AQA English Literature GCSE

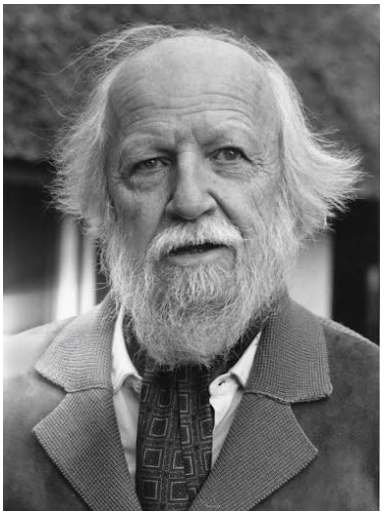
Lord of the Flies

Overview and Key Scenes

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Overview and Key Scenes

Summary of the text



William Golding's 1954 novel *Lord of the Flies* follows a group of schoolboys stranded on an isolated island after their plane crashes during a time of global conflict. At first, they attempt to recreate the rules and structure of the **civilised** world they've left behind. Golding, drawing on his experiences in WWII, uses the island to explore the fragility of order and the **darkness** within human nature. The boys descend into savagery, resulting in murder and the complete collapse of any reason or **morality**. The novel follows the conflict between civilisation and **savagery**, highlighting the capacity of humans to commit unthinkable violence and lose their civilised identity when they are not restrained by society's influences.

Key characters

Ralph: the **protagonist** who symbolises **civilisation**, **order** and **democratic leadership.** He tries to maintain rules and structure on the island, with the key goal of being rescued. He begins confident and authoritative but ends the text traumatised with the events of the island.

Jack: the **antagonist** of the novel who symbolises **dictatorship**, **primal instincts** and violence. He becomes leader of the hunters and constantly rivals Ralph's stable leadership by appealing to the boys' desire to hunt and kill. By the end of the text, he transforms into a savage **tyrant**.

Piggy: represents intellect, **logic** and **reason**. Despite contributing the most intelligent ideas, he is overlooked and **marginalised** by the other boys due to his physical differences. He remains as the voice of reason until his death when order collapses completely.

Simon: a '**Christ-like**' character who represents **morality**, spirituality and goodness on the island. He is the only character who truly understands mankind's nature, and is often seen as an outsider because of his deeper insight. He is brutally murdered by the group after his encounter with the **Lord of the Flies.**

Roger: represents the darkest human impulses with his relentless cruelty and **sadism**. Although he is initially restrained by **social conditioning,** he tests the boundaries on the island and eventually becomes a force of pure brutality, responsible for Piggy's death.

Sam and Eric (Samneric): twins on the island who are initially loyal to Ralph but eventually side with Jack out of fear and need to **conform**, reflecting how even 'ordinary' members of society can lose morality under pressure. The joining of their names reflects how the boys begin to lose their **identity** on the island, becoming one.

The Littluns: the younger boys on the island who represent **innocence** and vulnerability. They raise the existence of a 'beastie' on the island, which enables Jack to use fear to gain control. This shows how easily a population can be manipulated by **hysteria**.

Key Symbols and Motifs

The Conch



- **Symbolises** democratic rule and order on the island.
- The conch is initially used to call an assembly and when held, allows each boy to speak in turn and collaborate.
- However, the conch slowly loses power as the boys descend into savagery and turn to the violent **dictatorship** of Jack.
- Eventually the conch is smashed along with the death of Piggy, highlighting how democracy is fragile, held up by civilised behaviour and can only survive when there is **communal** belief in its systems.

Piggy's glasses



- **Symbolises** intelligence, rational thought and a connection to the modern world.
- Piggy's glasses are mocked by the other boys, yet are realised to be the only way to light the fire that aids in their survival and potential rescue.
- The glasses become gradually more damaged due to Jack's violence towards Piggy. They are eventually stolen by his tribe to fuel their tribal fires to cook meat, showing how technology can be abused by those in power and how rational thought is often overlooked, **eradicated** entirely from the island.

The Beast

- **Symbolises** the inherent evil and darkness that lies within humanity.
- The beast is introduced as a terrifying monster on the island. Jack manipulates this hysterical fear in order to gain control, offering protection from the beast if they submit to his **regime**.
- Simon is the only character who realises the beast is internal, rather than an external creature, but is killed as the boys surrender to savagery.
- Golding uses the beast to show how human beings project their inner darkness onto external threats and evil thrives on the breakdown of society.



The Signal Fire

- Initially **symbolises** the boys' hope and eagerness to be rescued, in order to return to a 'civilised' society. It is built and used as a **beacon** to attract passing ships.
- When given to Jack and his hunters as a responsibility, they neglect it in favour which results in a missed opportunity to be rescued, highlighting their drift from their previous lives and civilised **values**.
- The fire shifts and becomes a symbol of savage violence, accompanying the cooking of meat and **tribal rituals** the boys adopt.
- Eventually, they use it as a destructive forest fire that engulfs the island in order to hunt down Ralph, which **ironically** leads to the arrival of the naval officer.

The Lord of the Flies

- The pig's head on a stick that is offered to the beast by Jack's tribe.
- It **symbolises** the inherent darkness within humans.
- It is named after Beelzebub (another name for the devil) and the decaying head mirrors the decay of morality, civilisation and order on the island.
- In a hallucination, Simon speaks to the pig's head, which tells him that humans are the source of evil and it is themselves they should fear.

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Painted Masks and Uniform

- **Symbolises** loss of identity and transformation into savages.
- Jack suggests that the boys paint their faces in order to aid their hunting, and the boys slowly strip off their uniforms that remind them of the structure and rules of school life.
- As the text progresses, the mask becomes an **enabler**, allowing the boys to commit atrocities with no guilt. They are unrecognisable and cannot be held accountable for their actions.
- By the end, the boys have lost connection with their previous schoolboy identities, referred to as ***"savages"***. Golding shows just how far they have drifted from civilisation and how vital identity is in maintaining accountability and social responsibility.



Chapter by Chapter Overview

Chapter 1: The Sound of the Shell

- Ralph and Piggy are introduced, stranded on an island after a plane crash.
- They find the conch, which is used to gather the boys on the island together for a meeting, including Jack and his choir.
- Ralph is elected as chief, and a group of the boys excitedly explore the island.
- Jack goes to kill a pig, but is still restrained by society's influence so is unable to.

Importance: This chapter establishes the boys' initial pull to civilisation, as the boys' desire civilised rules and **democracy**. Golding **foreshadows** the breakdown of structure as Jack already brings an aggressive challenge to Ralph's leadership. When he vows to kill a pig, Golding signals that the line between civilisation and savagery is thin and will soon be crossed.



Chapter 2: Fire on the Mountain

- Ralph calls another meeting to discuss their survival, rules for the island and how they will be rescued.
- One of the younger boys raises the idea of a 'beastie' on the island which is dismissed.
- Ralph decides they need to make a signal fire and have to use Piggy's glasses to do so.
- Piggy realises that the boy with the birthmark on his face has disappeared.

Importance: The signal fire is established as a **symbol** of hope and rescue on the island. The first signs of disorder appear as the beast is introduced as an external monster and emerges as a symbol of growing **fear** on the island. Golding insinuates there has been a death already, which **foreshadows** the violence that will consume the island.

Chapter 3: Huts on the Beach

- Jack has adopted the appearance of a savage hunter and is determined to kill a pig, but fails again.
- Simon and Ralph work on building shelters, frustrated that no one is helping them. Most of the boys are playing or following Jack.
- Jack and Ralph clash over priorities on the island.
- Simon is described as a spiritual figure who feeds the younger boys and appreciates nature.

Importance: This chapter follows the growing conflict between Ralph's commitment to civilisation and Jack's obsession with savagery. It shows an early breakdown of order and the appeal of **violence**.



Chapter 4: Painted Faces and Long Hair

- As the littluns build sandcastles, Roger and Maurice trample through them. Roger begins to throw stones at one of the younger boys Henry as he plays. The stones just miss him.
- Jack suggests that they begin to wear paint on their faces as a hunting disguise, which makes them feel a sense of freedom.
- Ralph and the boys notice a ship in the distance, but realise the signal fire is out as it has been neglected by Jack.
- Jack enters with his hunters, chanting and carrying a pig carcass. They fight over the signal fire incident and Jack hits Piggy in anger.
- The tension dies and Jack's hunters excitedly recreate the killing of the pig.

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Importance: The signal fire incident reflects the divide between savage **bloodlust** and ordered civilisation as the boys miss an opportunity to be rescued. Golding shows how the boys are neglecting their duties in their new society, as they prioritise **self-gratification**. However, they are not completely savage yet as Roger is still held back by lingering **conditioning** from society.

Chapter 5: Beast from Water

- Ralph is feeling a sense of helplessness as he realises things are breaking down. He decides to call another assembly to restore order and reinforce the importance of the signal fire.
- The boys discuss the presence of the beast on the island, and fear spreads quickly.
- Jack challenges the authority of the conch and begins to speak out of turn, promising to hunt the hypothetical beast.
- Simon suggests the beast is ***"Only us"*** which is dismissed. Piggy suggests that fear itself is dangerous, but his voice is ignored.
- The assembly breaks up as the boys dance and chant, showing the breakdown of order.

Importance: Ralph's frustration at the boys shows how fragile **civilisation** has become and how much effort is needed to maintain it. Jack's rejection of the conch is a significant moment in his rebellion against Ralph's **democratic** rule. Golding introduces, through Simon, the idea of the beast being an **innate** evil rather than an external force to be hunted.



Chapter 6: Beast from Air

- A dead parachutist drifts onto the island and lands on the mountain. Sam and Eric, while tending to the fire, see this figure, mistaking it for the beast.
- An assembly is called and a decision is made to go and find the beast.
- While searching, they find a rocky space, which is later called Castle Rock. Jack believes it would make a great fort.
- Ralph desperately tries to redirect the boys to their mission and the importance of the signal fire again.

Importance: The parachutist acts as a **symbol** of how the adult world, seen as safe and civilised, is just as violent and savage as the island. The discovery of the parachutist as proof of the 'beast' only further divides the boys and strengthens Jack's challenge to Ralph's leadership. Golding shows how fear drives irrationality and escalates **hysteria**, which gives violent leaders like Jack more power.

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Chapter 7: Shadows and Tall Trees

- As they continue to trek to find the beast, Ralph feels a sense of hopelessness for their rescue. Simon foreshadows his own death by telling Ralph that he will get back safely.
- Ralph is involved in the hunting of a pig, which gives him simultaneous feelings of disgust and proud excitement.
- The boys reenact the hunt again. It becomes violent, but they dismiss it as a game.
- Ralph, Jack and Roger reach the top of the mountain and see the parachutist. In terror, they flee.

Importance: Ralph, one of the most civilised and orderly characters, shows his **capacity** for violence and hunting. Golding suggests it is difficult to be entirely immune from savage impulses. The boy's mock hunt **foreshadows** the way Simon dies later in the novel, highlighting their descent into **brutality**.



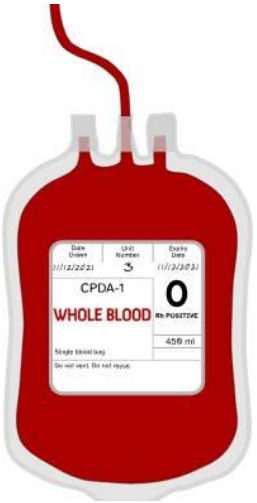
Chapter 8: Gift from the Darkness

- The boys report that they have seen the Beast, only reinforcing the fear of its existence.
- Jack challenges Ralph's rule as chief, calling to remove him from power. No one votes for this, so Jack angrily decides to leave the group in order to start his own tribe.
- A small group of boys sneak away to join him. They hunt again, and use a pig's head as an offering to the beast, placing it on a sharpened stick.
- Simon discovers the pig's head and in a hallucination, he interacts with the Lord of the Flies. It tells him the beast is mankind and he falls unconscious.

Importance: This chapter contains Golding's message explicitly, through the words of the **Lord of the Flies**: mankind is the true beast and humans have an inherent darkness in their hearts. Jack breaks away from the rest of the boys, forming a **dictatorship** resting on fear.

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Chapter 9: A View to a Death



- Simon wakes from his fainting spell and urgently runs to tell the boys the news.
- Ralph and Piggy decide to join Jack's 'party' where they are given meat. Jack asks the boys who will join his tribe, and several boys decide to side with him.
- The boys begin another dance and chant of ***"Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!"*** becoming swept up in a frenzied circle of savagery.
- Simon stumbles into the middle of the group, attempting to share his findings. In a mob of violence, they attack and kill him. His body is washed out to sea. The parachutist is also removed from the island by the wind.

Importance: With Simon's death, Golding displays the complete loss of **innocence** on the island. The boys' collective act of murder highlights how humans are capable of dark violence when acting as a unit. **Primal instinct** is powerful and can eradicate any sense of reason or morality.

Chapter 10: The Shell and the Glasses

- Piggy and Ralph discuss the events that occurred. Ralph states that he is terrified of ***"us"*** and what they have done, while Piggy tries to **justify** their actions with logic.
- Jack's tribe have formed a base at Castle Rock. His reign is violent and cruel, using collective fear of the Beast to remain in control.
- Ralph, Piggy, Sam and Eric attempt to rebuild the signal fire, but it is difficult with fewer of them.
- At night, Jack's tribe raid their camp. Ralph tries to attack them, but the tribe manage to violently steal Piggy's glasses.

Importance: Ralph starts to voice his realisation that the thing to be scared of is themselves. Golding shows how he battles with his **morality** as he realises what they are capable of. Jack's reign mirrors violent **dictatorships** and how they run off fear and brutality.

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Chapter 11: Castle Rock

- No longer able to make a signal fire for rescue, Ralph and Piggy decide to confront Jack about stealing the glasses.
- They go to Castle Rock and Ralph attempts to call an assembly to reason with them but Jack rejects his offer. Ralph and Jack fight.
- Piggy desperately pleads with the boys about the importance of rules and collaboration. Roger releases a boulder that kills him and shatters the conch.
- Jack declares himself chief and demands everyone join his tribe. Spears are hurled at Ralph as he runs away.



Importance: Piggy's death and the explosive shattering of the conch marks the end of reason and civilisation on the island. Roger's act shows the **sadistic** capacity of human beings when they are not restrained by morality or society.

Chapter 12: Cry of the Hunters

- Ralph tries to hide, understanding that Jack's tribe will be relentless in hunting him down. He finds the skull of the Lord of the Flies/pig's head. Out of rage, he hits it and takes the sharpened stick it was mounted on.
- He speaks with Samneric, who have been forced to join the tribe. They tell him that Roger has sharpened a stick at both ends.
- The tribe lights a destructive forest fire in order to smoke Ralph out. A wild hunt of Ralph ensues on the island.
- Ralph sprints away and the chaos is brought to a halt by the appearance of a naval officer, who has seen the smoke from the fire. He chuckles at the boys ***"fun and games"*** as they revert back to frightened children. Ralph breaks down.

Importance: Golding depicts the triumph of savagery on the island as Ralph is viciously hunted like **prey**. When the naval officer arrives, Golding creates an **ironic contrast** between the boys' brutality and the 'civilised' rescue from adults, who are in actual fact, also at war. Ralph's final breakdown shows the boys have been irreversibly changed by the dark truth of humanity's evil.

Key Scenes

Chapter	Scene	Analysis
1	The boy's arrival + discovery of the conch	This scene introduces the boys as orderly and civilised. It establishes the conch as a **symbol** of democracy and authority which they initially respect due to the lingering influences of society.
1	Ralph's election as leader	This scene shows the boy's early conditioning and loyalty to structure and rules. It sets up Ralph and Jack's conflict for the rest of the text, **foreshadowing** the breakdown of leadership.
2	The beast is introduced	The beast is introduced as the childish fear of an external monster. Golding shows how fear can **radically** spread and **destabilise** civilisation. The beast later becomes a **symbol of innate evil**, as Golding reveals it is the boys themselves.
4	Jack's hunters let out the signal fire	The boys' priority to hunt results in a missed opportunity for rescue. The reader sees Ralph's growing frustration with the boys' disorder. This moment highlights how humans can quickly prioritise their own **primal impulses**.
5	Simon suggests the beast is ***"only us"***	This moment reveals Golding's central message - that evil comes from within mankind. This reinforces Simon's role as a **spiritual guide** with unique **insight**. Their dismissal shows humanity's refusal to acknowledge their darkness.
8	Jack calls a vote to remove Ralph from power	This marks the moment where Jack breaks entirely from the civilised democracy they have established, instead initiating a violent and fearful **dictatorship**. His ability to eventually sway the boys highlights the fragility of civilisation.
8	Simon's encounter with the Lord of the Flies	Simon confirms that the 'Beast' is not an external monster but inside humans. This is the moment where Golding's message about **innate evil** becomes **explicit**.
9	Simon's death	This is the moment where the boys cross the line into savagery, killing Simon in a brutal **mob**. The only truly moral character is killed before he can share his revelation about the Beast.

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10	Theft of Piggy's glasses	Jack's tribe takes Piggy's glasses by violent force, leaving him powerless. Fire becomes a fierce weapon rather than a tool for rescue, showing the **surrender** to savagery.
11	Piggy's death + destruction of the conch	This marks the **symbolic collapse** of civilisation through the smashing of the conch. With Piggy's death, reason on the island is destroyed. There are no rules or restraints left.
12	The hunt for Ralph which is halted by the naval officer's arrival	Golding shows the boys have surrendered completely to their savage impulses, attempting to hunt down Ralph - the last **symbol** of civilisation.

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