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Literature Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Lord of the Flies

by William Golding

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Lord of the Flies

Note to the Teacher

William Golding was born in Cornwall, England on September 19, 1911, to Alec Golding, a science teacher at Marlborough Grammar School, and Mildred Curnoe Golding, an activist for women's suffrage. After spending his childhood in Marlborough, England, Golding attended Brasenose College, where he studied Natural Science for two years before shifting his focus to English Literature. Golding graduated in 1934, and that same year, he published his first book of poems with Macmillan & Co.

Golding then became a schoolmaster at Bishop Wordsworth's School, teaching philosophy and English. During his tenure as a teacher, Golding joined the Royal Navy and participated in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day.

In the wake of World War II, after several rejections from publishers, Golding published his first novel, *Lord of the Flies*—a dystopian novel that discusses the controversial topic of human nature and inherent evil. Set in the middle of an unspecified nuclear war, the novel follows a group of young boys as they attempt to thrive on a deserted island and create a society without adults. With hints of the Garden of Eden, the theme of the novel focuses on the beast that lurks in everyone—the inherent evil of humanity, which is just waiting to manifest at the first sign of the corruption of civilization.

Golding continued to teach until 1962 and went on to become a famed writer, with works as a novelist, playwright, and poet. In total, he wrote thirteen novels, three non-fiction titles, one play, and several unpublished works. Throughout his successful career as a writer, Golding was awarded the Booker Prize for literature in 1980, won a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1983, and was appointed as a Knight Bachelor by Queen Elizabeth I in 1988.

After living through two world wars and over eight decades of global turmoil and cultural evolution, Golding passed away from heart failure on June 19, 1993; however, his legacy lives on in his works, with *Lord of the Flies* enduring as a fundamental story on English Literature syllabi across the nation.

All references come from the Perigee Book edition of *Lord of the Flies*, copyright 1954.

Lord of the Flies

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. state why and in what way this book is a good example of the loss of innocence genre.
2. identify and comment on the following symbols in this novel: the island, the jungle, the ocean, the pig's head, and the major characters.
3. state Golding's view of the essential nature of man and comment on civilization's function in regard to man.
4. identify and discuss the types of power exemplified in this novel.
5. discuss the psychological aspects of this novel, particularly the following:
 - Piggy as the scapegoat and the reminder of the rule of intellect
 - Jack as an example of the militaristic mind
 - Ralph as the leader, for whom the following of rules is essential
 - Roger as the sadistic part of humanity
 - fear of the unknown
 - mob mentality
6. point out and discuss how *Lord of the Flies* exists on at least three levels:
 - as an action/adventure story
 - as a psychological novel about people under duress
 - as a symbolic novel about the nature of man and the role of civilization
7. understand, define, and give examples of the following literary terms:
 - simile
 - personification
 - hyperbole
 - metaphor
 - foreshadowing
 - irony
 - alliteration
8. determine who or what the title refers to.

Lord of the Flies

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. The Romantics believed that man was inherently good but that he had become corrupted by civilization. The boys in this novel were raised with access to books like *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Blue Lagoon*, *The Coral Island*, and *Swiss Family Robinson*, in which shipwrecked people built decent lives on their island. How does this book portray the opposite of that idea?
2. In Western literature, the jungle is a frequent symbol. What does the jungle represent in this novel?
3. Gradually, the boys become less and less civilized and more and more savage. Trace the progression that Golding puts forth.
4. Does this novel, in your opinion, end on an optimistic or pessimistic note?
5. Throughout the novel, the nature of the beast changes for the boys. Trace the boys' perception of the beast from its first mention until the end.
6. Jack and Ralph are said to represent the clash between authoritarianism and democracy. Show how, and to what extent, each boy's personality does, in fact, represent that claim.
7. Ralph experiences a loss of innocence. Describe his character at the beginning of the story, what crises he undergoes that change him, and how he is at the end.
8. Compare Ralph's "coming of age" in this novel to Gene's "coming of age" in *A Separate Peace* or any other novel that is suitable.
9. How do Piggy's glasses, the conch shell, the fire, the sea, and the pig's head function as symbols in this novel?
10. Point out how and why Piggy is a scapegoat in this world.
11. How does Jack manipulate the boys and use their fear of the beast to get what he wants?
12. There are many instances of irony in this novel. Analyze and discuss any three of them.

Chapter Two - Fire on the Mountain

VOCABULARY

assented – consented
borne – held aloft
confirmation – agreement
ebullience – enthusiasm, liveliness
errant – aimless
festooned – decorated
fluently – easily, fluidly
gesticulated – gestured
induced – persuaded
martyred – self-sacrificing
officious – meddlesome
quota – a proportional part
recrimination – an accusation in response to another accusation
tumult – commotion

1. What function has the clearing by the lagoon, described as a platform, assumed?

2. How does the conch become the visible symbol of authority?

3. What are Jack's feelings about rules?

4. With its benign climate, fresh water, and abundant fruit, the island seems to be a Garden of Eden—that is, until the little boy comes forward. What element does he introduce? How does he describe it? How does the descriptive phrase, “The small boy twisted further into himself,” hint at a theme?

6. The author says, "They [the hunters] agreed passionately out of the depths of their tormented private lives." Why do you suppose Golding uses the words "tormented" and "private" to describe them?

7. What is Jack's plan to persuade more of the bigger boys from Ralph's camp to join his own group? What does he plan for the beast, and what does his plan reflect about the boys on the island?

8. What effect do the pig hunt, the kill, and its aftermath have on Jack and the hunters?

9. For what expressed purpose does Jack say, "Sharpen a stick at both ends"?

10. Where is Simon?

11. After recovering from the initial scare, how do most of the boys feel about the raid by the hunters?

12. What indication is there that the savages have begun to respect and fear their new chief?
