

# Lord of the flies: the eternal struggle between two oppositions

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



“ I was thinking of the light. We’ll be stumbling about. . . We were going to look for the beast. . . There won’t be enough light”. In *Lord of the Flies*, the archetypes of light and dark serve as recurring symbols. In this quote, Ralph is afraid of going to the top of the mountain in the darkness; he is afraid of the beast associated with dark and evil. In addition to the conflict between Ralph and Jack (the Ego and the Id), the less apparent conflict between Simon and Roger mirrors that between light and dark. In *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding uses the interplay of light and dark symbolically to express the allegorical meanings of good vs. evil and the human personality.

*Lord of the Flies* is a novel filled with a plethora of allegorical and symbolic meanings, and among the most important is the use of light and dark to express the corresponding meanings of good and evil. To start, Ralph is introduced as the “ fair boy” before the reader learns his name. Through descriptions of physical beauty, “ width and heaviness of his shoulders” , Golding makes Ralph a symbol of good. All the boys (apart from the choir and the littluns) vote for Ralph as chief as a result of these bright qualities. On the other hand, the beast is symbolic of the human fears of the unknown. The boys fear the beast most at night; “[the littluns] dream and cry out [at night]”. Although the boys have fears from the beginning, it is not until the dead pilot falls that the boys feel certain that there is a beast. Furthermore, it is crucial that Sam and Eric see the pilot in the early morning—when their vision is distorted by the darkness. The darkness causes them to believe they saw “ the beast,” but they would have understood the truth had it been lighter. In addition, Roger—Jack’s executioner—is described as having a “ shock of black hair. . . [that] seemed to suit his gloomy face” . “[A] furtive

boy whom no one knew, who kept to himself with an inner intensity of avoidance and secrecy” , Roger’s dark tone and savage side is first introduced when he throws stones at Henry but “[throws] to miss”. Roger feels there is a field of protection around Henry—the protection of parents, civilization, and the law. All of these conditions however, soon disappear as Roger pulls the lever to send Piggy falling to his death. In contrast, Simon is the epitome of utter goodness and purity. His goodness is revealed when he helps the littluns get fruit they can’t reach; none of the other boys care about the littluns, but Simon, a Jesus-like figure, tries to help everyone. He is further illuminated when he meditates in the forest, in a serene location with butterflies and wildlife, in “ a place where more sunshine fell” . With the use of symbols, William Golding expresses how the archetypes of light and dark can shape good and evil.

Golding also uses light and dark to explain the human personality. Jack, the paragon of savagery, can be regarded as the “ Id” in the Freudian model of the psyche. The Id is one’s source of energy and pleasure and it reduces tension by action. The Id also contains deathly instincts, like aggression and destructive tendencies, which are qualities that pertain to Jack. Cowering behind his painted face, Jack feels stronger than ever in the darkness behind his mask, “ liberating [himself] from shame and self-consciousness” . Since the Id can’t think and does what it wants, Jack and his hunters leave the fire to go hunting despite Ralph’s instructions to tend to the fire. When the fire goes out, a ship passes by, representing how the Id can lead one into trouble—whether it be acting with violence and aggression or entertaining sexual

desires. In contrast, Simon represents the Superego, one's ethical and moral code. Simon, bright and bubbly, only does what's right; he never hurts anyone and could be considered a mystic. This is why Simon is the only one (apart from Piggy) to understand that the beast is a part of each and every one of the boys. Ralph, however, finds himself in the middle of the two extremes of the psyche. Ralph is the representation of the Ego, the "manager" who balances the Id and the Superego. He is a symbol of civilization and the Superego: he preaches the need for shelter, order, and a fire to get rescued. But he also entertains the Id: he is "full of pride" when he hits a boar with his spear. "I hit him alright. The spear stuck in. I wounded him!", he says in delight. Through brilliant literature, William Golding makes clear how light and dark work as symbols to express the human personality.

Golding shows how the island functions as a microcosm of society and the human personality through the symbolic interplay of light and dark. Through close reading and analysis, the reader can understand that *Lord of the Flies* is a brilliantly crafted allegorical novel centered on the conflict between civilization and savagery. Simon and Piggy represent goodness, civility, the Superego, intellect, and protection. Jack and Roger represent evil, savagery, the Id, violence, and one's dark desires. Ralph represents order, leadership, the Ego, and the need to be connected with the outside world. *Lord of the Flies* is relatable to readers in that each person has their own Simons, Jacks, and Ralphs. Golding wants his readers to be aware of what can happen when their Id—their desires and dark pleasures—takes over. Golding's story is

unfortunately one that is very much relevant today, and may continue to be so for as long as society chooses not to end wars and conflicts.