



# LORD OF THE FLIES KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

**Context** – *Lord of the Flies* was written by William Golding in 1954.

**William Golding** – William Golding was born on September 19, 1911, in Cornwall, England. Golding pursued the natural sciences until switching to English Literature at university. He served in the navy in WWII, before becoming a teacher and writer. *Lord of the Flies*, which was published in 1954, was his first and biggest success, however he also wrote *The Pincher Martin* (1956) and *The Brass Butterfly* (1958).



**Darwin and Evolution** – In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Charles Darwin published his research paper 'The Origin of Species.' This set out the theory of evolution – that humans and other life has developed from more primitive species. At the time that Golding wrote *Lord of the Flies*, it was still a relatively new concept that man had evolved from more primitive, animalistic creatures.



**The Coral Island** – *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1858) is a novel written by Scottish author R.M. Ballantyne. It tells of 3 boys marooned on a pacific island; the only survivors of a shipwreck. In the book, the children encounter different types of evil, yet their growing friendship, courage, and determination aid them in survival. Written around 100 years earlier, it nevertheless inspired *Lord of the Flies*. Golding was unsatisfied with how it 'espoused myths' and sought to invert its meanings (the evil is instead within the boys).



**Sigmund Freud** – Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis: a clinical method for treating psychopathology. He famously theorised that the human mind was a constant battle ground for three contrasting forces: the id (our most primal needs and desires), the superego (our sense of conscience and morality) and the ego (our conscious, rational mind). *Lord of the Flies* can be read through this theory, as the boys battle with what they have learnt is right and their innermost desires.



**Religion** – *Lord of the Flies* was written in the mid-twentieth century, a period of great discovery and scientific advancement. Aspects of life that were previously attributed to being religious or supernatural phenomena or were now being explained in some parts by science. In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding explores some of the fundamental issues that science could not fully explain, for example human sin and the conflict between internal good and evil.



**World War II** – World War II was the largest and deadliest conflict in human history. Involving all of the major developed nations in the world, the war pitted the Allied countries against the Axis powers (led by Hitler's Nazi Germany). In total, between 50 and 80 million people died, leaving a catastrophic effect the world over. Golding served in the navy, and participated in the invasion of Normandy. It had a profound effect on his view of the evils of which humanity was capable.



**Main Characters** – Consider what Golding intended through his characterisation of each of the below...

**Ralph** – Ralph is the lead protagonist of the novel. He is a twelve year old English boy, who has fair hair and a larger physique than most of the boys on the island. Ralph attempts to coordinate the boys to build a functioning civilisation on the island until they can be rescued. He represents the civilizing impact of human beings, as opposed to Jack's savage instincts. He is closely allied with Piggy.

**Quote:** "Shut up," said Ralph absently. He lifted the conch. "Seems to me we ought to have a chief to decide things."

**Jack** – Jack is the main antagonist of the novel, as he comes into direct opposition with Ralph on more than one occasion. He is also one of the older boys stranded on the island. Jack becomes the leader of the hunters but craves total power. He becomes wild, barbaric and cruel as the novel progresses. He becomes an expert at manipulating other boys, and represents human savagery.

**Quote:** "I ought to be chief," said Jack with simple arrogance "because I'm chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp."

**Piggy** – Piggy is arguably the most intellectual and mature boy on the island, but a combination of his whiny voice, overweight physique, and annoying manner means that his voice is often drowned out. Piggy becomes Ralph's lieutenant, remaining sure that civilisation is the way forward on the island. He represents the scientific, rational side of civilisation.

**Quote:** "...we can't be rescued if we don't have smoke."

**Simon** – Simon is a shy and sensitive boy who has often been described as the only truly 'good' character on the island. He helps the younger boys and is willing to work for the good of the community. Unlike Ralph and Piggy, Simon's moral actions do not seem to have been imposed upon him by society. In this way he represents a natural goodness that is lost when he dies.

**Quote:** "You'll get back to where you came from."

**Roger** – Roger is a cruel and sadistic boy, who displays a tendency to enjoy violence from early in the novel. Roger is one of the older boys, who enjoys bullying the littluns, and very quickly becomes Jack's lieutenant when the Castle Rock tribe is formed. Roger is often seen as the opposite of Simon, as he presents a sense of natural evil. His true inner nature is shockingly revealed when he rolls a boulder over Piggy, killing him, in the final chapters of the novel.

**Quote:** "Roger advanced upon them as one wielding a nameless authority."

**The Littluns** – 'The Littluns' is the name given by the older boys to identify the younger boys on the island. Whilst perhaps they need the most care of any on the island, the fact that hardly any of their names are mentioned demonstrates that they are not considered important – they are certainly not appropriately cared for by the older boys. The Littluns are often excitable and easily distracted, and are terrified by the idea of the beast.

**Quote:** "Simon found for [the littluns] the fruit they could not reach"

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Civilisation vs. Savagery** – The central themes in *Lord of the Flies* is a conflict between two competing impulses within all human beings – the inclination towards living by rules, acting peacefully (civilisation) and the impulse towards gratifying desires and acting violently (savagery). The boys battle between these two forces throughout their whole time on the island.

**Innocence** – The boys on the island progress from well-behaved, orderly young boys who seek rescue, into bloodthirsty hunters who have no desire to return to civilisation. Golding does not paint this as a result of some external driving force, but rather as resulting naturally from innate desires that have always rested within them.

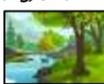


**'The Beast'** – Throughout their time on the island, the boys fear a terrifying, imaginary beast that they believe stalks the island. The beast is in fact symbolic of the primal instinct of savagery that lies within each of the boys. Only Simon realises this, and is soon killed.

**The Weak and the Strong** – Golding explores how communities and leaderships evolve in the absence of a determined order. Immediately after they are marooned on the island, the boys seek a leader (Ralph) and seek to determine some sort of hierarchy. Weaker individuals are cast aside, bullied, and even killed (e.g. the littluns and Piggy).



**Chapter-by-Chapter Summary** – Alongside key quotations from each scene.

|                       |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| <b>Chapter 1</b>      | A transport plane carrying a group of English boys is shot down onto an island. Jack and Piggy find a conch shell that they use to call the other boys. No adults survive – only boys aged 6-12. Some boys tease Piggy. Ralph is named leader, and Jack the chief hunter. The hunters find a tangled pig, but Jack finds himself unable to kill it.   | "Next time there would be no mercy. He looked round fiercely, daring them to contradict."   |
| <b>Chapter 2</b>      | It is agreed that whoever has the conch shell at meetings may speak. A young boy claims to have seen some form of 'beastie' or monster the night before, which makes the other boys shudder. The older boys try to reassure them. The boys decide to build a fire on the top of the mountain, to alert nearby ships/planes. In their enthusiasm, they accidentally set trees ablaze. A small boy playing near to the trees is now missing. Piggy laments the boys.  | "That little 'un that had a mark on his face—where is—he now?"   |
| <b>Chapter 3</b>      | Ralph shares his problems with Jack and Simon – none of the boys are helping to build the huts, the hunters have failed to kill anything, and most of the boys just want to play. Jack is only bothered about killing animals for food. Jack and Ralph begin to bicker, and become increasingly hostile towards one another. They try to make peace by going for a swim in the lagoon together, but it is clear that their feelings fester. Simon walks in the forest, helping the 'littluns.' Eventually he comes to a clearing, which he finds beautiful.   | "They walked along, two continents of experience and feeling, unable to communicate."    |
| <b>Chapter 4</b>      | The Littluns become troubled by visions and bad dreams. They continue to talk of the 'beastie.' Roger becomes increasingly violent and sadistic towards the littluns. Jack disappears to kill a pig. A ship is seen, but the fire has gone out. Ralph is furious at Jack for this. The hunters return, crazed that they have caught a pig. In the ensuing argument, Jack breaks Piggy's glasses. Jack eventually accepts his failure, but does not apologise to Piggy.  | "Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law."  |
| <b>Chapters 5-6</b>   | Jack calls a meeting to bring order. Again, the older boys try to allay fears of the beast. A littlun claims to have seen the beast and Jack claims that he will kill it if he sees it. This sends the boys into manic behaviour and they follow Jack. Ralph thinks of relinquishing control, but Piggy tells him that the boys need guidance. In the next chapter, above the island, there is a brief aerial battle. A dead parachutist falls to the island and becomes caught in the trees. His parachute flaps in the wind. Sam and Eric awake, and see the parachutist – they mistake this for the beast. The boys thus begin an expedition onto the hill to find the beast – the littluns soon become preoccupied with ideas of building a fort. | "We'll have to go back and climb the mountain. That's where they saw the beast."   |
| <b>Chapter 7</b>      | Ralph feels disconsolate about the disorder on the island, but Simon soothes him. The boys find boar droppings, and decide to hunt the boar. Ralph gets caught up in the exhilaration. Later that night, the group recreate the thrill of the chase, and in their excitement almost kill a boy named Robert. Ralph, Jack, and Roger climb up to the summit of the mountain and see what they think is the beast (the parachutist flapping in the wind). They hurry down the mountain to warn the other boys.  | "He bound himself together with his will, fused his fear and loathing into a hatred, and stood up."                                     |
| <b>Chapter 8</b>      | The boys return claiming to have seen the beast, to Piggy's bemusement Jack says Ralph is a coward who should be removed as Chief, but the others won't vote him out. Jack storms off, creating a new tribe with him as chief. They steal things from Ralph's tribe. Simon, alone, sees a pig's head, swarming with flies. In an apparition, it taunts him. He faints.  | "There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast. . ."   |
| <b>Chapter 9</b>      | Simon wakes in a daze, and staggers around. He sees the parachutist, and realises the boys' mistake. He rushes down to tell them that the beast does not exist. At Jack's tribe, a feast is held – all except Simon are present. Jack sits with a painted face on a throne, issuing commands. He issues an invitation to all of Ralph's tribe to join his own – most accept. They begin a wild tribal dance. At this point Simon comes down from the forest. Mistaking him in the dark as the beast, the boys kill him in their wild frenzy. It is swept into the ocean, as a storm begins, and the parachutist is swept off the cliff.   | "Even in the rain they could see how small a beast it was; and already its blood was staining the sand."                               |
| <b>Chapter 10</b>     | Almost all have joined Jack's tribe. Ralph and Piggy awake, feeling ashamed. At Castle Rock, Jack rules with absolute power – acting brutally to those in the tribe. He states that Ralph's tribe are a danger. Jack's tribe attack and badly beat Ralph and his tribe. They steal Piggy's glasses, which are the only way of making fire on the island.  | "They didn't come for the conch. They came for something else. Ralph—what am I going to do?"  |
| <b>Chapters 11-12</b> | Ralph's tribe travel to Castle Rock to try and make the others see reason. Jack and Ralph square off, and Sam and Eric are accosted by Jack's tribe. Piggy tries to make his voice heard, but Roger pushes a huge boulder down the cliff, knocking Piggy to his death. Ralph narrowly escapes with his life, whilst Sam and Eric are tortured into joining Jack's tribe. In the final chapter, Ralph hides in the jungle. Jack plans to send the whole tribe after him to kill him. Smelling smoke, Ralph realises Jack has set the forest on fire to smoke him out. His pursuers, armed with spears, are close to catching and killing him when a naval officer appears, having seen the smoke. He laments their lack of civilisation.               | "Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of a true, wise friend called Piggy."  |

**Golding's Language Devices**

| Golding's Language Devices    |  | Features of Form   |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Simile</b>                 | "When the sun sank, darkness dropped on the island like an extinguisher." (Golding, Ch4)   | <b>Adventure Novel</b> – Adventure stories commonly feature characters on a desert island, needing to be brave and resourceful to survive. Other examples are <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> and <i>Treasure Island</i> . Golding was particularly influenced by <i>The Coral Island</i> , in which three shipwrecked boys bond whilst being marooned on an island together. Golding found this hard to believe, and so wrote his own version!<br><br><b>Allegory</b> – Allegories are narratives that have deeper, symbolic levels of meaning. In <i>Lord of the Flies</i><br>-Ralph stands for civilisation, whilst Jack stands for savagery;<br>-Piggy symbolises rational human thought, whilst Simon represents human morality and goodness;<br>- The island setting is a microcosm of the wider world. |
| <b>Metaphor</b>               | "Now they talk—not only the littluns, but my hunters sometimes—talk of a thing, a dark thing, a beast, some sort of animal." (Jack, Ch5) |  |
| <b>Interesting Adjectives</b> | "He began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling." (Golding, Ch4, about Jack)  |  |
| <b>Personification</b>        | "At midday the illusions merged into the sky and there the sun gazed down like an angry eye." (Golding, Ch4)                             |  |