



LORD OF THE FLIES — STUDY GUIDE

1. Introduction

- **Author:** William Golding
 - **Published:** 1954
 - **Genre:** Novel / Allegory
 - **Setting:** A deserted tropical island during an unspecified wartime
 - **Premise:** A group of British schoolboys survive a plane crash and attempt to govern themselves — with disastrous consequences.
 - **Why it's studied:** Clear themes (civilisation vs savagery), symbolic characters, strong imagery, and moral/political depth.
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2. Plot Summary

Overview

A group of boys find themselves stranded on an island with no adults. At first, they try to organise a fair, civilised society — but fear, power struggles, and primal impulses take over.

Part-by-Part Summary

- **Chapters 1–2:**

Ralph and Piggy find the conch and use it to call the boys. Ralph is elected leader. Jack is put in charge of the choir/hunters. A small boy goes missing after a forest fire they accidentally start.

- **Chapters 3–4:**

Ralph builds shelters while Jack obsessively hunts. Tension grows between civilisation (Ralph) and savagery (Jack). Jack's hunters let the signal fire go out, causing them to miss a passing ship.

- **Chapters 5–6:**

The boys fear a "beast." The twins Sam and Eric claim to see it (really a dead parachutist). Jack challenges Ralph's authority but fails to take leadership.

- **Chapters 7–8:**

The boys hunt a pig; Jack forms his own tribe, more savage and violent. They mount the pig's head ("Lord of the Flies") on a stick as an offering to the beast. Simon encounters it and understands the beast is *within* them.

- **Chapters 9–10:**

Simon's attempt to reveal the truth is interrupted—he is killed in a frenzied dance. Jack's tribe becomes dominant; they steal Piggy's glasses (their only means of making fire).

- **Chapters 11–12:**

Piggy is killed when Roger releases a boulder. Jack's tribe hunts Ralph like an animal, burning the island. A naval officer arrives, rescuing them — and the boys break down in tears.

3. Setting & Context

- **Island:** Beautiful yet dangerous; becomes a microcosm of society.
 - **Post-war themes:** Reflects anxieties about human nature after WWII.
 - **Golding's purpose:** To challenge the optimistic belief that society is inherently civilising.
 - **Isolation:** No adults, no rules → civilisation must be built from scratch.
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4. Characters

Ralph

- Represents civilisation, order, democracy
- Practical, fair, focused on rescue
- Struggles to maintain authority

Piggy

- Intellectual, rational, physically vulnerable
- Represents logic, science, and reason
- His glasses = symbol of knowledge & fire

Jack

- Antagonist; violent, ambitious, charismatic
- Represents savagery, dictatorship, power without restraint

Simon

- Gentle, spiritual, intuitive
- Represents morality, natural goodness, innocence
- Recognises the "beast" is internal

Roger

- Sadistic; enjoys harming others
- Represents cruelty, brutality, and moral decay

Sam and Eric (Samneric)

- Twins who act as one unit
- Represent the difficulty of maintaining individuality under pressure

The “Littluns”

- Younger boys
 - Represent innocence and the easily influenced masses
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5. Themes

Civilisation vs Savagery

The central conflict of the novel. Ralph tries to maintain order; Jack embraces violence and power. Symbolically shown through the conch vs. the spear.

Human Nature

Golding suggests that evil is innate — civilisation only masks it.

Fear and the Beast

The “beast” represents the inner darkness of human nature. Fear drives the boys’ descent into savagery.

Leadership and Power

Ralph’s democratic leadership vs Jack’s authoritarian, fear-based rule.

Loss of Innocence

The boys begin as schoolchildren; they end as violent hunters.

Mob Mentality

Scenes like Simon’s death show how group pressure overrides morality.

6. Form, Structure & Language

Form

- Allegorical novel
- Symbolism central to meaning
- Third-person narration

Structure

- Divided into clear stages of regression from order to chaos
- Key turning points:
 - Signal fire going out
 - The pig's head (Lord of the Flies)
 - Simon's death
 - Piggy's death
 - The final hunt

Language

- Strong sensory imagery (sight, sound, colour, heat)
 - Symbolic vocabulary (light/dark, fire, masks)
 - Contrast between nature's beauty and boys' brutality
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7. Key Quotations

Civilisation vs Savagery

- "The conch exploded into a thousand white fragments."
→ Symbol of order collapsing.

Human Nature

- "Maybe there is a beast... maybe it's only us."
→ Simon's understanding of innate evil.

Leadership

- "I'm not going to play any longer. Not with you."
→ Jack's rejection of order.

Fear

- "The beast was harmless and horrible; and the news must reach the others."
→ Simon's discovery (and tragic failure to reveal truth).

Violence

- "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!"
→ Ritualistic savagery.

Final Irony

- Naval officer: "I should have thought a pack of British boys would have been able to put up a better show."
→ Highlights the depth of their descent.
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8. Symbolism & Motifs

The Conch

- Order, democracy, civilisation
- Loses power over time → collapse of society

Piggy's Glasses

- Reason, knowledge, science
- Stolen → reason is defeated by savagery

The Lord of the Flies (Pig's Head)

- Represents evil, corruption, human darkness
- Speaks symbolically to Simon

The Beast

- Not an external creature
- Symbol of inner savagery

Fire

- Hope and rescue (signal fire)
- Destruction (forest fire during Ralph's hunt)

Face Paint

- Masks identity; frees boys from guilt
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9. Important Scenes

- Arrival & conch assembly
 - Jack letting the fire go out
 - First successful pig hunt
 - Simon's encounter with the Lord of the Flies
 - Simon's death
 - Piggy's death & destruction of the conch
 - Ralph's final hunt
 - Rescue by naval officer
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10. Writer's Purpose

Golding's key messages:

- Humans have a natural capacity for evil.
 - Society's rules and structures are fragile.
 - Fear and power can override morality.
 - Innocence is easily lost when civilisation breaks down.
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11. Sample Essay Questions

- **Theme:** How does Golding explore the conflict between civilisation and savagery?
 - **Character:** Analyse Jack's role in the breakdown of order.
 - **Setting:** How does the island setting reinforce the novel's themes?
 - **Symbolism:** Discuss the symbolic significance of the conch.
 - **Turning Point:** Examine the importance of Simon's death.
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12. Model PEA Paragraph

Point: Golding uses Jack to represent the seductive nature of power and savagery.

Evidence: When Jack declares, "I'm not going to play any longer. Not with you," he symbolically rejects civilisation.

Analysis: Calling leadership a "game" belittles Ralph's authority, and Jack's defiance reveals his desire for dominance. His break from the group begins the island's irreversible slide into brutality.

13. Quick-Revision Checklist

- **Themes:** civilisation vs savagery, fear, power, human nature
- **Important symbols:** conch, glasses, beast, fire, Lord of the Flies, masks
- **Major characters:** Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Simon, Roger
- **Key quotes:**
 - "Maybe it's only us."
 - "Kill the beast!"
 - "The conch exploded..."
 - "I should have thought..."
- **Turning points:** loss of fire, Simon's death, Piggy's death

MINI-ESSAYS

Character: Jack as the Embodiment of Savagery

Jack represents the seductive pull of savagery when societal structures collapse. Golding introduces him as a frustrated leader-in-waiting, his choir marching "like a creature," foreshadowing the tribal monster he becomes. Unlike Ralph, who feels the weight of responsibility, Jack craves power without burden. His mantra—"I'm not going to play any longer"—reveals that for him leadership is performance, not duty. Hunting becomes his instrument for control: the painted mask liberates him from "shame and self-consciousness," allowing violence without consequence. Jack weaponises fear, using the "beast" as political currency to consolidate authority through intimidation and ritual. His raid on the shelters and theft of Piggy's glasses become symbolic acts: Jack seizes not just fire but knowledge and civilisation itself. By the time of Simon's murder, Jack's tribe has become a cult that turns innocence into bloodshed. Yet the novel avoids simple villainy; Jack's arc shows how quickly boys mimic the worst adult behaviours when hierarchy and violence are rewarded. Golding uses Jack

to argue that civilisation is a thin veneer—and that without accountability, charisma and brutality merge into something devastatingly human.

Turning Point

A. Turning Point: The Killing of Simon

Simon's death is the moment the island's symbolic "civilisation" collapses. Golding stages the storm like a ritual unmasking; the boys' circular dance becomes a vortex where fear (the "beast") and group ecstasy fuse into murder. Because Simon carries the revelation that "the beast" is within them, his death ensures the truth is never spoken, accelerating the slide from **order** (conch, assemblies) to **tyranny** (Jack's tribe). The turning point is ideological as well as violent: it shows how crowds sanctify cruelty when fear is useful.

B. Symbolism: The Conch, Piggy's Specs, The Lord of the Flies

- **Conch**: procedural authority; its shattering ends the illusion that rules can restrain appetite.
- **Piggy's specs**: technology and rational fire; theft equals seizure of power/knowledge.
- **Lord of the Flies**: totem of corruption; a memento mori of the beast within.

C. Setting Analysis

A sun-drenched tropical island becomes a moral laboratory. The beauty of the lagoon opposes the menace of the **castle rock**; the isolation removes adult oversight, exposing how environment plus scarcity (meat, fear) catalyse authoritarian politics.
