

# Lord of the Flies

## Study Guide



by Michael Gilleland  
and Calvin Roso

For the novel by  
William Golding



## Table of Contents

Study Guide Authors .....	5
Note to Instructor .....	6
Synopsis .....	7
Background Information .....	8
About the Novel's Author .....	9
Ideas for Pre-reading Activities .....	10
Chapters 1–2 .....	11
Chapters 3–4 .....	21
Chapters 5–7 .....	31
Chapters 8–10 .....	38
Chapters 11–12 .....	48
Overview .....	55
Writing Projects .....	58
Related Resources .....	60
Answer Key .....	Separate File

## Synopsis

*“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure . . .”* Jeremiah 17:9

*“There is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts . . .”*

Ecclesiastes 9:3

An airplane carrying a group of British boys fleeing a devastating war is shot down and crashes, stranding the boys on a tropical island. With the pilot dead and only themselves to rule the island, the boys try to establish order.

Under the leadership of Ralph and the advice of a boy called Piggy, the boys set up rules for survival and rescue. Above all else, a signal fire must be maintained. This responsibility is accepted by Jack and his followers, who are also the hunters. But something stalks the island, sowing fear and discord. The fire is allowed to die and a rescue ship misses them. Day-by-day the boys change. Conflicts arise. Mistakes happen. And as time passes, the children become filthy, careless, and cruel.

In time, the children who were formerly disciplined by the structure of British society become savage animals, hunting not only pigs, but each other. Golding's novel, *Lord of the Flies*, is a literary masterpiece examining the fallen condition of the human heart and the loss of innocence.



## Chapters 3–4

*Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins.*

### Vocabulary:

The words in the left column are taken from the text. Match each word with the best definition found in the right column.

- |                      |                                       |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ tendril     | a. implied without words              |
| 2. _____ pallor      | b. loose material from destruction    |
| 3. _____ inscrutable | c. a slender, spiral leaf or stem     |
| 4. _____ castanet    | d. murmur or whisper                  |
| 5. _____ vicissitude | e. paleness                           |
| 6. _____ tacit       | f. incapable of being sensed by touch |
| 7. _____ susurration | g. hard to understand                 |
| 8. _____ opalescence | h. changeable                         |
| 9. _____ impalpable  | i. a rhythm instrument                |
| 10. _____ detritus   | j. reflecting a colorful light        |

## *Lord of the Flies Study Guide*

### 4. Ralph:

They were both red in the face and found looking at each other difficult. Ralph rolled on his stomach and began to play with the grass. . . . He paused for a moment and they both pushed their anger away. Then he went on with the safe, changed subject. . . . They faced each other on the bright beach, astonished at the rub of feeling. Ralph looked away first, pretending interest in a group of littluns on the sand.

### 5. Piggy:

“We could make a sundial. You could put a stick in the sand, and then—” . . . .

“And an airplane, and a TV set,” said Ralph sourly, “and a steam engine.”

Piggy shook his head.

“You have to have a lot of metal things for that,” he said, “and we haven’t got no metal. But we got a stick.”

## **Questions:**

1. With what does Jack seem to have become obsessed?
2. What does Jack do to himself that turns him into an “awesome stranger”?

### *Lord of the Flies Study Guide*

8. *Point of view* is the vantage point from which a story is narrated. *First-person* point of view is when the narrator is a character in the story. *Second-person* point of view is when the narrator is a person, but is not in the story itself. *Third-person* point of view is when the story is told by someone outside the story. Third-person point of view can be *omniscient* (where the narrator reveals the thoughts and emotions of all the characters), *limited omniscient* (where the narrator reveals the thoughts and emotions of a few of the characters), and *objective* (where the narrator doesn't reveal characters' thoughts or emotions). From which point of view is *Lord of the Flies* told, and how does that vantage point contribute to the story?
  
9. *Juxtaposition* is the placing of two things side by side, generally to draw attention to or emphasize differences between the two things. Throughout most of Chapter 3, Golding juxtaposes Jack and Ralph. Describe how he does this and what becomes clear about the two boys in these passages.
  
10. There is another juxtaposition of characters framing Chapter 3: the chapter begins with Jack alone in the forest and ends with Simon alone in the forest. Compare the language Golding uses to describe these two boys and the forest. What do the two descriptions tell us about Jack and Simon?

*Lord of the Flies Study Guide*

16. If we are not careful, it can be easy for us to adopt Jack's attitude toward apology when we have committed a wrong. Read Psalm 51:16–17, Isaiah 29:13, Ezekiel 33:31–32, John 14:23–24. What kind of “apology” does God want from us?
17. Read Romans 1:20–23, 2:14–15. What is Paul saying about people's knowledge of God and sin? Using references from the book, explain whether you think Golding agrees, wholly or in part, with the passage from Romans. Are there characters who illustrate Paul's statements?
18. The tenor or point of *Lord of the Flies* seems to change in Chapters 3 and 4 from an adventure story about boys stranded on an island to something much deeper. What most clearly illustrates this turning point for you in these chapters? Why?
19. In Chapter 2, when Ralph is addressing the boys at the meeting he tells them, “we may be here for a long time. . . . But this is a good island.” Just a little later he says, “This is our island. It's a good island. Until the grownups come to fetch us we'll have fun.” But in the middle of Chapter 3, when Jack, Ralph, and Simon are talking, they say, “They talk and scream. The littluns. Even some of the others. As if—’ As if it wasn't a good island.” A few paragraphs later

## *Lord of the Flies Study Guide Answer Key*

17. Both answers may be valid, and examples may vary. The weather might be an example of pathetic fallacy because it seems in sympathy and harmony with the mood and actions of the boys. Some phrases that illustrate this include “The light was unearthly,” “the looming sky,” “Evening was come . . . with the threat of violence,” “the air was dark and terrible,” “the threat of the sky,” “the noise was on them like the blow of a gigantic whip,” “the clouds opened and let down the rain like a waterfall.” Note that the climax of the storm occurs while Simon is being killed. On the other hand, Golding begins the chapter with a very detached, scientific description of the weather: “Over the island the build-up of clouds continued. A steady current of heated air rose all day from the mountain and was thrust to ten thousand feet; revolving masses of gas piled up the static until the air was ready to explode.” Many of the descriptions speak of violence, but do not emphasize motivation or emotion.

18. Answers may vary. Ralph’s group still holds to symbolic power and authority, and the conch remains a potent symbol and very important to them. However, Jack seems to have cast off past symbols of authority. For example, he tells Ralph earlier that the conch doesn’t count on his end of the island. What matters most to Jack seems to be immediate physical desires and practical articles of power. The conch is symbol, it carries no real power in itself. Piggy’s glasses, however, can create fire, and fire can be used as a tool and a weapon.

### *Dig Deeper:*

19. Answers will vary. The intent of the author is unclear, though the sense that the head—the Lord of the Flies, Beelzebub—is trying to mislead and confuse Simon is clear. Possibly the passage refers to Simon wanting to confront the truth about the beast on the mountain, to go see what it really is. It seems as if the temptation here is to quit being different, to quit challenging, to accept appearances and common beliefs and go back to doing what everyone else is doing.

20. Golding clearly is using Christian imagery and allusion to make a statement about Simon. Answers will vary about what that statement is—critics have argued for years. The death of Simon does not bring any redemption for the boys, so the sacrificial redemption of Christ probably is not what Golding is trying to communicate. However, Simon has faced the Lord of the Flies and gone to the mountain and gained wisdom—he has learned the truth about the boys and their fear. The biblical allusions probably point to this struggle against evil and attainment of wisdom and the freedom that such insight can bring to the boys. Simon is the potential redeemer of the boys through his perseverance and the knowledge he has, not for his death. His death is a defeat of redemption. All the insight Simon gained, the knowledge that there truly was nothing physical to fear if they would just be honest and face things, died with Simon, and the boys were doomed to be controlled by the fear of something that was truly harmless.

21. Answers will vary. This is one of the primary questions of the book—what is the nature of evil? Golding seems to be implying that the *act* of the sacrifice or offering was at the heart of the evil, that the boys created an embodiment of evil when they killed the sow and left its head. They had stopped fighting evil, they had even stopped running from evil, and now they were willing to live with it and appease it. This becomes more evil than the death that follows because it makes Simon’s death, and the boys’ too-easy acceptance of it, possible.

22. Answers will vary. In the purist sense, evil is anything that is not in harmony or union with God. Under this definition, we are all evil. In a more human sense, however, evil is something that goes