

## **Lord of the Flies**

### **The title of the story**

“Lord of the Flies” is a story about the adventures of a group of British schoolboys on a tropical inhabited island. Through the whole book the rivalry between Ralph and Jack – the two leaders among the boys – is described. Ralph was elected, and Jack made himself a chief. The “Lord of the Flies” was neither of them, it wasn’t even a human. It was just a pig’s head on a spear placed on the top of the mountain to frighten the mysterious Beastie. Flies were flying around it because of an unpleasant rotten smell. It was mentioned in the eighth chapter, when Simon saw it. This moment in the story is perhaps the most important, because there we can understand the main idea of it. The Lord of the Flies tells Simon that there’s no beast on the island, the evil, which was imagined by the boys, was not on the island, it was in them. It also tells that all the boys have to be together and behave as a team, or they would destroy the island and each other.

### **The subject matter of the story**

1. The history of human’s being starts with the first people on our planet. They didn’t work, they didn’t think. Hunting, killing and eating was the sense of their life. We call them savages. But millions years later, savages turned into people, who created civilization. They worked, they discovered and invented, they thought. Ralph in the story symbolizes civilization: he was elected chief, he suggested to build shelters and to make a signal fire to be seen for some ships, so they could be rescued. For the group of boys these are good results and all that required a lot of hard work. But it was kind of civilization. Jack, another leader, wasn’t elected. He found Ralph’s suggestions boring and useless. His only desire was to become a leader, a chief. He tried to show, that living without grownups, rules is real fun. Jack painted his face like Indian hunters did and started to hunt pigs. Some of the boys followed him. Later all the boys, except for Ralph, Piggy and Samneric, left Ralph for Jack’s tribe, where they could hunt, eat meat, dance ritual dances – have fun instead of working. Hunts, killings, blood turned Jack and his tribe into savages. The main idea of the story is a conflict turning into a real war between civilization and barbarity.

2. The moment when the Lord of Flies tells Simon about evil as a part of each person in the world can be called the problem of the society William Golding wanted to show. Though Ralph said, the island hadn’t been good, the island had been good enough before the boys got on it and spread their evil on it. Unfortunately he couldn’t solve it.

### **Structure of the text**

1. We can divide the book into three major parts: 1) the boys explore the island and try to be organized. Ralph is in charge and civilized values are still important. This bit ends with the rescue fire failing and a feast of pig. 2) The fear of the beast gets stronger. Ralph tries to sort things out but Jack breaks away to set up a new tribe. Simon imagines the Lord of the Flies talks to him. 3) The murders begin. Simon and Piggy are killed and Ralph is hunted. The boys reach their most primitive level yet just before grownups arrive.

2. All the major parts are connected with parts, telling about the atmosphere in the group. At the beginning it was fantastic: warm sea, beach, sand, palms with tropical food, sun. Later that “paradise” became worse and worse: nobody wanted to work, the conflict between Ralph and Jack grew bigger and bigger, besides, everyone felt quite uneasy about the mysterious and dangerous Beast.

### **Plot of the selected episode (Simon’s Murder)**

1. The murder of Simon is the beginning of the last major part in the story. Jack and his tribe are no longer civilized normal boys, by killing Simon they turn into savages. That is also proved by the fact, how violently they killed him.
2. Simon is a little boy very weak physically, but powerful in his mind. He is rather thoughtful, though he isn't as smart as Piggy, he's kind and dreamy. He loves nature and always finds beautiful places where to be alone. One of such places was the top of the mountain where the Lord of the Flies was. He talks to it, but understands, that he's talking to himself. He also understands that there's no beast on the island, but just a dead airman, that's why he runs to Jack's tribe to tell about this. But the boys took Simon for the Beast and killed him. But when he is killed the scene becomes religious: it stops raining, the stars come out and the tide comes in, the lagoon seems to be full of silver light, Simon's body is carried gently out to sea.

### Characters

1. **Ralph** is athletic, determined, fair, kind, brave and honest. He's full of strong morals and responsibility. But Ralph isn't always perfect. His emotions change: at first he was excited and delighted, later he felt disappointed and wished not to be a leader any more, at last he was frightened for his life.

**Piggy** is sensible, logical, loyal, vulnerable, overweight, organized. He suffers from asthma and his eyesight is rather weak. He's rather helpful and brave. Piggy is the only boy on the island, who obeyed the rules and the conch.

**Jack** is intense, arrogant, violent, determined, ruthless and controlling. He isn't attractive: a tall, pale, bony and skinny red-haired boy, who first was the leader of the choir boys. Jack prefers fun to responsibilities; his main entertainment is hunting. He's not only proud, but also quite a show off.

**Simon** is very thoughtful, perceptive, solitary, kind, courageous, helpful and unconventional. He is shy and struggles to express himself; he likes to go off on his own. Sometimes Simon seems rather strange to the boys. He's physically weak; he's a short, bony and skinny little boy, who often faints. In the story he's quite a spiritual figure, some people think, Simon represents Jesus in the story: he loves everyone on the island, he admires nature; he's always very kind and helpful, his death is horrible: the boys used their bare hands and their teeth to beat and tear at Simon.

**Roger** is very devoted to Jack. He's often gloomy and imperceptible. His power increases, when Jack organizes his own tribe. He doesn't say much. Roger enjoys damaging and violence, he becomes more and more vicious.

**Samneric** are identical twins called Sam and Eric. They are good-natured cheerful brothers doing everything together, even finishing each other sentences. Everyone sees one person in them, that's why the twins are called "Samneric". They usually exaggerate.

**The "littluns"** (or the little ones) are little boys from 5 to 6 years old. They automatically obey Ralph, because he behaves as an adult. They do nothing except for sunbathing, building sandcastles, playing games and eating. One of the littluns was the first to mention the beast. That littlun was killed by the fire which went out of the control.

2. Usually Ralph doesn't express himself clearly, and the assembly rarely understands him. He often tries to explain something or to teach the boys some morals, but his disability to think straight often leads to the opposite result.

In Jack's voice it is always possible to hear some kind of commands. He never speaks quite – either shouts or gives orders. He also speaks without the conch and breaks the rules. Jack never stays quiet – he always talks and gives commands, and that proves that he's a bit power-hungry.

Piggy can be called a sociable person, though he speaks about things which are not interesting for the others, that's why he's usually called a bore.

Simon, because of his shyness, hardly ever talks. He seldom expresses his opinion. Once he said some strange words to Ralph (it was just before his death), that he'll return home, but Ralph thought Simon was mad.

The littluns don't associate with the bigguns (the big ones) much. They cry when they talk about the Beastie but can be made easily laugh, especially by Maurice. They also cry at night, thinking about the beast or missing their parents.

3. The only character in the book who has an inner speech is Simon. When he has a dialog with the Lord of the Flies he has the dialog with himself. He understands that there's no beast on the island, the fear they imagined is in them. Simon also understands that he has to join all the boys and stop being in isolation, or the others will destroy Simon and each other. This conversation is Simon's inner speech, telling us what is really happening on that island.

4. The rivalry between Ralph and Jack goes throughout the story. At the beginning they are friends: they smile at each other and explore the island together. Their quarrel starts when they decide whether to hunt or to build shelters. Their relationship becomes worse and worse. After Jack leaves the others to make his own tribe they conflict turns into a real war.

### **Main idea of the text**

1. One of the main ideas of the story is **civilization vs barbarity** and how they can turn into each other. At first the boys cling to the rules from their old life. Later civilized values begin to fade – hunting is much more interesting than work. Then Jack organizes his tribe – the new society that develops is selfish and violent; useful rules disappear, and primitive rituals, like shouts “Kill the pig, cut its throat, spill its blood!” or ritual dances around the fire, take their place.

Another idea of the story is **power and leadership**. There are two leaders on the island, though only Ralph is chosen. Jack is totally upset as he wants to be a leader too. Some time goes by and he turns into a leader too. He easily controls the boys and makes them obey him. The two chiefs compete with each other through out the whole story.

**Fear** is one of the main ideas too. That fear is the Beast. It was just imagined by one of the littluns as a snake-kind creature turning into creepers at daylight. Some days later, when Samneric were looking after the fire at night, they saw a dead airman and thought it was the beast. They run to the others and describe that “beast”, but with exaggerations. From then on the Beast becomes real. Jack doesn't actually believe in it, but he uses the others' fear to control the boys. The only person who knew exactly that there was no beast on the island was Simon. He tried to tell the others about that, but was killed.

2. We can see the main ideas of the story through many details:

**Nature** – when the boys arrive on the island, it turns into a tropical paradise: warm sea, sand, palm trees with tropical fruit on them. Everyone is excited and delighted. While the boys explore the island, they get tangled in the creepers and scratched by thorns. This is the hint that the island is not perfect. Talking about the weather, it's usually sunny and warm, but sometimes there are violent storms, like when the plane crashes or when Simon is killed. The island repairs itself: the storm drags the plane wreckage out to sea, the wind lifts the dead parachutist off the island and carries his body away, the tide removes evidence of murder – it washes Simon's and Piggy's bodies out to sea.

**Games** – the boys play at first: the bigguns swim and sunbathe, the littluns eat fruit and build sandcastles. Election of the chief is also a game of pretending to be adults. They explore the island – it's a game. They find the Castle Rock – a nice place for a “fort”, which is not nice at all. Jack makes a tribe of hunters from his choir and hunts pigs – it's also a game. Soon violence creeps into these games. Blood and cries of pigs excite the boys, Roger enjoys

damaging the littluns' sandcastles. Afterwards the boys just can't stay organized as they'd rather play, than making fire and build shelters. After Jack makes his tribe without rules and work, the games take place all the time. Jack throws parties where they dance, sing and eat. By the end of the book the games become serious: Simon and Piggy are killed and Jack's only desire now is to kill Ralph. The naval officer who arrives says "Fun and games". At first he thinks they're playing a childish play of war, with spears and fire, - but their war is real as the one the adults are involved in.

**Evil** goes through the whole book. The littluns have nightmares every night, the boys first spot as a choir as "something dark...fumbling along". Later this choir turns into a tribe. Jack is the first boy to become obsessed with killing, he leads most of the violent events that happen on the island. Roger enjoys destroying. He starts with sandcastles and ends with people. Ralph and Piggy, though they represent good in the book, take part in Simon murder. By the end of the story Ralph knows much about evil, the main thing is that evil lives in all people. The Lord of the Flies has several meanings, it represents evil too. It shows how far they have sunk into superstition and savagery. The pigs head also presents the devil – the worst kind of evil.

### **Writer's attitude**

William Golding tries to warn us about what could happen to our lives through:

- **the mood**, which changes in the story with the mood of the characters. At first everything was fine: the boys were happy to live in the "tropical paradise". But very soon, after the news about the beast, the mood becomes gloomy and depressed. It becomes more depressed after the murder of Simon – in both tribes the boys feel rather uneasy. In the end when the island is on fire the mood is very worrying, Ralph's life is hanging by a thread.

- **the names** used in the book. In the beginning the boys are called "children" and their meetings are "assemblies". In the end the boys are "savages" and their meeting is no longer an assembly, it's a tribe, but when the naval officer come savages turn into children again. Jack is called by his name in the book, but he wants to be called Merridew, by his surname, as he wanted to sound like an adult. In the end he's called "the Chief".

Piggy is always called by his nickname, which reminds of a pig. When he dies his arms and legs twitch "like a pig after it has been killed".

Some of the language creates irony, like a "boat-shaped" island which doesn't go anywhere or the naval officer, who said to Ralph "We saw your smoke". The smoke only existed because Jack's tribe had forgotten about the rescue and was trying to kill Ralph.

Animal imagery shows how inhuman the boys become. The littluns make animal sounds when they have nightmares and howl when Jack comes to steal Piggy's glasses. There are "no movements but tearing of teeth and claws" as the tribe kill Simon. There is a "vicious snarling" as Jack's group attacks the shelters. Ralph "launches himself like a cat" to try and save himself from the tribe. When he screams become "continuous and foaming", he sounds as though he has become an animal like the pigs.

### **Reader's attitude**

1. The story shows how easily a human can turn into a savage. Breaking the rules and leaving work for having fun leads to the most primitive way of life: hunt, kill and eat or even just eat. Jack didn't obey to the rules and didn't work, so very soon he turned into a savage.

2. I like this story. It shows us what could happen to us if we live just in fun and games without morals and rules. I like such adventure stories with contrasting characters like Ralph, Piggy, Simon and Jack, Roger. "Lord of the Flies" makes us think about usual things like unity in family, friends and the whole society.