

Lord of the Flies Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

1. **Setting:** The combination of place and time that provides the general background for the characters and plot of a literary work is the story's setting. Describe the setting of *Lord of the Flies*. What is "the scar"? Why does Golding choose that word? Focus on the descriptions. Compare the forest to the beach; the lightness to the darkness. What overall mood is set by these descriptions?
2. **Symbolism:** A symbol is something that stands for or suggests something larger and more complex (most often an idea or feeling) than itself. What does the scar symbolize? What does the conch symbolize? What is the title of the first chapter, and how does it function? Ralph has the conch, what does Jack have? What does this symbolize? Describe the island and explain the significance of its shape.
3. **Characterization:** The term characterization refers to the various means by which an author describes and develops the characters in a literary work. Describe Ralph, Piggy, and Jack. How is Ralph's reaction to having no adults around differ from Piggy's? In what sense do Ralph and Piggy complement each other while dealing with the conch? Describe Sam and Eric. How do Ralph and Jack treat Piggy? What does this say about each of their characters? Why is Ralph elected chief? How does he try to appease Jack...does it work? On the expedition, why doesn't Jack kill the pig? What does this say about him?
4. **Imagery** – Reread the description of the Jack when he is first introduced. Discuss Golding's use of color and imagery and what it might foreshadow. What rhetorical device does Golding use on page 15 in his description of light and breezes?

Chapters 2-3

1. **Conflict:** A confrontation or struggle between opposing characters or forces in the plot is conflict. **External** conflicts generally involve a clash between a character and nature or between humans competing or struggling against one another or society. **Internal** conflicts are psychological and involve the inner divisions or turmoil of a single character. Provide at least one example of EACH type of external conflict and discuss in detail. Provide at least one example of an internal conflict and discuss in detail.
2. **Characterization** – Does Piggy's place in this society seem to be any different from his place in England? In what ways is Piggy the voice of reason? Why is it hard for the boys to hear Piggy? How does Jack and Ralph's relationship develop during the building of the fire? Then how does friction develop between them in Chapter 3? When Jack is hunting or talking about

hunting, what kind of look does he have? What does this signify? How is Simon different from Ralph and Jack?

3. **Figurative Language: Personification** bestows human characteristics upon anything nonhuman. What is being personified in these chapters? Give specific examples. A **metaphor** compares two unlike objects without using connective words such as *like* or *as*, whereas a **simile** uses the connective words to make the comparison. List at least three examples of each.

4. **Symbolism:** Examine the meanings of the following character names: Ralph, Jack, Simon. How do each of these names relate to the characters to which they belong? What do Piggy's glasses represent? What part of society does Piggy represent? In addition to the huts on the beach being a shelter from weather, in what symbolic way does Ralph think that the shelters are important? What societal archetypes do Ralph, Jack, and Simon seem to represent? In what ways does the author create a Christ-likeness about Simon?

5. **Allusion** – What allusion is made when Ralph is explaining the benefits of the island (about three pages into Chapter 2)? Why is it referenced?

6. **Syntax – Asyndeton** is a lack of conjunctions between coordinate phrases, clauses, or words. **Anaphora** is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses or lines. What do the anaphora add to the asyndeton in the following phrase, “We saw no houses, no smoke, no footprints, no boats, no people.” Why does Ralph repeat the phrase, “There isn't a beastie” five times?

7. **Theme** – The little boy with the mulberry-colored birthmark come forward to speak of what? What element does he introduce? How does the descriptive phrase, “the small boy twisted further into himself” hint at a theme? What has Ralph come to learn about society on the island? The personal conflict between Ralph and Jack in Chapter 3 mirrors the thematic conflict of the novel. What is the thematic conflict?

Chapter 4

1. **Symbolism:** When Jack sees Roger after the incident with Henry, Roger is described as “a darker shadow crept beneath the swarthiness of his skin” (57). What does this **symbolize** for Roger? Describe Jack's face painting. What does it represent? How does the paint change Jack? Piggy is described as wearing “the remainders of a pair of shorts, his fat body was golden brown, and the glasses still flashed when he looked at anything. He was the only boy on the island whose hair never seemed to grow. The rest were shock-headed, but Piggy's hair still

lay in wisps over his head as though baldness were his natural state and this imperfect covering would soon go, like the velvet on a young stag's antlers" (59). What does this say about Piggy? What does he represent? After Jack kills the pig, what does he do? What does this symbolize? Why is the fire so important? What does it represent?

2. **Imagery:** The actual language that writer uses to convey a visual picture (create or represent any sensory experience) is **imagery**. Give examples of imagery that cover each of the five senses from the beginning of this chapter. What is Golding trying to convey through these images?

3. **Conflict:** Describe the incident between Maurice and Roger and Percival and Henry. Why is Roger not able to hit Henry with the stones? What does Ralph see that causes much excitement? What has Jack done to cause **conflict**? Contrast Ralph's and Jack's reactions to missing their first chance of rescue. What does Jack do to Piggy to further the **conflict**? In what way has Jack's attitude towards Piggy escalated? How does Ralph feel at the feast? What does he decide to do?

Chapters 5 - 6

1. **Motif:** A unifying element in a work, especially any recurrent image or subject is a **motif**. One motif Golding uses throughout the novel is appearance (illusion) versus reality. Give specific examples of this motif.

2. **Irony:** List one example of each type of irony – verbal, situational, and dramatic.

3. **Characterization:** How is Ralph different than when he arrived on the island? Why has he called an assembly...what does he want to talk about (Answer this for Ch. 5 and 6)? What does Jack say to assembly? What dangerous idea does Simon come up with? What does he think the beastie is? What is Piggy's take on the situation? What is the final straw in Jack and Ralph's relationship? Why doesn't Ralph want to blow the conch? What does this say about their new society? Explain what is happening to Ralph in this statement from Chapter 6, "A strange thing happened in Ralph's head. Something flittered there in front of his mind like a bat's wing, obscuring his idea."

4. **Symbolism:** What does Piggy represent at the assembly? In the midst of the final conversation in Chapter 5, someone says, "Keep the fire going." Interpret the symbolism of this statement.

5. **Allegory:** Since *Lord of the Flies* is allegorical in nature, interpret what the beast may signify.

6. **Foreshadowing:** What does the use of the adverb "mutinously" foreshadow?

7. **Theme:** What theme is Golding developing in the opening paragraph of Chapter 5? How is the meeting in Chapter 5 different from previous meetings? How do the topics at the meeting reflect the novel's themes? Interpret the statement, "Simon became inarticulate in his effort to express mankind's essential illness." How does the larger setting described in the second paragraph of Chapter 6. reinforce the theme of the novel?

Chapter 7

1. **Foreshadowing:** What prediction does Simon give Ralph? What mood does this prediction cast?
2. **Characterization:** What is Ralph thinking as he walks behind Jack? What does this say about him? Why does Ralph allow Jack to lead and what is the effect? What conflict arises? When the boys find the pig, who seems the most excited? Why is this ironic? Describe the reenactment with Robert. What do they chant? How does this affect them? What is particularly horrific about Jack's suggestion to "use a littlun" when Robert says they need a real pig so they can kill it? Who volunteers to go back to the beach alone? Why would this person do this? How do Jack, Ralph, and Roger react when they get to the top of the mountain? How does Golding show that Ralph is still civilized in this chapter?
3. **Syntax:** What type of syntax is used in the following statement, "but here faced by the brute obtuseness of the ocean, the miles of division, one was clamped down, one was helpless, one was condemned, one was-"? What is the effect of this statement? How does the syntax change in the paragraph beginning, "Once, following his father from Chatham to Davenport . . .?" What is the effect of this change?
4. **Symbolism:** What might Ralph's daydreams symbolize?

Chapter 8

1. **Conflict:** Describe how the meeting ends. What reminds the reader that the story is about young boys? How is the decline of Jack and his followers to savagery physically displayed? What is Jack's plan after naming himself "Chief"? What is his plan regarding the beast? When Jack and the savages surprise Ralph, Piggy, and the others, Ralph runs to the fire, and Piggy runs to the conch. Interpret the symbolism.
2. **Characterization:** What does Piggy's suggestion to move the fire to the beach accomplish in the boys? How does Piggy feel? How is his participation in the group different than in the past?

3. **Theme:** The central message or idea that a work conveys is the **theme**. How does the hunt add to the development of the theme? Where does the hunt end? What do the boys do with the pig? Why? The act of placing the sow's head near the forest glade filled with butterflies and flowers highlights what theme? How is the decline of Jack and his followers to savagery physically displayed?

4. **Symbolism:** Interpret the title of the chapter, "Gift for the Darkness," in two ways. "Lord of the Flies" is an English translation of the name Beelzebub, a common name for either Satan or one of his chief demons. What is the connection between the beast and this skewered sow's head? What truth has Simon realized that no one else seems to comprehend? Interpret Simon's confrontation with the Lord of the Flies from an archetypal standpoint.

5. **Foil:** Simon is the only character who does not feel morality as an artificial imposition of society. For whom might he be a foil? Explain.

Chapters 9-10

1. **Foreshadowing:** Re-read the first two paragraphs of this chapter, and explain what the title might foreshadow. Why? What happens to Simon? How does the Lord of the Flies foreshadow this (revisit Ch. 8)? When the boys are on the beach dancing, what two statements or phrases seem to foreshadow that there will be trouble before the night ends?

2. **Allegory:** The typical allegory is a narrative that has at least two levels of meaning. The first is the surface level story line, and a second deeper level of meaning, which may be moral, political, philosophical, or religious. Who might Simon represent? Why? (Revisit Ch. 8) What Biblical parallels may be drawn from Simon's walk?

3. **Symbolism:** Describe the setting as Simon reaches the beach. What does this symbolize? What is symbolized by what happens to Simon at the beach? What becomes of the dead parachutist? What does this symbolize? In the raid, why are Piggy's glasses taken, but not the shell? Why is this symbolic?

4. **Irony:** What does Simon's vision teach him? When is the vision fulfilled? How is this ironic? What does Ralph say in Chapter 10 that signifies the end of hope?

5. **Theme:** How does Golding highlight the transition from civilization to savagery?

Chapter 11

1. **Characterization:** Contrast Jack's and Ralph's attitudes toward their appearance. The twins see Ralph "as though they are were seeing him for the first time." What does this statement imply? Trace the progression of Roger's savagery in Chapter 11.

2. **Symbolism:** What is the significance of Piggy's holding the conch when the boys go to claim back the glasses? Sam says that Jack will be painted. What is Sam implying? What happens to Piggy? What happens simultaneously? What do these signify? Describe the changes in the depiction of the conch.

3. **Theme:** Ralph insists his tribe wash so they can be like they used to be, but is reminded by the others that they bathe everyday. What theme is supported? What actions show that the tribe has not completely abandoned the established society of the island?

4. **Figurative Language:** Identify and interpret the following quotation: "Jack had backed right against the tribe and they were a solid mass of menacing that bristled with spears."

Chapter 12

1. **Characterization:** What is the significance of the stick sharpened at both ends that Roger has planned for Ralph? Explain the following observation: "But really, thought Ralph, this was not Bill. This was a savage whose image refused to blend with that ancient picture of a boy in shorts and shirt." What does Ralph mean? What is significant about the fact that Percival cannot even remember his name? Why does Ralph weep at the end?

2. **Symbolism:** In the microcosm on the island, what does each these boys represent: Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Roger, and Simon.

3. **Irony:** What is ironic about the fire the tribe creates to flush out Ralph? What is ironic about the rescue of the boys?

4. **Figurative Language:** Identify and interpret "The skull gleamed as white as ever the conch had done."

5. **Deus Ex Machina:** – Deus ex machina is an improbable character that suddenly appears to resolve a situation. What plot even serves as deus ex machina?

6. **Allusion:** Why does the officer allude to Coral Island?