

CliffsNotes.com® Conversation Starters for **LORD OF THE FLIES**

Why do you think Golding named his novel *Lord of the Flies*? In the novel, what is the Lord of the Flies? What does it mean? What does it symbolize?

In his 1982 essay *A Moving Target*, Golding stated that the theme of *Lord of the Flies* is "grief, sheer grief, grief, grief." What might he have meant by this? How is grief present in the novel? What are some examples of it? Do you agree or disagree with Golding's statement? What is the major theme of the novel?

Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is most often read as an allegory, meaning that characters and events represent complex ideas and concepts. *Lord of the Flies* is especially noteworthy for its allegorical commentary on different aspects of human nature — for example, an allegory of evil inherent in each individual rather than in society as a whole. What are some other allegories that are found in the novel?

When choosing a leader, the boys initially vote for Ralph not because he has demonstrated leadership skills but because of his charisma and arbitrary possession of the conch. Later they desert him to join Jack's tribe because of Jack's way of life, with the war paint and ritualized dance. What is the difference between Ralph's and Jack's leadership? How does the way Ralph lead contrast to the way Jack leads? How would you characterize each form of leadership?

The conch plays a significant role in the novel. What does the conch symbolize?

Piggy, Ralph, Jack, and Simon are perhaps the four most important characters in the novel. But they're so different from each other. What does each of them represent? How do their actions on the island and their outlook on life differ from each other? What type of human nature does each of them represent?

In Chapter 3, Piggy asks the boys "How can you expect to be rescued if you don't put first things first and act proper?" What does Piggy mean by "act proper?" Why does he feel acting properly will bring them success in being rescued? Contrast this sentiment to the actual reason a rescue ship spots their smoke signal.

In Chapter 4, who or what is being described with this phrase: "There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill, and there was the world of longing and baffled common-sense"? What does this mean? How do the two worlds represent facets of humanity?

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In Chapter 5, Golding writes, "In a moment the platform was full of arguing, gesticulating shadows. To Ralph, seated, this seemed the breaking up of sanity." How is sanity defined? How does this novel contribute to an understanding of sanity and of madness? What are some other instances of madness in the novel?

What does it mean when Piggy says in Chapter 5, "Course there aren't [ghosts] . . . 'Cos things wouldn't make sense. Houses an' streets, an' — TV — they wouldn't work." What does he mean when he says that technology couldn't function if supernatural beings existed?

What are some of the ways that the vision of a human "at once heroic and sick" (Chapter 6) is represented in the novel? How is this vision represented within the larger context of history? Does Golding suggest a remedy for the "sickness"?

In Chapter 8, when Simon sees the Lord of the Flies, Golding writes that Simon's "gaze was held by that ancient inescapable recognition." What "recognition" is Golding referring to? What does that phrase mean?

In Chapter 9, Simon finds the paratrooper's body and returns to the beach to tell the rest of the boys. But when he crawls out of the forest into the center of the dance ritual to tell them, the group turns on Simon as if he were the beast and kills him. Why?

Why does Simon's role as a visionary make him an outcast in the group? What other visionaries have been outcasts in their societies?

How does Golding use color to link Jack with the Lord of the Flies? Are there other instances of Golding using color to link characters or provide symbolism?

Golding makes much of Piggy's glasses throughout the novel. The boys use the glasses to initially start a fire. But in Chapter 10, Jack and his group steal Piggy's glasses, which are later shattered. Why does Jack steal Piggy's glasses? What significance do the glasses play in the novel? What do they symbolize?

In Chapter 11, when Ralph announces that he's calling an assembly, he is greeted with silence. How do silence and speech function in this novel, and why is silence so threatening to the boys?

Ralph says in Chapter 12, "there was that indefinable connection between himself and Jack; who therefore would never let him alone; never." What is that connection? How does it develop and what does it signify?
