

# *Lord of the Flies* Essay Questions

*Directions: You will be writing a précis on The Lord of the Flies. Choose one of the essay prompts below as the topic for your paper. If you would like to write about a different topic, you must get it approved by me before you begin.*

1. Develop an explanation of why some critics feel that Golding's main themes are that there is no hope for mankind, or that evil is an inborn trait of mankind. Be sure to use examples from the book.
2. Identify the most significant symbol in the novel and justify your choice. (Symbols to choose from: the conch, Piggy's glasses, the fire, the parachute man, the pig's head/Lord of the Flies)
3. State one possible theme of the novel, and support your position.
4. In his introduction to William Golding's novel, novelist E.M. Forster suggests that Golding's writing "lays a solid foundation for the horrors to come." Using Forster's quote as a starting point, discuss how the novel foreshadows the murders of Simon and Piggy. Focus on two events or images from the novel's earlier chapters and describe how they anticipate the novel's tragic outcome.
5. Simon says: "Maybe there is a beast."  
Ralph says: "But there isn't a beast."  
Jack says: "We'll make sure when we go hunting."  
*How does William Golding use the "beast" in the novel as a whole?*  
You should write about:
  - what the "beast" may symbolise
  - the way the boys' ideas about the "beast" change
  - what effect the "beast" has on the boys.
6. What do you think Golding has to say about evil in *Lord of the Flies*? How does he convey his ideas to the reader?
7. How is Ralph changed by his experiences on the island?  
You should write about:
  - what he is like when the boys are first stranded on the island
  - what he tries to do and how he responds to events and other characters
  - how the writer shows us the character of Ralph
  - what you think the writer wants Ralph to represent.

## **Lord of the Flies Seminar Prep**

*Directions: Our final will be a Socratic seminar on The Lord of the Flies. Part of your grade will include your preparation for the final. Complete the following on a separate piece of binder paper (not in the notebook!)*

**Part A: Create a list of 5 discussion questions that could be used during the seminar. These may not be questions I have provided for you.**

**Part B: Answer at least one question per chapter from the list below. A complete answer should be at least a paragraph and contain evidence from the text (direct quotes and page number).**

### **Chapter 1: “The Sound of the Shell”**

1. Examine the characters of Ralph, Jack, or Piggy in terms of what they possess that link them with their past lives, and what their emerging roles on the island are. Is there any indication which of these characters may be advancing more rapidly toward savagery than the others? Support your conclusion.

2. What is the symbolism of the conch? Why does it seem to have so much power? What characteristics does it have in common with what it appears to symbolize?

### **Chapter 2: “Fire on the Mountain”**

1. What is the significance of the boys’ first attempt at the fire? How does the result foreshadow events to come? What is the result of the fire? Why are the creeper vines significant? How does the fire’s result mirror the boy with the mulberry-colored birthmark’s fear?

2. What is the meaning of the beast that makes its first appearance in this chapter? Discuss how it is portrayed, and the others’ reaction to it. Does this foreshadow its later significance? How does the beast become real to the boys?

### **Chapter 3: “Huts on the Beach”**

1. Trace the path of Jack’s success as a hunter and Ralph’s growing ineffectiveness as a leader. Compare their emerging viewpoints in their argument together on the beach. What does this say about the two boys and their roles as civilized young men?

2. What divisions are becoming apparent among the boys on the island? Trace the characters and who they are allied to at this point. Discuss these alliances and why they are occurring.

### **Chapter 4: “Painted Faces and Long Hair”**

1. Examine Simon’s actions in this chapter and compare them to Roger’s. Both boys are outsiders like Piggy, yet seem to be accepted. Based upon these observations, present an argument for whom they will eventually ally themselves and explain why.

2. What is the significance of the camouflage paint that Jack puts on? How does it affect his personality? Why will it make him a better hunter? In what ways does it hide his personality? In what ways does it reveal his personality? Discuss its symbolic meaning as well as the others’ reactions to it.

### **Chapter 5: “Beast From Water”**

1. Trace the references to the beast in the novel thus far. Parallel that with the diminishing sense of order on the island and the boys’ gradual embracing of Jack’s savagery. What is the true nature of the beast on the island that Simon is unable to verbally define?

2. Discuss how and why Jack disrupts the meeting. What is at the core of the power struggle between he and Ralph? What techniques of anarchy and disruption does Jack apply? What is the result? What does it tell you about the characters of Jack and Ralph?

### **Chapter 6: “Beast From Air”**

1. Consider the character of Jack Merridew. How does he appear to be a qualified leader? What are his actual qualifications? Would he be a good leader? Why or why not? Compare him to Ralph. Who is better suited to lead the boys? Generally sum up why Jack’s character is introducing anarchy on the island and how.

## **Lord of the Flies Seminar Prep**

2. What is the symbolic significance of the parachutist? How and why is it mistaken for the beast? In what ways is it a symbol of the beast?

### **Chapter 7: “Shadows and Tall Trees”**

1. The scene in which the boys beat Robert is a crucial development in the story. Examine this situation. What do the boys’ actions say about their descent toward savagery? Why is it so surprising that Ralph eagerly takes part in the ritual? Why does he? What do the boys’ actions after the beating say about their situation?

2. Consider the character of Simon. How is he different from the others? Why is he unable to express his thoughts? Why does he seem to know what Ralph is thinking? Trace his development as a character thus far, and the emerging role he has in the story.

### **Chapter 8: “Gift for the Darkness”**

1. Trace the boys’ gradual descent toward savagery to this point in the novel. What does it say about the nature of the beast? What is the beast? Who are the boys most closely related to it? When has it shown itself already? Where is it? Why don’t they see it?

2. Trace the symbolism of Simon’s relationship with The Lord of the Flies. Why is the head described as speaking from inside him? Why does he fall into its mouth? Why does he look it in the face? What is the result of understanding the nature of violence? Support your thesis with evidence from the story.

### **Chapter 9: “A View to a Death”**

1. Why does Simon travel to the mountaintop? What does he do there? What does he discover there? What is the symbolic meaning of his journey and discovery?

2. What is the meaning behind Simon’s death? How and why is he killed? What is he doing when he is killed? Why do Ralph and Piggy have a part in his death? What part do they play?

### **Chapter 10: “The Shell and the Glasses”**

1. How do Ralph, Piggy, and Samneric react to their roles in Simon’s death? What does this tell you about them? What does it tell you about the boys in general? How is this experience related to Golding’s theme that the flaws of mankind are inherent in man’s nature?

2. Examine and compare the two groups’ relationship to fire. What is significant about fire keepers versus fire takers or fire makers versus those who only want to use it to cook meat?

### **Chapter 11: “Castle Rock”**

1. Trace Roger’s evolution from “dark boy” to sadist. What behavior has he expressed that has gradually led him to evolve into a frightening and dangerous figure? How is he a natural extension of Jack’s authority? What place does the future hold for Roger on the island?

2. Examine Piggy’s last day of life on the island. What does it say about his character and his role on the island? What does he do? Why does he do it? How does his death contribute to the symbolism of the boys’ descent toward savagery?

### **Chapter 12: “Cry of the Hunters”**

1. Choose any of the main characters whose personalities are described in detail (Ralph, Jack, Simon, Piggy, Roger) and trace their development in the story as it pertains to Golding’s theory that the basic flaw of mankind is inherent in man. Support your thesis with character details highlighting their flaws or descent into savagery.

2. Throughout the story, trace the symbolic role of fire. Begin with the raging fire that kills the small boy, consider the changing role of fire between Jack’s tribe and Ralph’s, and finish with the fire that destroys the island and brings rescue.