

Lord of the flies and robinson crusoe



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William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' is a novel about good and evil, along with innocence and experience within society. Golding uses the boys' innocence, and gives them time on the island to gain experience, then shows us how people react and change if they are left fully to their own devices.

Daniel Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe' shows that you have to have a strong sense of belief in something to make anything work. Both authors, writing at different times, reflect situations and actions they are familiar with to enhance their novels.

'Lord of the Flies' is a novel which may lead you to believe one thing, and then leads you in a totally different direction to explain it is, in fact the opposite. "Perspectives of palm and beach water drew to a point near infinity". This is a good example of how Golding leads the reader to believe and imagine one thing, while he means something different. The description leads you to believe the island is like a paradise, it is difficult to imagine how a paradise could change so dramatically. He shows that you have to look farther than the surface to understand and grasp the truth.

Golding uses the island to show that you have to look at the whole picture to understand what is happening. You have to see the good and the evil in everything in order to make sense of it. 'Robinson Crusoe', written in the first person allows the reader to empathise and understand the character. By using the first person Defoe can show exactly how Crusoe is feeling, it also makes Crusoe seem more isolated; the use of the first person promotes the isolation Defoe wants the island and Crusoe to feel. 'Lord of the Flies' is conversely written in the third person.

This makes the reader feel more involved in the story and allows them to empathise with each character. The reader can get an overview of what is going on and this allows them to see how the story develops in their own way. Robinson Crusoe discovers Defoe's island after a storm which shattered his ship along with all the crew and passengers, " Eleven in number, to God's mercy and the wild sea". Robinson Crusoe sees the island and makes a life saving dash toward it. Crusoe, although " Assisted myself to swim with all my might" thought " the land looked more frightful than the sea".

This is because Crusoe didn't know what to expect on the island, even with suspicions he sought to reach the shore. The island however is seen later as Crusoe's refuge and is symbolic in his place of survival. The land housed him, " Free from danger and quite out of reach of the water". The sea is personified during Crusoe's life saving struggle, the sea is the first obstacle Crusoe has to overcome on his road to repentance. Crusoe has to fight against something to even get onto the island. Defoe wants this battle to show what God makes Crusoe face to show that he is really sorry for his sins.

The boys in ' Lord of the Flies' are thrown onto Golding's island after a plane crash sends them plummeting into the forest of the island. The wreckage imprints a " scar" on the island, a long lasting memoir of the boy's destruction and time there. The reader finds out little about how the boys arrive on the island, and learns only the same as each character learns through word of mouth from another. The introduction of many characters so early on in the novel creates confusion for the reader, confusion which is also felt by the characters.

The way in which the boys arrive on the island contrasts to that of Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe sees the island and strives for it as a tool for survival; later Crusoe respects the island and tries not to interfere with it and its environment. The boys don't honour or respect the island; they take it for granted unlike Crusoe. The boys quickly see the beauty of the island, "The shore was fledged with palm trees". The boys are astounded, "Forced at last to believe the reality of the island" and find the beauty and the situation unbelievable.

They feel they have landed in paradise; they have no idea how it could turn into a savagery and hell. They are not agitated, yet excited and happy; Ralph "Laughed delightedly again and stood on his head". As soon as the boys arrive they are excited and eager to be on the island. When Crusoe arrives he panics and runs around with anxiety, "Making thousands of gestures and motions which I cannot describe" far different from the excitement of Ralph. The boys were quick to elect a leader; consequently the leader who was chosen for superficial reasons was overthrown, "Let him be chief with the trumpet thing" howing that the boys didn't really care that much about their leader, and that they were only playing along with the election to integrate themselves into island society.

Crusoe had set out on his voyage without best wishes from his father. His father had forbidden the trip. Crusoe however sought adventure and decided to go even without his father's blessing. During the time Defoe was writing, to disobey ones father was to disobey God. As head of the house the father was the closest person to God, and generally whatever the father said or

believed was also that of the family. This is shown in Crusoe's language when describing his father.

Crusoe therefore found his survival from the storm and shipwreck an act of God, and the island a place whereby he can repent of his sins. When Crusoe arrived on the island he wondered on the beach, " Wrapt up in the contemplation of my deliverance". Soon he began to think about his future. Crusoe soon discovered he " Had no weapon either to hunt and kill any creature for my sustenance, or to defend myself against any other creature that might desire to kill me for theirs". Consequently, he spent his first night on the island up a tall, thorny tree, so not to get attacked during the night.

Crusoe uses the thorns of the tree to protect him from any predator. The boys soon become cut and torn by the thorns of trees on Golding's island. The characters different approach to the island shows their intentions and inclinations. The boys dive into the island, deciding they own it, and have rule. When they roll the rock off the side of the cliff and destroy the vegetation underneath we see them being destructive for fun. Crusoe works differently with the island and uses its resources to his advantage. Crusoe's difference in approach to the boys shows his maturity and experience of looking after himself.

He is logical and quick to think about dangers. " My next care was for some ammunition and arms". Crusoe think his survival, and place on the island is to show God that he is sorry, and to prove he is a respectful man. The boys however seem to share no thought for anyone but themselves and their fun. They don't, at this early stage worry about the consequences of being on a

desert island. Soon after Crusoe and the boys arrive on the islands they both are described as stripping. Ralph quickly removed his all clothes, “ stood there naked” removing the identity of his old life.

Crusoe however stripped and left his “ linen and open knee’d” breeches and stockings on. This again shows the contrast between the ages and maturity of the characters. Crusoe, although totally alone left clothing on, and regarded himself as naked. Ralph took off all his clothes and was unashamed to show his body. Another example of how Crusoe attempted to impress another; while the boys did what they wanted to do. As Ralph throws his old life away with his clothes Crusoe symbolically retains his old life with his. Crusoe is methodical in using resources from the ship.

He carefully ventures aboard, almost every day and collects resources in order of importance. He is aware that the ship may drift away or break further at any point so is cautious about his trips aboard. Crusoe works hard everyday to ensure he builds a civilised lifestyle for himself on the island. He uses the supplies from the ship to build shelter, eat and defend himself from any predators. Crusoe uses what he had learnt in his previous life to create a similar life on the island. Crusoe “ meets” with himself and keeps a calendar on a tree bark so he can keep the Sabbath.

Should even forget the Sabbath days from the working days; but to prevent this I cut it with my knife upon a large post”. As Crusoe is precise about his time on the island he also describes the actual environment, “ on the flat green, just before the hollow of this place” Defoe’s only descriptions of the island are to aid stories or descriptions of actions. Defoe describes the size of

the island more precisely than Golding does in ' Lord of the Flies'. The size of Golding's island is confused and again allows the reader to make their own assumptions. Golding however, describes the scenery of his island more.

Crusoe doesn't think he should enjoy his time on the island so wouldn't regard beauty on Defoe's island important and would find it irrelevant, if even apparent. Crusoe has tools and no people; this suits Crusoe because it allows him to go about his business, impressing God without any interference. The boys however have no tools and lots of people, this shows in the difference between the societies on the two islands. The boys quickly forget about their old lives. They do however use knowledge of their old lives at the beginning, when they elect a leader, and when they decide to use the conch as a token to speak.

These rules are soon overturned and their society begins to crumble. The boys set up their camp on the beach because they are scared to venture anywhere else for long periods; they have suspicions about a " beast". The beach is seen as a safe, wide open space, nowhere for anything to lurk or hide, so they feel safer there than in the dark, suspicious forest. Crusoe uses a practical destination for his camp rather than a lazy, fearless place, like the boys. The boys waste the few resources they have. When they set fire to the top of the island, they destroy the island in an act of laziness.

The boys aren't committed to making their society work. Some of them are lazy and care about having fun more than being rescued. The hunters seem only interested in bringing food to show their strength and in attempt to belittle someone else. The boys seek pleasure at the beginning in having the

power to punish rule breakers, “ We’ll have rules! Lots of rules! Then anyone who breaks them-” “ Whee-oh” Here the only reason the boys seem to want to punish anyone is so they can have fun having authority. They don’t seem bothered about the principle of rule breaking, or the problems it may cause.

Island life was very different for the boys, than their previous lives. They have all been thrown together into a very bizarre situation. Stuck on an island, they had no civilising influences like teachers or parents. We can see this when the boys are throwing stones and destroying a perfectly adequate habitat. No one is there to control their actions, and it isn’t surprising that later in the novel conflicts between different characters occur. Such an intense situation brings out people’s inner feelings and instinctive behaviour. The boys’ now primitive existence allows them to do whatever they want. They can be whoever they want to be.

When the hunters dress themselves up and paint their faces, we see them create what they see as a license to kill. They disguise themselves with the face paints and become barbaric, using the disguise as an excuse for this. The boys show little remorse about brutally killing the animals on the island, whereas Crusoe feels bad about this act of survival. He even studies the optics of the goat to provide the quickest and most pain and fear free death and to farther himself away from the inhumanity of killing another creature. “ I concluded that by the position of their optics, their sight was directed downwards”

Crusoe uses a gun to kill the animals on Defoe’s island, this makes him further away from the actual killing of the animals, this differs dramatically

from the stabbing and spearing of the animals on Golding's island; the boys enjoy the tribal killings. Their chanting and brutal attacks are much more barbaric than Crusoe's remorseful killings. The language used to describe the killings show how the characters feel about the acts. We can see characters who think they act similarly as they had before their time on the island. Jack for instance wants to be leader from the start because "I was head boy, I can sing C sharp".

Jack thinks himself a good leader because of responsibilities and power he had in his old life. Simon seems to be philosophical about his experiences on the island, and is mature for a young boy. The freedom which the boys have gained allows them to control their own lives and actions. Many of the boys follow others, while some take the lead. These boys are similar to Crusoe in that they are often trying to prove something to another. Crusoe, with his every action is trying to impress God and gain forgiveness. Crusoe's island life becomes very similar to his previous life.

He builds a table, chair, and even shelves for him to store his belongings. He remains methodical in his life on the island, and seems not to do anything rash or hastily. Even when Crusoe reflects on the island he designs a list of good vs. evil. His rational thinking allows him to contain himself and continue to act in a way which he feels will repent his sins. This is similar thinking to that of the new age Defoe was writing in, the age of rationalism and enlightenment. The boys however reject their old life and are happy to leave their old ways behind. They seem to be happy to let the days slip by.

They don't even seem bothered when they discover people are missing, when they kill or when people die. This shows how their attitudes and morals changed. Simon's death is symbolic on the island. Simon thinks very logically and is the only person on the island to understand and relate to what is really going on; he understands the truth about human nature. Simon understands that there isn't actually a beast on the island, and the only thing the boys are scared of is themselves, Simon realises that they are the only bad thing on the island. The boys kill Simon because they don't like anyone to interfere with their beliefs and their fun.

The boys reject Piggy in this way too. Piggy is different from the other boys and because of this he is penalised. Crusoe builds himself an environment whereby he will be sufficient for many years. He expects to remain on the island until he dies unless he can impress God enough to rescue him.

Conversely the boys don't seem to think long term about being on the island and live each day as it comes. The boys fall into regression, they are going backwards as their lifestyles change dramatically. They become less civilised, humane, and sane. On the other hand Crusoe progresses and builds a new, substantial life for himself.

Simon and Piggy attempt to show the boys that things need to be done to provide a safe environment for the future, but they are disregarded by the self involved, fun loving boys. Crusoe doesn't seem remorseful about being on the island, he sees it a new life. Crusoe's calendar charts his time on the island so that he can see how long it takes for him to repent of a sin. The boys expect to get rescued and don't really take island life that seriously. At first the fire is a chance of rescue, nonetheless it is quickly disregarded and

abandoned. The boys don't talk about the length of time they have spent on the island.

Only in chapter one is there any optimism about being rescued. These attitudes show that the boys are immature and don't regard the future very often. They seem dismissive about their future and are happy to take every day as it comes. Conversely Crusoe uses his time on the island as a reflection because he sees it as penitence. Crusoe however doesn't completely deny the thought of rescue, " If God sent any ship in sight, I might not lose any advantage for my deliverance, of which I was not willing to banish all my expectation yet". It feels the authors placed their characters on islands to create similar effects in different ways.

Golding uses the island to create a unique environment for the boys. He uses the island as an example of the world at the time he was writing. He explores through a small group in a small isolated space how people interact, exposes how relationships/conflicts occur, and how they are dealt with. Golding's island is used as a microcosm, a miniature version of the world. He chooses to put the boys together and see how they react with each other in the intense atmosphere. Much like many modern reality television shows, isolation prompts no false personality or behaviour. You behave in a way true to only yourself, as the boys did.

The intensity of the situation proved that innocence doesn't last forever. The island and the characters provide the balance between good and evil. In ' Lord of the Flies' the island provokes the evil in the boys; whereas in ' Robinson Crusoe' the island provokes the good. Crusoe arrives on the island

having sinned. The boys' innocence balances with the islands evil. This links in with one of the key messages from 'Lord of the Flies'. Golding uses the book to show how there is always evil in humanity. Golding shows that no matter whom you are and what you do, or who you try to be you will always, somewhere, sometime, be involved with evil.

There is nowhere to turn, and just as innocence doesn't last forever, evil will linger within humanity forever. The good of Defoe's island helps Crusoe balance his evil. The isolation of both islands creates a different atmosphere for all the characters, this allows the authors complete control over their characters actions. I consider the authors choice of character to go onto the island not a reflection of maturity but of experience. I feel Golding chose to place boys on his island to show how children, who are the world's future, would act under intense situations.

Children are the key to progression as the next generation, and we can see Golding use them to stress problems which may become apparent, and how effectively the future generation can deal with them. Defoe's choice of Crusoe to place on his island also aids his novel. Defoe wants to send out a religious theme and who better to showcase this than a respectful Christian who changed their ways and then realise and attempt to change their faults. 'Lord of the Flies' reflects much of William Golding's personal encounters with life.

Golding wrote 'Lord of the Flies' around the Second World War and uses the island and characters to portray all the conflicting ideas and countries during the war. He uses characters to show certain events and to include certain

people and atrocities which were apparent at the time. Hitler and his extremist political party are reflected in Jack. This is shown when Jack creates the alternative group from Ralph's and persuades people to join his group by saying they will have lots of fun and have lots of meat. He makes promises which he can't keep as many romantic extremist leaders do.

The Nuclear age is described as the boys' talk of an "atom bomb". After working for many years at a boys school Golding uses his own knowledge and experience of boys as a tool to interpret how boys react. In the blurb of 'Lord of the Flies' an extract from a review from The Times newspaper states "Golding knows exactly what boys are like". Golding's style allows the reader to relate to the story because of the way he uses his own knowledge and experiences with the diversity within characters. Daniel Defoe uses 'Robinson Crusoe' to show that God has ultimate power, and when one sins one must repent.

Defoe's island offers penitence and punishment for Crusoe and that's why Crusoe works so hard while there. In conclusion I feel that 'Lord of the Flies' uses the island to help the story and to develop the plot more than 'Robinson Crusoe'. I feel that a modern audience would react better to 'Lord of the Flies' and the messages within the novel than 'Robinson Crusoe'. Although 'Robinson Crusoe' would be impossible without an island I believe many modern readers would find it difficult to empathise with a lonesome man on an island, attempting to impress God.

While Defoe's island is portrayed as penitence it is difficult to understand, within today's culture, why God forces repentance upon Crusoe. The

characters in ' Lord of the Flies' are easier to empathise with for a modern audience because people can relate to good and evil. The islands help to create the correct atmospheres for both the novels; the description of the islands allow the reader to see what they want to see and offers them the freedom to make their own assumptions and additions to the novels.

The genre of ' Robinson Crusoe' is similar to the original adventure genre of ' Lord of the Flies'. Golding however, twists his adventure genre into a sinister adventure story and a physiological study of the behaviour of boys in an extreme situation. Golding's adaptation of the genre allows the reader to see the different elements of the book and the significance of the island setting. Defoe tries to teach the reader about religious morals. It is instructional whereas ' Lord of the Flies' allows the reader more freedom to make their own conceptions.

I feel Golding presents and uses the concept of the island setting the most effectively because ' Lord of the Flies' is more descriptive of the island and the island play a more significant role in the plot of the novel than the island in ' Robinson Crusoe'. Our knowledge of Defoe's island is limited compared with that of Golding's. Golding allows us to explore all the different areas and environments of the island whereas Defoe restricts the reader to a small section of his island setting, suggesting the island is less significant in ' Robinson Crusoe'.