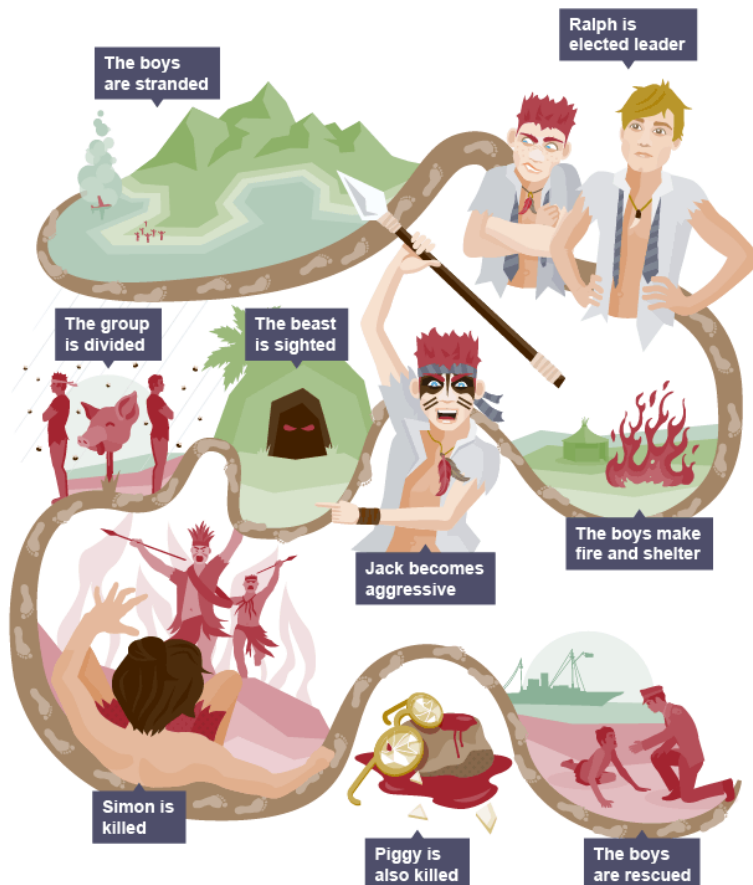




1. A group of schoolboys find themselves stranded on a deserted island with no adults to supervise them.
2. A leader, Ralph, is elected but not everyone is happy about this, especially Jack.
3. Although some of the younger boys are scared because they think there is a beast on the island, they all try to be civilised by making a fire to signal for help and by building shelters.
4. Jack, however, seems only interested in hunting and, as some of the boys start to follow his lead, things begin to go wrong - arguments break out and Jack becomes increasingly aggressive.
5. Concerns over the beast continue, particularly when Sam and Eric report that they have actually seen it.
6. The boys break into two groups - one is led by Ralph and one by Jack.
7. Simon sets out to discover the truth about the Beast but in a horrific turn of events is killed by the others.
8. Piggy is also killed, and Sam and Eric are taken prisoner by an increasingly dangerous Jack.
9. Jack and his tribe try to hunt Ralph down and attempt to smoke him out by starting a huge fire, but a passing ship sees the fire and rescues all the boys. Ralph is saved from certain death and the rescuing officer chastises the boys for not behaving in a British manner.

In an essay called Fable, William Golding wrote: 'Man produces evil as a bee produces honey'. His novel Lord of the Flies sets out to show how evil and cruelty lurks within the heart of every individual.

Detailed Plot Summary

Arriving

Following an aeroplane crash, a group of British schoolboys find themselves on a deserted tropical island. Two of the boys, Ralph and Piggy, find a large conch shell and use it like a trumpet to call the other survivors onto the beach. Last to arrive are Jack and a group of choirboys. After some initial discussion Ralph is elected leader and Jack is far from pleased. Jack is made responsible for organising a sub-group of hunters. While Piggy is left behind to make a list of all the other boys, Ralph, Jack and Simon set about exploring the island. As they do so they spot a wild pig and Jack says he will kill it for food but cannot quite bring himself to do so.

Surviving

It becomes clear that no adults have survived so the boys will have to learn to fend for themselves. One of the concerns raised by the 'littluns' (the younger boys) is that there is some sort of beast on the island. Ralph reassures them then suggests they build a signal fire on the mountainside to attract attention. Jack takes over but does so

is deeply connected with nature and, in its own way, as primal as Jack's evil. The other boys abandon moral behaviour as soon as civilization is no longer there to impose it upon them. They are not innately moral; rather, the adult world-the threat of punishment for misdeeds-has conditioned them to act morally. To an extent, even the seemingly civilized Ralph and Piggy are products of social conditioning, as we see when they participate in the hunt-dance. In Golding's view, the human impulse toward civilization is not as deeply rooted as the human impulse toward savagery. Unlike all the other boys on the island, Simon acts morally not out of guilt or shame but because he believes in the inherent value of morality. He behaves kindly toward the younger children, and he is the first to realize the problem posed by the beast and the Lord of the Flies-that is, that the monster on the island is not a real, physical beast but rather a savagery that lurks within each human being. The sow's head on the stake symbolizes this idea, as we see in Simon's vision of the head speaking to him. Ultimately, this idea of the inherent evil within each human being stands as the moral conclusion and central problem of the novel. Against this idea of evil, Simon represents a contrary idea of essential human goodness. However, his brutal murder at the hands of the other boys indicates the scarcity of that good amid an overwhelming abundance of evil.

Simon is small and skinny with a pointed chin. He has black hair, bright eyes and tans easily. He is considered strange or odd by the others as he is rather shy and secretive. He has a habit of going off on his own which sets him apart and he is also not physically strong.

When we first see Simon he has fainted, which draws disdain from Jack. Golding hints that Simon may have epilepsy which makes him different from the other boys. Simon does, however, show bravery when he goes to look for the Beast. Simon is the only one of the boys who can really see what is going on and that they are being driven by the evil which is inside themselves.

Solitary

How is Simon like this? - Simon frequently goes off on his own to a private place on the island. Here he can think things through and come to reasoned conclusions. The other boys find this odd.

Evidence - He went on among the creepers until he reached the great mat that was woven by the open space and crawled inside. Beyond the screen of leaves the sunlight pelted down and the butterflies danced in the middle their unending dance.

Analysis - Simon has gone to his secret place but on this occasion, it seems much less comfortable and more threatening. The sun is extremely hot and almost seems to be a weapon attacking him ('pelted' is usually a word associated with heavy rain).

Considerate

How is Simon like this? - Simon shows concern for others and helps those less able than himself. For instance, he is the only one who really helps Ralph with building the shelters and he makes sure the younger boys are kept fed.

Evidence - Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach, pulled off the choicest from up in the foliage, passed them back down to the endless, outstretched hands. When he had satisfied them, he paused and looked round. The littluns watched him inscrutably over double handfuls of ripe fruit.

Analysis - Although there is some food already available, Simon wants to make sure that the younger boys are properly cared for. So, he pauses in his journey into the jungle to gather fruit for them. He makes sure that they are all fed well ('double handfuls') and that they get the best fruit available ('choicest').

Perceptive

How is Simon like this? - It is Simon that realises there is nothing to fear but each other and themselves. He understands that the beast is not real.

Evidence - Simon's mouth laboured, brought forth audible words. "Pig's head on a stick." "Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" said the head... "You knew didn't you? I'm part of you?..."

Analysis - It is Simon who creates the phrase 'Lord of the Flies' which is what he names the pig's head given as an offering to the Beast.

Roger

Introduced as a quiet and intense older boy, Roger eventually becomes a sadistic and brutal terrorist over the course of *Lord of the Flies*. Midway through the book, Roger's cruelty begins to surface in an episode where he terrorizes the littlun Henry by throwing rocks at him. Still beholden to the rules of society, Roger leaves a safe distance between the rocks and the child, but we see his moral code beginning to crack. As Jack gains power, Roger quickly understands that Jack's brutality and willingness to commit violence will make him a powerful and effective leader. When he learns that Jack plans to torture Wilfred for no apparent reason, he thinks about "the possibilities of irresponsible authority," rather than trying to help Wilfred or find out Jack's motivation. Roger gives into the "delirious abandonment" of senseless violence when he releases the boulder that kills Piggy. He then descends upon the twins, threatening to torture them. The next day, Samneric tell Ralph "You don't know Roger. He's a terror."

Roger is black-haired with a fringe that covers his forehead and makes him look sinister. He has an extremely cruel and sadistic streak in his nature which attracts him to Jack's way of doing things.

Roger is an uncommunicative, moody and secretive loner, preferring to use power as a weapon of evil. Although all the boys are involved in Simon's death, it is Roger alone who murders Piggy.

Watchful

How is Roger like this? - Roger is often to be found watching events or listening to the discussions in the assembly silently and without comment. It is as though he is biding his time and waiting to strike.

Evidence - Roger remained, watching the littluns. He was not noticeably darker than when he had dropped in, but the shock of black hair, down his nape and low on his forehead, seemed to suit his gloomy face...

Analysis - Roger's silent watchfulness is eerie and disturbing. He has just kicked over the littluns' sandcastles and now makes them even more scared by simply staring at them. His physical appearance adds to the sense of him being dangerous.

Menacing

How is Roger like this? - Roger wants power so that he can hurt others. Early in the novel he throws stones at Henry and he is a natural part of the hunting group. By the end of the novel he has committed murder and become Jack's henchman.

Evidence - Roger edged past the chief, only just avoiding pushing him with his shoulder. The yelling ceased, and Samneric lay looking up in quiet terror. Roger advanced upon them as one wielding a nameless authority.

Analysis - Although Golding does not spell it out, it is clear that Roger is about to do something extremely vicious to Sam and Eric who have been captured and tied up and are now looking at their torturer in silent horror.

Sam and Eric

Sam and Eric are twin older boys on the island who are often referred to as one entity, Samneric, and who throughout most of *Lord of the Flies*, remain loyal supporters of Ralph. Sam and Eric are easily excited, regularly finish one another's sentences, and exist within their own small group of two. Like Ralph and Piggy, Samneric participate in the death of Simon, but insist that they left the dance early, too ashamed to admit what really happened. After Jack leaves to start his own tribe, the twins are two of the few boys who remain with Ralph and Piggy to help maintain the signal fire and look after the littluns. They bravely go with Ralph and Piggy to get the glasses back from Castle Rock. But after Piggy's death, they are coerced and manipulated into joining Jack's tribe. Sam and Eric try to warn Ralph about Jack and Roger's bloodlust, but they are physically dominated the next day and reveal Ralph's hiding spot in the underbrush.

Ralph

"Jack's in charge of the choir. They can be-what do you want them to be?"

After Ralph is democratically elected as chief of the island in Chapter 1, he allows Jack to maintain control over his choir. While Ralph's gesture is friendly, his generosity ultimately backfires when Jack, hungry for power, decides to take his hunters and start his own savage tribe in the second half of the novel.

Piggy is the most intelligent, rational boy in the group, and his glasses represent the power of science and intellectual endeavour in society. This symbolic significance is clear from the start of the novel, when the boys use the lenses from Piggy's glasses to focus the sunlight and start a fire. When Jack's hunters raid Ralph's camp and steal the glasses, the savages effectively take the power to make fire, leaving Ralph's group helpless.

Rational thought, science and technology: Piggy is the rational thinker of the group and his glasses suggest that he is able to see what to do. Once the glasses are broken Piggy's powers decline and by the end of the novel Piggy is virtually blind. The glasses are also used to create fire and, for a while, become the most powerful object on the island. Once Jack and his tribe steal Piggy's glasses that power falls into the wrong hands and leaves Ralph's more civilised group in a hopeless situation.

The Signal Fire

The signal fire burns on the mountain, and later on the beach, to attract the notice of passing ships that might be able to rescue the boys. As a result, the signal fire becomes a barometer of the boys' connection to civilization. In the early parts of the novel, the fact that the boys maintain the fire is a sign that they want to be rescued and return to society. When the fire burns low or goes out, we realize that the boys have lost sight of their desire to be rescued and have accepted their savage lives on the island. The signal fire thus functions as a kind of measurement of the strength of the civilized instinct remaining on the island. Ironically, at the end of the novel, a fire finally summons a ship to the island, but not the signal fire. Instead, it is the fire of savagery-the forest fire Jack's gang starts as part of his quest to hunt and kill Ralph.

Hope of rescue, and also destruction: Fire is first used to try to attract a passing ship which would take the boys back to civilisation. The boys keep the signal burning and their hopes alive. Then it is left to go out and this takes their hopes with it. When the first fire gets out of control, destruction follows and several of the smaller boys go missing - we presume they have died. Jack eventually steals fire, but this is not for signalling for rescue - it is so his tribe can cook the carcass from the pig hunt. A ship does eventually see the smoke from a fire and comes to rescue the boys. However, this is smoke from a destructive use of fire - Jack's tribe are trying to smoke Ralph out of hiding so that they can kill him.

The Parachutist

Adults and war: Apart from the naval officer at the end of the novel the only adult to appear in the story is the parachutist. However, as he is dead, he can be of no use to the boys - in fact he becomes a symbol of terror to them when Simon mistakes him for the Beast. The parachutist lands on the island as result of an aerial fight in the adult war that is going on in the wider world. The boys mirror the global events by starting a war of their own.

The Beast

The imaginary beast that frightens all the boys stands for the primal instinct of savagery that exists within all human beings. The boys are afraid of the beast, but only Simon reaches the realization that they fear the beast because it exists within each of them. As the boys grow more savage, their belief in the beast grows stronger. By the end of the novel, the boys are leaving it sacrifices and treating it as a totemic god. The boys' behaviour is what brings the beast into existence, so the more savagely the boys act, the more real the beast seems to become.

The Lord Of The Flies

The Lord of the Flies is the bloody, severed sow's head that Jack impales on a stake in the forest glade as an offering to the beast. This complicated symbol becomes the most important image in the novel when Simon confronts the sow's head in the glade and it seems to speak to him, telling him that evil lies within every human heart and promising to have some "fun" with him. (This "fun" foreshadows Simon's death in the following chapter.) In this way, the Lord of the Flies becomes both a physical manifestation of the beast, a symbol of the power of evil, and a kind of Satan figure who evokes the beast within each human being. Looking at the novel in the context of biblical parallels, the Lord of the Flies recalls the devil, just as Simon recalls Jesus. In fact, the name "Lord of the Flies" is a literal translation of the name of the biblical name Beelzebub, a powerful demon in hell sometimes thought to be the devil himself.

Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Simon, And Roger

Ralph sets up his society with the express mission of looking to the future, and focusing on the boys' safety, by way of shelter, and rescue. This need for rules, and constant decision-making, proves untenable for the boys, who gravitate toward authoritarianism throughout the novel.

Man's Inherent Evil

"Maybe there is a beast... Maybe it's only us."

While the other boys are afraid of a sea monster or some winged creature, Simon meditates on the metaphysical nature of the beast, wondering if they should fear their own natures instead of some outside force. Simon predicts that there is a darkness lurking in the hearts of the boys on the island and rejects the notion of a beast.

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!... You knew didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?"

The Lord of the Flies says this to Simon when he is isolated, in the woods. The Lord of the Flies confirms Simon's theory about the beast, explaining that the darkness that is within human beings can't be killed. Here, Golding uses dialogue to point to his larger allegory, to answer "why things are what they are."

"His mind was crowded with memories; memories of the knowledge that had come to them when they closed in on the struggling pig, knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink."

Jack relishes what he feels after a particularly satisfying hunt. Here, Golding makes a connection between Jack's thrill of the hunt and his desire to commit violence. Even at the first assembly, Jack is obsessed with the idea of hunting, which, Golding suggests, betrays his desire to take life.

The Dangers Of Mob Mentality

"Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood."

Immediately after their first successful hunt, Jack's hunters chant as a group, showing that they prefer to enact violence as a mob, rather than as individuals. Their chanting shows their cohesion, and their delight over killing becomes ritualistic.

"Simon was crying out something about a dead man on a hill... The sticks fell and the mouth of the new circle crunched and screamed. The beast was on its knees in the centre, its arms folded over its face. It was crying out against the abominable noise, something about a body on the hill... At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore."

This quote suggests otherwise moral beings will subject themselves to immorality for the purpose of joining a group. When Simon is murdered, the boys think that he is the beast, and enable each other to believe this fantasy. Again, they kill as a mob, nobody stepping in to disrupt the collective fantasy or prevent injustice.

"There had grown up tacitly among the biguns the opinion that Piggy was an outsider, not only by accent, which did not matter, but by fat, and ass-mar, and specs, and a certain disinclination for manual labour."

If most of the boys are vulnerable to the attractions of being part of a group, Piggy is firmly independent. His lack of physical prowess and his tendency toward thoughtfulness make him a bad fit for mob mentality. His virtues – wisdom, patience, goodness – are not immediately apparent or attractive to the rest of the boys.

"Memory of the dance that none of them had attended shook all four boys convulsively."