

What does chapter
one of the spire
reveal about Jocelyn
and his attitude to
other...

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



How does Golding's language reveal the extent to which he deceives himself? The first chapter of William Golding's novel "The Spire" reveals much about Jocelin's attitude to the people around him and also the contrary view that others hold about it. The language Golding uses highlights Jocelin's delusions and shows the reader just how much he deceives himself.

Throughout the first chapter we are introduced to many of the people that Jocelin encounters on a daily basis. One of the first characters to appear is Goody Pangall, who Jocelin views as his 'daughter in God'. This phrase shows how much Jocelin admires Goody and, at first, appears to simply demonstrate more of Jocelin's loving nature.

However, after reading the following paragraph where he watches her walking away from him 'with love and a little disappointment', it becomes clear that the sentence holds more meaning than just showing his fondness. It shows up Jocelin's somewhat obsessive character, suggesting he views Goody as being flawless and that he has idealised her to the point where he can imagine her as God's daughter. As Jocelin thinks 'my daughter' it becomes apparent that he has deceived himself into thinking that he loves Goody as if she were just his daughter but Golding makes it clear to the reader that this is not true.

As the paragraph continues it is revealed just how much Jocelin is infatuated with Goody for example, when she does not follow the same routine as usual, he has to 'glimpse the long, sweet face' as she turns away from him. Golding's use of the word 'glimpse' suggests that Jocelin is purposely looking out for her 'sweet face'. Golding repeats this word later in the paragraph 'got

a glimpse of green dress', this too implies that Jocelin is trying to see more of Goody.

The fact that Golding has given Goody Pangall a 'green dress' under her 'grey cloak' and 'wimple' makes her more of a distraction for Jocelin and it give the impression that he waits each day to catch a 'glimpse' of her exotic, colourful interior under her seemingly plain, dull exterior. It also shows the reader that Jocelin is looking at Goody with a masculine gaze, trying to see her passionate side instead of the pure and obliging woman that she must present to society. During the first chapter Goody Pangall is only referred to as 'Pangall's wife'.

Withholding her name allows Golding to deny Goody her own identity and personality, turning her into a possession rather than an individual person. As Jocelin thinks of her as 'Pangall's wife' it may be that he is trying to remind himself that she is married and the fact Jocelin feels the need to remind himself that she is married and that he cannot have her shows that he does not love her solely as a 'daughter'. A reason the Jocelin is so attracted to Goody Pangall is that she is quiet and she knows her place in society as, at the time the novel is set, society is extremely patriarchal.

This is emphasised by Jocelin's thought that Goody 'is entirely woman' solely because of what he calls 'foolish' 'childish curiosity'. This language shows that he recognises her 'foolish' ways as only applicable to women, if he was to show any curiosity it would not be classed as 'foolish' as he would, as a man, have a legitimate reason for it. Although Jocelin recognises her 'folly'

he does not reprimand her, telling himself that 'that is a matter for Pangall or Father Anselm'.

Golding has written this to remind the reader that Jocelin does not want to recognise any of Goody Pangall's faults as then not only would she not be perfect, but he would probably upset her and he does not want to do anything to hurt Goody. When Goody has left the church Golding turns the reader's attention to Gilbert, 'the dumb man'. With Jocelin's first words to Gilbert, 'I think he made you choose me, Gilbert', Golding subtly reminds the reader that Jocelin is a man of God and that he has immense faith in Him.

This contrasts with the previous paragraph about Goody Pangall where it seemed that Jocelin had become so immersed in his thoughts about her that he had forgotten about who, and where, he was. Gilbert has many of the same qualities as Goody Pangall. He is quiet and does not interfere with Jocelin's plans for the spire, instead he agrees with everything Jocelin suggests. In a peculiar way Gilbert has every characteristic that people expected of a woman in those times and this is probably why Jocelin is so fond of him.

As Gilbert does not, or more precisely cannot, object to any of Jocelin's remark or aspirations Jocelin is more comfortable around him. Unlike the chancellor, Pangall and others in the church, Gilbert is the one person who does not have any objections to the spire and Jocelin's delusions that God will perform a miracle in allowing it to be built. Therefore Jocelin need not be guarded around Gilbert for he knows that Gilbert will not confront him about

the near non-existent foundations like the chancellor does 'I don't know, my Lord Dean'.

That Jocelin likes to be around people who do not query him reveals that he likes to have control of the situation that he is in, and that he needs to be right. Golding has created Jocelin as a rather selfish character, he wants to build the spire and is determined to do so as, he believes, 'God will provide'. However, Jocelin has become so absorbed with the detail and planning required and is so inspired by the grandeur that he is certain the spire will provide for the cathedral that he does not pause to think about the effects of the building on his friends.

Golding uses subtle phrases and words to show this egotism such as 'my place, my house, my people' and 'I know them all, know what they are doing and will do'. These two sentences show that Jocelin sees the people around him as a means to building the spire and does not want to associate with them unless they support him or provide a skill that will build the spire. Jocelin does not see his actions as self-centred, he sees himself as a man who loves everyone and Golding frequently mentions what Jocelin sees as agape love, 'he shot an arrow of love after him', 'Jocelin looked sideways at him, loving him'.

The reader is shown how Jocelin's aspirations for the spire are damaging his relationships with others by the deacons scathing insults. The remark 'say what you like, he's proud' is met with the reply 'and ignorant'. These simple comments hold a huge amount of meaning, for deacons to talk about their

dean in such a derogatory manner, especially in the cathedral itself, shows that Jocelin really is pursuing an impossible and ludicrous goal. When Jocelin overhears this conversation he confronts the deacons asking 'who is this poor fellow? '.

To the reader it is obvious they were talking of Jocelin but Jocelin himself is so engrossed in his thoughts that it does not occur to him that they could be discussing him. Before Jocelin approaches the deacons they remark 'he thinks he is a saint! A man like that! ', Golding's use of exclamation marks after these statements makes them even more prominent and what they are suggesting more absurd. For a dean in a church to be thought of as a ridiculous candidate for being a saint indicates to the reader that Jocelin's actions are extremely inappropriate for a man of his importance in the church. A man like that! ' shows that the deacons do not look up to Jocelin as a role model nor do they respect him. It also proves that Jocelin thinks highly of himself, he does not even consider for a moment that the deacons are talking about him as he believes his to be too high in the church and too respected for anyone to think of him as 'ignorant', let alone voice their views. Another example of Jocelin's pride in himself comes when he meets with Gilbert again. Jocelin asks Gilbert to show him the carving and exclaims, 'Oh no, no no! I'm not as beaky as that! '.

This denial shows that Jocelin has an exact idea of what he believes he looks like in the same way that he believes he knows what people think of him. After studying the carving further Jocelin 'fell silent', this silence may be because he has realised that actually the carving does resemble him, 'mouth

wide open, lined cheeks, hollow deep under cheekbone'. Golding is also suggesting to the reader that in chasing his dream of the spire Jocelin has neglected not only his relationships with others but himself as well, allowing himself to become older and more dishevelled.

Golding has taken the idea of Jocelin becoming lost in his vision by giving Jocelin the thought 'at the moment of vision, the eyes see nothing', a phrase completely suited to Jocelin and his situation. Overall, chapter one reveals to the reader that Jocelin has allowed himself become so absorbed into his vision of the spire that he has begun to ignore the people around him and to avoid them if they disagree with him or criticise his dream.

It gives a great insight into Jocelin's thoughts and other's perceptions, showing the reader that most people in the church have started to see Jocelin as a person to ridicule as he is so self-involved that he will not notice. Golding's language helps to expose Jocelin's self-important views making them stand out and his continual use of the words 'joy' and 'love' in Jocelin's thoughts emphasise the fact that he believes he is blessed with the task to build the spire whereas the reader can see that it is more of a curse as it is beginning, even in the first chapter, to damage not only his relationships but his wellbeing too.