

Lord of the flies by
william golding and
the black cottage by
wilkie collins



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In this essay, I will explore the similarities and differences between the above named pieces of writing. The two pieces are similar in some ways, but they contain a few fundamental differences. William Golding wrote Lord Of The Flies in 1954, whereas The Black Cottage was written in 1859, almost 100 years earlier, and this will be reflected upon later in this essay.

I will begin with a brief introduction to the two pieces of writing. This is important to do, as Lord Of The Flies is essentially a novel, and the section I will be concentrating this essay on is only a short part of that. Lord Of The Flies is a thought-provoking novel, based on the terrible exploits of a group of young British boys evacuated from their homes during the war. Their plane crash-lands on an isolated island in an unknown location.

The story describes the transition from civilisation to barbaric savagery, and delivers a message of pessimism in that, without the society that man is inherently tied to, we would be likely to return to savagery. The Black Cottage is less of a novel than a short story. It follows the exploits of Bessie, a young girl who is left alone for the night in a lonely abode on the moors. She must fight off a couple of thieves, in order to protect a large sum of money entrusted to her, and a set of valuable teaspoons left to her by her late mother.

In this essay, I will attempt to demonstrate the similarities and differences in these two pieces of writing, by looking at many different aspects of the two extracts. These will include the setting, the main characters and the villains, the language used and its effect on the story, and the images used in them.

Both of the settings, although very different in many aspects, present in

themselves a stunning contrast between an apparent paradise and an isolated and potentially threatening situation. Lord Of The Flies is set on an island, in the centre of the Pacific Ocean.

At the beginning of the novel, the boys see the island as a tropical paradise. Having explored a bit, and verified that their situation was indeed an island, Ralph declares that ' This is our island. It's a good island'. Its appearance itself lends itself to being labelled a paradise; ' The shore was fledged with palm trees', '..

. he white surf flinked on a coral reef'. These images are those commonly associated with paradise. The Caribbean islands are similar examples of these. The setting of The Black Cottage is introduced to us in a similar way, as a secluded paradise in a beautiful rural setting. ' The farmlands stretched down gently into a beautiful rich valley, lying nicely sheltered by the high platform of the moor'.

These openings to the stories set a scene that says that, although the settings are isolated, it is a good aspect, which adds to the feeling of beauty and paradise about the places. However, later in the stories, we see that the isolated setting of each story turns a convenient and comfortable situation into a dangerous place with a threatening atmosphere hanging over the main characters. In Lord Of The Flies, as Ralph flees the approaching hunters, '..

. bushes and a wild tangle of creepers made a mat that kept out all the light of the sun'. The loss of light is commonly associated with evil and throughout

Lord Of The Flies, is considered a threat by the boys. With darkness comes <https://assignbuster.com/lord-of-the-flies-by-william-golding-and-the-black-cottage-by-wilkie-collins/>

the beast, and although the beast itself is revealed to be fictitious, it is true that the real beast, described near the end of the novel as ‘ the darkness of man’s heart’, comes with the loss of light.

In *The Black Cottage*, it is clear to see how the cottage, beautiful as its situation is, could become a threatening situation. ‘ The nearest habitation to ours was situated about a mile and a half off, where a strip of fertile land stretched out into the waste like a tongue’. Later in the second paragraph, the situation is actually said to be ‘ lonely’ and, later still, it is said to be ‘ solitary’. Therefore, in both stories, the atmosphere is mixed. In *Lord Of The Flies* the island is perceived to be a tropical paradise, although Ralph sees the darker side when he is left with nowhere to run from the savages attack.

In *The Black Cottage*, the lonely moorland situation seems to be advantageous to Bessie, until the house is attacked in the darkness, and Bessie has nowhere to go for help. Another area of the two stories that must be assessed is the characters themselves. I shall do this in two stages; firstly, I will examine the main characters, Ralph from *Lord Of The Flies*, and Bessie from *The Black Cottage*. Having looked at these, I will turn my attention to the enemies, Jack and Roger in *Lord Of The Flies*, and Shifty Dick and Jerry in *The Black Cottage*. There is a striking similarity in the formation of the characters of Ralph and Bessie. In both pieces, they seem to reflect similar qualities, which are adapted to suit the situations they find themselves in.

They are reliable and mature, leading to recognition by other characters. For Ralph, the other boys made him chief. For Bessie, her father left her in charge of the house, and then Mrs Knifton also left the pocket book in her

care. Coincidentally, it was these 'rewards' that led to the downfall of these characters. The other boys hunted down Ralph because he was the only one who wanted to be civilised and proper in his actions.

Shifty Dick and Jerry attacked Bessie because she refuses to give up the pocket book she has in her care. This leads to the second point I wish to make. Both characters are mentally very strong, and are able to adequately stand up to their enemies. Near the beginning of Lord Of The Flies, when Jack and his hunters desert the fire and go off hunting, and the ship passes by, Ralph remains civilised, but talking to Jack 'His voice was loud and savage, and struck them into silence. "There was a ship"'. This is one of the many confrontations between Jack and Ralph in Lord Of The Flies, proving that he is not afraid to stand up to his enemies.

When Shifty Dick and Jerry first arrive at the Black Cottage, Bessie displays this quality too, when she '... answered sharply that I had no cider in the house - having no fear of the consequences of refusing them drink...

'. This proves that, when necessary, she too can stand up to her enemies, and this quality is essential to the development of the attack later on in the story. Finally, we look at the character's reactions to problems presented to them. Bessie in The Black Cottage displays the ability to predict problems before they appear, hopefully to avoid them. As Mr ; Mrs Knifton depart from The Black Cottage, Bessie says that '..

. the very sight of the pocket book behind the glass door of my bookcase began to worry me'. Immediately, she begins to look for '...

a place to lock it up in, where it would not be exposed to the view of any chance passer-by'. This foresight was indeed a bright idea, but she was not quite quick enough, as Shifty Dick and Jerry arrive before she has time to hide the pocket book. In Lord Of The Flies, Ralph is not so much able to predict problems as he is able to find suitable solutions to them. This quality is emphasised in his first few meetings as chief on the island, when he decides on a number of courses of action to establish a sort of society and order between the boys on the island. ' We need shelter'.

We must make a fire'. ' We ought to have more rules'. ' We've got to decide about being rescued'. These are just a few of Ralph's key decisions, which provide valuable stability to the boys in the early part of the novel. The villains in both stories are totally evil in their actions, but are very different in their appearance and in the way they carry out their actions.

In Lord Of The Flies, the villains are, after all, just young boys, and so they are not expected to look like fearsome thugs. In fact, at the start of the novel, Jack and Roger (the leaders of the savages) are simply choir boys, no older than 12. Jack is exactly the opposite of how you would envisage the evil one in a story. He '..

. was tall, thin and bony, and his hair was red'. His face was later described as being'...

crumpled and freckled, and ugly without silliness'. This is in contrast to Roger, who, although he is of about the same age as Jack, is described as being '...

something forbidding', with a ' shock of black hair... seemed to suit his gloomy face'.

Roger seems to be unsociable and withdrawn, but, as civilisation creeps away from the boys, he becomes evermore the character who portrays pure evil, demonstrated perfectly by his deliberate killing of Piggy in Chapter 11. In contrast, Shifty Dick and Jerry look exactly how we envisage a criminal double act. In children's films, where the character's appearances must be exaggerated to make the story understandable for the children, we see a couple of characters with striking similarities to Shifty Dick and Jerry, for instance the crooks in ' 101 Dalmatians'. In this way, the crooks in The Black Cottage take on an almost comical appearance. We are told immediately by Bessie that Shifty Dick '.

.. bore a very bad character'. She then goes on to describe him.

" He was a tall, heavy man with a lowering, scarred face and huge, hairy hands'. The image of huge, hairy hands is one commonly associated with apes, and in this way, this description implies to us that Shifty Dick is almost animal-like. In further contrast, Jerry was '..

. a quick, dapper looking man...

a very bald head with some very ugly-looking knobs on it'. Jerry is much more of an intelligent crook than Shifty Dick, as demonstrated by his ' mock politeness' and ' leering eyes'. It appears that these two have all the ingredients for a comical and seemingly effective crooked team - Jerry with the brains and Shifty Dick with the brawn. They deliberately attempt to

attack Bessie after their seemingly foolish assumption that she would roll over and hand them the pocket book, and are calculating in their attack on the cottage. This compares with the choir boys in Lord Of The Flies, who lose hold of the society they were brought up in, and become caught up in the tribal hunting games, turning them into a real life hunt for Ralph. Under the eyes of grown ups, the boys would never dream of trying to deliberately killing someone, but with nobody to chastise their savage and inhumane behaviour, they are allowed to let loose their darkest possible sides.

The actions of the villains in Lord Of The Flies and The Black Cottage allow us to draw direct comparisons between the two villains in each story. The aggressive nature of Jack mirrors that of Shifty Dick and the blood thirsty but calculated minds of Roger and Jerry are also similar. In Lord Of The Flies when Jack is confronted by Ralph about the way in which he is breaching the rules by speaking out of turn, he ‘...

slammed his knife into a trunk, and looked around challengingly... “ You shut up!.

.. Bollocks to the rules! ‘ This type of aggression towards Ralph when confronted is similar to the way Bessie heard ‘..

. Shifty Dick swear a whole mouthful of oaths’ in The Black Cottage, when Bessie refuses to allow them to simply break into her house. Roger represents pure evil in Lord Of The Flies, even more so than Jack does. The sadistic pleasure that roger gets from torturing the pig adds to the image we have of Roger as an almost Satanic figure. When the second pig is captured

on the way up the mountain to look for the beast, the boys were bundling each other into a heap of boys prodding pig flesh.

Roger ran around the heap, prodding with his spear whenever pig flesh appeared". In The Black Cottage, Jerry is simply wickedness and evil personified. As he tries to cut his way through the roof of the cottage, Wilkie Collins describes how ' the murderous hand was still tapping with the knife'. Describing Jerry's hand as murderous is implying that he too is just as blood thirsty as Roger or Shifty Dick, but is also very clever Another way of looking at the evil present in Roger comes from an earlier chapter of Lord Of The Flies, when he comes across some littluns playing by the beach.

He and Maurice were running through the sand, kicking over the sandcastles and the stones that the littluns had prepared in the sand, causing upset to the three who were playing at the time. Where Maurice felt guilty, and crept off quietly to the bathing pool, Roger laughed. He then ' stooped, picked up a stone, aimed, and threw it at Henry - threw it to miss'. This deliberate destruction of other people's happiness is another demonstration of Roger's sadistic attitude to life. Throughout both stories, the villains change in identity, which has a profound effect on the way the stories develop.

In Lord Of The Flies, Ralph's pursuers lose their identity entirely, and assume a massive amount of authority and a sinister persona. In the closing passage, Jack is no longer referred to by his name, but by the label ' the chief' the rest of the boys no longer have names, but are simply referred to as ' savages'.

When the officer arrives on the island, Percival Wemys Madison starts towards the officer to introduce himself, but all he could manage was ' I'm,

I'm... ' as the incantation he could once recite as second nature had faded clean away.

Collins does something different with Shifty Dick and Jerry. The identity of the pair as a unit is ' the villains', and Bessie rarely refers to them by their names. This gives the impression that they have assumed fear and power enough not to be referred to by their names, rather like a dictator or monarch in real life. Even as early as the first chapter, Jack sees names as a childlike thing. As Piggy tries to collect names, he says simply ' Kids names. Why should I be Jack? I'm Merridew' (his surname).

This is the first instance of Jack trying to assume the authority he establishes in the final passage. Both Lord Of The Flies and The Black Cottage feature scenes in which the main characters are involved in a frightening hunt in which they really fear for their lives. Ralph is subjected to the most terrifying ordeal in Lord Of The Flies, when people he once counted on as friends attempt to hunt him out and kill him. Bessie is trapped inside the Black Cottage by intruders Shifty Dick and Jerry, who begin by simply attempting to steal the pocket-book, and quickly turn towards trying to openly hurt Bessie. The stories have a similar theme, but are formed very differently, and written in contrasting styles to achieve separate effects. In the last part of Lord Of The Flies, William Golding is trying to put across the feelings of terror passing through Ralph as he is hunted ruthlessly by the savages.

This is done very successfully, through three main methods. The first is the way in which Golding repeats things from previous parts of the story with apparent randomness. Looking closely at the words, you will find that these

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words are the memories of Ralph as his mind races uncontrollably in his attempts to escape the savages. Golding repeats ' a stick sharpened' numerous times in this final passage.

Ralph does not know the significance of the stick sharpened at both ends, but as readers, we know that this is the ritual performed when pigs are caught - to cut off the head, and skewer it on a stick sharpened at both ends, as a sacrifice to the beast. Ralph only knows that the sharpened stick is something Roger has done that is likely to be associated with his death. Golding also repeats the words of Simon to Ralph in earlier chapters - ' You'll get back'. This is significant to this part of the story, as Ralph's situation seems desperate, and these words may well be his last hopes. Golding also flits between different subjects in short, sharp sentences, which reflect the racing of Ralph's mind.

In conclusion, we can see that the final chapter of Lord Of The Flies and The Black Cottage are very similar in that they portray an attack and chase on the main characters by a group of villains who will stop at nothing to get what they want. In Lord Of The Flies, the savages want to kill Ralph as they did Piggy, and they will set fire to the whole island in order to achieve this, jeopardising their own future in a foolish frenzy of savagery which was unleashed upon Ralph. In The Black Cottage, Shifty Dick and Jerry try every which way they can to break into the cottage. Later on, as their efforts to steal the pocket book fail, their efforts turn towards breaking in to cause harm to Bessie. However, there are very striking differences between the two stories, and the way they are formed.