Lord of the Flies

Background Info

Author Bio
Full Name: William Golding
Date of Birth: 1911
Place of Birth: Cornwall, England
Date of Death: 1993
Brief Life Story: William Golding's parents brought him up to be a scientist. But he always had an interest in reading and writing, and at Oxford University he shifted from the sciences to literature. Golding fought in World War II, and was involved in the D-Day landing at Normandy. His experience in the war greatly influenced his views of human nature. After the war, he began writing novels in addition to teaching. Lord of the Flies was Golding's first novel, published in 1954, and was a critically acclaimed bestseller in both England and the United States. Though Golding never again achieved the same commercial success, he continued to write and went on to publish many more novels, including The Scorpion God (1971), Darkness Visible (1979), and Fire Down Below (1988). He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1983 and died in 1993.

Full Title: Lord of the Flies
Genre: Allegorical novel / Adventure novel

Setting: A deserted tropical island in the middle of a nuclear world war
Climax: Piggy's death
Protagonist: Ralph
Antagonists: Jack and the Lord of the Flies
Point of View: Third person omniscient

Historical and Literary Context
Where Written: England
When Published: 1954
 Literary Period: Post-war fiction
 Related Literary Works: Adventure stories such as Robinson Crusoe and Swiss Family Robinson depict people who are stranded on deserted islands transforming and civilizing nature. Lord of the Flies subverts the genre. It shows boys stranded on an island who try to civilize nature, but instead descend into savagery. While other adventure novels support the idea that man is inherently civilized, Lord of the Flies uses the genre to suggest exactly the opposite.
 Related Historical Events: World War II influenced the themes and setting of Lord of the Flies. The war changed the way people in general and William Golding in particular viewed the world. World War II was for many years called the War to End All Wars. World War II proved that idea wrong and created a new sense that people are inherently warlike, power hungry, and savage. While the world war raging in Lord of the Flies is not World War II, it can be viewed as Golding's version of World War III. Only a few brief references to the war outside the boys' island appear in the novel, but references to an atomic bomb blowing up an airport and the "Reds" make it clear that the war involves nuclear weapons and places capitalist allies including the British against the communist "Reds."

Extra Credit
Beelzebub. The phrase "lord of the flies" is a translation of the Greek "Beelzebub," a devil mentioned in the New Testament. In the Bible, Beelzebub sometimes seems to be Satan himself, and at other times seems to be Satan's most powerful lieutenant.
Coral Island. William Golding based several of the main ideas in Lord of the Flies on Coral Island (1858), a somewhat obscure novel by Robert Ballantyne, a 19th-century British novelist. In Coral Island, three English boys create an idyllic society after being shipwrecked on a deserted island. They battle wild hogs, typhoons, hostile island visitors, and eventually Pirates on the South Seas.

Plot Summary
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 blowouts 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 go 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 mountain top 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.

Characters

Note: Lord of the Flies is an allegory, a literary genre in which characters symbolize abstract ideas. The list below describes the characters and, when applicable, states what they symbolize. The terms "biguns" and "littleuns" refer to the older and younger boys on the island. All the main characters are "biguns." Only a few "littleuns," about age 10 and younger, appear as characters in the novel.

Ralph – The largest and most physically powerful boy on the island. Despite his size and strength, Ralph shows no signs of wanting to dominate others and is preoccupied with being rescued. He insists on planning and following the rules, and is able to prioritize the needs of the group above his own selfish desires. For example, Ralph builds the huts even though he dislikes the work, in contrast to the other boys who go off to play whenever they dislike doing important tasks. Ralph feels the exhilaration of hunting and killing, but he always manages to suppress savage feelings. Ralph symbolizes law, government, and society.

Piggy – The smartest boy on the island. Due to his obesity and asthma, Piggy is also the weakest of the biguns. Piggy believes passionately in civilization, law, and reasoning through problems, but he seldom does any work because of his obesity and his nonstop craving for food. Piggy also has a tendency to lecture and criticize. His condescension infuriates the other boys and inspires them to single him out, ridicule him, and even physically abuse him. Piggy symbolizes science and rationality.

Jack – The head boy of his chorus back in civilization, Jack becomes the leader of the hunters on the island. Jack loves power. Laws and rules interest him only because they give him the chance to punish the other boys and express his dominance over them. He loves to hunt and kill because it gives him a chance to dominate nature. Jack gets angry whenever he doesn't get his way: he believes a proper leader issues orders and is obeyed. By the end of the novel he becomes exactly that sort of leader, wielding power only for his own whim and benefit. Jack symbolizes the human love of dominance and power.

Simon – A dreamy, dark-haired boy, prone to fainting spells and occasional fits. Simon is the only member of Jack's chorus who doesn't become a hunter. The most generous of the biguns, Simon helps Ralph build the shelters not out of a sense of duty, but because he wants to. Simon is also the most insightful and in many ways the bravest of the boys. Only Simon recognizes that the boys carry the beast within themselves; only Simon suggests that they confront the "beast" by
climbing the mountain; and only Simon is unafraid when alone in the jungle. Some critics have called Simon a symbol of Jesus Christ, but his symbolic role is actually more general. With his fits and spiritual insights, he stands for the mystics, prophets, and priests of all religions who confront and reveal the darkest aspects of human nature.

Roger – A quiet, brooding member of Jack’s chorus. Roger is at first little more than a mystery, a quiet, intense boy who seems to hide himself from the other boys. But as the trappings of civilization begin to recede on the island, Roger begins to reveal himself, first by throwing rocks at littleuns (and purposely missing), then by killing a pig more viciously than necessary, then by rolling a boulder down on Piggy, then by torturing Samneric, and finally by sharpening a stick on which he plans to stake Ralph’s head, just as he earlier stalked a pig’s head. While Jack loves power, Roger loves to cause pain. He symbolizes mankind’s sadistic instincts, the suppressed desire to hurt others.

The Lord of the Flies – The pig head that Jack’s hunters stake into the ground and leave as an offering to the beast. Simon recognizes that the Lord of the Flies is the savage monster buried in everyone. When the Lord of Flies tells Simon “we are going to have fun on this island,” it means they’re going to indulge every want and desire, without regard to the rules of civilization. The Lord of the Flies symbolizes the evil in all men’s souls, and is also covered in the Symbols section.

Samneric – The identical twins Sam and Eric who do everything together. They so closely resemble each other that the other boys use just one name to refer to both of them. The twins prove to be less influenced by fear of the beast or Jack than any of the other boys (except Ralph and Piggy), perhaps because as twins they’re less alone than any of the other boys.

Phil – A littleun who says he saw the beast, though the “beast” turns out to be Simon coming back from the jungle.

Themes

In LitCharts, each theme gets its own corresponding color, which you can use to track where the themes occur in the work. There are two ways to track themes:

• Refer to the color-coded bars next to each plot point throughout the Summary and Analysis sections.

• Use the ThemeTracker section to get a quick overview of where the themes appear throughout the entire work.

Human Nature

William Golding once said that in writing Lord of the Flies he aimed to trace society’s flaws back to their source in human nature. By leaving a group of English schoolboys to fend for themselves on a remote jungle island, Golding creates a kind of human nature laboratory in order to examine what happens when the constraints of civilization vanish and raw human nature takes over. In Lord of the Flies, Golding argues that human nature, free from the constraints of society, draws people away from reason toward savagery.

The makeshift civilization the boys form in Lord of the Flies collapses under the weight of their innate savagery: rather than follow rules and work hard, they pursue fun, succumb to fear, and fail to violence. Golding’s underlying argument is that human beings are savage by nature, and are moved by primal urges toward selfishness, brutality, and dominance over others. Though the boys think the beast lives in the jungle, Golding makes it clear that it lurks only in their hearts.

Civilization

Although Golding argues that people are fundamentally savage, drawn toward pleasure and violence, human beings have successfully managed to create thriving civilizations for thousands of years. So that disproves Golding’s theory about human nature being savage, right? Wrong. The famous psych- ologist Sigmund Freud argued that without the innate human capacity to repress desire, civilization would not exist. In Lord of the Flies, Golding makes a similar argument. He depicts civilization as a veil that through its rules and laws masks the evil within every individual. So even while civilizations thrive, they are merely hiding the beast. They have not destroyed it. The Lord of the Flies is a chronicle of civilization giving way to the savagery within human nature, as boys shaped by the apparently civilized British society become savages guided only by fear, superstition, and desire. And even before the boy’s become fully savage under Jack, Golding shows hints of the savage beast within society by showing Piggy’s love of food, the way the boys laugh when Jack mocks Piggy, and all the boys’ irrational fear of the “beast.” And as the boys on the island shed civilization for savagery, the adults of the supposedly “civilized” world outside the island are engaged in a savage and brutal worldwide nuclear war.

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.

Symbols

Symbols are shown in red text whenever they appear in the Plot Summary and Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

The Island

The tropical island, with its bountiful food and untouched beauty, symbolizes paradise. It is like a Garden of Eden in which the boys can try to create the perfect society from scratch.

The Lord of the Flies (the Beast)

The “Lord of the Flies,” or the beast, inhabits the severed head of a pig staked into the ground. It symbolizes the evil that lies within every person.

The Conch Shell

The conch shell symbolizes the rule of law and civilization. It’s used to call assemblies and as a kind of microphone that grants the right to speak to whomever holds it during assembly.

Piggy’s Glasses

By allowing the boys to create fire, the first necessity of civilization, Piggy’s glasses represent science and technology, mankind’s power to transform and remake their environment to best suit its needs.

Fire

Fire is a complicated symbol in Lord of the Flies. Like the glasses that create it, fire represents technology. Yet like the atomic bombs destroying the world around the boys’ island, fire is a technology that threatens destruction if it gets out of control. Fire also symbolizes the boy’s connection to human civilization: their signal fire gives them hope of rescue.

Adults

Adults symbolize civilization and social order to the boys. But to the reader, the war raging outside the island makes it clear that the adult “civilization” is as savage as the boys’ “civilization” on the island.

The Scar

A rip in the forest caused by the crash landing of the boys’ plane on the island. The scar symbolizes that man, and his savage nature, destroys paradise merely by entering it.

The Ocean

The ocean symbolizes the unconscious, the thoughts and desires buried deep within all humans.

Spirituality and Religion

Most of the boys on the island either hide behind civilization, denying the beast’s existence, or succumb to the beast’s power by embracing savagery. But in Lord of the Flies, Golding presents an alternative to civilization and savagery: spirituality. This is a life of religion and spiritual truth-seeking, in which men look into their own hearts, accept that there is a beast within, and face it squarely.

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 themselves. 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, 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

Within the larger battle of civilization and savagery ravaging the boys’ community on the island, Lord of the Flies 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. And in order to appear strong and powerful, boys give in to the savage instinct to ignore, pick on, mocked, or even physically abuse boys who are weaker than them. Over and over, Lord of the Flies shows instances where a boy who feels vulnerable will save himself by picking on a weaker boy.
Summary and Analysis

The color-coded bars in Summary and Analysis make it easy to track the themes through the work. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section. For instance, a bar of red indicates that all five themes apply to that part of the summary.

1. The Sound of the Shell

An English schoolboy of about twelve years old explores a jungle. A second boy soon joins the first. The first boy is tall, handsome, and athletic. The second is fat and wears glasses. The boys discuss what happened and how they got to the jungle. They’re fairly sure the plane was in was shot down and crashed landed on an island, and that all the adults on the plane were killed. They wonder if any of the other schoolboys on the flight survived.

The fat boy asks the tall boy his name. The tall boy answers, Ralph. But instead of asking the fat boy’s name, Ralph wanders off. The fat boy follows, but can barely keep up because of his asthma. When the fat boy starts eating some fruit, Ralph slips away and says that without adults they’ll have to take care of themselves. He makes a rule that whoever holds the conch at meetings gets to speak.

Eventually the fat boy finds Ralph and proposes they call a meeting and make a list of everyone who survived. He lets slip that in school people called him Piggy. Ralph laughs. Piggy begs Ralph not to tell anyone.

The boys keep exploring. Ralph finds a perfect swimming hole and proposes they find a place to live. Then, Ralph spots a huge conch shell. Piggy realizes they can use it as a trumpet. Piggy can’t blow it himself, because of his asthma, but shows Ralph how to do it. Ralph blows, and a huge blast sounds. All the boys gather on the beach: they range in age from six to twelve. There’s one set of twins, Sam and Eric. A group of the older boys are members of a choir, dressed in black. Their leader is Simon. A second boy soon joins the first. Excited by the idea of building a fire, the boys jump up and run to collect wood and bring it to the mountain top. Ralph ignores the fat boy because he's fat and weak. Even in paradise, human nature is prejudiced against weakness.

The boys decide to vote for a leader. Everyone in the choir votes for Jack, but all the other boys vote for Ralph because he blew the conch. To keep Jack happy, Ralph says that the choir will be hunters and Jack will lead them.

Ralph decides the boys must explore their island. He and Jack will both go, of course. Ralph ignores Piggy’s whining pleas to be included, and picks Simon to be the third explorer. Ralph, Jack, and Simon have a great time exploring, and stop to push a huge boulder off a cliff, which seems to them like a great accomplishment.

The boys climb to the highest peak on the island, which they call the mountain, from where they can see that they’re on an uninhabited island. They also see the “scar” where the crashing plane tore through the jungle. Ralph says of the island, “This belongs to us.”

2. The Fire on the Mountain

Back at the beach, Ralph blows the conch to call another meeting. Ralph announces that they’re on an uninhabited island. Jack interrupts to say that they still need an army in order to hunt pigs. Ralph says that without adults, they’ll have to take care of themselves. He makes a rule that whoever holds the conch at meetings gets to speak.

The boys’ first law is focused on the conch and made by Ralph.

Jack needs to be in control: he interrupts Ralph to demonstrate his importance.

The meeting is Piggy’s effort to build a “civilization,” but already Jack seeks to take over by mocking Piggy. Ralph plays along, wanting to seem fair, but shows Ralph how to do it. Ralph realizes he must keep Jack happy: civilization makes him powerful. Ralph, the symbol of savagery, and intellectual (Piggy) intensifies. Note also Simon’s generosity.

Civilized and intelligent, Piggy prefers organized plans to short-sighted “fun.”

Jack takes on keeping the boys linked to civilization. He likes to punish.

The rivalry between the savage (Jack) and intellectual (Piggy) intensifies. Note also Simon’s generosity.

The boys focus on short term pleasure and fun.

Later, the boys focus on short term pleasure and fun.

Fire leads to rescue, which leads back to civilization.

The boys make a pile of dead wood on the mountain. They can’t figure out how to start the fire until Piggy’s glasses symbolize technology, man’s ability to harness nature to build tools. Here the boys use technology to help their return to civilization.

As the conch-blower, Ralph symbolizes civilization. But Ralph realizes he must keep Jack happy: civilization makes a deal with savagery.

The boys focus on short term pleasure and fun.

Ralph claims the island for civilization. But in doing so he also claims the scar, the symbol of savagery that exists in human nature.

Sooner the boys head back down the mountain to the beach. On the way, they spot a wild pig caught in vines. Jack pulls out his pocket knife, but pauses before striking, and the pig escapes. Jack vows not to hesitate next time.

Ralph ignores the fat boy because the boy is fat and weak. Even in paradise, human nature is prejudiced against weakness.

Piggy’s glasses symbolize technology, man’s ability to harness nature to build tools. Here the boys use technology to help their return to civilization.

As the conch-blower, Ralph symbolizes civilization. But Ralph realizes he must keep Jack happy: civilization makes a deal with savagery.

The three boys who symbolize civilization, savagery, and spirituality all go to explore the island together. As of now, all three are united.

Ralph claims the island for civilization. But in doing so he also claims the scar, the symbol of the savagery that exists in human nature.
3. Huts on the Beach

It’s weeks later. In the deep silence of the jungle, Jack tracks a pig and hurl’s his spear at it. As usual, he misses. Jack returns to the beach, frustrated and angry.

On the beach, Ralph and Simon are building huts. Ralph is frustrated because only he and Simon are working on the huts, which are falling apart. He complains to Jack that everyone else is off playing or hunting.

Ralph’s complaint offends Jack. Ralph points out that all the hunters except Jack came back hours ago, and are now swimming and playing. Jack tries to explain his obsession with catching and killing a pig, but can’t find the words.

Ralph and Jack argue whether hunting is as important as building shelters.

Ralph says they need shelters because many of the boys are scared. Simon observes that it is as if the island is bad, not the good island. Ralph described in Chapter 2. Jack agrees. While hunting in the jungle, he says, he often feels like he’s the one who’s being hunted.

Ralph puts the focus of the conversation back on getting rescued. He mentions Jack and the hunter’s responsibility for the fire, which causes another argument. Jack claims hunting is work. Ralph shouts that while Jack likes hunting, he’s stuck building shelters for the good of everyone, not for pleasure. They go for a swim that just barely manages to cool down their anger.

Simon slips away into the forest. He helps some of the younger boys gather fruit, then finds a beautiful glade hidden by creeper vines. He sneaks inside and contemplates the island’s sights and sounds in a kind of spiritual meditation.

Jack becomes obsessed with killing a pig, but some shred of civilization still holds him back.

Savagery confronts civilization: as Jack hunts, Ralph builds shelters. Note that only Simon helps Ralph build the huts.

The instinct toward savagery cannot be conveyed in words. Language is a product of the civilization that Jack is abandoning.

Savagery again clashes with civilization.

Simon’s sense of the island is mystical, as if it’s haunted. Jack, a hunter, feels hunted himself. But the boys have yet to figure out what is haunting the island.

Civilized Ralph builds shelters out of necessity. Civilization suppresses the desire to “have fun” by making people feel shame for not acting responsibly. Successful societies suppress the beast, but never destroy it.

Unlike the civilized Ralph, Simon builds shelters. Unlike the savage Jack, Simon is perfectly comfortable and unafraid in the jungle.

4. Painted Faces and Long Hair

The boys adjust to life on the island. The younger boys are now called ‘littleuns.’ The older boys are “biguns.” The littleuns generally play all day and become terrified at night.

As three littleuns play in the sand, two biguns, Maurice and Roger, emerge from the forest. Maurice heads off to swim, but Roger stays behind. When one of the littleuns, Henry, wanders off, Roger follows him. Henry plays at the edge of the ocean, happily controlling the movements of the small animals living there.

Roger watches Henry from a distance, and finds some nuts blown from a tree. After a pause, Roger throws the nuts and then some stones at Henry, but he purposely aims to miss by a few feet.

Jack emerges from the forest and calls to Roger, telling him to follow. In the jungle, Jack paints his own face for hunting camouflage. The mask makes him feel liberated: Jack begins dancing and snarling. He gets Roger, Samneric, and some others to come hunt with him.

On the beach, a bunch of biguns, including Ralph and Piggy, rest and talk. Soon Piggy comes up with a plan for them to build sundials so they’ll know the time. The other boys laugh at him: his obesity, glasses, and asthma make him an outsider.

Suddenly Ralph spots smoke on the horizon—it’s a ship! Everyone looks at the mountain, but there’s no smoke from their signal fire. They run to the mountaintop and discover the fire is dead and the ship has passed. Below them they see a procession of hunters carrying a pig on a spit and chanting, “Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood.” The hunters come up to the mountaintop. Jack, not realizing what’s happened, is triumphant after killing the pig. Furious, Ralph tells Jack about the ship. Jack responds defensively: he says he needed more hunters to circle the pig.

Roger and even some of the hunters start yelling at Jack. Jack, humiliated and angry, hits Piggy. Piggy’s glasses fly off, breaking a lens. Jack mocks Piggy and everyone laughs.

Eventually Jack apologizes for letting the fire die. Ralph asks Piggy’s permission to use his glasses to light the fire. Ralph realizes he and Piggy have become allies.

They cook the pig, but Jack refuses to give Piggy any meat. Simon shares with Piggy.

Jack and his boys begin to reenact the killing of the pig in a kind of ritual dance. Ralph announces that he’s calling an assembly and walks away.

5. Beast from Water

Ralph paces the beach, planning what he’ll say at the meeting and wishing he could think as well as Piggy can. Finally, he blows the conch.

Everyone gathers and listens to Ralph. He explains that the meeting is about setting things straight, not fun. He points out all the things they said they’d do, but didn’t: store water, build shelters, keep the signal fire going. He says the fire is the most important thing on the island.

Jack stands and reaches for the conch so he can talk. But Ralph refuses to hand it over and Jack sits back down.

Ralph observes that people are becoming afraid. He doesn’t know why, but he thinks they should discuss their fear to overcome it. Jack takes the conch. He calls the littleuns’ crybabies. He says he’s been all over the island, and there’s no beast. Piggy agrees with Jack.

A littleun named Phil stands up and says he saw the beast in the forest the previous night. To everyone’s shock, Simon says the boy probably just saw him—Simon went walking in the forest that night.

Another littleun stands and identifies himself as Percival Wemys Madison. He gives his London address, and tries to give his telephone number, but can’t remember it and begins to cry.

When Percival recovers his voice, he tells the other boys that the beast comes from the sea. This idea terrifies the boys.

Simon takes the conch. He says maybe the boys themselves are the beast. Piggy thinks this idea is crazy. Many of the boys think Simon’s saying the beast is a ghost. Ralph holds a vote on whether the boys believe in ghosts. A majority raises their hands.

Piggy grabs the conch and shouts that ghosts don’t exist. He asks the boys if they’re humans or savages? He mentions the hunters letting the fire go out. Jack furiously rips the conch from him.

Savagery and civilization clash in the open for the first time. Jack chooses to hunt over tending the fire. His choice has devastating consequences: a ship and the prospect of rescue pass. Jack has decided that rescue (civilization) is not as important to him as hunting (savagery), while Ralph has clearly taken the other side.

When he feels most vulnerable, Jack abuses a victim weaker than he to regain his authority.

The boys take sides: Ralph and Piggy favor rescue and civilization, while Jack favors hunting and savagery.

Simon is generous and not in conflict with anyone.

Ralph interrupts the savage ritual dance by calling a meeting, a symbol of civilization.

Civilization involves planning and work, not fun. It’s the force that suppresses man’s savage inclination to pursue short term pleasures, like hunting.

Jack’s actions show he still respects the rules of the boys’ civilization.

Both the civilized (Piggy) and the savage (Jack) continue to deny the existence of the beast.

Only Simon would even consider walking into the forest alone at night. Only Simon knows there’s nothing to fear.

Percival’s only remaining connection to civilization are his name and address. Civilization is slowly receding.

The ocean symbolizes the unconscious. So Percival’s claim is accurate.

Simon reveals the truth. But Piggy, the most civilized boy, can’t accept it. The conflict brings the boys to a hopeless standstill.

Civilized and savage blame each other for the subconscious fear they both feel that the beast lies within them.
Ralph accuses Jack of breaking the rules. Jack questions Ralph's leadership. He says he doesn't care about the rules, that he'll hunt the beast and kill it. He starts a chant on the beach. Everyone but Ralph, Piggy, and Simon join him.

Piggy tells Ralph to blow the conch, but Ralph refuses. What if no one responded? Ralph considers stepping down as chief, but Piggy protests. He says everything would descend into chaos, and then Jack would target Piggy.

The three boys wish adults were around to make everything better. Ralph wishes the adults would at least send them a sign.

### 6. Beast From Air

That night, airplanes battle in the night sky, high and far enough away that none of the boys wake. A dead pilot from one of the destroyed planes drifts down on a parachute and lands on the mountain top. That night, airplanes battle in the night sky, high and far from one of the destroyed planes. A sign from the adult world arrives. But it's a dead soldier, signalling that adult "civilization" also rules savagery within.

The sign from the adult world is the beast. The beast has put out the signal fire, which is the boys' last link to civilization.

The boys think it might be the beast's hideout. Ralph, the leader, volunteers to search it. Jack follows Ralph to appear strong and undaunted in the eyes of other boys. He can't allow Ralph to upset him and thereby appear to be the more courageous and deserving leader.

The boys find no beast, but Jack is excited because the rock protects a cave and would make a terrific fort. It even has boulders, which, if pushed in the right way, could roll down to crush approaching enemies.

Ralph and the biguns agree to search the island. Piggy stays behind to look after the littleuns. At the far tip of the island, the biguns find a rock formation Jack calls the "castle." The rock is accessible only by a piece of stone forty feet above the water below. They think it might be the beast's hideout. Ralph, as the leader, volunteers to search it. Jack follows behind him.

The boys find no beast, but Jack is excited because the rock protects a cave and would make a terrific fort. It even has boulders, which, if pushed in the right way, could roll down to crush approaching enemies.

Jack follows Ralph to appear strong and undaunted in the eyes of other boys. He can't allow Ralph to upset him and thereby appear to be the more courageous and deserving leader.

In Chapter 1, the boys move a boulder in fellowship. Now Jack is excited to use boulders to kill.

The other boys want to "have fun." Ralph wants to rebuild civilization in the form of the signal fire.

### 7. Shadows and Tall Trees

While resting on the hike to the mountain, Ralph wishes he could cut his hair, clip his nails, and get cleaned up. Remembering his past in England, he stares at the ocean and thinks how big it is and how it separates the boys from civilization. Simon seems to read Ralph's mind, and reassures him. "You'll get back alright," he says.

A while later as they head through the jungle toward the mountain, the boys find signs of pigs. Ralph agrees that as long as they're going in the right direction, they can hunt. Soon, they come upon a wild boar. The boar gets away, but not before Ralph hits it in the side with a spear. Flushed with pride, Ralph reenacts the hunt with a bigun named Robert. Soon all the boys are involved, chanting "Kill the pig. Cut its throat." For a brief moment, it seems like they might actually kill Robert.

The boys finally stop and discuss how to do the dance properly. Maurice suggests a drum and fire. Robert says they need to use a real pig next time, so they can really kill it. Jack suggests they use a littleun. All the other boys laugh.

Darkness falls before they reach the mountain. Ralph realizes that they need to send someone to tell Piggy they won't be back that night. Everyone's too frightened to volunteer, except Simon.

Jack mocks Ralph's concern for Piggy. Ralph asks Jack why he hates him. The question makes all the boys nervous.

At the base of the mountain, the boys stop for the night. But Jack questions Ralph's courage, and so Ralph agrees to climb right then. Only Roger agrees to accompany them. Halfway up the mountain, Ralph decides it's foolish to go up in the dark. Jack insists on going ahead as Ralph and Roger wait behind. A few minutes later Jack returns saying he saw something. The three boys climb the mountain to the peak, blinded by darkness. The wind blows. The parachutist sits up. The boys run for it.

Ralph's excitement at killing the shows that even he has a savage side to him, though it's more repressed. The ritual dance gains in power, almost killing Robert and foreshad-owing future trouble.

The boys' suggestions, from drums to human sacrifice, would make the dance more "savage," and foreshadow more violence.

### 8. Gift for the Darkness

Back on the beach, Piggy can't believe the beast is real. He asks what they should do. Ralph isn't sure. He says the beast is sitting up by the signal fire as if trying to intercept their rescue.

Jack says his hunters could kill the beast. Ralph says they're just boys with sticks. Infuriated, Jack blows the conch to call a meeting. Ralph begins to talk but Jack says he called the meeting with the conch, so he should get to speak. Ralph lets him. Jack says they've seen the beast: it's a hunter.

Next Jack accuses Ralph of belittling the hunters. He says Ralph is like Piggy and isn't a proper chief. Jack calls for a vote to remove Ralph and make Jack chief. Nobody votes for Jack.

Jack storms off, humiliated and crying. He vows to form a new group, and says anyone can join him when he hunts. He disappears into the forest. Everyone is stunned, but the meeting continues. Simon suggests they climb the mountain. Piggy considers the suggestion insane. He says they should just build a signal fire on the beach.

The boys build the fire and the littleuns dance and sing. After the fire, Ralph realizes that all the biguns but Samneric and Piggy have disappeared. Most have gone to join Jack.

Simon has wandered alone into the forest. He enters a secret glade and sits there in the sun. Though he gets thirstier and thirstier, he continues to sit.
10. The Shell and the Glasses

The next morning, Piggy and Ralph discover that every bigun except them and Samneric has joined Jack's tribe. Ralph tells Piggy that the "beast" that came out of the forest was Simon, and that they murdered him. Piggy screams that it was an accident. When Samneric show up, all four boys pretend they left the feast early, before the dance.

Jack moves his tribe to Castle Rock. He orders his savages to post a guard and beat anyone who disobeys or displeases him. Jack says that the thing that crawled out of the forest the previous night was the beast. But he says that they didn't kill it, because it's impossible for them to ever kill it.

Jack says they'll go hunting tomorrow and have a feast. To cook the meat, they'll raid Piggy's group for Piggy's glasses. Meanwhile, Ralph, Piggy, and Samneric discover four people aren't enough to keep the fire going. They decide to keep it burning only during the day. That night, Jack and his hunters attack while everyone is asleep. Ralph and Eric beat each other up, and Piggy protects Piggy's glasses, while Jack steals Piggy's glasses.

11. Castle Rock

Though only Piggy, Ralph, and Samneric remain in their group, Piggy tells Ralph to blow the conch to call an assembly. He does. They decide to go to Castle Rock. Piggy plans to ask Jack to give back his glasses because "what's right's right." Ralph, Sam, and Eric decide to carry spears, but Piggy insists on holding only the conch.

At Castle Rock, Ralph blows the conch. Roger throws a rock, though he purposely misses the twins and the other savages remain quiet.

Jack appears from the forest behind Ralph's group, followed by hunters carrying a pig on a spit. Ralph calls Jack a thief. Jack attacks him. The two boys fight, but only with the sides of the spears, and soon wear themselves out.

Ralph demands that Jack return Piggy's glasses. He mentions again the importance of the signal fire. Jack's tribe has only a cooking fire, he points out. In response, Jack orders his hunters to surround and tie up Samneric. He says to Ralph, "See? They do what I want."

Ralph and Jack start to fight again, but Piggy asks to speak and Ralph relents. Piggy raises the conch and once more calls them all kids, and argues that it's better to be sensible than savage.

Civilization still has a hold on Roger.

Civilization confronts savagery head on, but not completely: the boys aren't really trying to kill each other... yet.

Ralph emphasizes the importance of rescue, but Jack and his group no longer care about rescue. They simply obey Jack.

Piggy literally holds on to civilization (the conch). His civilized argument based on "what's right" ignores the savage rule of dominance by the strong.

Piggy makes one last appeal for civilization over savagery.

Ralph leaps into savagery, destroying intelligence and law, in the form of Piggy and the conch. Only Ralph, symbol of government, remains.
The Lord of the Flies is a hollow skull: its true power exists within men.

The sharpened stick recalls the Lord of the Flies. It is a symbol of civilization, like a pig head staked as an offering to the beast.

As a civilized person, Ralph can’t understand the power of torture.

Ralph still trusts Samneric as friends, as rational civilized people.

Technology and fire, formerly symbols of savagery, have become tools of savagery, used to kill.

Ralph tells Samneric he’s going to hide in a nearby thicket so they can misdirect the tribe. As he runs off, he hears Samneric arguing with someone.

In the jungle, Ralph comes upon the skull of a pig hung on a spear staked into the ground. He punches it and the skull splits.

As the jungle burns, the tribe chases Ralph from hiding place to hiding place. He has no time to think or plan: he can only run or hide or attack.

The tribe slowly surrounds him, until Ralph is forced onto the open beach, where he’ll surely be killed. But in front of him stands an officer of the British Navy. The smoke from the burning jungle caught the ship’s attention.

The savages trickle out of the forest behind Ralph. The officer asks who’s in charge. Ralph says he is. Jack is quiet. Percival Wemys Madison tries and fails to say his own name.

The next morning Ralph hides in the thicket. But it’s soon surrounded: Samneric have been tortured into revealing Ralph’s location.

As a civilized person, Ralph can’t understand the power of torture.

The tribe slowly surrounds him, until he feels the power of savagery to prevail over civilization.

Hunted by the tribe like an animal, Ralph becomes an animal.

Chapter 2 Quotes

"He says he saw the beastie, the snake-thing, and will it come back tonight?" "But there isn’t a beastie!" "He says in the morning it turned into things like ropes in the trees and hung in the branches. He says will it come back again tonight?" "But there isn’t a beastie!"

There was no laughter at all now and more grave watching. Ralph pushed both hands through his hair and looked at the little boy in mixed amusement and exasperation.

Ralph waved the conch. "Shut up! Wait! Listen!" He went on in the silence, borne on in his triumph. "There’s another thing. We can help them to find us. If a ship comes near the island they may not notice us. So we must make smoke on top of the mountain. We must make a fire." "A fire! Make a fire!"

Chapter 4 Quotes

Roger stooped, picked up a stone, aimed, and threw it at Henry — threw it to miss. The stone, that token of preposterous time, bounded five yards to Henry’s right and fell in the water. 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 other little boys.

"There’s another thing. We can help them to find us. If a ship comes near the island they may not notice us. So we must make smoke on top of the mountain. We must make a fire.”

Chapter 5 Quotes

What I mean is… Maybe it’s only us…

Chapter 8 Quotes

The spear moved forward inch by inch and the terrified squealing became a high-pitched scream. Then Jack found the throat and the hot blood spouted over his hands. She col-lapsed under them and they were heavy and fulfilled upon her.

There isn’t anyone to help you. Only me. And I’m the Beast… Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill… You knew, didn’t you? I’m part of you? Close, close, close! I’m the reason why it’s no go? Why things are the way they are?

Chapter 12 Quotes

What did it mean? A stick sharpened at both ends. What was there in that?

His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, 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.
### Themes Chapter 1
- A plane carrying school boys is shot down onto a desert island during wartime. All the adults are killed.
- Ralph and Piggy find and blow the **conch.** All the boys gather.
- Ralph is elected leader over **Jack.** Ralph makes Jack the head of the hunters.
- Ralph explores the **island** with Jack and Simon. They spot a pig, but are unable to kill it.

### Themes Chapter 2
- At a second assembly, Ralph makes rules, says that the island is a good island, and dismisses some of the younger boys' fears of a "**beastie**" as just a nightmare.
- The boys make a signal **fire,** using Piggy's glasses to light it. They accidentally burn a patch of the forest.
- Piggy scolds the boys for acting childish. Jack mocks Piggy, then volunteers his hunters to keep the fire lit at all times.
- The boy who saw the "beastie" disappears.

### Themes Chapter 3
- Jack grows obsessed with hunting, but is unable to kill any pigs.
- Only Simon helps Ralph build the shelters on the beach. Ralph and Jack start to argue about whether hunting or building shelters is more important, and only barely avoid coming to blows.
- As Jack and Ralph argue, Simon slips away and meditates in a secret forest glade.

### Themes Chapter 4
- Roger throws rocks at a littleun, but purposely misses by a few feet.
- Jack calls Roger into the forest. Jack, Roger, and other boys paint their faces and then go hunting.
- Jack’s hunters kill a pig, but they neglect the signal which goes out just as a ship is passing. Ralph and Jack argue. Humiliated, Jack mocks and hits Piggy, breaking a lens of Piggy's glasses. Everyone laughs at Piggy. Ralph realizes that he and Piggy are now allies.
- Jack and his hunters do a dance re-enacting the killing of the pig. Ralph calls an assembly and walks away.

### Themes Chapter 5
- Before the assembly, Ralph wishes he was as smart as Piggy.
- During the assembly, Jack mocks the littleuns who fear the beast. Piggy agrees that there is no beast.
- The littleun Percival says the beast comes from the sea. Simon says maybe the boys themselves are the beast. The boys don’t understand what he’s talking about.
- As the meeting descends into chaos, Jack questions Ralph's leadership, says he will hunt the beast and kill it, and then starts a wild dancing chant.
- Ralph and Piggy wish there were adults around. Ralph wishes, at the very least, that the adults would send them a sign.

### Themes Chapter 6
- There is an airplane fight over the island. The boys all sleep through it. A dead parachutist lands on the mountain next to the signal. The boys make a signal fire, but think it is just a nightmare. The boys call an assembly. Jack nearly ousts Ralph as leader, but Ralph wins the boys to his side by asking whether they all want to be rescued or not.
- All the biguns except Piggy search the island. They don’t find the beast, but they do discover Castle Rock, which Jack thinks would make a great fort.
- The boys hike to the mountain. Simon predicts Ralph will “get back alright.”

### Themes Chapter 7
- Ralph kills a wild boar with a spear. The boys do a ritual dance, and for a moment it seems as if they might actually kill the boy playing the boar.
- Ralph, Jack, and Roger climb the mountain at night. The wind blows and moves the parachutist, convincing them that it is the beast. The boys don’t understand what he’s talking about.
- Jack calls an assembly, then insists on a vote to make him chief instead of Ralph. Ralph wins unanimously. Jack storms off.
- Ralph and Piggy start a new signal fire on the beach. But while they work, all of the biguns except Samneric slink off to join Jack. Simon goes to his secret glade.
- Jack is chief of the new tribe of biguns. His tribe kills a pig, then stashes the pigs' head on a stick sharpened at both ends and leave it as an offering to the beast.
- Jack’s tribe raids fire from the new signal fire on the beach. Jack invites everyone to his feast.
- Simon witnesses the killing of the pig, then the pig’s head, the Lord of the Flies, speaks to him: “I’m the Beast … You knew, didn’t you? I’m part of you?”

### Themes Chapter 8
- Simon climbs the mountain and learns the truth—that the beast is just a dead parachutist.
- At Jack’s feast, it starts to rain. Ralph mocks Jack for failing to build shelters. Jack whips the boys into the ritual pig-killing dance. Even Ralph and Piggy join in.
- Simon emerges from the forest to tell the other boys about the parachutist. The boys, now a frenzied mob, kill Simon.

### Themes Chapter 9
- Ralph and Piggy, realize that the "beast" they killed was Simon. When Samneric show up, all four boys claim not to have been at the feast when the dance started.
- Jack’s group raids Ralph’s camp. Piggy protects the conch. Jack’s tribe steals Piggy’s glasses.

### Themes Chapter 10
- Ralph, Piggy, and Samneric go to Castle Rock to confront Jack and his tribe. Samneric are captured. Ralph and Jack fight, but not to kill.
- Piggy insists on speaking. He holds up the conch and argues that it’s better to be sensible than savage. Roger rolls a boulder that knocks Piggy into the sea and kills him, and also destroys the conch.
- Jack throws his spear at Ralph, aiming to kill. Ralph runs into the forest. The tribe takes Samneric into the fort. Roger tortures them into joining the tribe.

### Themes Chapter 11
- Ralph spies on Castle Rock and speaks with Samneric. They tell him that the tribe plans to hunt him, and that Roger has sharpened a stick at both ends.
- Jack’s tribe hunts Ralph and sets the fire to smoke out. The tribe eventually surrounds Ralph and forces him into the open on the beach.
- The huge fire has attracted a British Naval ship to the island. An officer is standing on the beach.
- The officer thinks the boys are playing games, and is shocked when he learns that there have been two deaths. Ralph and the other boys cry. The officer, uncomfortable at this show of emotion, looks at his warship.