and Ralph are used by Golding to represent different styles of **government**, then the littluns represent ordinary citizens in society
- As citizens of this makeshift civilisation, its leaders assume responsibility for them:
 - They keep registers
 - They build shelters and provide drinking water for all the boys
 - At the end of Chapter 2, Piggy notices that one littlun – with a mulberry-coloured birthmark – has disappeared



Your notes

- This boy was last seen playing where a wildfire has just been raging
- It is clear to the reader that this boy has probably perished in the fire, but the boys ignore it and the littlun is barely mentioned again
- Golding could be suggesting that establishing a civilisation and assuming responsibility for its citizens is extremely challenging:
 - Ultimately, Ralph and Piggy's project fails, and this episode with the littlun with the mulberry-coloured birthmark **foreshadows** this
 - Ralph and Piggy try to take this responsibility seriously:
 - However, it is clear that even Ralph's community-focused leadership fails the littluns:

Sam and Eric

- Sam and Eric are twin boys and are known collectively as Samneric
- They are loyal to Ralph and Piggy, even after Jack's tribe splits from the group
- Golding uses the characters of Sam and Eric to explore the different leadership styles of Ralph and Jack:
 - Although Sam and Eric wish to remain loyal to Ralph, they are forced to join Jack's tribe
 - This shows that Jack's **authoritarian** rule is more powerful than Ralph's **democratic** leadership
 - Golding's view is, therefore, a pessimistic one: that even though it is recognised that **democratic government** is preferable, it will lose out to **authoritarianism**



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Ralph Character Analysis

Ralph represents the goodness of society and is democratically elected to be the boys' leader before Jack ousts him; Ralph's fate suggests that savagery and **individualism** are stronger forces than democracy and morality.

Ralph character summary

Overview

- Elected leader
- Sets up rules for the boys' society
- He loses power to Jack, and is isolated
- Jack's tribe tries to hunt Ralph down and kill him

Key characteristics

- Strong moral compass
- Natural leader
- Middle class
- Reflective

Role

Ralph is the novel's central protagonist, and represents the civilised values of traditional British society, in contrast to the allure of savagery embodied by Jack



Themes

- Power and Leadership
- Civilisation versus Savagery
- Good versus Evil



Your notes

Why is Ralph important?

As the central protagonist, readers see most of the novel through Ralph's eyes. He can be seen to represent humanity as a whole, and is pulled between the influences of **reason** (represented by Piggy) and **individualism** (represented by Jack):

- He has a **strong moral compass**: Ralph knows that the boys will only survive if they cooperate and behave in a civilised manner, "like in school". He recognises that the collapse of the boys' society leads to savagery and death, and Ralph is the only boy to understand that what the boys do to Simon is "murder".
- He is a **charismatic leader**: His physical size and charisma make him a natural leader to the other boys, who see him as a "link with the adult world". Because of this he is able to issue clear commands, establish rules and delegate responsibility.
- He is **impressionable**: Although he is a confident leader, Ralph is easily influenced by the other boys. He establishes the nickname "Piggy" after Jack calls Piggy fat, and is swept up in the ritualistic frenzy of Simon's murder in Chapter 9.

Ralph Language Analysis

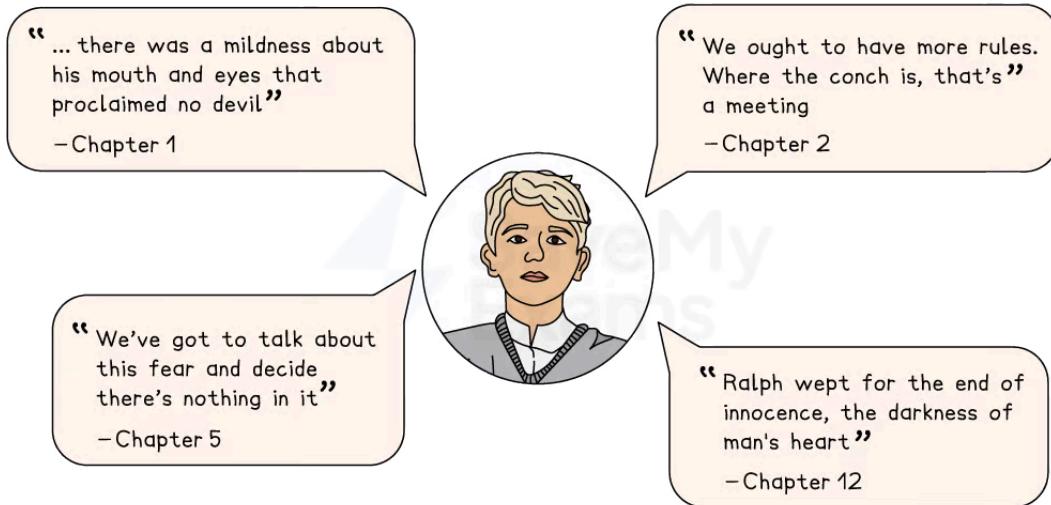
Ralph's language reflects his public school education and his straightforward understanding of society and social order:

- **Class prejudice**: Ralph simply assumes that he will be a good leader on the basis of his class and background — his father is in the navy. He also instinctively thinks less of the working-class Piggy, mocking his accent: "sucks to your ass-mar".
- **Clarity of speech**: Ralph's speech is usually clear, simple and commanding, such as when he states: "We ought to have more rules. Where the conch is, that's a meeting". His clarity makes his imperative commands and statements ("we ought"; "we should") seem more logical and persuasive.
- **Represents civilised society**: He wants the boys' society to be "like school", and uses his strength to **foster** community via the conch shell, which gives all members of the group a voice. This distinguishes him from the individualism of boys such as Jack, who says "Bollocks to the rules!"

Ralph key quotes



Your notes



Ralph character development

Chapters 1–4	Chapters 5–9	Chapters 10–12
<p>Ralph establishes civilised society: After their plane crashes, Ralph and Piggy use a conch to gather the survivors. The boys elect Ralph as their leader; Ralph establishes rules for their survival. Ralph soon becomes frustrated that the boys are not helping to build shelters. He argues with Jack after Jack allows the signal fire to go out.</p>	<p>The boys descend into savagery: The boys start to fear a "beast" on the island, and Ralph and Jack try to hunt it down. The boys disagree on how to deal with it, and Jack starts his own tribe. Later, while Jack's tribe feasts, Ralph becomes swept up in their frenzied attack on Simon, who they think is the beast. The boys all murder Simon.</p>	<p>Ralph realises the truth: Ralph regrets his part in Simon's murder. He and Piggy are ostracised and attacked. At Castle Rock, Ralph and Jack fight while Roger kills Piggy and destroys the conch. Jack's tribe hunt Ralph through the jungle. Chased onto the beach, Ralph is met by a naval officer. Ralph weeps at what the boys have become.</p>

Ralph character interpretation

Ralph reflects man's true nature

Ralph is our point-of-view character for much of the novel, and might be seen to represent the goodness of humanity as a whole. Although there are some darker aspects to him (such as his bullying of Piggy), he also possesses qualities that mark him as an attractive and moral individual.

Golding's first description of Ralph emphasises that "there was a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil". He consistently attempts to do what is "right", and repeatedly refers to the values and moral codes of English society, "like in school". Moreover, he demonstrates a selfless spirit when, after winning the leadership vote, he allows Jack to remain in charge of his choir, who become the hunters.

By positioning Ralph as a strong, natural leader, Golding creates a sense of hope and optimism in the first part of the novel that makes the eventual collapse of the boys' new society feel all the more tragic: it demonstrates that even the strongest of individuals can succumb to the "darkness" lurking within.



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Piggy Character Analysis



Your notes

Piggy represents civilisation and rational thought, but he is bullied horribly and his intelligence and foresight are dismissed because of his working-class origins.

Piggy character summary



Your notes

Overview

- Helps Ralph to establish rules
- Is bullied relentlessly for his accent and appearance
- Joins in with the savage attack on Simon
- Is murdered after he reminds Jack's tribe of the importance of rules

Key characteristics

- Rational
- Values rules
- Low social status
- Victim of bullying

Role

Piggy represents rational thought on the island, but although he is loyal to Ralph, his useful and important ideas about how the island should be run are ignored because of his working-class background

Themes

- Good versus Evil
- Civilisation versus Savagery

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved.

Piggy character summary

Why is Piggy important?



Your notes

Piggy is the character who most represents the values of civilised society: he prizes rules, knowing that vulnerable members of the group (like him) will be protected by order and shared responsibility. His murder represents the triumph of human evil over this order, and suggests that humans are drawn to savagery over morality and cooperation.

- He believes in **reason and rules**: Piggy reminds the other boys of the importance of sticking to rules for everyone's benefit, and reminds Ralph of his responsibilities when Ralph becomes distracted or depressed. He understands the severity of the boys' situation, and the importance of their working together
- He is **responsible for many of the group's ideas**: Piggy establishes the importance of the conch as a symbol of civilised order. It is also his idea to take a register and build shelters. His glasses become important because they allow the boys to make fire
- He is a **tragic character**: Piggy is bullied awfully by the other boys; we never learn his real name, and only know him by the cruel label that Ralph gives him. He is the repeated victim of violence. Despite this, he tries to establish rules that help everyone, and is killed while appealing to the hunters' better natures

Piggy Language Analysis

The language spoken by, or used to describe Simon, is often prophetic or packed with religious symbolism that relates to Golding's message about humanity's tendency towards savagery:

- **Working-class dialect**: Piggy is from a working-class background, and despite his good ideas he is treated by other boys as lower in status; even Ralph mocks his accent: "sucks to your ass-mar".
- **Language of civilisation and reasoning**: Piggy sees rules and logical actions as the foundations of working society, and believes that "Life [...] is scientific". He also knows that democracy and civilised values are all that protect him and the weaker members of the group from the boys' savage natures.
- **Represents the battle of ideas on the island**: Golding uses Piggy to pose a central question: "Which is better – to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?" Piggy gives voice to the battle of ideas that is waging on the island between order and disorder, and between civilised and uncivilised society.

Piggy key quotes



Your notes


Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Piggy key quotes

Piggy character development

Chapters 1–4	Chapters 5–8	Chapters 9–12
<p>Establishing civilised rules: After crashing, Ralph and Piggy use the conch to bring the boys together. Piggy helps Ralph to establish rules. The boys use Piggy's glasses to make a fire that spreads and kills a littlun. Piggy is upset after Jack's hunters let a signal fire go out, and Jack hits Piggy, breaking his glasses.</p>	<p>The boys' society fails: When Ralph questions his leadership, Piggy and Simon affirm loyalty to him. The littluns express their fear of a "beast", and Piggy rationally argues that there is no such thing. Piggy stays with the littluns while the other boys go hunting. After Jack rebels, Piggy helps Ralph to build a new signal fire.</p>	<p>The death of civilised order: Piggy and Ralph are part of the circle of boys who mistake Simon for the beast and murder him. Piggy won't allow himself to believe that he was part of it. Jack's tribe attack Ralph and Piggy, stealing Piggy's glasses. When Ralph and Piggy try to reason with them, Roger murders Piggy and destroys the conch.</p>

Piggy character interpretation

Reason and rational thought versus savagery

Golding uses Piggy as a mouthpiece for rational thought. This is best demonstrated when Piggy insists that "life is scientific" when faced with the increasing superstitious hysteria of the group when they insist they are being haunted by a "Beast". He states clearly — when even Ralph and Jack are beginning to believe in

the reality of a monster on the island — that “I know there isn’t no beast” and even has the insight to suggest that “there isn’t no fear, either... Unless we get frightened of people”.

Unlike many of the other boys, whom Golding uses to represent the unthinking and superstitious masses, Piggy recognises that really what the boys should fear is themselves, and the dark side of human nature. Sadly, his concerns are proved true when Jack’s hunters give in to their violent desires. Roger, one of Jack’s tribe, kills Piggy with a boulder at Castle Rock, and Piggy’s death can be seen as the death of reason and any hope for civilisation on the island.



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Simon Character Analysis



Your notes

Simon represents the only truly good character in the novel, and his death is therefore all the more tragic: it suggests that, freed from the rules or moral codes that bind civilisation, human nature will eliminate goodness.

Simon character summary



Your notes

Overview

- One of Jack's choristers
- Helps to feed the littluns and build shelters
- Realises that "the beast" is imaginary
- Is murdered by the other boys, who mistake him for "the beast"

Key characteristics

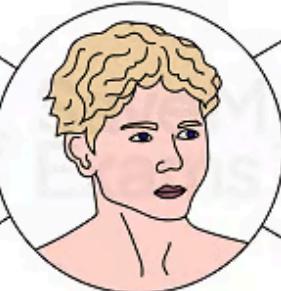
- Kind
- Hard-working
- Isolated
- An innocent victim

Role

Simon represents human goodness on this island, demonstrated by his respectfulness towards nature, and his kindness towards others, but he is murdered by the boys as they give in to their savage instincts

Themes

- Religion
- Good versus Evil
- Civilisation versus Savagery

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved.

Simon character summary

Why is Simon important?



Your notes

Simon is the most morally “good” of the boys on the island, and is shown to behave in selfless ways that benefit the wider group. His murder represents the triumph of human evil over goodness, and suggests that humans are drawn to savagery over morality and cooperation.

- He is **kind and cooperative**: he is the only boy shown to **altruistically** help others: he picks fruit for the littluns and helps to build shelters, and he also sticks up for Piggy when other boys mock his lack of physical strength. The other boys see his behaviour as strange, though, and he is increasingly isolated from the wider group.
- He is **perceptive**: Simon sees the beauty in his new surroundings (such as flowers that Jack “slashes”), and is the first boy to realise that there is no “beast” on the island, although he is not believed when he tells the others that “maybe it’s only us”.
- He is a **Christ-like victim**: Simon climbs a mountain to discover that the “beast” is simply a harmless corpse. His selflessness in rushing to tell the others that it is “harmless”, even after being **ostracised**, has Christ-like connotations, as does his barbaric death at the hands of those he sought to save.

Simon Language Analysis

The language spoken by, or used to describe Simon, is often prophetic or packed with religious symbolism that relates to Golding’s message about humanity’s tendency towards savagery:

- **Prescient language**: Simon is the first boy to realise that “the beast” is not “something you could hunt and kill” but is “part of you”, and he alone understands that the true evil on the island comes from the boys themselves. He also seems to predict Ralph’s fate, telling him that he will “get back alright”.
- **Religious imagery**: When Simon feeds the littluns, he offers them only “the choicest” fruit, and is surrounded by “endless, outstretched hands” like a prophet surrounded by worshippers. When he is murdered, his body seems to shine like “silver”, and nature itself seems to mourn his death.

Simon key quotes



Your notes



Simon character development

Chapters 1–4	Chapters 5–8	Chapters 9–12
<p>Kind but isolated: Simon is introduced as one of Jack's choristers; the others see his fainting as a weakness. He supports Ralph's rules for civilisation and is the only boy shown to help feed the littluns and build shelter. He goes alone into the jungle and finds a peaceful glade that he likes to sit in.</p>	<p>Brave and perceptive: The boys are scared of a “beast”, so Simon goes with Ralph and Jack to hunt it. He spends more time alone in his glade, and he is spoken to by “the Lord of the Flies” — a severed pig's head. He realises that the real “beast” is inside the boys, and finds only a corpse, not a monster, atop the mountain.</p>	<p>A victim of the “beast”: Simon rushes to warn the boys that the beast is not real, but interrupts a tribal dance. The boys mistake him for the beast, and murder Simon in a savage attack. Only Ralph accepts his role in Simon's murder. Ralph later recalls Simon's prophetic words as he flees from Jack's hunters.</p>

Simon character interpretation

Morality and Christianity

Simon's status as an outsider is implied by his fainting at various points in the novel, suggesting that he has a medical condition such as epilepsy that makes it harder for him to fit in with the other boys, who see him as weak. Worse, while Simon helps others, his goodness does not inspire others to act **altruistically**. In fact, far

from being an inspiration to the other boys, his capacity for good and cooperative spirit mean that he is seen as "queer" by the group. He does not seem to have any friends, and is shown to be isolated on the island.

Despite how he is treated, though, Simon risks his safety by climbing the mountain to find the beast and then, even after being violently sick, rushes to tell the others that it is "harmless". His bravery and selflessness after being marginalised has Christ-like connotations, as does his barbaric death at the hands of those he was rushing to save.

It is significant that all of the other boys are involved in his murder; through this, Golding seems to suggest that humanity naturally tends towards savagery, and that this human impulse is stronger than external value systems, such as the moral code of Christianity.



Your notes



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Jack Character Analysis

Jack takes over from Ralph as the boys' "chief", ruling through fear and violence; his conflict with Ralph suggests that savagery and **individualism** are stronger forces than democracy and morality.

Jack character summary

Jack			
Key characteristics	Role	Themes	Overview
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Middle-class▪ Autocratic▪ Individualistic▪ Violent	Jack is the novel's central antagonist , and represents the savagery and individualism at the heart of humanity, in contrast to the values of cooperation and civilised order embodied by Ralph and Piggy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Power and Leadership▪ Civilisation versus Savagery▪ Good versus Evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Loses the leadership election to Ralph▪ Leads the hunters, but clashes with Ralph and Piggy▪ Starts his own tribe of painted, bloodthirsty savages▪ Jack's tribe tries to hunt down Jack down and kill him

Why is Jack important?

As the central antagonist, Jack demonstrates how quickly even the most civilised of individuals can descend into selfish and savage behaviour; his rise to power suggests how humanity is drawn to violence at the expense of civilised social values:

- He is **violent**: Jack is first described as the head of a "creature" made up of choristers, setting the theme for his animalistic behaviour. He is described as "slashing" at plants, becomes obsessed with hunting and killing and he later recruits boys to his tribe through violence.
- He is **individualistic**: Jack prioritises his personal desires at the expense of what would be best for the group, such as when he takes his choristers hunting instead of tending the signal fire and ensuring the



Your notes

boys' rescue. He also considers rules only in terms of how they benefit him (or his hunger to mete out punishment).

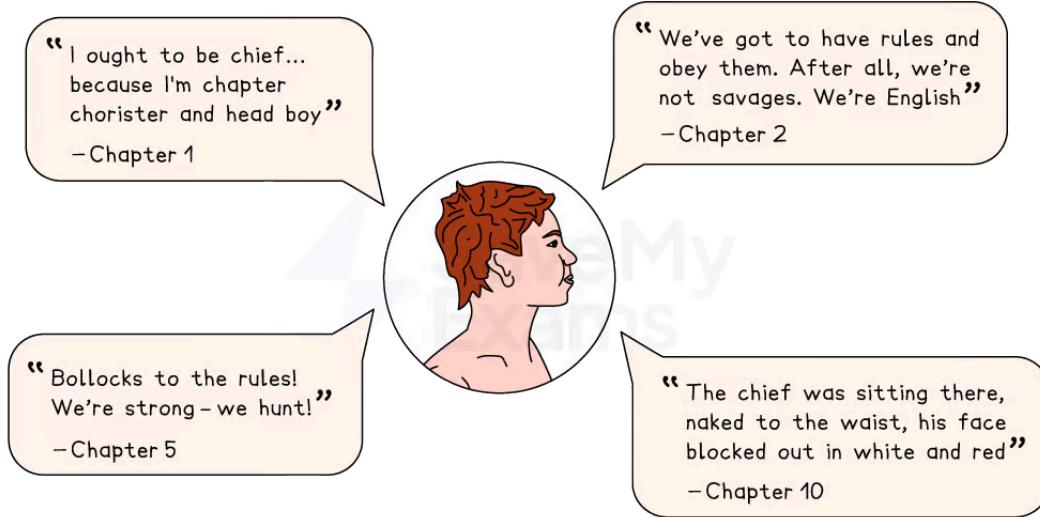
- He is **influential**: He is athletic, strong and violent, and his promise of a rule-less tribe is attractive to many of the boys on the island, as demonstrated by his dominance at the end of the novel. He even influences Ralph, who establishes the nickname "Piggy" after Jack calls Piggy fat.

Jack language analysis

From Chapter 1 onwards, Jack's language, and the language used to describe him, highlights his alarming capacity for violence and his opposition to Ralph's civilised order:

- **Innate violence**: In Chapter 1, Jack is described as "slashing" at flowers (as opposed to Simon, who admires their beauty); in Chapter 4, killing a pig feels to him like taking "a long satisfying drink". His violence extends to his own tribe as he tortures and threatens the boys to ensure their obedience.
- **Bullying and autocratic**: Jack initially gives the impression of valuing rules and order, but seems especially excited at the prospect of dishing out punishment — foreshadowing his later autocratic leadership: "Then when anyone breaks 'em—"
- **Represents individualism**: Golding contrasts the opposing leadership styles of Jack and Ralph, especially in Chapter 5 when Jack says "Bollocks to the rules!" This statement shows how Jack considers civilisation and cooperation less appealing than "the brilliant world of hunting".

Jack key quotes



"I ought to be chief... because I'm chapter chorister and head boy" – Chapter 1

"We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English" – Chapter 2

"Bollocks to the rules! We're strong – we hunt!" – Chapter 5

"The chief was sitting there, naked to the waist, his face blocked out in white and red" – Chapter 10

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

Jack key quotes

Jack character development

Chapters 1–4	Chapters 5–9	Chapters 10–12
Jack is established as Ralph's opposite: Jack loses the leadership vote to Ralph, but remains leader of his group of hunters. Jack supports Ralph in establishing rules for their survival, but only wants to hunt. Jack and his hunters choose to hunt a pig instead of tending the signal fire; the fire goes out and they miss a chance for rescue. Jack argues with Ralph about his actions.	Jack and his hunters descend into savagery: The boys start to fear a "beast" on the island, and Jack and Ralph try to hunt it down. The boys disagree on how to deal with it, and Jack leaves to start his own tribe of face-painted savages. During a war dance, Jack's tribe, Ralph and Piggy mistake Simon for the "beast", and murder Simon.	Jack's autocratic rule: Jack uses violence to force the boys to join his tribe. He has stolen Piggy's glasses, and has the power to make fire. At Castle Rock, Ralph confronts Jack but Roger kills Piggy and destroys the conch. Jack's tribe hunt Jack through the jungle, intending to offer his head as a sacrifice to the "beast". Jack sets fire to the jungle while hunting Ralph.



Jack character interpretation

The breakdown of social order, and the triumph of evil

Golding uses Jack to show how swiftly civilised individuals will ignore rules, straining to break rules, or abuse rules for their own **base** desires. In Chapter 2, Jack tells the others that rules are a vital part of civilisation: "we've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages". However, it soon becomes clear that Jack is not interested in the boys behaving in a civilised way. If anything, he is eager for some to break the rules because if people don't "obey" them, he may be able to impose discipline, or even dish out punishment. Indeed, later at the same meeting he says "we'll have rules! ... Lots of rules! Then when anyone breaks 'em —", **foreshadowing** his cruel torture of boys on Castle Rock who dare to defy Jack's commands.

As the novel goes on, Jack also loses the clothing that represents civilised society, and by Chapter 4 the choral gowns and hats are discarded, and Jack has long hair and fewer clothes. He even paints on a "mask" which frees him from the "shame and self-consciousness" of society — and the members of his tribe follow suit. The boys' appearance is a metaphor for their turn towards savagery, and away from the **trappings** (neat appearance, short hair) of civilisation.



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Roger Character Analysis

Initially presented as a quiet member of Jack's choir, Roger's violence and cruelty grow throughout the novel until he chillingly exemplifies humanity's capacity for evil and the boys' descent into savagery.

Roger character summary

Overview

- Initially quiet and unassuming
- After joining Jack's tribe, Roger loses all moral constraints
- Becomes Jack's enforcer and torturer
- Murders Piggy

Key characteristics

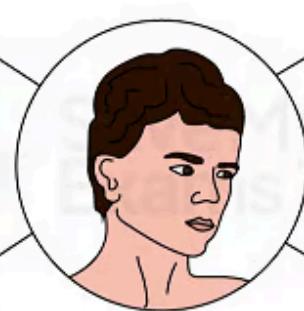
- Quiet
- Sadistic
- Individualistic
- Violent

Role

Roger is the novel's most violent and **sadistic** character. He represents the darkest aspects of human nature: the inherent capacity for cruelty when societal constraints are removed

Themes

- Civilisation versus Savagery
- Good versus Evil
- Power and Leadership

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved.

Roger character summary



Your notes

Why is Roger important?

Roger demonstrates the consequences of society's breakdown and the release of humanity's most primal instincts. His character arc suggests that evil is not an anomaly but a fundamental aspect of human nature, unleashed when societal norms no longer exist.

- **He represents inherent cruelty:** Even before the boys fully descend into savagery, Roger's actions show his capacity for evil. In Chapter 4, he throws rocks at Henry but refrains from hitting him due to the "taboo of the old life." This shows that he is already testing the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.
- **He is a symbol of unleashed savagery:** Once Jack's tribe splits from Ralph's leadership, Roger's behaviour becomes increasingly violent and sadistic. He acts without inhibition, seen most shockingly when he kills Piggy by rolling a boulder onto him in Chapter 11.
- **He embodies Golding's message about human nature:** Roger's **sadistic** tendencies suggest that cruelty and evil are inherent in humanity and are only suppressed by societal rules. Sam and Eric describe Roger as "a terror," highlighting his transformation into a figure of pure violence.

Roger language analysis

Although Roger rarely speaks, the descriptions of him – even from the early chapters – foreshadow his descent into violence and highlight the darker aspects of his personality:

- **Testing boundaries:** In Chapter 4, Golding writes that Roger smashes a littlun's sandcastle, and throws stones at another young boy, but is "conditioned by civilisation" not to hit him. This moment subtly hints at Roger's latent capacity for violence, as he is already straining against the **constraints** of society.
- **Sadistic behaviour:** As the novel progresses, Roger's violent tendencies escalate. His actions become unrestrained, and Golding uses phrases like "a terror" and "one wielding a nameless authority" to show how his cruelty now defines him.
- **Ultimate violence:** In Chapter 11, kills Piggy with a boulder and explodes the conch "into a thousand white fragments". This act represents the final breakdown of civilisation on the island, as Roger no longer feels any moral or societal **constraints**.

Roger key quotes

“ ”

"Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilisation that knew nothing of him and was in ruins"

“ ”

"You don't know Roger. He's a terror."



Your notes

"

"the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments"

"

"sharpened a stick at both ends"

Roger character development

Chapters 1–4	Chapters 5–8	Chapters 9–12
First signs of violence: Roger is introduced as a quiet and seemingly inconspicuous member of the choir. His latent cruelty is hinted at when he smashes a sandcastle and throws stones at Henry but does not hit him, restrained by the remnants of societal norms.	Descent into savagery: As Jack's tribe splits from Ralph's leadership, Roger begins to lose his inhibitions. Freed from the constraints of rules and morality, he starts to indulge his sadistic impulses, gaining a reputation for cruelty within the group. Roger sharpens the stick on which the pig's head is skewered as an offering.	Triumph of evil: Roger becomes Jack's enforcer, embodying the tribe's savagery. He tortures Sam and Eric. In Chapter 11, he kills Piggy by rolling a boulder onto him, symbolising the complete destruction of civilisation and order on the island. He sharpens a stick on which to place Ralph's head.

Roger character interpretation

The breakdown of social order and triumph of savagery

Golding uses Roger to demonstrate the breakdown of social order and the triumph of savagery. Initially, Roger is restrained by the "taboo of the old life", but as the boys descend into savagery, these moral boundaries are stripped away.

By Chapter 11, Roger's violent tendencies are unleashed without **constraint**, symbolising the collapse of civilisation on the island. His role as Jack's torturer-in-chief illustrates the dangers of autocratic leadership, as Jack's regime rewards Roger's cruelty and fosters his **sadistic** impulses. The killing of Piggy, alongside the destruction of the conch, marks the ultimate triumph of savagery over civilisation. Through Roger,

Golding suggests that humanity's capacity for evil is ever-present, only held in check by the fragile constructs of society.



Your notes



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Context

The Lord of the Flies historical context

The consequences of war

- Golding wrote Lord of the Flies during the **Cold War**
- The **Cold War** was a rivalry between the **Soviet Union** and **the West**, and can be seen as a war between two very different styles of government:
 - **The West** championed democracy and free speech
 - The **Soviet Union** was seen by the West as **authoritarian** and **autocratic**
- William Golding served in the British Navy during World War II
- His experiences of warfare – and witnessing first-hand the evils of which man is capable in war – informed the writing of Lord of the Flies:
 - Although it could be argued that the Nazis' **dehumanisation** of and evil committed against the Jewish race shaped his pessimistic view of human nature, it was also the acts he saw perpetrated by the British that shocked him:
 - He later said that war enabled him to "see what people were capable of doing"
 - He was as disturbed by the Allies' behaviour during the war, including the dropping of the atom bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
 - The US dropped nuclear bombs on two Japanese cities in 1945, killing an estimated 200,000 civilians

How this links to the novel The Lord of the Flies

Cold War parallels	It is possible to see in Lord of the Flies a parallel to the clash of civilisations during the Cold War, with Ralph representing democracy and free speech (the West), while Jack represents the negative Western view of the Soviet Union . However, Golding doesn't seem to suggest that either side is blameless for the evil that is perpetrated on the island. For example, the littlun who perishes in the fire in Chapter 2 is not protected by Ralph's democratic government; all sides take part in the murder of Simon; and although Jack's tyranny is clearly detrimental, it is perhaps the battle between the two sides that causes the greatest harm.
Impact of war	However you read Golding's intentions in Lord of the Flies, it is clear that he believes that all of humanity has the capacity for evil and that warfare brings this impulse to the surface. Even Ralph and Piggy take part in the murder of Simon. Further, since Ralph and Piggy represent

"civilised society" then perhaps Golding is arguing that even a war waged in the name of civilisation can lead to acts of evil. It is the conflict between Ralph and Jack's ideologies, and the fact that they cannot come to an agreement, that causes the death of Piggy.



Your notes

The Lord of the Flies social context

Loss of innocence

- William Golding spent more than 20 years as a teacher of young boys:
 - It is not a coincidence, then, that his characters in Lord of the Flies are schoolchildren
 - He had first-hand experience of the interactions of young people with each other, including their relationships and cruelties
 - Golding wanted to explore the notion of childhood innocence:
 - What made children capable of evil?
 - Did external factors result in this loss of innocence?
 - Or is the idea that children are ever innocent wrong?
- He taught English and philosophy, and was fascinated by morality and human nature:
 - He stated that Lord of the Flies was "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature":
 - This suggests that Golding believed it was not external factors that caused human beings to act in an evil way, but human nature itself
 - Golding famously remarked that "Man produces evil as a bee produces honey"

How this links to the novel The Lord of the Flies

Absence of social norms	Lord of the Flies can be seen as a philosophical text which seeks to identify the source of human evil. Although it could be argued that the boys on the island copy the behaviour of the adults engaged in warfare, it is perhaps more true to say that it is the absence of social norms that allow the boys' true nature to emerge which is cruel and capable of shocking violence. This nature, according to Golding, is capable of great evil, even if they are just children.
Descent into savagery	As the boys become further and further removed from the society they once knew, they become more capable of evil. This is evident in many ways: hunting – and then killing – the pigs makes it easier to commit violent acts against each other; wearing face-paint frees them of the "self-consciousness" of civilisation; having longer hair



Your notes

and wearing fewer clothes removes the physical markers of society; Jack and the hunters' speech becomes more primal and monosyllabic; and the boys engage in more and more "savage" practices, like ritual ceremonies and dances.

Piggy's dehumanisation and fate

It is also a deliberate choice by Golding that the character of "Piggy" is killed. Throughout, he is **dehumanised** to the extent that he is referred to as an animal and treated like the island's other animals, which subsequently leads to him being killed. However, it could also be said that as the novel progresses, the boys all treat each other less like human beings, and more like beasts.

Social class

- England in the 1950s was characterised by a deeply entrenched class system that significantly impacted people's live and opportunities
- People born into the middle or upper classes had substantial advantages over those born into the working class:
 - They typically had better access to education, including private schools and prestigious universities
 - Their social connections and family networks often provided easier pathways to desirable careers
 - They generally enjoyed greater financial security and inherited wealth
- Working-class people had low status and faced many challenges:
 - They often had limited educational opportunities, with many leaving school at a young age to enter the workforce
 - Manual labour and factory work were common occupations
 - There was less social mobility, making it difficult to move up the socio-economic ladder

How this links to the novel The Lord of the Flies

Social hierarchy

In Lord of the Flies, there is a clear distinction between Piggy (who is working class) and the rest of the boys. Piggy has an accent which highlights his low social status. We can assume that most of the boys have been educated in private schools, while Piggy's grammatical errors suggest that he has not. As a result of being working class, and thus being of a lower status, Piggy is treated badly by the other boys. He is mocked for his accent and his ungrammatical speech; he is **dehumanised** to the extent that the other boys never ask him his real name and he is only referred to by a cruel nickname; he is verbally and physically abused by Jack.



Your notes

Ralph's perceived superiority	Furthermore, despite the fact that Piggy is clearly the most intelligent boy on the island, and devoutly loyal to Ralph and his leadership, Ralph never defends him from abuse. In fact, Ralph states that his father is a commander in the English Navy, highlighting his family's high status and hence his perceived superiority over characters like Piggy. Here Golding suggests that class is a powerful – and harmful – social force. He also appears to suggest that the English class system neglects intelligence and talent in favour of status and reputation. Because he is working class, Piggy could never hold a leadership position, however suitable he might be.
-------------------------------	---

Christianity

- There is a lot of Christian imagery in Lord of the Flies, but William Golding is not attempting to create a straightforward **religious allegory**:
 - Instead, he uses religious symbolism to explore ideas about human nature, and human goodness and evil
- It is unclear whether Golding himself believed in God, but he was certainly raised in a household that did not practise Christianity:
 - His father was a science teacher and an atheist
- However, Golding himself was upset when he discovered his father's atheism, and was himself a spiritual – if not traditionally Christian – man
- Rather than interrogating the existence of Heaven, Hell or God, Golding was more interested in exploring ideas around moral responsibility and humanity's good and evil:
 - These are themes that are prevalent in all of Golding's novels

How this links to the novel The Lord of the Flies

Good versus evil	In Lord of the Flies, Golding uses Christian religious symbolism to explore ideas about morality and good and evil. For example, Simon can be interpreted as a symbol of Jesus Christ and the sacrificial pig's head could be seen as representing the Devil. Further the island itself could be seen to represent the Garden of Eden .
Inner demons	However, Golding isn't commenting on Christianity directly with these references, or the existence of external evil (from the Devil, for example). Instead, he concludes that the source of humanity's evil is human nature itself: the boys themselves are the cause of all evil on the island. His view is pessimistic: Simon is killed because of humanity's inherent savagery; the island (a kind of paradise) is destroyed by the boys' desire to kill. Indeed, the sacrificial pig's head is not some external force as Simon is terrorised by his own imagination.



Your notes

The Lord of the Flies literary context

The 1950s saw a rise in dystopian and allegorical literature, with authors using fiction to comment on social and political issues. Golding's novel can be viewed as part of this trend alongside works like George Orwell's 1984 (published in 1949) and Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 (published in 1953).

- Lord of the Flies is sometimes referred to as psychological fiction, or philosophical fiction, but its genre can be neatly defined simply as allegory
- The novel is written in the form of an allegory:
 - An allegory is a fictional work in which the characters and events represent particular qualities or ideas
- Lord of the Flies uses its setting and characters to represent the whole of human society
- Golding's work has been compared to R.M. Ballantyne's The Coral Island (1858), a Victorian adventure novel that also features British boys stranded on an island
- However Golding's novel subverts Ballantyne's work, presenting a darker view of human nature
- Much like Ancient Greek tragedies, Golding utilises a technique known as the unity of place in Lord of the Flies:
 - The unity of place means that the story takes place in just one location
 - Much like Ancient Greek tragedy, Lord of the Flies also contains morally flawed characters and death

How this links to the novel The Lord of the Flies

Allegory	<p>Different characters represent different aspects of human nature: Roger represents human evil, Simon represents human goodness and Piggy represents human innovation.</p> <p>The characters also symbolise different styles of government, with different characters representing different leadership styles: Ralph represents democracy and free speech, while Jack represents authoritarianism. The island also represents a tabula rasa, or blank slate, on which the boys can create a society of their choosing</p>
-----------------	--



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Writer's Methods and Techniques

The best responses at GCSE don't limit their analysis to individual words and phrases. Examiners are really looking for analysis of Golding's overall aims, so try to take a 'whole-text' approach to writer's methods and techniques. Each of the below topics do just that:

- **Structure**
- **Foreshadowing**
- **Allegory**
- **Symbolism**

Structure

Writing about structure is a great way to explore a writer's methods in any GCSE English Literature essay. By thinking about how Golding has structured Lord of the Flies, you are already taking a 'whole-text' approach to the novel (which examiners love) and will be commenting on sophisticated techniques without the time-consuming need to learn lots of quotations.

Setting

- Much like Ancient Greek **tragedies**, Golding utilises a technique known as the **unity of place** in Lord of the Flies:
 - The **unity of place** means that the story takes place in just one location
 - Much like Ancient Greek tragedy, Lord of the Flies also contains morally flawed characters and death
- The single location of Lord of the Flies is a deserted island:
 - This is a particularly restricted setting:
 - On their own, the boys cannot escape this setting
 - The fact that there is no escape lends a **claustrophobic** tone to the novel
 - The isolated setting also builds tension, as the reader knows that the boys – especially as they begin to fall out – will not survive on this island forever
 - This setting, therefore, creates a sense of **jeopardy**
 - Only the naval officer's arrival punctures this **claustrophobia** and **jeopardy**



Your notes

- The island setting also enables Golding to create a **microcosm**:
 - A **microcosm** is a small place, or setting, that represents something much larger
 - In Lord of the Flies, the island represents human society
 - Like a thought-experiment, by creating a **microcosm** in Lord of the Flies, Golding is able to explore how different **ideologies** (**democracy** versus **autocracy**; **altruism** versus **individualism**) clash with each other
 - The arrival of the naval officer destroys the **microcosm**, and the boys are no longer representations of **democracy**, or **autocracy**, but little boys once more

Foreshadowing

- Golding uses **foreshadowing** on many different occasions throughout the novel to hint to the reader what is about to happen:
- Golding **foreshadows** the division between the boys, and the destruction of nature by Jack's tribe, with the use of "the scar":
 - "The scar" is the name the boys give to the damage their aeroplane makes after it crash lands on the island
 - It takes the form of a large indentation, which has destroyed a large part of the forest
 - The scar divides two parts of the forest, just like Jack's and Ralph's tribes will be divided later in the novel
 - The scar has spoilt a paradise, just like the boys will do
 - A scar also represents pain and damage, just like Jack will attempt to kill Ralph – and burn down a large part of the forest to do so – in Chapter 12
- Golding **foreshadows** the death of Piggy with the earlier description of Roger throwing stones at Henry:
 - In Chapter 4, Roger is described as throwing stones at a littlun called Henry
 - At this point in the novel, Roger is still conditioned by society's rules for behaviour, so "throws to miss"
 - However, Golding's deliberate reference to a "stone" here **foreshadows** the rock that Roger launches from Castle Rock that kills Piggy
- Golding **foreshadows** Simon's death with the earlier ritual dance involving Robert:
 - After a successful hunt in Chapter 7, Jack's tribe decide to create a ritualistic re-enactment of the killing of the pig
 - They choose a boy called Robert to play the 'role' of the pig



Your notes

- The game goes too far, and Robert is jabbed with spears and fears for his life
 - Golding describes the boys' collective frenzy: "the desire to squeeze and hurt was over-mastering"
 - This **foreshadows** all of the boys' participation in the murder of Simon in Chapter 9, which again took the form of a savage ritual
- Golding **foreshadows** the dehumanisation of the boys, and the killing of Piggy, when the boys give him the nickname "Piggy":
 - Piggy is never referred to by his real name in the novel, and as such is **dehumanised**
 - It is no coincidence that Golding chooses pigs as the victims of Jack's hunters:
 - Before the first kill, Jack says: "If only I could get a pig!"
 - Piggy is verbally and physically abused by Jack throughout the novel, almost treated like an animal
 - This is ominous for Piggy and foreshadows his death in Chapter 11:
 - If the hunters can kill an animal, they can also kill a person they treat as an animal

Allegory

Lord of the Flies is sometimes referred to as psychological fiction, or philosophical fiction, but its **genre** can be neatly defined simply as **allegory**.

- The novel is written in the form of an **allegory**:
 - An allegory is a fictional work in which the characters and events represent particular qualities or ideas
- Lord of the Flies uses its setting and characters to represent the whole of human society:
 - The characters represent human nature:
 - Different characters represent different aspects of human nature:
 - Roger represents human evil
 - Simon represents human goodness
 - Piggy represents human innovation
 - The characters also symbolise different styles of **government**:
 - Different characters represent different leadership styles:
 - Ralph represents **democracy** and free speech
 - Jack represents autocracy and **authoritarianism**



Your notes

- The island represents a **tabula rasa**, or blank slate, on which the boys can create a society of their choosing
- Golding uses the **genre of allegory** to reach a pessimistic conclusion:
 - All human beings have a natural impulse towards evil
 - If you stripped away society's rules that govern behaviour, human beings commit atrocities

Symbolism

Golding uses many symbols throughout his novel. However, the following symbols are used multiple times across the text, and are thus known as **motifs**. If you understand the following **motifs**, and what they represent, you will be able to use them in almost any essay.

The conch shell

- The conch shell represents order:
 - Ralph blows it to convene the boys' very first meeting
 - It can, therefore, be seen to represent Ralph and Piggy's attempt to organise a miniature society on the island
- The conch shell represents free speech:
 - Only those who hold the conch are permitted to speak in meetings
 - This means that any boy who wishes to be heard, or debate, is given equal status in meetings
 - Despite the fact that Jack has ignored most of the other rules, even as late as Chapter 8 Jack "clings" to the conch when speaking in a meeting
 - However, as soon as he leaves for Castle Rock, he leaves the conch behind and doesn't create an equivalent system
- The conch shell represents **democracy**:
 - In Ralph's system of **government**, all people have a say, not just literally, but also in terms of the decision-making
 - The conch represents this
 - When the conch is destroyed in Chapter 11, it also signals the death of Ralph's system of **government (democracy)** and the triumph of Jack's **autocratic** rule

The island

- The island represents nature and man's relationship with nature:
 - The first human contact with the island is the damage ("the scar") that the aeroplane makes as it crash lands:



Your notes

- This highlights Golding's opinion that humanity's presence is damaging to nature
- One character, Simon, has a positive relationship with the island:
 - He finds peace on the island, especially in his **glade**
 - He finds wonder and beauty in the natural world ("bright fantastic birds"; "candle buds")
 - However, he is unusual, being the only boy who doesn't fear the island
 - Furthermore, his paradise (the **glade**) is spoilt by the actions of the other boys
- Jack's character represents man's destructive relationship with nature:
 - Jack is seen, as early as Chapter 1, "slashing" at the island with his knife
 - He takes his frustration out on the natural world, stabbing a tree trunk after an unsuccessful hunt
 - This foreshadows his burning of the forest in Chapter 12, and displays Golding's belief that all human beings aim to **subjugate** nature

The Lord of the Flies

- The Lord of the Flies is the name given to the **sacrificial sow**'s head that Jack places on a stick
- The Lord of the Flies represents human evil:
 - Far from being an external devil, or demon ("Lord of the Flies" is another name for the devil), the **sow**'s head is created by Jack and the hunters:
 - This suggests that all evil is human-made, and doesn't come from external forces
 - When Simon hears the Lord of the Flies talking to him, it is his imagination talking
- The Lord of the Flies also represents human destruction:
 - Jack placing it there literally spoils the beautiful **glade** that Simon found:
 - This represents humanity's destruction of unspoilt nature
 - Human evil is also psychologically destroying the boys' minds:
 - Simon's hallucinations terrorise him

Signal fire

- The signal fire represents rescue:
 - Ralph decided that the boys need to build and maintain a small fire to alert passing aeroplanes and ships of their presence on the island
 - It represents a bridge from the children back to the adult world:



Your notes

- It is also, therefore, a link back to civilisation
- Jack and his hunters would rather hunt than be on duty tending to the signal fire
- Neglecting the signal fire can, therefore, be seen as them rejecting the adult world that they came from, even rejecting civilisation in general
- The signal fire represents cooperation and **altruism**:
 - Ralph creates a rota to ensure that the signal fire is always lit
 - This represents the boys making a sacrifice for the greater good (being rescued)
 - However, the boys either cannot, or will not, stick to the rota:
 - Sam and Eric fall asleep while on duty
 - Jack and his tribe prioritise hunting over their duties
 - Golding is, therefore, suggesting that:
 - Creating a society based on **altruism** is extremely challenging
 - The human impulse towards **individualism** is greater than that towards cooperation

Clothing and hair

- Clothing and hair represent civilisation:
 - Well-kept hair and clothes represent society's expectations in terms of appearance
 - In Chapter 1, all the boys have short hair and are still in their school uniforms:
 - This includes Jack and the choir wearing long, black cloaks and square hats
 - As the novel progresses, the boys' hair grows longer and they begin wearing fewer and fewer clothes:
 - This represents their growing distance from civilisation and its expected social and moral codes
 - It also represents the boys' (and by extension all of humanity's) **inherent** savagery
 - It is only once Jack's appearance changes by Chapter 4 that he is able to kill a pig, and he becomes less and less bound by society's rules:
 - Jack undergoes the biggest transformation in terms of his appearance (from choir cloaks to being near naked by Chapter 12), which reflects that his behaviour shifts the most of any character

Piggy's glasses

- Piggy's glasses represent technology:

- Piggy's glasses are used to start the signal fire
- However, they are also the cause of the first forest fire, which potentially kills the littlun with the mulberry-coloured birthmark
- They are also fiercely fought over by Ralph's and Jack's tribes
 - Therefore, Golding could be suggesting that technology is at the same time humanity's salvation, but also the cause of human conflict and very dangerous in the wrong hands
 - This could be a reference to nuclear weapons and the clash of civilisations in the **Cold War**



Your notes



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Key Quotations

Remember the assessment objectives explicitly state that you should be able to “use textual references, *including* quotations”. This means summarising, paraphrasing, referencing single words and the referencing of plot events are all as valid as quotations in demonstrating that you understand Lord of the Flies. It is important that you remember that you can evidence your knowledge of the text in these two equally valid ways: both through references to it and direct quotations from it.

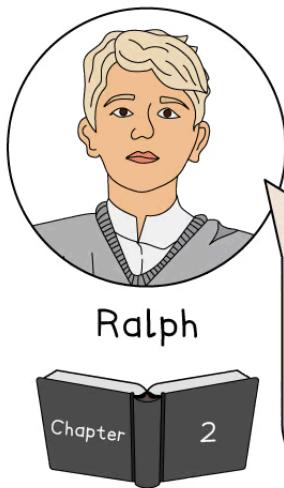
Overall, you should aim to secure a strong knowledge of the text, rather than rehearsed quotations, as this will enable you to respond to any question you may be set. It is the quality of your knowledge of Golding’s novel which will enable you to select references effectively.

If you are going to revise quotations, the best way is to group them by character, or theme. Below you will find definitions and analysis of the best quotations, arranged by the following themes:

- Civilisation versus savagery
- Good versus evil
- Religion
- Power and leadership

Civilisation versus savagery

Perhaps the central concern of Lord of the Flies is a question: is it more natural for human beings to work together and create a community (civilisation), or do people naturally tend towards their individualistic impulses (savagery)?



“ And another thing. We can't have everybody talking at once. We'll have to have 'Hands up' like at school ”


Your notesCopyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

"And another thing. We can't have everybody talking at once. We'll have to have 'Hands up' like at school" - Ralph, Chapter 2

Meaning and context

- This quotation comes as Ralph attempts to settle the group of boys down in one of their first meetings

Analysis

- At this point in the novel, the boys are presented as **unruly** and excitable, full of nervous energy
- Ralph and Piggy attempt to establish order in the group by convening meetings and instituting rules (such as "hands up")
- In Lord of the Flies, meetings and rules symbolise society:
- Meetings and rules also represent an attempt to create a community with shared values:

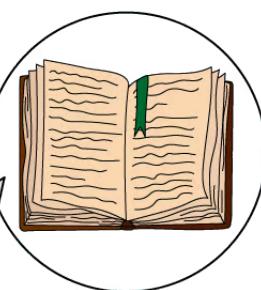
Paired quotations:



The hunters



“ Kill the pig. Cut her throat.
Spill her blood ”



Narrator



Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

“Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood.” - The hunters, Chapter 4

“At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore.” - Narrator,
Chapter 9

Meaning and context

- The first quotation is a refrain that Jack's choir chant after their first successful hunt
- The second refers to the actions of the entire group of boys during the murder of Simon

Analysis

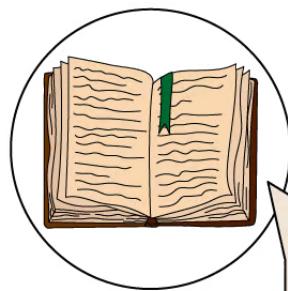
- These two quotations show the boys' descent into savagery



- As soon as Jack's hunters make their first kill, they become more **primal**, and begin ritual dances, ceremonies and chants:
 - This can be seen as "uncivilised", akin to savagery
 - This chant is **monosyllabic**, suggesting that the boys' own language is less civilised
 - It is also **visceral** ("throat", "blood") and violent, again suggesting savagery
- As the novel progresses, the actions of the boys towards each other becomes more violent and savage:
 - Before Simon's murder, a boy called Robert is almost killed when a ritual dance becomes violent
 - Here, during Simon's murder, the boys descend on him – no longer a boy but a "beast" – in an **animalistic** manner:
 - They use "teeth" and "claws" and "bit, tore" at Simon



Your notes



Narrator



“The mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness”

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

"The mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness." - Narrator,
Chapter 4

Meaning and context

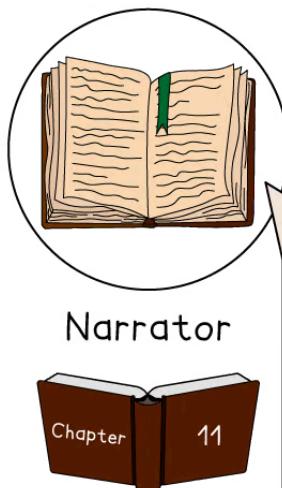
- This quotation describes Jack when he is on his own in the jungle, using soil as face paint to create a kind of mask
- It suggests that once he is hidden by the face paint, he feels free from the normal rules of civilised society

Analysis



Your notes

- At this point in the novel, the boys (even Jack's emerging tribe) still feel constrained by society's rules regarding behaviour:
 - Golding suggests that these **social norms** give us a healthy dose of "shame" and "self-consciousness"
 - He is suggesting that without these **social norms** guarding our impulses, we can easily become savages
- This quotation marks a turning-point for Jack, because it signifies that he is turning his back on the rules and conventions of civilised society:
 - From now on, he feels free to act however he pleases



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

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

"The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist." - Narrator, Chapter 11

Meaning and context

- This quotation describes both the killing of Piggy and the destruction of the conch shell when Ralph and Piggy look to reason with Jack on Castle Rock

Analysis

- Golding deliberately decides to kill off Piggy and the conch shell at the same time in Chapter 11, as both represent a symbolic death:

- He is the island's intellectual and always urges Ralph to think logically when making decisions
- His death, therefore, represents the death of a chance at **reconciliation** or negotiation between the two camps of boys
- This links to Charles Darwin's ideas of **survival of the fittest**
- With it now destroyed, no other voice but Jack's has authority
- This represents a victory of **autocracy** over **democracy** (which has "ceased to exist")
- Piggy's death represents the death of rational thinking, of reason:
- Piggy's death also represents the ultimate victory of the strong over the weak:
- The destruction of the conch represents the death of free speech and **democracy** on the island:



Your notes

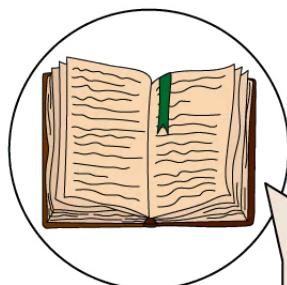
Good versus evil

In many ways, Lord of the Flies is a morality tale exploring the two sides of human nature. Golding is exploring whether evil is **inherent** in human beings, or whether it is learnt. Ultimately, his view is a pessimistic one: he seems to suggest that all human beings have a natural capacity for evil.

Paired quotations:

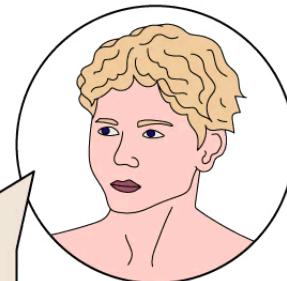


Your notes



Narrator

“The creature was a party of boys”



Simon

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved.

“The creature was a party of boys” - Narrator, Chapter 1

“What I mean is ... maybe it's only us” - Simon, Chapter 5

Meaning and context

- The first quotation is the first description of Jack's choir – later the hunters – as seen by Ralph and Piggy
- The second quotation is stated by Simon when the boys are discussing the possibility that a beast exists on the island

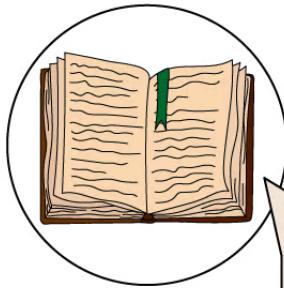
Analysis

- Throughout the novel, Golding suggests that any evil that exists on the island comes not from any external monster, but from the boys themselves
- Indeed, from the very first description of the characters in Lord of the Flies who represent human evil (Jack and his choir) we see them compared to a “creature”:



Your notes

- This **metaphor foreshadows** the evil that the boys will commit against each other later in the novel
 - It also alerts readers to the fact that there is no external monster at all
- Golding uses the character of Simon to express his own opinions:
 - Simon says that the creature is “only us”, suggesting that the boys are creating the monster in their own heads
 - However, it could also suggest that all evil on the island is perpetrated by “only” the boys themselves, and that the boys are a danger to each other
 - This is reflective of Golding’s larger argument that human beings have a natural capacity for evil



Narrator



“ Roger stooped, picked up
a stone, aimed, and threw it
at Henry — threw it to miss ”

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

“Roger stooped, picked up a stone, aimed, and threw it at Henry - threw it to miss” - Narrator, Chapter 4

Meaning and context

- This quotation describes an episode when Roger spies on a couple of littluns on the beach, and then begins to throw stones at one of them

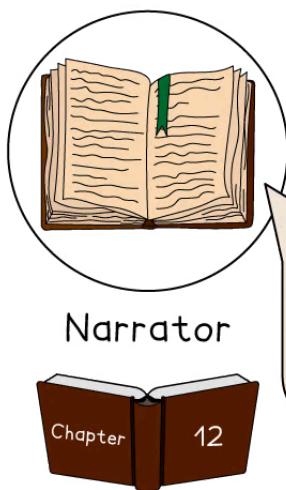
Analysis

- Golding suggests that all humans have a capacity for evil, and no character encapsulates this more than Roger
- Here, Golding describes Roger’s desire to commit acts of violence
- However, he is still conditioned by society’s rules and **social norms** not to hurt the littlun Henry, but instead to throw to “miss”
- However, this episode **foreshadows** a later change to Roger’s **inhibitions**:



Your notes

- Later, Roger has no hesitation in committing acts of violence against the boys when he acts as Jack's torturer-in-chief on Castle Rock
- Golding's deliberate reference to a "stone" here foreshadows the rock that Roger launches from Castle Rock that kills Piggy
- Golding is suggesting, therefore, that it is only society's unwritten rules that prevent people like Roger committing acts of dreadful violence



“Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart”

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

“Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart” - Narrator, Chapter 12

Meaning and context

- This is a description of Ralph after he learns that a naval officer has come to rescue the boys from the island

Analysis

- Ralph – despite his occasional impulsiveness and immaturity – is one of the novel's most reflective characters:
 - Earlier in the novel, the morning after Simon's murder, he acknowledges his own part in the killing (unlike Piggy, who refuses to accept responsibility)
 - Here, he reflects on the actions and behaviour of the entire group, and cries as he realises how terrible they have become (how far they have come from being “innocent” children)
- Ralph's weeping is prompted by coming in contact with a figure who represents the society he tried – and failed – to recreate on the island:

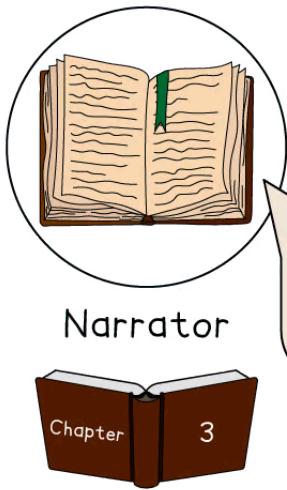


Your notes

- The naval officer represents order, rules and all grown-ups (who are often referred to and symbolise the society they have come from)
- Ralph's feelings are perhaps Golding's own:
 - It could be argued that Golding believes that there is evil **inherent** in "man's heart"

Religion

Some people assume that Lord of the Flies is a **religious allegory**, but this reading is perhaps too simple: instead, Golding seems to explore the complex relationship between the inner nature of human beings and external value systems, such as Christianity.

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

"Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach" - Narrator, Chapter 3

Meaning and context

- This comes after Simon has worked with Ralph building huts for the group – here, he is described picking fruit for the younger children

Analysis

- It can be argued that Simon is used by Golding not just to represent absolute human goodness, but also as a representation of Jesus Christ:
 - Here, Simon giving food to those who cannot feed themselves is reminiscent of the Biblical tale of the feeding of the 5,000
 - Like Jesus, Simon aims to help those less fortunate than himself, getting the fruit the littluns "could not reach"
- However, unlike Jesus, Simon cannot inspire others to perform good deeds:

- Golding seems to be referencing the idea of **divine grace**, which is where the actions of God (or Jesus) inspires other good acts by those that witness them
- Like Jesus, Simon is killed by his peers, but this doesn't result in a change of behaviour in the boys, nor does Simon return:
 - There is no resurrection; Simon's death is final
 - This could be Golding suggesting that even external value systems like Christianity cannot shift the boys' embracing of savagery



Your notes



"He's queer, he's funny" - Ralph, Chapter 3

Meaning and context

- Ralph calls Simon strange in a conversation with Jack, after Simon has walked off

Analysis

- It is telling that even though Ralph has consistently said that Simon is the only boy that has helped him, he refers to him **pejoratively** behind his back:
 - Simon has just helped Ralph build huts all day
 - However, he describes him as "queer", meaning strange, which instantly isolates Simon from the rest of the group
- This rejection of Simon, despite his focus on community and his **altruism**, perhaps reveals Golding's true feelings about human nature:
 - Instead of being embraced, Simon, this Christ-like figure, is **marginalised**
 - He is **marginalised** even by the character – Ralph – who sees the value in society and cooperation the most

- This suggests that Golding believes that human beings naturally reject community in favour of individualism

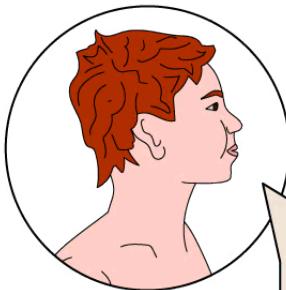


Your notes

Power and leadership

Golding uses the two characters of Ralph and Jack to represent two styles of leadership: Ralph symbolises **democracy**, while Jack represents **authoritarianism**. Ultimately, Golding seems to suggest that – although it does more harm than good – people are more attracted to the powerful rule of **autocracy**.

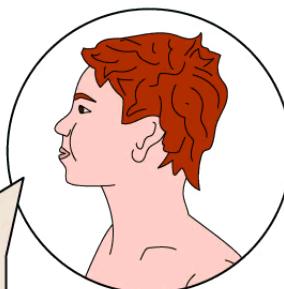
Paired quotations:



Jack



“ We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages ”



Jack



“ We'll have rules! ... Lots of rules! Then when anyone breaks 'em— ”

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved.

"We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages" - Jack, Chapter 2

"We'll have rules! ... Lots of rules! Then when anyone breaks 'em—" - Jack, Chapter 2

Meaning and context

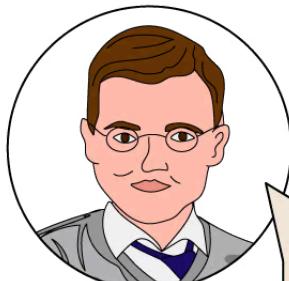
- The first quotation comes during one of the first meetings held by the boys, where Ralph and Jack attempt to establish order
- The second quotation is stated by Jack later in the same meeting



Analysis

- This pair of quotations, both stated during the same episode of the novel, reveals Jack's attitude to rules:
 - While Ralph and Piggy look to establish rules and responsibilities to benefit the group as a whole, Jack revels in the prospect of creating rules in the first place:
 - When Jack talks of creating rules he isn't thinking about how they might benefit others
 - If Jack makes the rules then he gains authority
 - If anyone breaks these rules, Jack believes he has the right to punish the boys if "anyone breaks 'em—"
- These quotations **foreshadow** Jack's **authoritarianism** and desire for absolute power later in the novel
- The second quotation also **foreshadows** his capacity for violence and torture

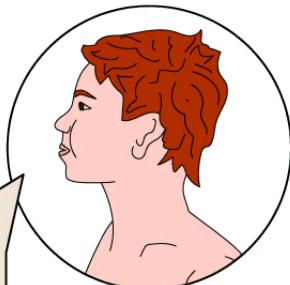
Paired quotations:



Piggy



“ Which is better—to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill? ”



Jack



“ Bollocks to the rules!
We're strong – we hunt! ”

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved

“Which is better - to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill? - Piggy, Chapter 11

“Bollocks to the rules! We're strong - we hunt!" - Jack, Chapter 5

Meaning and context

- The first quotation comes as Piggy and Ralph look to reason with Jack on Castle Rock, just before Piggy is killed
- The second quotation is stated by Jack in an argument he has with Ralph about how the island is being run

Analysis

- The first quotation neatly sums up Golding's central question in Lord of the Flies: do humans naturally prefer to pull together for the community as a whole, or act as individuals following their **base** instincts?



Your notes



Your notes

- Ralph and Piggy represent the first idea ("have rules and agree" = civilisation)
- Jack, Roger and the hunters represent the second ("hunt and kill" = savagery)
- Piggy's desperate plea here in Chapter 11 also allows Golding to contrast the leadership styles of Ralph and Jack:
 - Ralph has attempted throughout the novel to establish rules that work for all of the boys
 - Piggy also uses the word "agree", which refers to the idea of **consensus** and **democracy**
 - Jack, on the other hand, prioritises **personal freedom**
 - He rejects the rules from early on in the novel ("Bollocks to the rules!") in favour of his own individual desires ("we hunt")
- Ultimately, Golding suggests that humanity's desire for personal freedom wins out over the compromise, or sacrifice, involved with agreeing and having rules



Your notes

Lord of the Flies: Character Quotations

GCSE English Literature exam questions usually focus on a theme, a character or a relationship between two or more characters. Examiners reward responses that track the development of characters or themes through the text.

When revising, try to consider quotes in terms of their narrative effects — how the words are spoken, what attitudes or relationships are presented and why these ideas have been shown to the audience.

We've included the best Lord of the Flies quotes — with detailed analysis — to help you to revise and organised them by the following characters:

- Ralph
- Piggy
- Jack
- Simon



Examiner Tips and Tricks

Examiners are not looking for just quotes, or even just the names of techniques within them. For example, it is only worth discussing whether a word is a noun or a verb if it is relevant to the effect that it has. As examiners say, it is much better to analyse how the characters respond to each other, and how they cast light on others. You could ask yourself: what idea is the writer trying to raise for consideration?

It will help you to do this if your references or quotes are precisely analysed. Here, we've included a "key word or phrase" from every one of our longer quotations to help you keep your focus on the most important part.

Ralph

“

“We've got to talk about this fear and decide there's nothing in it. I'm frightened myself, sometimes; only that's nonsense! Like bogies” — Ralph, Chapter 5

 Ralph	Key word or phrase to memorise: “fear” and “nonsense”	What the quotation means: Ralph tells the group of boys that they need to discuss their situation so that their fear, which he believes is “nonsense”, can be managed properly	Theme: Power and leadership
---	--	---	---------------------------------------

- Ralph's character is **juxtaposed** against Jack's, who prefers to use fear as a tool to dominate and command others:
 - Golding presents Ralph as a relatively empathetic and sincere leader
 - He uses any power he is given for the good of the group
 - He is the only one of the older boys to listen to Piggy's sensible advice, although this does not stop him from behaving cruelly towards Piggy on occasion



“ ”

“Who’s clever now? Where are your shelters? What are you going to do about that?” — Ralph,
Chapter 9

 Ralph	Key word or phrase to memorise: “clever” and “shelters”	What the quotation means: Ralph is frustrated that the group's division has put them at risk, and warns the hunters that they are not prepared for a storm	Theme: Civilisation versus savagery
---	--	---	---

- Ralph values preparation and civility as a means to survival:
 - He equates being prepared with being “clever”
 - **Rhetorical questions**, here, convey his frustration at their lack of planning
- His focus, however, on unglamorous domestic chores, like the fire and shelter, restricts his power:

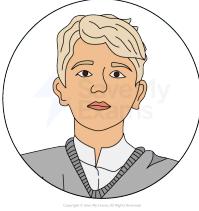
- Golding shows Ralph's struggles to maintain control against increasing savagery



Your notes

“

“We were together then” — Ralph, Chapter 12

 Ralph	Key word or phrase to memorise: “together” and “then”	What the quotation means: At the end of the novel, Ralph tells a naval officer who has come to rescue them that, at first, the group worked together, but that “then” things changed	Theme: Good versus evil
---	---	---	-----------------------------------

- Golding's resolution offers no hope that good overcomes evil in uncertain, fearful environments:
 - Ralph's unstable voice offers a sinister summary of events
 - His short phrase implies the destruction that resulted when the boys stopped working together
- Ralph accepts that his attempt to maintain democracy and work “together” has failed:
 - The word “then” implies a change, the details of which are left unspoken, suggesting the horror of the events after the change
 - The officer's casual response suggests a normalisation of violence
 - Alternatively, the officer may simply not understand the full extent of the devastation

Piggy

“

“I can't hardly move with all these creeper things” — Piggy, Chapter 1

 Piggy	Key word or phrase to memorise: "hardly move" and "creeper things"	What the quotation means: Piggy tells Ralph, when they are finding their bearings on the island, that he is struggling to make his way through the vines	Theme: Civilisation versus savagery
---	---	--	---



- Golding describes the island as hostile to the boys, especially Piggy:
 - Piggy is misplaced, amongst unidentifiable "creeper things"
 - He can "hardly move", perhaps **foreshadowing** the loss of his glasses which restricts his movement
- Piggy's mistreatment by the others on the island presents ideas about civilisation and savagery:
 - Golding introduces Piggy, in contrast to Ralph, as physically weak
 - This is one of the reasons that he is not respected by the others
 - Even Ralph, the boy who Piggy respects the most, abuses him; Ralph is the one who names him "Piggy"
- Golding draws attention to **ableist** philosophies which prioritise physical strength, particularly prevalent during World War II

“ ”

“Nobody don’t know we’re here. Your dad don’t know, nobody don’t know” — Piggy, Chapter 1

 Piggy	Key word or phrase to memorise: "nobody don't know"	What the quotation means: Piggy tells Ralph the bad news: they are stranded on the island and without any hope of rescue because nobody knows they are there	Theme: Power and leadership
---	--	--	---------------------------------------



Your notes

- Golding's presentation of Piggy conveys various perceptions of leadership:
 - Piggy's acceptance of reality, or "ill-omened talk", is ignored by Ralph
 - Golding, perhaps, illustrates the group's desire for an idealised version of the truth
 - Certainly, Piggy's complaints do not win favour with the group
- Golding conveys ideas about status and power through Piggy:
 - In contrast to Ralph, Piggy speaks in a working-class London **dialect** ("Nobody don't know")
 - Piggy's lower class is presented as another reason he is not respected on the island

"

"That's right. We was on the outside. We never done nothing, we never seen nothing" — Piggy,
Chapter 10



Piggy

Key word or phrase to memorise: "on the outside" and "never seen nothing"

What the quotation means:
Piggy is keen to distance himself from Simon's murder, telling Ralph that they were not involved because they were outside of the ring

Theme:
Good versus evil

- Piggy's fear of the hunters makes him distance himself from the group:
 - As he was "on the outside" of the crowd around Simon, he is removed from the guilt of Simon's murder
 - The moment reflects Piggy's status throughout the novel, though, as one who is isolated from the group
- The **anaphora**, "never done nothing, we never seen nothing" alludes to a **maxim**:
 - The phrase may refer to a Western adaptation that suggests the three monkeys who see, hear, and speak no evil, 'turn a blind eye'
 - Golding illustrates how going along with the crowd can perpetuate evil

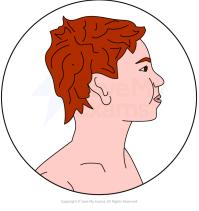
Jack



Your notes

“

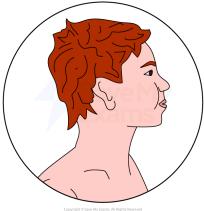
“‘You’re talking too much,’ said Jack Merridew. ‘Shut up, Fatty.’” — Jack, Chapter 1

 Jack	Key word or phrase to memorise: “talking too much” and “Fatty”	What the quotation means: Jack becomes frustrated with Piggy’s need to name the boys and, much to the amusement of the younger boys, he insults his weight	Theme: Good versus evil
--	--	---	-----------------------------------

- Golding immediately draws attention to the idea of mob mentality:
 - Jack’s control over the younger boys is first achieved by insulting Piggy’s physical appearance
 - This scene foreshadows conflict, as the littluns’ amusement encourages Jack’s bullying
- One of the criticisms that Jack has of Piggy and Ralph is their need to communicate:
 - Golding depicts how Jack’s desire to act rather than talk tempts the younger boys and wins them over

“

“I don’t know what it does. We don’t even know what it is”— Jack, Chapter 8

 Jack	Key word or phrase to memorise: “don’t even know what it is”	What the quotation means: Jack describes the beast to the boys, although he emphasises that he does not know how to identify it	Theme: Power and leadership
--	---	--	---------------------------------------



- Jack’s uncharacteristic keenness to call a meeting in this scene is, ultimately, shown as self-serving rather than democratic:
 - The boys’ fear of the beast is exploited by Jack to gain power
 - **Anaphora** allows Jack to emphasise the unknown quality of the thing they fear, and stir further panic
- As Jack uses the “Beast” to further divide the group, Golding illustrates how easily leadership can change as a result of an invisible threat

“

“See? See? That’s what you’ll get! I meant that! There isn’t a tribe for you any more! The conch is gone” — Jack, Chapter 11

 Jack	Key word or phrase to memorise: “There isn’t a tribe for you any more!”	What the quotation means: Towards the novel’s climax, Jack isolates Ralph from the “tribe” and explains that Ralph is powerless, and that the “conch” and the democratic decision-making that it represented, is now “gone”	Theme: Civilisation versus savagery
--	--	--	---

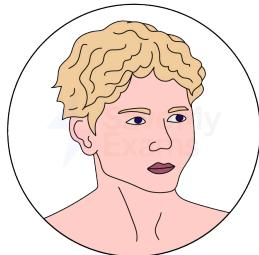


Your notes

- Jack's transition to violent leader changes the group of British school boys into a "tribe":
 - Golding portrays the descent into savagery as a result of Jack's **authoritarian** control
 - His threats show his tendency to alienate anyone who disagrees or wants debate
- Golding depicts the division and isolation that results from oppressive leadership

Simon

"Like candles. Candle bushes. Candle buds." — Simon, Chapter 1



Simon

Key word or phrase to memorise: "Like candles"

What the quotation means: Simon describes the flowers on the bushes in the forest as "candles"

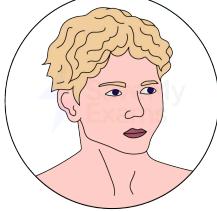
Theme:
Religion

- Simon appears in harmony with the jungle:
 - His romantic descriptions portray his spiritual nature, as his simile compares flower buds to flames
 - The reference to candles has religious allusions, indicative of Simon's role as a Christ-like figure who dies while trying to save the group from their fears
 - Arguably, Simon represents the idea of innocence and, perhaps, its fragility
- To highlight Simon's gentleness, Golding juxtaposes his words with Jack's slashing of the bushes:
 - This may foreshadow Simon's murder later in the novel

"You'll get back alright" — Simon, Chapter 7



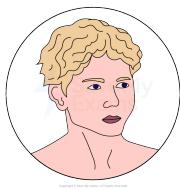
Your notes

 Simon	Key word or phrase to memorise: "get back alright"	What the quotation means: Out of nowhere Simon tells Ralph, with some confidence, that he has an instinct that Ralph will make it back home	Theme: Good versus evil
---	---	--	--------------------------------

- Golding presents Simon as kind-natured and spiritually gifted:
 - Simon's prediction that Ralph will get home safely initially confuses Ralph
 - He repeats that Ralph will "get back alright", but is unsure how he knows
- Golding illustrates how Simon's spiritual nature is perceived by the others as "batty":
 - Yet, he is the wisest, calmest and kindest of the group
- His death in Chapter 9 unnervingly exposes the implications of his predictions (that Ralph makes it home, but he does not):
 - It also presents Golding's **cynical** portrayal of good defeated by evil

“

"Pig's head on a stick." — Simon, Chapter 8

 Simon	Key word or phrase to memorise: "Pig's head on a stick"	What the quotation means: When Simon is confronted by the "Beast" or the "Lord of the Flies", he is bewildered, but reminds himself that the voice he hears is an illusion, and that the "Beast" is just a pig's head	Theme: Civilisation versus savagery
---	--	--	--



Your notes

- The narrator describes how "Simon's mouth laboured, brought forth audible words" as he says this line:
 - This is uncharacteristic for Simon, who is mostly silent
 - This emphasises Simon's determination to overcome his fear
 - Simon focuses on reality when he is faced with the "Beast", demonstrating maturity
- In response to the voice (the "Lord of the Flies"), Simon reminds himself of the truth:
 - Golding implies that Simon does not submit to illusion and fear

Source

William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, Faber & Faber (1997)