

Importance of roger mason in 'the spire'

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



Roger Mason is a vital character in the novel, without whom there would be no spire at all. Even before the reader is introduced to Roger there are hints that he will be important to the plot. Jocelin's first mention of the phrase 'cost what you like' coincides with the first introduction to Roger; this foreshadows the sacrifice of Roger and the breakdown he suffers due to the pressure put on him by Jocelin, the spire and even his relationship with Goody Pangall.

In many ways Roger can be seen as the strength behind the spire. From Golding's physical description of him, using phrases such as 'bullet head', 'like a bear' and 'his heavy eyebrows', the reader gains the impression that he is solid and his expertise in building shows him to be very factual and rational. Nearly all of Roger's attributes are the antithesis to Jocelin's; where Roger is down-to-earth, Jocelin is spiritual and deluded. Both men are compared to animals in the novel, Roger is likened to 'a bear' and a 'dog' whereas Jocelin is described as 'an eagle' and 'beaky', Golding's choice of animals here show the reader how the two men have completely different views of the world.

Roger's confrontation with Jocelin highlights the antithesis between them. Roger, as an earthy man, can see that the spire is dangerous and a nearly impossible concept and regards Jocelin's vision with 'contempt and amusement', whereas Jocelin believes that it will be held up simply by his faith and prayer, 'God will provide'. These contrary descriptions reappear throughout the novel and intertwine their lives until, ironically, it becomes clear that the spire only gets built due to a combination of Jocelin's delusion and insistence on his vision and Roger's skill.

Roger and Jocelin not only have opposing natures but also relationships and interactions with women. Jocelin fails, or refuses, to understand women but Roger has an unusually equal relationship for the medieval times with his wife and they are often seen together around the cathedral, 'inseparable'. His relationship with Rachel is important as it emphasises Jocelin's inability to deal with a woman who is 'not like a decent reticent Englishwoman' or 'silent Goody Pangall', Jocelin spends much of the novel trying to avoid Rachel and Golding continually describes her as a 'body' or a 'face'. The fact that Roger can have a friendship with a woman that Jocelin cannot stand outlines their differences.

Roger's other relationship with a woman is with Goody Pangall. Unlike his relationship with Rachel, his affair with Goody is passionate and is portrayed as love; Roger watches her walking 'as though nothing and no one in the whole world mattered'. When the reader first finds out about the affair, it is through Jocelin's perspective, 'he saw this was one encounter of many. He saw pain and sorrow'. The pain and sorrow may be Jocelin's realisation that he will never have Goody or it may be sorrow in Roger for he has been forced into this by Jocelin.

The novel has an inchoate structure that not only shows Jocelin's gradual descent into complete delusion and madness but the loose time frames with some chapters taking place over a month, others over six months also show Roger's growing dependence on alcohol. Golding finally turns the attention of the reader back to Roger when Jocelin visits him at the end of the novel. Roger has suffered a breakdown and is 'moo-ing' and the reader can see the

entire effect that Jocelin and the spire have had on his life. Roger's mental breakdown has turned him into a 'crab', he is no longer the skilled and reliable 'bear' he was at the start of the novel. This presentation of Roger shows that he, too, has an irrational side and that he is not in fact that different to Jocelin, Roger turns to alcohol in times of stress and Jocelin turns to prayers, neither of which aid the two characters and these actions eventually end in their downfall.

Roger and Jocelin are also not that different in their visions either. The first description of Roger contains the phrase 'he could see nothing else, or hear or feel nothing else' showing that when Roger is working, nothing distracts him and he becomes oblivious to those around him. The presentation of Roger in this way once more joins him to Jocelin, before the reader has even been given a description of him. This illustrates how important Roger is to the novel and to Jocelin as a tool to build his vision.

Overall I think that Golding's language when describing Roger is important because he is antithetical to Jocelin and therefore provides a comparison point. This has been used by Golding to draw attention to Jocelin's delusion and to allow the reader to see Jocelin's growing madness more clearly; however as the novel progresses it also becomes clear to the reader that Roger and Jocelin's characters become less and less contradictory. This is significant as it makes Jocelin's revelation at the end of the novel more pronounced and allows the reader to see that pure facts or pure faith are not effective, but it is a combination of the two that is needed for anything to be achieved.