AQA English Literature GCSE

Lord of the Flies

Glossary of Definitions

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Glossary of Key Terms

Techniques – Language

Allegory – A story, character, setting or object which alludes to wider moral, social or political messages.
[Jack represents authoritarianism and dictatorship, while Ralph represents democracy.]

Alliteration – The repetition of the same consonant sounds at the start of words, often creating a staccato rhythm.

Allusion – An indirect reference to a concept or theme without explicit mention.
[The island is an allusion to the Garden of Eden, a place of innocence before corruption. The boys' arrival mirrors the Fall and the Beast, described as a 'snake' alludes to Satan who appears as a serpent to tempt Adam and Eve]

Anaphora – Repeating a word or phrase at the start of successive clauses.
*[**"No fire; no smoke; no rescue"**]*

Animalistic imagery – where a writer describes people using animal–like qualities, behaviours or characteristics.
*[The boys are frequently compared to predatory animals as they descend into savagery. For example, Jack's **"bloodthirsty snarling"]***

Antithesis – A rhetorical device where contrasting concepts are placed together in a text, typically a sentence, to highlight how different they are.
[Jack and Ralph are the antithesis of one another: Ralph represents civilisation and morality and Jack represents the violent impulses of savagery.]

Assonance – The repetition of vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u) within words close to each other, often creating emphasis or musicality.

Asyndetic listing – several items or ideas are placed one after another, without conjunctions but separated by commas.
["... ***the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore."*** *Golding uses asyndetic listing to emphasise the violent brutality**.]***

Auditory imagery – Language which appeals to the reader's hearing.
*[When Jack first goes to kill a Pig, Golding describes **"The pig continued to scream"** making his behaviour seem even more disturbing.]*

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Colloquialism – An informal expression.
*[Piggy's language is more colloquial to indicate his lower–class and outsider status on the island. An example is **"Nobody don't know we're here."**]*

Connotation – Implied meanings of words beyond their literal definitions.

Consonance – The repetition of consonant sounds anywhere within words close to each other in a sentence, often creating a harsh sound.

Dynamic character – A character who undergoes a significant transformation through the course of the novel.
[Ralph is a dynamic character. He begins the novel as an innocent, optimistic schoolboy who believes in rules and the security of the adult world. By the end, he is traumatised by his discovery of mankind's capacity for evil.]

Foreshadow – To subtly allude to an event which happens later in the novel.
[Roger throwing stones that just miss Henry foreshadows his killing of Piggy with a boulder later in the novel.]

Hyperbole – The use of exaggerated statements.

Imperative verbs – verbs that are used to give a command, instruction or request. They create an authoritative tone.
["Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!"]

Irony – Using language typically implying the opposite of what the writer is intending to express, often for a humorous effect.
[It is ironic that the boys in Lord of the Flies have so much faith in the adult world. They imagine it as protective and rational, when in reality it is engulfed in destructive chaos.]

Juxtaposition – Comparing two concepts, characters, or clauses, in close proximity in a passage for the effect of contrast.
[*"**Jack held out his hands for the conch and stood up, holding the delicate thing in his sooty hands."** Golding uses juxtaposition between Jack's corruptive hands and the purity of the conch.]*

Light imagery – references to light are used to symbolise ideas or emotions. It often suggests purity, clarity and goodness and contrasts with darkness.
*[Simon is described: **"his face was glowing"** which reinforces his goodness, kindness and Christ–like presence.*]

Microcosm – a setting, group or situation that symbolically mirrors broader society.
[The island in Lord of the Flies is a microcosm of human society. Golding uses the community of the boys to reflect the behaviour of wider humanity.]

Modal verb – A verb that expresses a level of certainty or likelihood that an action will happen. Modal verbs include will, shall, can, may, must.
[***"We want to be rescued; and of course we shall be rescued." – "shall"*** *is an example of a modal verb with high certainty showing Ralph's determination.*]

Motif – A recurring image, idea or symbol throughout the novel.
[Hunting scenes are repeated throughout the novel, becoming more violent each time and are a motif of savagery and loss of innocence.]

Oxymoron – Two opposing terms are placed next to each other.

Pathetic Fallacy – Weather or nature reflecting characters' feelings or the mood of the scene.
[During Simon's murder, the violent storm reflects the boys' frenzied violence. The weather mirrors the eruption of brutality and disorder.]

Personification – Attributing human qualities to non–human things.
["Authority sat on his shoulder and chattered in his ear like an ape."]

Protagonist – The central character of a literary text.
[Ralph is the protagonist of Lord of the Flies. The action centres around him.]

Rhetorical questions –A question asked that does not require an answer but is designed to provoke a thought or emphasise an idea.
*["**What are we? Humans? Or animals? Or savages?"** Golding uses a series of rhetorical questions to show Piggy's desperation as he tries to reason with the boys.]*

Sibilance – Repetition of 's' sounds.
*[**"All round him the long scar smashed..."**]*

Symbolism – Using one object or character to represent a wider concept running throughout the novel.
[For example, Piggy's glasses symbolise rationality and intelligence. The conch represents order, democracy and the civilised world.]

Syndetic listing – several items or ideas are placed one after another, connected by conjunctions such as "and" "or."
[***"Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law."]***

Tri–colon – a language technique where a writer uses three words, phrases or clauses in succession to create emphasis.
["Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy."]

Techniques – Structure

Chronological – a novel that is arranged in the order that events happen in time, from earliest to latest.
[Golding uses a chronological structure to show the boys' descent into savagery.]

Climax – The height of the tension in the novel.

Deus ex machina – describes a twist in the plot where a problem or conflict in the story is suddenly solved by the unexpected arrival or a person or thing.
[The naval officer acts as a deus ex machina, bringing the chaotic hunt of Ralph to a halt.]

Exposition – The beginning of a text. It provides all the background information required to understand the forthcoming plot and the characters involved.

Falling action – After the climax, comes the falling action. This is where the tension is diffused, preparing the reader for the **resolution**.

Foreboding – An indication that something bad is about to happen.
[Before Simon's brutal murder, the atmosphere of the island shifts as the air becomes heavier and darker. This is foreboding as the reader anticipates something bad will happen.]

Foreshadow – To subtly allude to an event which happens later in the novel.
[Roger throwing stones that just miss Henry foreshadows his killing of Piggy with a boulder later in the novel. The boys' mock hunt foreshadows the violent way they kill Simon.]

Rising action – Follows the **exposition** and builds the tension before the **climax**.

Key Vocabulary

Accountability – being answerable for your actions or decisions giving an explanation for them and being totally responsible for them.
[The boys slowly lose all accountability as they descend into savagery. They become a group of nameless hunters so are no longer held responsible for their behaviour.]

Atrocity – an extremely violent or inhumane act

Authority – the power or right to give orders, make decisions and have control over others.
[Golding, through Jack and Ralph's leadership on the island, explores how individuals gain or lose authority.]

Authoritarian – describes a leader or system that is based around strict obedience to authority. It is normally enforced through control or intimidation.
[Jack has an authoritarian style of leadership on the island, using violence and fear of the Beast to remain in charge.]

Autocracy – refers to a system of leadership where one person holds total power and control. It is the opposite of democracy.

Bloodlust – uncontrollable desire for harm or killing.

Brutality – extreme cruelty or violence

Civilisation – an ordered society that is based on shared laws, morals and structures.

Colonialism – The act of one country controlling another country or territory politically and economically.

Conscience – a moral sense of right or wrong that guides a character's behaviour.

Contemporary reader – A reader of the book at the time it was published.

Corruption – undergoing moral decline.

Degeneration – The fear that people could regress to a more primitive state.

Dehumanise – denying someone their humanity, including their emotions and independent thought.
[*Golding uses dehumanisation to show, as the boys descend into savagery, they stop seeing each other as human beings. Piggy is often dehumanised, compared to the pigs on the island.]*

Democracy – refers to a system of leadership where power is shared among people who participate in decision making through voting. It is the opposite of autocracy.

Dictator – a ruler who holds total power and often maintains it through fear and force.

Dictatorship – a system of rule where a **dictator** holds total power. It is characterised by restricted freedom and enforced obedience.

Duality – Simultaneously displaying two halves, with the two halves often having opposite meanings.
[Golding engages with the duality of good and evil or civilisation and savagery.]

Enabler – someone or something who supports and encourages someone else's harmful and immoral behaviour.
[The mask acts as an enabler for Jack.]

Empire – The group of territories controlled by another country.

Fascist – a far–right political ideology that is based around dictatorial power and strict control.

Frenzy – being in a state of uncontrolled emotion, where people act without rational thought. It normally involves chaotic and impulsive actions.

Hedonistic – The self–indulgent life, which is dedicated to seeking pleasure.
[Jack and his tribes' desire to hunt can be described as hedonistic.]

Hysteria – a state of intense and uncontrollable emotion that spreads quickly and causes people to act without thinking rationally.

Identity – collection of qualities, beliefs and characteristics that makes a person or a group who they are.
*[The boys slowly lose their sense of identity as they become a pack of "**savages".**]*

Inherent – a quality that is an essential part of something or someone.

Innate – belongs to an individual from birth and is not learnt but internal.

Innocence – being free from guilt or corruption.
[Golding explores the loss of the boys' childlike innocence throughout the text.]

Mob mentality – when individuals lose their own decision–making abilities and instead follow the behaviour of a group.

Moral – Awareness of the principles of right and wrong conduct.
[Morality is a key theme that Golding explores, revealing how the boys' sense of right and wrong deteriorates as civilisation collapses.]

Naive – lacking experience and wisdom. Being naive can cause people to be too trusting in something or someone.

"Other" – A term used to refer to someone outside the dominant ethnic or social group.
[Golding presents Piggy as "other" due to his physical and social differences.]

Primal – fundamental instincts or urges shared by humans and animals, such as hunger, fear and the need to survive.
[The boys' primal instincts overwhelm their need for rules, order and morality.]

Purity – state of being free from moral corruption.

Rationality – The attitude that prioritises logical thinking over emotions.
[Piggy embodies rationality. He prioritises logical decision making over savage desires.]

Regime – a particular way of leadership or government.

Sadistic – describes a person who gains pleasure from causing pain and suffering.
[Roger can be described as extremely sadistic in the way he likes hurting others.]

Savagery – the violent, primitive behaviour that emerges when civilisation and morality break down.

Self–gratification – seeking immediate personal satisfaction which usually involves disregarding the needs of others.

Social conditioning – the way that humans are trained to think and behave in a certain way by society.
[The boys' initial belief in rules and order reflects the social conditioning of the civilised world.]

Totalitarian – a type of leadership where one person holds total power.

Tyranny – a style of rule where the leader uses fear and violence to control others. A tyrant has typically gained power without being 'voted in.'