

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Lord of the Flies

by

William Golding

Book Information

William Golding, Lord of the Flies
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Coward McCann & Geoghegan, 1955
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Interest Level: UG

Shipwrecked English schoolboys set up their own civilization, but savagery finally emerges.

Award: ALA Notable/Best Books

Topics: Adventure, Survival; Popular Groupings, College Bound; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 9-12

Main Characters

Jack Merridew another boy about Ralph's age, who becomes the leader of the hunters

Piggy a boy about Ralph's age, who is generally not accepted by the others because he is overweight, has asthma, and wears glasses

Ralph a twelve-year-old boy, who becomes the chief of a group of boys stranded on a tropical island

Roger an older boy, who becomes one of Jack's right-hand men in his tribe of hunters

Sam and Eric twin boys, who are loyal to Ralph for most of the novel

Simon a boy who is intelligent, but finds himself set apart from the group

Vocabulary

enmity great wickedness; an outrageous act

gesticulate make gestures while speaking

malevolent having, showing, or arising from ill will, spite, or hatred

mortification humiliation

propitiatingly in a manner to gain or regain the favor of or appease

vicissitude a change from one thing to another, especially an irregular, unexpected, or surprising change

Synopsis

A group of English schoolboys is stranded on a tropical island after their airplane crashes in a tropical storm. With no adults alive to guide them, they attempt to organize and plan for their survival. The group elects Ralph as their chief. Ralph states that the most important thing they must do is start and keep a fire going in the hope of being seen by passing ships. Another boy, Jack Merridew, volunteers the choir boys for that role and to hunt, which he feels is essential for survival..

Tensions rise among the boys when Jack's group allows the fire to go out as they hunt. The lack of fire and smoke allows a ship to pass by without rescuing the boys. Ralph calls an assembly by blowing the conch shell and tries to impress upon the group that their only hope for rescue, and therefore survival, is to keep the fire going. The conflict between Ralph and Jack grows as it is reported that a beast has been spotted on the island. Jack and the hunters split off from the rest of the group to hunt for food and possibly the beast.

Many of the boys are lured to Jack's tribe with the promise of meat. Amidst the struggle, Simon emerges from the jungle to report that the "beast" is actually a dead man. Simon innocently stumbles into a tribal "dance" and ends up being killed by the boys. This frightening incident sends Jack's group spiraling out of control.

Ralph retreats with Piggy, Sam and Eric to try to keep a fire alive. In the night, Jack and two others attack Piggy and take his glasses and the fire. Without Piggy's glasses, Ralph cannot start a signal fire and must confront the hunters. In the confrontation, Piggy is killed, and Sam and Eric are captured.

Alone and desperate, Ralph discovers that he will be hunted by the group and killed. He manages to evade the hunters, even though they set the island ablaze in order to flush him out. Just as he feels he is doomed to die because he is exposed on the beach, he learns that rescuers have arrived. The

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jungle fire attracted their attention.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Why did the Lord of the Flies tell Simon, "Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill"?

"The Beast" has taken many imaginary forms by this point in the book, representing various threats and horrors. In his dream-like encounter with the sow's head--left on a stick as a gift for the Beast--Simon is realizing that the true source of danger and savagery threatening the boys lies within themselves.

Literary Analysis

The author vividly described the deserted tropical island on which the boys had crash landed. Recall those details and describe the island.

It had sandy beach around most of its shore. The center of the island was mountainous. There was a steep, rocky area along one shore. The center of the island had dense vegetation. There was a flat, platform area and a water hole.

Inferential Comprehension

Jack and Ralph both wanted to survive their ordeal on the island, but they had different ideas about what was most important in that process. Explain what each thought and discuss who you think was correct.

Jack thought hunting for meat was important. Ralph felt keeping a signal fire going was crucial. Ultimately, Ralph was correct because the group would never have survived if they had not been rescued.

Constructing Meaning

When Ralph realized that he and the others were going to be rescued, he cried. List the things he cried for and what he had learned.

He cried for "the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy." He realized the boys had been changed forever and that in the pit of one's soul might lie the ability to kill other human beings. He also realized he had treated Piggy poorly, even though Piggy had tried to be a true friend.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting The setting of the story is a deserted tropical island. It appears that none of the boys had ever been in such location before, yet they managed to find food, water, and shelter. Research tropical islands and learn what kinds of fruits and vegetation they may have found. Using descriptions in the novel, create a map of the island showing areas where important events took place.

Understanding Characterization Each of the main characters (Jack, Ralph, Simon, Piggy) represented a way of thinking and/or personality type. Evaluate each of them and describe their basic character traits and what segment of society they represented.

Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning There were many symbolic images and descriptions hidden in the text of this story. As a class, explore some of these and debate or discuss what they represented. The notes at the end of the book may help.

Responding to Literature Piggy's character was repeatedly abused and/or ignored by the other characters. Ralph gave Piggy some respect but rarely defended him when Jack was around. Explain why this happened. Share times when you or someone you know may have felt like Piggy or acted like Ralph. Discuss why Piggy was so put down by the others.