

# Lord of the



# Flies



# Study Guide

by Michael Gilleland  
and Calvin Roso

For the novel by  
William Golding

**CD Version**



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**Lord of the Flies Study Guide**

A Progeny Press Study Guide

by Michael Gilleland and Calvin Roso

edited by Andrew Clausen

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## 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        |

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### **Character Study:**

For each of the passages below, write down what the passage reveals or suggests about the character.

1. Simon:

. . . the littluns who had run after him caught up with him. They talked, cried out unintelligibly, lugged him toward the trees. Then, amid the roar of the bees in the afternoon sunlight, Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach . . .

2. Roger and Maurice:

Roger led the way through the [littlun's] castles, kicking them over, burying the flowers, scattering the chosen stones. Maurice followed, laughing, and added to the destruction.

3. Roger:

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.

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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”?

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3. Who are the littluns?
4. What do the littluns dream about?
5. In Chapter 4, Jack gets one of his greatest desires fulfilled, and Ralph has his greatest desire torn away. What are these two events and how are they related?

### **Analysis:**

6. Look at the description of Jack in the first four paragraphs of Chapter 3. What does this description tell you about Jack? List the words and phrases that influence your answer and explain their impact.
7. An *allusion* is a reference to an event, place, or person from history or literature that the author assumes the reader is familiar with and that carries with it added meaning. For instance, saying that someone has met their Waterloo would be an allusion to the great and unexpected defeat of Napoleon's troops at Waterloo, Belgium, in a battle that eventually led to the French emperor's total military and political defeat. In Chapter 3 of *Lord of the Flies*, what is "the abyss of ages" mentioned in the fourth paragraph? What is the context of the reference, and why would Golding use such an allusion here?



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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?

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**Dig Deeper:**

11. When the boys decide to elect a chief in Chapter 1, Jack immediately responds “I ought to be chief . . . because I’m chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp.” Golding writes,

This toy of voting was almost as pleasing as the conch. Jack started to protest but the clamor changed from the general wish for a chief to an election by acclaim of Ralph himself. None of the boys could have found good reason for this; what intelligence had been shown was traceable to Piggy while the most obvious leader was Jack. But there was a stillness about Ralph as he sat that marked him out: there was his size, and attractive appearance; and most obscurely, yet most powerfully, there was the conch.

Why did the boys elect Ralph as chief? After seeing the events of Chapters 3 and 4, was their decision a good one? Why?

12. Read Luke 22:24–26, 1 Peter 5:1–3. What attitude do these verses say a leader should have toward his followers? How effective do you think Ralph has been at this?
13. A short way into Chapter 4, Golding gives us a brief glimpse of some littluns at play and an encounter between them and Roger and Maurice. Give a brief summary of what happens. What might Golding be pointing out to us about all of the boys in these interactions?

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14. From what does Jack “liberate” himself when he puts on the face paint? Are these things from which we need liberation, or are they things we should keep?
15. After Jack has returned from the hunt and has been chastised by Ralph they have this exchange:

“All right, all right!”

[Jack] looked at Piggy, at the hunters, at Ralph.

“I’m sorry. About the fire, I mean. There. I—”

He drew himself up.

“—I apologize.”

The buzz from the hunters was one of admiration at this handsome behavior. Clearly they were of the opinion that Jack had done the decent thing, had put himself in the right by his generous apology and Ralph, obscurely, in the wrong. They waited for an appropriately decent answer.

Yet Ralph’s throat refused to pass one. He resented, as an addition to Jack’s misbehavior, this verbal trick.

Is Jack’s apology sufficient? Why doesn’t Ralph accept it? Would you? Is there a difference between apologizing and reforming or repenting? Explain your answers.

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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

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Ralph repeats “As if this wasn’t a good island. . . . Yes, that’s right.” What do the boys mean by “a good island”? Can the island really be “good” or “bad”? What could make a place good or bad in the sense the boys mean?

### **Optional Exercises:**

1. *Discussion:* In Chapter 4 Jack seems to become a different person when he paints his face, creating a mask. Discuss possible symbolism in the colors and composition of Jack’s mask. Have the students create a mask for themselves, illustrating either who they are or what they would like to project of themselves to others. Discuss why Jack changed when he painted his face, why he seemed to feel free from normal constraints. How is this similar to or different from using figurative masks, or image or reputation, to hide our true selves from others? Some verses relevant to discussion might be 1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 139:1–12, Hebrew 4:12–13.
2. Research stories of people stranded away from civilization. Write a one-page essay comparing or contrasting real-life accounts with the action seen thus far in *Lord of the Flies*.
3. Read the following passage about Simon. Write a poem or draw a picture of Simon and the littluns.

Flower and fruit grew together on the same tree and everywhere was the scent of ripeness and the booming of a million bees at pasture. Here the littluns who had run after him caught up with him. They talked, cried out unintelligibly, lugged him toward the trees. Then, amid the roar of the bees in the afternoon sunlight, Simon

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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.

4. Read James 1:22–25. Use the events from Chapters 3 and 4 to illustrate and explain these verses.

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3. Jack's rules are to hunt and to forget the beast. He seems to be making things up as he goes along, not thinking things through. First he says to forget the beast, then he says they will leave a sacrifice for it. Jack's rules seem self-serving and emotionally based rather than designed to preserve order and safety for the group.
4. They put the stick in the ground and put the pig's head on top of it as a sacrifice or offering to the beast.
5. The sow's head, or the "Lord of the Flies," speaks to Simon.
6. Simon tries to tell the other boys that the "beast" is a dead man in a parachute, not something that can actually hurt them. The boys attack and kill Simon.
7. They steal Piggy's glasses. Piggy thought they were coming to steal the conch.

### *Analysis:*

8. Answers may vary. The sow is pretty clearly a maternal, motherly, figure. Her hunting and brutal death, and the sexually charged descriptions of the boys hunting and killing, seems to reflect the increasing depravity of Jack's group. They did not just happen upon her, they chose her out of a group of pigs. They did not just hunt and kill her, they were lustful and frenzied. Golding implies that the boys no longer hold anything sacred—they are willing to violate old and deep taboos.
9. After the boys refuse to vote against Ralph as chief, Jack starts to cry with humiliation and says "I'm not going to play any longer. Not with you." The statement is almost shocking because it is what kids say everyday in schoolyard play, and its normalcy stands out in stark contrast to the boys' experiences on the island. It reminds us that Jack is still a young boy, despite everything that has happened, and that he is not just some kind of devious or corrupt seeker of power. But it also highlights the contrast between what he is (a boy) and what he does. It may also tell us that Jack does not see the importance of what is happening or the full consequences of his actions. A more sinister, but unlikely, interpretation may be that Jack is warning them—from now on he's not playing with them, he's in deadly earnest.
10. Answers will vary. The boys may recognize that Ralph's leadership is valid and generally wise, and so they have no legitimate reason for removing him, yet they don't really want to submit to his leadership and rules. Jack's group looks as if it will be more fun and less restrictive, so though they know that having Ralph as leader is better for all of them, they, personally, do not want to have to be responsible and submit to the work that needs to be done. Therefore they won't remove Ralph from power, but neither will they stay and follow him. In essence, they want the things Ralph offers, but they want someone else to do the work that it requires.
11. When Roger asks how they will make the fire for the feast, Jack responds, "We'll raid them and take fire." Answers may vary about what this tells us about Jack. Jack never seems to consider asking for the fire or cooperating with Ralph's group. He has set himself in competition with them and apparently never entertains any thought but direct conflict.
12. Answers may vary somewhat. The allusions do not seem to be for direct insight but for mood and association; they should not be taken as direct correlations or parallel passages. Genesis 3:1–5: This passage sounds similar to the condescending voice Simon hears from the pig's head when he first sees it, tempting him to go back and join the others. Exodus 19:16–17: The top of the island mountain is also covered with cloud and thunder and lightening, and though God does not await Simon at the top, the truth about themselves does. Exodus 32:1, 6, 25: Jack and the boys have cast off their restraints and are also feasting and dancing; and "Jack, painted and garlanded, sat there like an idol." Matthew 4:1–11: Simon has gone off by himself, is consumed by thirst to the point of finding it hard to walk, and is tempted by the Lord of the Flies. The temptation itself is different, but both mark a passage and triumph. Luke 22:44: Similar to Jesus being in anguish and sweating blood before his crucifixion, Simon is in anguish and bleeds through the nose and mouth.
13. Answers may vary. There can be several interpretations or layers to the images. The open space in the forest has always been Simon's place of spiritual retreat, a place of peace and reflection—possibly represented by the butterflies. Even here the evil or fallen nature of man intrudes. The sow's head and its flies are the embodiment of the fallen nature of man. Note that the butterflies leave the open space when the sow's head and the flies enter. Golding seems to be illustrating that no one and no place is immune to the influence of evil. Another contrast may be the way in which the butterflies feed on the bloom and growth of nature, whereas the flies feed on the decay and violence of the acts of the boys.
14. Answers will vary. The contrast is clearly dramatic and intentional. Both the parachutist and Simon for a time are considered the beast by the boys. The parachutist comes in corruption and violence and leaves the same way, frightening the boys again as he leaves. Simon's death is, in a sense, accidental and a result of his trying to bring freedom and enlightenment to the boys. The paragraphs depicting his body going out to sea have a tender, almost holy, aspect to them. We can almost imagine that the little "moonbeam-bodied creatures" are angels escorting Simon away through the reflected constellations. It reflects the spiritual nature of Simon, but it also brings in a rather poignant irony—these