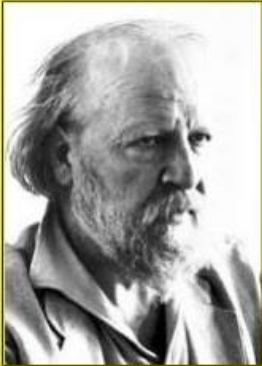


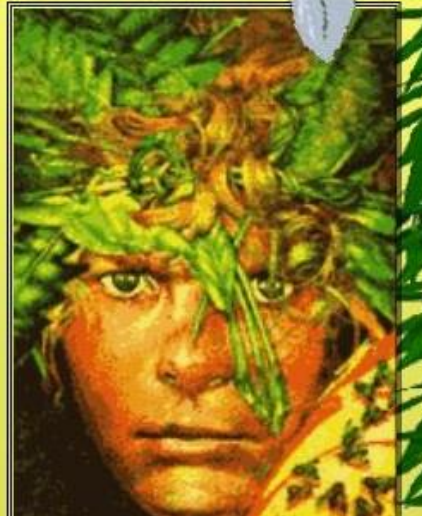
William Golding (1911-1993)



- * British novelist
- * Fought in Royal Navy during WWII
- * 1944 – Participated in invasion of Normandy on D-Day
- * At war's end, returned to teaching and writing
- * 1983 – Winner of the Nobel Prize in literature

William Golding

- * Golding's first and most successful novel, *Lord of the Flies*, was published in England in 1954.
 - Did not become popular until five years later when it appeared in paperback



About the Novel

- * Set in the early 1950s during a fictional atomic war
- * A plane carrying British school boys is mistaken for a military craft and shot down.
- * Only the boys survive the crash and try to form a society and govern themselves



The Island



Characters:



Themes Developed in *Lord of the Flies*

1. Humans are inherently evil and need the structure of civilization (law and order) to control them.
2. The capacity for human nature is to be both good and evil.
3. Defects in society can be traced to defects in human nature.
4. A society can often be judged by the way it treats its most vulnerable citizens.

Symbols in the Novel

1. The Conch Shell



2. The Beast



3. Piggy's Glasses



4. The Lord of the Flies



5. Signal Fire



Introduction :

It is a novel by the **Nobel Prize-winning British author** William Golding. He wrote it shortly after the end of WWII. As an allegory about human nature and society, the novel draws upon Judeo-Christian mythology to elaborate on the novel's sociological and political hypothesis. The title has two meanings, both charged with religious significance. **Published in 1954** early in the Cold War, *Lord of the Flies* is firmly rooted in the sociopolitical concerns of its era.

The first is a reference to a line from King Lear, "As flies to wanton boys, are we to gods." The second is a reference to the Hebrew name Ba'alzevuv, or in its Greek form Beelzebub, which translates to "God of the Flies" and is synonymous with Satan

Characters :

Ralph : The protagonist of the story, Ralph is one of the oldest boys on the island. He quickly becomes the group's leader. Golding describes Ralph as tall for his age and handsome, and he presides over the other boys with a natural sense of authority. Although he lacks Piggy's overt intelligence, Ralph is calm and rational, with sound judgment and a strong moral sensibility

Piggy : Although pudgy, awkward, and averse to physical labor because he suffers from asthma, Piggy--who dislikes his nickname--is the intellectual on the island. Though he is an outsider among the other boys, Piggy is eventually accepted by them, albeit grudgingly, when they discover that his glasses can be used to ignite fires. Piggy's nickname symbolically connects him to the pigs on the island, who quickly become the targets of Jack's and his hunters' bloodlust--an association that foreshadows his murder.

Jack Merridew: The leader of a boys' choir, Jack exemplifies militarism as it borders on authoritarianism. He is cruel and sadistic, preoccupied with hunting and killing pigs. His sadism

intensifies throughout the novel, and he eventually turns cruelly on the other boys. Jack feigns an interest in the rules of order established on the island, but only if they allow him to inflict punishment. Jack represents anarchy.

Simon : The most introspective character in the novel, Simon has a deep affinity with nature and often walks alone in the jungle. While Piggy represents the cultural and Ralph the political and moral facets of civilization, Simon represents the spiritual side of human nature. Like Piggy, Simon is an outcast: the other boys think of him as odd and perhaps insane. It is Simon who finds the beast. When he attempts to tell the group that it is only a dead pilot, the boys, under the impression that he is the beast, murder him in a panic. Golding frequently suggests that Simon is a Christ-figure whose death is a kind of martyrdom.

Sam and Eric : The twins are the only boys who remain with Ralph and Piggy to tend to the fire after the others abandon Ralph for Jack's tribe. The others consider the two boys as a single individual.

Roger: One of the hunters and the guard at the castle rock fortress, Roger is Jack's equal in cruelty.

Maurice : During the hunters' "Kill the pig" chant, Maurice, who is one of Jack's hunters, pretends to be a pig while the others pretend to slaughter him.

Percival : One of the smallest boys on the island, Percival often attempts to comfort himself by repeating his name and address as a memory of home life. He becomes increasingly hysterical over the course of the novel and requires comforting by the older boys.

The Beast : A dead pilot whom Simon discovers in the forest. The other boys mistake him as a nefarious supernatural omen, "The Beast." They attempt to appease his spirit with The Lord of the Flies (Satan)

The Lord of the Flies : The pig's head that Jack impales on a stick as an offering to "The Beast." The boys call the offering "The Lord of the Flies," which in Judeo-Christian mythology refers to Beelzebub, an incarnation of Satan. It represents the savagery and amorality of Jack's tribe.

An outline of the novel:

A group of English schoolboys are marooned on a jungle island with no adults after their plane is shot down in the middle of a war. Two of the boys, Ralph and Piggy find a conch shell. Ralph blows into it like a horn, and all the boys on the island assemble. At the assembly, a boy named Jack mocks Piggy for being fat and runs against Ralph to become chief of the group. Ralph wins the election, and declares Jack the leader of the group's hunters. Soon after, Ralph, Jack, and another boy named Simon explore the island and discover wild pigs.

At a second assembly, the boys set up rules to govern themselves. The first rule is that whoever wants to speak at an assembly must hold the conch. At the meeting, one young boy claims he saw a "beastie" in the jungle, but Ralph dismisses it as just the product of a nightmare. Ralph then suggests that they build a signal fire at the top of a mountain so any passing ships will see its smoke and rescue them. The boys use Piggy's glasses to light the fire, but they're careless, and accidentally set part of the forest on fire.

The boy who saw the beastie vanishes during the fire and is never seen again. Time passes. Tensions rise. Ralph becomes frustrated when no one helps him build shelters. Lots of boys goof off, while Jack obsesses about hunting and takes every opportunity to mock Piggy, who is smart but weak. Simon, meanwhile, often wanders off into the forest to meditate. The rivalry between Ralph and Jack erupts when Jack forces the boys who were supposed to watch the signal fire come hunting with him. They kill their first pig, but a ship passes while the signal fire is out, which causes a tremendous argument between Ralph and Jack.

Ralph calls an assembly hoping to set things right. But the meeting soon becomes chaotic as several younger boys talk about the beast. Now even the bigger boys are fearful. That night, after a distant airplane battle, a dead parachutist lands on the mountaintop next to the signal fire. The boys on duty at the fire think it's the beast. Soon Ralph and Jack lead an expedition to search the island for the beast. While searching, they find a rock outcropping that would make a great fort, but no beast. Tempers between the two boys soon flare up, and they climb the mountain in the dark to prove their courage. They spot the shadowy parachutist and think he's the beast.

The next morning, Jack challenges Ralph's authority at an assembly. Ralph wins, but Jack leaves the group, and most of the older boys join him. Jack's tribe paint their faces, hunt, and kill a pig. They then leave its head as an offering to the beast. Simon comes upon the head, and sees that it's the Lord of the Flies—the beast within all men. While Jack invites everyone to come to a feast, Simon climbs the mountain and sees the parachutist. When Simon returns to tell everyone the truth about the "beast," however, the boys at the feast have become a frenzied mob, acting out a ritual killing of a pig. The mob thinks Simon is the beast and kills him. Jack's tribe moves to the rock fort. They steal Piggy's glasses to make fire. Ralph and his last allies, Piggy and the twins named Samneric, go to get the glasses back. Jack's tribe captures the twins, and a boy named Roger rolls a boulder from the fort that smashes the conch and kills Piggy.

The next day the tribe hunts Ralph, setting fire to the forest as they do. He evades them as best he can, and becomes a kind of animal that thinks only of survival and escape. Eventually the boys corner Ralph on the beach where they first set up their society when they crash landed on the island. But the burning jungle has attracted a British Naval ship, and an officer is standing on the shore. The boys stop, stunned, and stare at the man. He jokingly asks if the boys are playing at war, and whether there were any casualties. When Ralph says yes, the officer is shocked and disappointed that English boys would act in such a manner. Ralph starts to cry, and soon the other boys start crying too. The officer, uncomfortable, looks away toward his warship.

Themes: At an allegorical level, the central theme is the conflicting human impulses toward **civilisation and social organisation**—living by rules, peacefully and in harmony—and toward the will to power. Themes include the tension between groupthink and individuality, between rational and emotional reactions, and between morality and immorality.

Savagery and the "Beast": The "beast" is a symbol Golding uses to represent the savage impulses lying deep within every human being. Civilization exists to suppress the beast. By keeping the natural human desire for power and violence to a minimum, civilization forces people to act responsibly and rationally, as boys like Piggy and Ralph do in *Lord of the Flies*. Savagery arises when civilization stops suppressing the beast: it's the beast unleashed. Savages not only acknowledge the beast, they thrive on it and worship it like a god. As Jack and his tribe become savages, they begin to believe the beast exists physically—they even leave it offerings to win its favor to ensure their protection.

Civilization forces people to hide from their darkest impulses, to suppress them. Savages surrender to their darkest impulses, which they attribute to the demands of gods who require their obedience.

Civilization vs. Savagery : The overarching theme of *Lord of the Flies* is the conflict between the human impulse towards savagery and the rules of civilization which are designed to contain and minimize it. Throughout the novel, the conflict is dramatized by the clash between Ralph and Jack, who respectively represent civilization and savagery. The differing ideologies are expressed by each boy's distinct attitudes towards authority. While Ralph uses his authority to establish rules, protect the good of the group, and enforce the moral and ethical codes of the

English society the boys were raised in, Jack is interested in gaining power over the other boys to gratify his most primal impulses.

Individualism vs. Community : One of the key concerns of *Lord of the Flies* is the role of the individual in society. Many of the problems on the island—the extinguishing of the signal fire, the lack of shelters, the mass abandonment of Ralph's camp, and the murder of Piggy—stem from the boys' implicit commitment to a principle of self-interest over the principle of community. That is, the boys would rather fulfill their individual desires than cooperate as a coherent society, which would require that each one act for the good of the group. Accordingly, the principles of individualism and community are symbolized by Jack and Ralph, respectively.

Spirituality and Religion: Simon occupies this role in *Lord of the Flies*, and in doing so he symbolizes all the great spiritual and religious men, from Jesus to Buddha to nameless mystics and shamans, who have sought to help other men accept and face the terrible fact that the beast they fear is their own selves. Of all the boys, only Simon fights through his own fear to discover that the "beast" at the mountaintop is just a dead man. But when Simon returns with the news that there's no real beast but only the beast within, the other boys kill him. Not just the savages, not just the civilized boys—all the boys kill Simon, because all of the boys lack the courage Simon displayed in facing the beast. **The Weak and the Strong:** The novel also depicts in great detail the relationships and power dynamics between the boys. In particular, the novel shows how boys fight to belong and be respected by the other boys. The main way in which the boys seek this belonging and respect is to appear strong and powerful.

Question :

***Lord of the Flies* as a political allegory:**

The boys attempt to create a working government and a community. The conch represents democracy where every citizen has a say. At first democracy is seen as a toy or a game but, after Jack loses out on being elected chief, political conflict ensues. Both Ralph and Jack symbolize different types of government. Ralph symbolizes democracy. The boys elect Ralph as leader, "elect" being the operative word here. Ralph shares responsibilities with the other boys. He is a boy who leads by example.

Ralph has a vision, as much as a boy can have, of a functioning society. Ralph even gives Jack control of a sort of army/hunting wing of government. Ralph evolves by utilizing the strengths of other boys, like Simon and Piggy, to help develop a better society and perhaps get rescued. Jack represents an autocratic dictatorship. He has no interest in society or rescue. At first Jack seems content to hunt and play his quasi-war games.

Later, like many emerging democracies, the military leader is not content to work in a democracy. Jack takes control and becomes the autocratic dictator who leads by fear instead of consultation and example. By the end of the novel Jack sets himself up as sort of a God/King, "Jack, now a leader sits on a great log, painted and garlanded as an idol." The civilized democracy of Ralph has long been forgotten.